REPORT TO EXETER BOARD

Date of Meeting: 28 April 2016
Joint Report of: Assistant Director Public Realm, Exeter City Council and Head of Highways, Capital Development and Waste Management, Devon County Council
Title: Highways Vegetation Management

Is this a Key Decision?
Yes
One that affects finances over £1m or significantly affects two or more wards. If this is a key decision then the item must be on the appropriate forward plan of key decisions.

1 What is the report about?

1.1 To update the Exeter Board at their request on the delivery of solutions to manage and control highways grass and weed growth in Exeter.

2 Report details:

2.1 As noted in the Exeter Board report 30th July 2015, “(the) Leaders of both Councils met on 30 April 2015 and agreed the following three-year solution that moves towards the County Council’s policy of reducing unnecessary maintenance but retains adequate standards for the City. This provides a total of £84,000 for the County Council to address highway grass and weeds in the City (excluding dual carriage way work) until March 2018, with the works to be done by the City Council.”

2.2 At a subsequent meeting between DCC and ECC officers in September 2015 the following points were agreed.
- DCC Highways verge maintenance contributions will be - £24K in 2015/16; £22.5K in 2016/17 and 2017/18.
- Weed control. The financial contributions are DCC £25K; ECC £25K; Exeter Board £10K for three years from 2015/16. The money will be paid to ECC who will undertake weed spraying at our discretion. DCC have no specific policy on weed spraying.
- DCC will commission ECC to do the works to meet Highways Health and Safety standards, and match current policy as closely as possible.
- DCC is happy with a light touch arrangement so no formal agreement is required between the two authorities. The outcomes of weed control and grass cutting continue to be monitored to ensure adequate standards are achieved.

2.3 A contract for highways weed spraying was let by ECC in March 2016 for a period of two years. The specification includes the following requirements
- Supply and apply Glyphosate or similar and approved pesticide to adopted highway footpaths, kerbs and gutters.
- Area for treatment is the full width of the hard surface of the pavement to the top of the kerb stone, and includes the top and face side of the kerb, and the
• Gutter to a width of 300mm from the kerb face.
• High level paths are to be treated the full width edge to edge, unless railings prevent access to the roadside edge. The base of any retaining wall is to be treated to a height of 300mm above road surface level, and to a distance of 300mm out from the wall face.
• Effective kill is to be not less than 95% of the weed population at the time of application.
• The contractor is to ensure that all employees are adequately trained and wear clothing that identifies them with the company. They are to carry information with them that will inform members of the public of a contact name with telephone number and address within the company.
• Footpaths and pavements are terms used to describe the public pedestrian part of the highway.
• Contractors can utilise a combination of pedestrian and vehicular applications subject to a satisfactory Risk Assessment being approved by the Council.

2.4 Grass cutting of DCC highway verges and ECC owned grass commenced in mid March 2016. Highway verges in the more densely populated urban areas can be cut more frequently as the unit costs are lower. Elsewhere, such as verges on the margins of the city, far lower mowing frequencies will occur whilst still retaining highway safety margins.

2.5 A programme of works is being currently developed by Devon County Council for continuation of the Community Payback scheme in for 2016/17. This is to enable desirable works outside the scope of the agreement.

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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None.

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