

Date: 9 January 2014
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To: Members of the Grounds Maintenance Task and Finish Forum:
(Susie Bond, Christine Drew, Douglas Hull, Jim Knight, Pat Rous,
Sue Saunders, Pauline Stott, Peter Sullivan)

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Sue Bewes – Landlord Services Manager
Dennis Boobier - Housing Needs and Strategy Manager
Pauline Druce – Street Scene Finance Officer
John Golding – Head of Housing
Andrew Hancock – Street Scene Manager
Andrew Harris – Street Scene Area Manager West
Tim Harris – Street Scene Area Manager East
Joyce Murphy – Estate Management Officer
Mark Pollard – Parks Development Officer
Graham Symington - Housing Asset & Business Development Officer
Mandy White - Accountant

For information:

Councillor Jill Elson – Portfolio Holder, Sustainable Homes and Communities

Councillor Stephanie Jones – Deputy Portfolio Holder, Sustainable Homes and Communities

Meeting of the Grounds Maintenance Task and Finish Forum

Friday 17 January 2014 at 10am

Committee Room, Knowle, Sidmouth

Councillors and members of the public are reminded to switch mobile phones to silent during the meeting.

AGENDA

Page/s

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| 1. | To receive any apologies for absence. | |
| 2. | To receive the notes of the meeting held on 4 October 2013. | 4 - 7 |
| 3. | To receive any declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda. | |
| 4. | Update on the recruitment of a grounds maintenance apprentice . | Verbal |
| 5. | Street Scene mobile working technology – presentation. | Verbal |
| 6. | Work programme and date of next meeting. | |

Decision making and equality duties

- The Council will give due regard under the Equality Act 2010 to the equality impact of its decisions.
- An appropriate level of analysis of equality issues, assessment of equalities impact and any mitigation and/or monitoring of impact will be addressed in committee reports.
- Consultation on major policy changes will take place in line with any legal requirements and with what is appropriate and fair for the decisions being taken.
- Where there is a high or medium equalities impact Members will be expected to give reasons for decisions which demonstrate they have addressed equality issues.

Members and co-opted members remember!

- You must declare the nature of any disclosable pecuniary interests. [Under the Localism Act 2011, this means the interests of your spouse, or civil partner, a person with whom you are living with as husband and wife or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners]. You must also disclose any personal interest.
- You must disclose your interest in an item whenever it becomes apparent that you have an interest in the business being considered.
Make sure you say what your interest is as this has to be included in the minutes. [For example, 'I have a disclosable pecuniary interest because this planning application is made by my husband's employer'.]
- If your interest is a disclosable pecuniary interest you cannot participate in the discussion, cannot vote and must leave the room unless you have obtained a dispensation from the Council's Monitoring Officer or Standards Committee.

Getting to the Meeting – for the benefit of visitors



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The following buses all terminate at the Triangle in Sidmouth. From the Triangle, walk up Station Road until you reach the Council Offices (approximately ½ mile).

From Exeter – 52A, 52B

From Honiton – 52B

From Seaton – 52A

From Ottery St Mary – 379, 387

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The Committee Suite has a separate entrance to the main building, located at the end of the visitor and Councillor car park. The rooms are at ground level and easily accessible; there is also a toilet for disabled users.

For a copy of this agenda in large print, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01395 517546

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Notes of a meeting of the Grounds Maintenance Task and Finish Forum held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 4 October 2013

Present:

Councillors:

Susie Bond
Pauline Stott

Tenants:

Pat Rous

Officers:

Sue Bewes – Landlord Services Manager
Andrew Harris – Street Scene Area Manager, West
Tim Harris – Street Scene Area Manager, East
Andrew Hancock – Street Scene Manager
Joyce Murphy – Estate Management Officer
Graham Symington – Housing Asset & Business Development
Officer
Alethea Thompson – Democratic Services Officer
Mandy White – Accountant

Devon County Council Officers:

Chris Henley – Highway Asset Principal Officer
Tom Vaughan – Local Highways Manager for East Devon

Also present:

Councillor Jill Elson – Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and
Communities

Apologies:

Tenants:

Sue Saunders

Officers:

Mark Pollard – Parks Development Officer

The meeting started at 10.00am and ended at 11.30am.

***21 Welcome and introductions**

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting and invited everybody to introduce themselves.

***22 Minutes**

The notes of the meeting held on 2 August 2013 were confirmed as a true record.

***23 Declarations of interest**

Board Member	Minute number	Type of interest	Nature of interest
Pat Rous	All	Personal	She is a Council housing tenant.

***24 Devon County Council grass cutting service**

The Chairman welcomed Chris Henley, Highway Asset Principal Officer and Tom Vaughan, Local Highways Manager for East Devon from Devon County Council (DCC) to the meeting. They gave a presentation to the TaFF on DCC’s grass cutting and hedge trimming service across the county.

It was reported that the grass cutting and weed clearance budget was £1.7m and that the total road length in Devon was 8,000 miles. The total highway verge length was 4,150 miles, with a total verge area of 3,200 acres. The first priority was safety, but the Devon Verges Policy was sympathetic to wildlife needs. This policy was introduced in 1973 and amended in 2010.

DCC maintenance categories were not based on the classification of roads but on the speed limit, the number of properties and the proportion of buses and lorries. The frequency of cutting verges and hedges depended on whether the road was in an urban or rural area, as well as the maintenance category of the road.

The presentation went on to outline practices and standards for:

- Timing of cutting.
- Rural verge visibility splays.
- Rural hedge cutting.
- Rural verges – 1 metre cuts, full width cuts and general.
- Urban verges.
- Urban visibility splays.
- Traffic signs in verges and visibility areas.
- Traffic signs in hedges.
- Safety fences/barriers in hedges.
- Street furniture.
- Saplings.
- Special verges.
- Arisings/cuttings.
- Litter.

It was noted that the Highways Act stated that hedge cutting was the responsibility of land owners. Therefore DCC would only cut hedges that it owned, as well as those facing junctions and inside bends for highway safety. A notice would be issued to owners of hedges that were causing a problem/in need of cutting. If the owner did not rectify the hedge DCC would cut it and recharge the owner.

***24 Devon County Council grass cutting service (cont'd)**

Throughout the presentation it was stressed that the DCC budget only allowed for 4 grass cuts a year. Arisings/cuttings would not be collected unless they landed on hard areas or could enter gullies, ditches, channels, streams or watercourses. It was the contractor's responsibility to check for and remove litter before and after cutting. Litter was often a problem and the district council would be called to remove large amounts. It was acknowledged that closer working with EDDC regarding DCC work programmes would allow things such as litter picking to be carried out before DCC grass cutting, to avoid EDDC staff needing to pick up strewn litter afterwards.

A large cost to DCC was traffic management. It was suggested that DCC and EDDC could better co-ordinate work programmes, especially under road closures. DCC were willing to consider partnership arrangements with district and town/parish councils regarding grass and hedge cutting services but reiterated that it would only provide enough funding for 4 grass cuts a year on highway areas. It was also noted that the same traffic management rules applied to whoever carried out grass cutting on highway areas, whether they were contractors or volunteers.

The Chairman explained that housing maintained areas in East Devon received far more cuts per year than four and that this led to complaints being received that one side of the road/path appeared nice and tidy, whilst the other looked scruffy and unkempt. It was difficult to discuss EDDC's ability to take on any of DCC's cutting services until the exact areas maintained under the HRA had been identified and re-measured (as recommended at the previous TaFF meeting). Once this work had been completed more would be known about the areas and costs involved. Another area of concern was privately owned properties on council housing estates.

All those present agreed that DCC and EDDC should work smarter together to achieve efficiency savings. The Chairman thanked the DCC officers for their presentation, which had been very useful to the TaFF.

***25 Feedback from the Housing Review Board**

The Landlord Services Manager informed the TaFF that she had presented an interim report on the work of the Forum to the Housing Review Board (HRB) on 5 September. The report included all the TaFF recommendations to date. These had all been agreed by the HRB and by Cabinet on 2 October. This meant that work on garden licences, in terms of the land they were on, the purpose of the licence and the fee charged could now be progressed.

***26 Re-measuring housing areas**

The HRB and Cabinet also agreed that a budget should be provided from the Housing Revenue Account to identify, re-measure and catalogue all the housing areas maintained under the grounds maintenance service.

*26 **Re-measuring housing areas (cont'd)**

The Landlord Services Manager and the Street Scene Manager agreed to work together, and seek the advice of the Corporate Organisational Development Manager to draw up a job specification and advert for the fixed term post. It was felt that the role would be suited as an apprenticeship. The employee would be managed and supervised as part of the Street Scene Services team and it was hoped that the post would commence in the New Year.

*27 **Programme of future meetings**

It was agreed that information/a presentation would be provided on Street Scene mobile working technology at the next meeting. An update would also be given on the recruitment of an employee to identify, re-measure and catalogue housing areas.

The Chairman thanked all those present for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED: that the next meeting of the Grounds Maintenance Task and Finish Forum be held at 10am on Friday 17 January 2014.