

Runnymede Borough Council

Economic Development Committee

Thursday 13 May 2004

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

9. HIGHWAY SHRUB BED MAINTENANCE (DAL)

(Ref: Minutes of the Leisure and Environment Committee, March 2004, page 1442, para. 797).

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to consider whether highway shrub bed maintenance should continue to be undertaken by Runnymede or transferred to Surrey County Council.**

2. Background Information

2.1 At its meeting in March 2004, the Leisure and Environment Committee gave initial consideration to the content of the Grounds Maintenance Contract. In the light of the Council's savings target, Officers were asked to investigate the desirability of handing the maintenance of Highway shrub beds back to Surrey County Council, with a view to a decision by this Committee.

2.2 The Leisure and Environment Committee is due to give further consideration to the re-letting of the contract at its meeting on 20 May.

3. Report

3.1 The County Council has confirmed that it would be willing to assume responsibility for shrub beds maintenance if this Authority asked it to do so. However, as the County Council does not have the necessary funds to maintain all of the shrub beds to the standard that Runnymede achieves, some beds would probably be removed and grassed over or paved. The County Council has expressed the view that its function is to maintain the Highway but not necessarily make it look attractive. The County Council has indicated that if it was to take over shrub bed maintenance it would also wish to regain responsibility for sponsored roundabouts, which are currently managed by the Council's Technical Services Department.

3.2 There are currently 24 sponsored roundabouts in the Borough, managed by an Officer in the Technical Services Engineering section. All of the roundabouts currently have sponsors and the sponsors are contracted to provide the materials and labour to maintain the roundabouts. Roundabouts are in prominent positions and maintaining them to a good standard adds to the public's impression of the Borough. The roundabouts all have signs that, as well as the sponsor's name, show the Borough's logo and coat of arms. The Borough Council therefore receives due recognition for the enhancement that this provides. If the sponsored roundabouts were handed back, the County Council, unlike with highway shrub beds, would continue to operate a system of sponsorship to enhance them. The signage on the roundabouts would then contain the County Council's logo.

4. Resource Implications

4.1 The Environmental Maintenance Budget for 2004/05 includes £61,500 for shrubs and flowerbeds and £5,000 for sponsored roundabouts (page 170 of the Budget Book). On the expiry of the present maintenance contract, the Council has the opportunity of ceasing these works and realising savings without incurring penalties under the contract.

4.2 The provision for roundabouts was inserted into the budget from 2004/05 onwards because it is becoming increasingly difficult to find sponsors. In the event of a sponsorship arrangement ending, this new provision will maintain the roundabout until another sponsor can be found.

4.3 The roundabout sponsorship contracts are managed in the Technical Services Department and, as long as the sponsors continue their funding, involve little Officer input.

4.4 The grounds maintenance contract is undertaken by an external contractor. The staffing implications of a transfer of the shrub bed element of the work would therefore be minimal.

5. Council Policy

5.1 “We propose to continue to improve the general environment of our three main town centres whilst encouraging and maintaining local and village economic vitality.....” (The Leader’s Position Paper 2004/05.)

5.2 To achieve revenue savings of £1m.

THE COMMITTEE IS ASKED TO

determine whether shrub bed maintenance should continue to be managed by the Borough Council and retained in the new Grounds Maintenance Contract.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

None