

Options for the future management of local amenity areas – what does this mean for town and parish councils?

Frequently Asked Questions

6 December 2016

Note: These proposals are subject to approval by Shropshire Council Cabinet in early 2017

Background

What are local amenity areas?

Amenity areas include play parks, recreation grounds, playing fields, and small areas of recreational land.

What are the plans for the new Environmental Maintenance Contract?

The current Highways Maintenance Term contract (HMTc) between Shropshire Council and Ringway expires at the end of its full contracted six-year term on 31st March 2018. The option to extend for a further four years will not be exercised by mutual agreement. It has been agreed that Shropshire Council will re-procure Highways and Environmental Maintenance Services using a Term Service Model. The tender documents for this re-procurement will go live in February 2017, the appointment of the new contractor will be in July 2017 and the transition period between contractors will start in October 2017. Full details are within the Cabinet report of 19th October 2016 – Highways and Environment Term Maintenance Contract Re-procurement <http://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/documents/b10917/Cabinet%20To%20Follow%20Report%20-%20Agenda%20Item%208%20-%20Highways%20and%20Environment%20Term%20Maintenance%20Contract%20Repr.pdf?T=9>

What are Environmental Maintenance Grants (EMGs)?

EMGs support town and parish council involvement in minor highways and environmental maintenance. Local councils apply to the scheme for financial support up to £3K p.a. to deliver general maintenance, drainage, traffic signs and environmental maintenance works within their parish. There is the potential for neighbouring councils to pool resources and create a single larger contract across their areas. A business case describing the proposed works is submitted with the application to ensure that these do not duplicate what Shropshire Council's contractor is doing. An annual review at the end of each year is completed to confirm that the works described in the business case were completed.

Management of local amenity areas

What options are available for town and parish councils to support the management of their local amenity areas?

The options are -

1. Areas of amenity land **transfer** from Shropshire Council to local councils on a leasehold basis (freehold on an exceptional basis) and the local council takes on responsibility for the costs and delivery of future maintenance (there could be the opportunity for areas of transferred land to be maintained by Shropshire Council's

contractors through an annual Service Level Agreement linked to a financial contribution).

2. Areas of amenity land stay in the ownership of Shropshire Council and are maintained through the new contract with a **core offer** - a basic 'health and safety' level
3. Areas of amenity land stay in the ownership of Shropshire Council and are maintained through the new contract at an **enhanced level**, i.e. the core offer is supplemented by a financial contribution from local councils to increase the levels of maintenance

How do local councils confirm what amenity areas are in their area, and get the necessary information on these sites, e.g. its size, current maintenance specification, etc.?

All of the local councils that have Shropshire Council owned amenity sites within their area will have been told of these and their local Community Enablement Officer will be able to confirm these and arrange for full details to be provided by the Environmental Maintenance team.

What is the deadline for town and parish councils to let Shropshire Council know that they are interested in the transfer of amenity areas?

Expressions of Interests (EOIs) in the potential transfer of sites to town and parish councils need to be received by the end of March 2017. A template for these EOIs has been circulated to local councils. The necessary due diligence on the potential for these transfers will be carried out subsequent to EOIs being received.

When would the transfers take place?

We will create a programme of amenity land transfers, with the aim of completing all transfers by April 2018.

Environmental Maintenance Grants

What will be happening in the future with the Environmental Maintenance Grants scheme?

The EMG scheme will run in 2017/8 and will be open to all local councils. In early 2017 Shropshire Council will write to all local councils to confirm this and to say that we will be reviewing the future scheme alongside the development of the new maintenance contracts.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any queries or requests for further information, get in touch with your local Community Enablement Officer or ring/email the Community Enablement Team office on 01743 253077 or communityenablement@shropshire.gov.uk

ENDS