

## **Stokenham Pilot Project**

Report of the Area Engineer (South)

***Please note that the following recommendation is subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.***

**Recommendation: that the report be noted.**

### **1. Summary**

In the autumn of 2009 Stokenham Parish Council undertook a 6 month pilot over the winter months, following liaison and agreement with South Hams District Council and Devon County Council, to extend the original pilot scheme agreed with South Hams in 2008. Under the extended pilot scheme, the Parish undertook routine maintenance services themselves under delegated authority from the District and County Councils who also allocated them budget.

The district work represented approximately 80% by value, and included sweeping and litter picking, toilet cleaning and grass cutting (including some urban county highway verge).

The county work represented approximately 20% by value, and was mainly the cleaning of buddle-holes, grips and easements, and some cleaning and trimming around signs on roads other than A roads which are more difficult to work on due to speed and volume of traffic.

The sum allocated by the County for 6 months was £3,050, based on a proportional share of the budget for this type of work when discussions about the pilot began in 2008.

In February 2010 funding allocated for this type of work was halved as part of the overall budget reallocations. So if the pilot continues for a second winter the allocation to Stokenham would be less than half to allow for storms. The parish were informed in early 2010 and reminded of this recently.

### **2. Results of Pilot - County Work**

The parish considered the county work they did over the winter a success. There were no reports of blocked buddle-holes whereas previously there were some.

The parish employed a local man who took ownership working as a mobile lengthsman as needed. He updated plans adding owners' names and got some landowners to do their ditches on insides of their hedges. A random check indicated he was doing a thorough job.

DCC still have to attend major flooding and wash type incidents following major storms. There were no significant flooding or wash incidents during the pilot period.

All operatives employed by the parish to work in highway areas must have training and pass an assessment to demonstrate they are competent to place the correct road signs and barriers when working. This is known as "Chapter 8" training.

Also at least one and preferably two parish representatives must have a Chapter 8 qualification, as they are responsible for setting their employees to work, so need to understand and be able to direct how that is done safely.

### **3. District Position**

A consultation was undertaken by the Devon Association of Parish Councils with all the South Hams Parishes as to whether they wished to see the pilot rolled out to their parishes. There were not sufficient parishes in the South Hams who supported the service being delegated and the budget devolved to them. This applied to both District and County work.

South Hams District Council concluded following careful consideration that it would not be cost effective to devolve part of the service to parishes and retain part with the district. Therefore their pilot with Stokenham will end in October.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Whilst a pilot with a single large coastal parish appears to have been successful for the County elements of the work so far, if this were rolled out to all parishes it is likely that:

DCC would need to retain more of the budget to deal with storms expected across the County and A road cleaning, and the share to parishes would be further reduced. (So the pilot had a good start in Stokenham, DCC minimised the budget retained for these works).

Other parishes are likely to receive less from the County than Stokenham which is one of the larger rural parishes. Towns would receive little as they have few buddle-holes.

With operatives employed by parishes, the ability of DCC's main contractor to respond to localised emergencies requiring a number of men could be reduced. There are health and safety and supervision issues to combine operatives employed by a range of parishes. This would need further consideration with the main DCC contractor before rolling out to parishes.

If operatives employed by parishes changed every year, a significant part of their budget would be used training new ones each year to Chapter 8 standard. If operatives changed part way through a year, parishes may not be able to provide their service till a suitable course could be arranged for any new employee without the correct Chapter 8 qualification.

Not enough South Hams parishes indicated support when consulted to extend the arrangement to all parishes, and it is unlikely to be cost effective to have two approaches.

Discussion with Stokenham continues to see if they wish to pilot the county work for one more winter, to establish what service can be achieved with the lower level of funding.

Based on feedback from all parishes it is not currently planned to devolve this service further.

Brian George

**County Electoral Division: Kingsbridge Rural  
District Council Ward: Stokenham**

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Ref.
Nil		

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