



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
(WOKING)**

WOKING TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

26 SEPTEMBER 2012

KEY ISSUES AND SUMMARY

To report discussions which have been held between Woking Borough Council (WBC) and Surrey County Council (SCC) about options for the future management of the town centre.

To understand the Local Committee's position and to seek endorsement for a proposed agreement, which will enable WBC to locally manage key functions within the town centre and establish a secure funding stream.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee is asked to:

- (i) Support continued joint working between the SCC and WBC
- (ii) Endorse the principal of a "Town Centre Management Agreement (TCMA)" between WBC and SCC
- (iii) Agree that 40% of any future on-street parking account surplus devolved to this committee, is ring fenced to support the agreement
- (iv) Endorse Woking Borough Council's public realm improvements and support Officers from the County and Borough in working together to ensure all necessary procedures are put in place to enable construction of the Commercial Way improvements from early 2013.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 SCC, as the highway authority is responsible for the management and maintenance of the publicly maintainable highway network. Resources are prioritised to ensure an equitable level of service across the network, consistent with the classification of the road / footway. The network is extensive, with responsibilities extending to about 4000km across the County, over 300km within the Woking district.
- 1.2 SCC is keen to work with Districts, Boroughs and other organisations or groups to help ensure works and services are delivered at the right level by the most appropriate people.
- 1.3 WBC is committed to investing in their town. They are part way into a multi-million pound regeneration project targeted to enhance the viability and attractiveness of the town centre. Part of this includes the use of extensive high quality paving materials. It is essential that this investment is properly maintained so that the benefits continue for the foreseeable future. Further details of the next planned phase of improvements are detailed in section 6 of this report.
- 1.4 Discussions have been held between Officers from both authorities. These have focused on the practicalities of making any potential town centre agreement work in both the short and long term. The discussions have been positive for both sides and the detail is contained later within this report. Subject to Member support, the intention is to enter into a ten year agreement (with ability to extend or terminate as required) for WBC to manage most highway functions within a defined town centre area. A map showing the extent is contained in Annex 1.
- 1.5 If the town centre agreement is to be successful, it needs to be set on a sound financial basis. The proposal includes contributions from both authorities, plus a recommendation that this Local Committee allocates a proportion of the on-street parking surplus which is due to come under the control of the Local Committee.
- 1.6 Within the Borough of Woking, WBC already undertakes a range of functions on behalf of SCC. These include administration of on-street Civil Parking Enforcement, management of sponsored roundabouts, grass cutting, general horticultural works and trees. There are good local working relationships between Officers and where opportunities present themselves works are coordinated between both authorities.
- 1.7 If the Local Committee supports the proposal, the intention will be to take a report to Cabinet later in the year. WBC will need to secure their internal approvals. Subject to parties being in agreement, it will come into effect on a phased basis from April 2013.

2.0 What is proposed within the agreement?

- 2.1 The scope of the Highway Authorities work is widespread, ranging from the construction / resurfacing of major highways through to administering skip licences. The starting point for discussion was to work on the basis that all functions will be included within the TCMA with exceptions being highlighted.

The table below is not exhaustive and maybe subject to minor revision, but it indicates what Officers suggest should be notionally in or out of scope.

Included	
Highway inspections	Patching, repairs
Gully cleaning and drainage repairs	Managing insurance risks / claims
Fences	Trees / shrubs / vegetation
Road markings	Parking enforcement and meters
Signs, posts, fingerposts	Refuges, guardrails
General street furniture	Accident and emergencies (24hr response)
Street cleansing	Winter maintenance (part only– see below)
Reconstruction or resurfacing roads	Reconstruction or resurfacing footways
Licences / policy for A boards, tables & chairs, skips, scaffold, filming etc	Streetworks coordination – within SCC framework but local powers for area
Making of temporary traffic regulation orders and promotion of permanent (through Local Committee)	Any other reasonable works as agreed between both parties
Excluded	
Street lighting – part of existing PFI contract, WBC will be able to influence individual replacement through Skanska	Illuminated street furniture / signs – part of existing PFI contract
Winter maintenance precautionary road salting	Transportation Development Control advice on behalf of SCC
Traffic signal maintenance	Structures

- 2.2 SCC operates standard inspection / repair criteria to ensure the public highway is maintained in a safe condition. These standards are periodically reviewed. The agreement will stipulate that inspection frequency and repairs must be at least equal, or greater than those adopted by SCC. WBC is keen on entering into this agreement to enhance service standards, not reduce them.

- 2.3 To compliment the other works within the town centre, WBC have indicated that they have an aspiration to undertake a programme of major planned improvements prioritising key pedestrian routes across the town. The scale of improvements would be significant and it is anticipated that it may take 3 to 5 years before completion. A TCMA would enable WBC to press ahead with planning this work with the ability to design, procure and supervise delivery.

3.0 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Most of SCC's routine maintenance functions are paid for through a "lump sum" arrangement, meaning that we agree with our contractor a fixed fee for a particular service, to be carried out within an agreed timescale. This brings with it an element of risk to the contractor but more certainty for the County Council. These are fixed six year agreements of which we are less than eighteen months into. The total area of highway within the TCMA is minuscule when compared to the area which these contracts operate over. The ability to reduce the "lump sums" will not happen until the end of the current terms and even then, the saving, if any, by removing the TCMA will be very small. A small saving will be made from a reduction in condition work (works undertaken to improve the condition of an object or area which does not have any significant safety implications for non completion. In effect; desired improvements as opposed to statutory maintenance against the highway safety matrix), as this is not covered under the lump sum arrangements.
- 3.2 To reflect the savings for condition work, SCC would be able to contribute £10k per annum (to Woking) for ongoing routine maintenance. This will be funded from existing highway budgetary provision, not budgets under the direct control of the Local Committee.
- 3.3 WBC have indicated their intention to provide an allocation of £40k per year to support the TCMA. WBC are considering employing an additional engineering resource (at their cost), to assist with WBC's longer term aspirations They have an existing staff and contractor structure which will be able to absorb much of the routine work.
- 3.4 WBC undertakes on-street parking enforcement on behalf of SCC. This should not be operated to generate income as its purpose is to assist with effective traffic management and turnover of vehicles. However, if through good management and effective policies, an operational surplus is generated, it is legitimate to reinvest this in the highway network and other public spaces. At this time, any surplus is split in the ratio of 65/35 between the SCC and WBC respectively. This funding does not go to the Local Committee. For 2011/12 the surplus within Woking is approximately £240k.

New agency agreements are being negotiated with the Borough Councils with the intention that they will be operational from next year. After consultation with the Surrey Leaders Group, the Leader of SCC has proposed that any surplus should be broadly split 60/20/20 between the Local Committee, enforcing Borough Council and SCC respectively.

The Borough Council have indicated a commitment to allocate the whole of their 20% share to the TCMA. As stated in point 2.3, the longer term vision is to undertake substantial improvements. To assist with this, it is recommended that the Local Committee give an ongoing commitment to allocate 40% of their "60%" to the TCMA. Based on 2011/12 on-street parking outturns this would equate to a fund of approximately £105k per annum (£48k from WBC 20% plus £57k from the Local Committee 40% of 60%).

It should be noted that if this is agreed, it will not impact on any budgets currently under the control of the Local Committee and refers only to this new source of funding.

- 3.5 If the above is agreed it will provide a future revenue source to;
- a) undertake routine maintenance and coordination functions and
 - b) provide a fund to further invest in this high profile area of public highway / space.

This area within the TCMA will be enhanced over and above the standard that SCC would normally be able to fund.

4.0 Governance

- 4.1 The Local Committee will retain responsibility for approving permanent traffic orders, although WBC will have the ability to promote them. WBC will be responsible for local policies, but those relating to inspection frequency / defect classification, will be as a minimum comparable or in excess of those standards adopted by SCC.
- 4.2 It is expected that the Local Committee will wish to ensure that any funding they allocate is properly used. Therefore the intention would be to establish a steering group consisting of representatives from the Local Committee so views of Members are properly taken on board. In addition, WBC will provide at least an annual update report to the Local Committee on progress and plans.

5.0 WAY FORWARD AND TIMETABLE FOR TCMA

- 5.1 Subject to the support of the Local Committee,
- Autumn 2012 - internal WBC and SCC approvals finalised
 - Autumn 2012 - legal arrangements to be agreed between SCC and WBC
 - April 2013 - transition of responsibility for town centre to WBC
 - Sept 2013 - WBC fully responsible for all aspects within agreement

6.0 WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

6.1 As Members of this Committee will be aware, the Borough Council is part way through a programme of major improvement to the town centre. The next phase is Commercial Way. The intention is to substantially enhance the area using a combination of quality materials and sympathetic planting to create a modern clutter free pedestrian zone. Annex 2 is a position statement prepared by the Borough Council which gives further information on the proposals, public consultation and timeframe. Annex 3 contains the initial design brief and a detailed presentation.

6.2 If the TCMA is approved, Commercial Way will form part of it. As stated earlier in the report, the intention is to enter into this agreement from April 2013. The proposed works for Commercial Way are programmed to commence in early 2013, before any TCMA will be in place. This creates a need for the County Council to approve the works to enable Woking Borough Council to achieve this timeframe. Officers from both authorities will work together to ensure all proper processes are adhered to.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 It is an objective of both SCC and WBC to treat all users of the public highway with equality and understanding. Appropriate Equalities Impact Assessments will be undertaken as required.

8.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 A well-managed highway network can reduce fear of crime.

9.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The introduction of a TCMA between SCC and WBC will be an excellent example of two tiers of Local Government working together. The proposals will provide a secure funding stream to enable a reactive level of service in excess of that currently provided and the ability for substantial longer term improvements.

10.0 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

10.1 Officers from both authorities will work together to confirm the operational scope of the agreement, legal framework and transitional arrangements. A further update report will be submitted to the Local Committee once the agreement has been enacted.

10.2 Arrangements will be put in place to enable Woking Borough Council with their development partner to undertake the street scene improvements for Commercial Way.

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