

Lengthsman Review Scheme, 8th November 2007

Action Report

Thanks go to all of the Clerks and Councillors that were able to attend the first Lengthsman Review Session, feedback from all concerned has been very positive.

I have drawn up a table of all of the issues raised at the meeting, with a comment from myself on the feasibility of the suggestion and how we can move things forward. If I have missed anything out, please do let me know, or if you wish to voice your query at the regular Lengthsman Steering Group meetings you can contact CALC to arrange.

Yours sincerely,
Dave Hunter

Suggestion / Comment	Feedback	Response	Action
Litter picking	Litter picking generates a lot of work within a Parish and would occupy too much of the lengthsman's time	The litter picking trial has been operating for some time, and has proven to be quite successful. To roll this out to other areas would require the input and cooperation of the District Councils, and will be explored through the Lengthsman Steering Group.	Add to agenda for Steering Group Meeting.
Scope of work	Work on A-roads is excluded from the scheme	Work on A and B class roads is only excluded when the road is subject to a 50mph or national speed limit, and this only applies to the live carriageway (most commonly the bit between the kerbs). In practice, this will only affect gully clearing, as most of the lengthsman's work is on the verge / footways. It would not be possible to allow the lengthsman to work on these roads on Health and Safety / insurance	None.

		grounds.	
Reporting of defects	Issues outside of the lengthsman remit or capability are reported, but not followed up (i.e. jetting)	If any issues are reported along with the invoice or worksheet they may get overlooked by the admin team that processes them. If any issues need to be submitted to Highways it would be best to send them on a covering letter, so that the issues can be reported separately.	None.
Repairing potholes	Can the lengthsman scheme be expanded to undertake the repairing of potholes? A 'stitch in time' may save more work	This was addressed at the review meeting, to reiterate, it would not be possible to expand the lengthsman scheme to allow carriageway repairs to be undertaken.	None.
Highway drainage plans	It would be useful if the lengthsman could have access to plans showing the existing highway drainage network	Where plans exist of the drainage system, we will endeavour to supply them. However, we do not have complete records and the plans that have been kept over the years vary from district to district. If a particular area requires some research I would advise you to contact your County Highways Liaison Engineer for advice.	None.
Single point of contact for all Highway matters	Request for a single point of contact	The Worcestershire Hub has been set up to provide a single number for all Council services. Any highway issues raised with the hub will be transferred to the Highways Control Centre if required.	None.

Invoicing / outstanding payments	Some payments are still not being made on time	I can only apologise for late and erratic payments. On the whole, the systems in place to deal with invoices are working smoothly, but this is of course no consolation to those Parishes that are chasing payments. We will shortly be undertaking a review of our payment procedure and I have every confidence that this issue will be resolved.	Undertake a full review of payment procedures as a matter of urgency.
	Can the system be simplified?	The workload generated by the invoicing is too large for one person to undertake, and requires specialist input from both the highways and finance teams. As much as I would like to do it all, there just aren't enough hours in the day!	As above.
	Can payments be made in advance, possibly bi-monthly?	The payment system is due to be reviewed, and this suggestion will be explored.	As above.
Disposal of arisings	No coherent policy on disposal of arisings	<p>Where the lengthsman's activities have generated green waste that cannot be disposed of locally (i.e. on the verge) the waste should be bagged and I can arrange for its collection.</p> <p>This arrangement is clearly not cost effective, and the Lengthsman Steering Group is working to identify other options.</p>	Add to agenda for Steering Group Meeting.

Portable Speed Sign extension	Concerns over health & safety issues	This extension will be subject to its own contract, this will have gone through consultation with the Police, our Accident Studies section and our legal department. All proposed sites for the unit will be approved by the highways team before the unit is deployed so there will be no room for error.	Contract to be drawn up by Legal Services, scheme to be trialled in the Malvern district by Quality Parish Councils.
	Transporting of signs / weight issues	The unit is the size of a small suitcase, and is relatively lightweight, and would pose no logistical problems.	As above.
	Lengthsman doesn't have time	The decision to use this device will be entirely at the discretion of the Parish Council. The lengthsman time will be paid for out of a small supplementary budget that will not diminish the £2000 allocation.	As above.
	Would be useful to have data collection facility	The units are already in stock, and it would not be cost effective to buy new ones. Because the device is designed to influence driver behaviour and speeds recorded would be biased. For a passive record of speeds our data collection team can install the strips across the road, however there is a cost incurred and as such can only be used sparingly. Manual data collection (pen and paper!) can be used to get an estimate of speeds, which could be passed to the Police to aid in the decision to carry out enforcement.	As above,
	Would have little impact on driver behaviour	There is a minority of drivers that do not adhere to speed limits or respond to traffic management techniques. It is true that we	As above.

Rights of Way	Single point of contact for P3 scheme and lengthsman scheme	There may be scope for synergy between these two schemes. However, there are operational and technical differences between these two distinct areas of service and a single point of contact would not be practical.	None.
Grass Cutting	There is no standardisation of grass cutting arrangements within the county	Agreed, this makes its inclusion in the lengthsman scheme difficult.	Add to agenda for Steering Group Meeting, to discuss adding minor grass cutting to contract next financial year.
	The grass cutting contract is too large to be taken by the lengthsman, he wouldn't have time to do anything else	I feel that we may be able to accommodate limited grass cutting within the Lengthsman Scheme, i.e. around amenities, signs etc. The larger grass cutting contracts would take up too much time, and require in most cases specialist equipment. The limited lengthsman budget could also not stretch to accommodate this extension.	As above.
Ditch clearance	Clerks would like lengthsman to undertake ditch clearance within the parish	Maintenance of roadside ditches is, in most cases, the responsibility of the adjacent landowner. As such we cannot use the county budget to clear these areas. Should a ditch need clearing you would be best advised to consult your County Liaison Engineer for advice. Should a ditch require urgent attention (if it is causing flooding etc) contact Highways before proceeding.	None.
Lengthsman ID cards	Parishes wish to see ID cards for lengthsman	This is still on the cards, so to speak. We will progress the issue with our Public Rights of Way team who provide ID cards in relation to the P3 scheme.	Progress in conjunction with P3 scheme / Lengthsman Steering Group.

Training to use powered tools / equipment	Can the County Council provide this?	Training would be for the benefit of the lengthsman, so the County cannot fund such training. However, if there is sufficient interest we may be able to organise training for lengthsman, at the Parish / lengthsman's cost.	Add to agenda for Steering Group Meeting.
Contacting the County Council	Contacting myself	Apologies if I have been hard to track down. I have attached a copy of my contact details, Mobile for use during office hours only please.	See attached information.
	Contacting County Highways Liaison Engineer	Also attached are the contact details for the 7 Liaison Engineers for the county.	See attached information.
	Contacting Worcestershire Hub / reporting defects online	This is a much wider issue than can be addressed here. Your concerns have been noted and the issues that have been raised will be addressed.	To be raised with Hub centres.
	Emergency contact at County for lengthsman in case of emergency	Should you require assistance / advice during office hours you have my contact details and those of your respective Liaison Engineer. The hubs are available outside of office hours and have access to the emergency highways numbers.	See attached information.
Equipment	It is difficult to get equipment for the lengthsman	Equipment is now in stock, if I have not contacted anyone who has requested a kit, please do let me know.	None.

Further action on highway issues	County needs to send letters to homeowners asking to cut back hedges, clear ditches etc.	In the first instance, if the owner of the hedge is easily identified, it would be useful if the Parish could send out a letter advising them of the encroachment. Where this is not possible, the issue can be reported to the Worcestershire Hub for action. An inspector will visit the site and the decision to send a letter from the County will be at his/her discretion.	None.
Training	Confusion over whether training is mandatory	Training for lengthsman is a contractual requirement. Training for clerks is not mandatory at this time.	None.
	Need an ongoing programme so there is continuity when a new contract is issued	Training will be provided, if required, near the start of the next financial year.	Training to be provided when required.
	Training was of poor quality	I have had mixed feedback regarding the training provider. It is an issue that will be monitored.	Issue to be investigated.
	Some parishes have not been reimbursed for training when the one session was cancelled	If this is the case I need to know and it can be sorted.	None.
Health cards	Request for lengthsman to carry health cards	Issue to be progressed at the lengthsman Steering Group.	Add to agenda for Steering Group Meeting.
Supply a list of trained lengthsman	Parishes joining the scheme would be able to find a contractor more easily	There are Data Protection issues here that need to be considered. If a Parish would like any details of a neighbouring lengthsman, Highways or CALC will be able to assist.	None.

Hedge cutting	Can a lengthsman cut a hedge when ownership is unclear?	Only with the consent of Highways, this will only be given if the hedge is causing a problem / is a danger to road users.	None.
Lengthsman pay	The lengthsman should be paid more than £10 an hour	The financial arrangements (including hourly rate) between the Parish and Contractor / employee are entirely the Parish Councils decision. You can contact CALC for guidance on pay and contracts.	None.
Monitoring of Lengthsman Work	Who monitors the work that the lengthsman has undertaken?	The work of the lengthsman should be inspected by the Clerk or Parish Council. A highways inspector will only be dispatched when an issue is raised with the county, or when an issue is identified up on the worksheets.	None.

Area / District	Hub Centre	Liaison Engineer	Phone	E-mail
Redditch	01527 534123	Debbie Degge	01905 76 8338	ddegge@worcestershire.gov.uk
Worcester City	01905 722233	Tom Comerford	01905 76 8385	tcomerford@worcestershire.gov.uk
Bromsgrove	01527 881288	Mike Walton	01905 76 8351	mwalton@worcestershire.gov.uk
Wyre Forest	01562 732928	Dave Hunter	01905 76 8356 or 07901511614	dhunter@worcestershire.gov.uk
Malvern	01684 862151	John Wallace	01905 76 8369	jwallace@worcestershire.gov.uk
Wychavon (North)	01905 794272	Roy Fullee	01905 76 8377	rfullee@worcestershire.gov.uk
Wychavon (South)	01386 443322	Paul Cooper	01905 76 8372	pcooper1@worcestershire.gov.uk