

REPORT TO CABINET – WEDNESDAY 2ND SEPTEMBER 2015

RENEWAL OF TREE AND ECOLOGY SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS WITH NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In September 2012 Cabinet agreed that the tree service previously carried out by this Council would be provided by the NPA on the basis of a service level agreement. This started on 1st October 2012 and was for three years expiring at the end of September 2015.
- 1.2 Shortly prior to this a service for the provision of ecological support had been transferred from Hampshire County Council to the NPA. This has just expired and although the service is continuing a new service level agreement needs to be signed.
- 1.3 The NPA have said that they are happy to continue to provide these two specialist services subject to the service level agreements being renewed.

2. CONSIDERATION

- 2.1 These two shared services have worked well for the past 3 years. Customers have got used to new arrangements, the standards set out in the agreements have been achieved and financial savings have been made by both authorities.
- 2.2 The terms agreed for both agreements are very similar to the original terms. A few changes have been, for example to delete references to TUPE transfers, but the main elements are the same. The drafts of both agreements are available from Chris Elliott, the Head of Planning and Transportation.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The cost of the tree service will be £107,000 in the first year and this cannot be increased annually by more than the retail prices index. In 2012, before the transfer, this service cost the District Council £120,000 per year.
- 3.2 The cost of the ecology service will be £10,970 in the first year and this can only be increased by agreement between the parties to reflect inflationary pressures.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There will be no environmental implications because the service levels will remain as they are in original agreements and no problems have arisen in the last 3 years.

5. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS COMMENTS

- 5.1 Councillor Edward Heron says that he has no issues with renewing these SLA's. He is not aware of any adverse comments from Councillors and his own experience is that both are working well.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The provision of these two services under an agreement between the District Council and the National Park Authority has worked well for the last 3 years. Both of the agreements have a clause enabling either party to give notice of withdrawing from them by giving 6 months' notice.
- 6.2 It is recommended that both agreements be renewed for a further 3 years until 2018.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That the Head of Planning and Transportation be authorised, in consultation with the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder, to finalise the terms of the aforementioned agreements under which the National Park Authority will be discharging the Council's functions in respect of tree matters and offering advice on ecological issues.

For further information

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Background Papers

None