



Devolution of Services to Parishes

New Menu of Options



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INTRODUCTION

RBWM is committed to decisions about local service delivery being taken as closely as possible to the people that are affected by them. As part of this commitment the Council is keen to devolve decision making, to Parish Councils where appropriate. The Council does not wish to burden Parishes with the day to day management of the services. However, It wishes to give Parishes greater influence and choice. The Council is promoting a new approach to devolution of services that will develop and build on this idea.

The new menu of options isn't a definitive list of services but is a list of suggestions that can act as a basis for discussion.

RBWM has identified the following key contacts who are happy to meet with parishes, discuss their priorities and concerns and identify how they can best be addressed:

David Perkins- Neighbourhood and Street Scene Lead Officer

01628 79-6860

david.perkins@rbwm.gov.uk

Suki Coe – Development Control Manager

01628 79-6042

suki.coe@rbwm.gov.uk

A number of parishes are actively determining service levels for services such as street cleaning already. We have listed parishes you may wish to talk to about how this is working.

1. STREET CLEANING

David Perkins- Neighbourhood and Streetscene Delivery Services Lead

01628 796860

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What we can offer

The Council would provide Parish Councils with a schedule of the regular street cleaning activities undertaken in their area. This would show the various types of activity undertaken e.g. mechanical sweeping and litter bin emptying and also the frequency with which these activities are carried out.

Using their local knowledge Parish Councils can identify changes to the schedule by suggesting changes e.g. one street may be cleaned less often and another more frequently.

RBWM would retain the budget and continue to manage the service however Parish Councils would be given influence over how the budget is spent.

The service could be enhanced over and above the existing provision if Parish Councils were prepared to meet the additional costs out of their own budget or utilise their own resources as appropriate.

Parishes that have taken up or are actively considering this offer:

Old Windsor, Sunningdale, Cookham, Ascot & Sunninghill, Hurley, White Waltham, Cox Green, Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury Parish Councils have agreed to progress the offer to influence the delivery of street cleaning services and have been provided with a copy of the local cleaning schedules.

2. HIGHWAY AND AMENITY GRASS VERGES

Contact: Stephen Anderson – Outdoor Facilities Manager

stephen.anderson@rbwm.gov.uk

01628 79-6279

What we can offer

The Council currently manages the maintenance of highway and amenity grass verges adjoining the highways and footpaths as part of its day-to-day highway management role. Grass verges are cut several times during the summer months and the damaged highway verges are also repaired or protective measures introduced when budget permits. Grass verges are cut at regular intervals as appropriate to the locality. Damaged areas are only dealt with when funding is available.

Parish Councils could agree the standard of maintenance to be delivered to their area within the existing budget and advise RBWM when, in their view, it is not being delivered. RBWM would retain the budget and continue to manage the service but parishes would be given more control over where local resources are directed so that grass in one area may be cut less frequently with the resources switched somewhere else.

The service could be enhanced over and above the existing provision if parishes were prepared to meet the additional costs out of their own budget or supplement the service with volunteers or its own direct resource (e.g. groundsmen).

A locally influenced service would facilitate more regular and early identification of problems. This would lead to an overall improvement of the area and may be perceived as a more personal service to the local residents.

Parishes that have taken up or are actively considering this offer:

Wraysbury and Horton Parish Councils both undertake management and maintenance of the verges in their Parish and RBWM pays them what it would cost to do in the current contract.

Datchet and White Waltham have also shown an interest.

3. WINTER GRITTING

Contact Vikki Roberts – Senior Engineer

vikki.roberts@rbwm.gov.uk

Telephone 01628 796361

What we can offer

In the event of bad weather, RBWM has a statutory responsibility to ensure that primary and secondary routes are gritted and kept free of ice but there is a host of tertiary routes that could be identified locally.

Parishes could use their local knowledge to review the list of tertiary locations and ensure that they are consistent with local needs and priorities.

RBWM would hold the budget and deliver the service but the parish council would have increased direction over where resources were directed.

Some parishes have indicated that they may wish to bring additional resource to the gritting process e.g. use of local farmers tractors etc. RBWM will be pleased to talk to parishes about proposals of this nature and to discuss and resolve issues around indemnity and relaxation of regulations (e.g. relating to use of agricultural machinery on highways) to make this feasible.

Parishes that have taken up or are actively considering this offer:

Old Windsor has indicated an interest in winter gritting.

4. MINOR MAINTENANCE AND NON URGENT POT HOLE REPAIRS

Christopher Wheeler – Strategic Asset Management – Business Improvement Principal

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01628 79-6723

What we can offer

The Council has a pot of money for undertaking minor maintenance and non urgent pothole repairs.

The Council will continue to manage the budget and deliver the service but parishes can be given more influence over how the money is spent; identifying priorities in their own area.

RBWM will seek to give better information earlier about work that is planned in parish council areas and will be happy to discuss with parishes how this could be achieved. One suggestion for improved communication is that an appropriate officer, potentially a Highway Inspector, could drop in at parish offices on a regular basis.

There may sometimes be opportunities for parishes to link to work happening locally and to use 'top up' resources to get work done on an adjacent or nearby site.

The Council will also endeavour to give parishes advanced information about e.g. when street lighting work is to be undertaken in their area, planned changes to public transport, changes to on street parking (e.g. new traffic bays).

Parishes that have taken up or are actively considering this offer:

Bray Parish Council is actively considering this offer.

5. MANAGEMENT OF OVERHANGING VEGETATION

David Perkins- Neighbourhood and Streetscene Delivery Services Lead

david.perkins@rbwm.gov.uk

01628 79-6860

What we can offer

The Council currently manages vegetation that overhangs the highways and footpaths as part of its day-to-day highway management role. The Council has a statutory obligation to ensure that the highway is not obstructed by overhanging vegetation.

The Council is offering Parish Councils the opportunity to identify issues in the local area and pass them to RBWM for resolution. The active involvement of Parish Councils in identifying issues would facilitate more regular and early identification of problems. This would lead to an overall improvement of the area, whilst at the same time being perceived as a more personal service to the local residents.

The burden need not fall on Parish Councillors as the Parish, with support from the Council's Adopt A Street Scheme, could enlist the support of local residents.

Parishes that have taken up or are actively considering this offer:

Cookham Parish Council agreed to play a larger role including scouting, reporting and sending an initial letter but will stop short of enforcement.

Similarly, issues reported to Cox Green Parish Council result in a letter to offender. Non compliance then gets passed to RBWM for further action.

Old Windsor Parish Council take in complaints from residents either directly or via RBWM. The Parish Council then write to the Riparian Owner seeking a resolution to the complaint. The situation is then managed by the Parish Council until such time as the Riparian Owner has rectified the matter or in cases where this does not happen, the Parish Council will hand details of the proceedings over to RBWM to take

enforcement action. The cost estimated by the Parish Council for carrying out this activity is £250 per annum.

6. PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY/ PARISH PATHS

Anthony Hurst- Principal Rights of Way Officer

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01628-796180

What we can offer

Parishes already exercise influence over the management of Public Rights of Way/Parish Paths through participation in the Parish Paths Initiative (PPI). All Parishes are signed up members of the PPI: under this scheme, Parishes suggest local projects in their areas and these are delivered either by the Public Rights of Way team or as partnership projects. Additionally, two Parishes (Cookham and Old Windsor) arrange contractors to carry out routine clearance of vegetation from the public rights of way in their areas.

The borough's Public Rights of Way team also organise volunteer path surveys and small scale practical works on public rights of way.

RBWM remains committed to the principle of further extending parish influence over Public Rights of Way/Parish Paths, and also further developing the role of volunteers and is keen to discuss with Parishes how this can be achieved.

Parishes that have taken up this offer:

Bisham, Bray, Cookham, Cox Green, Datchet, Eton, Horton, Hurley, Shottesbrooke, Sunningdale, Sunninghill and Ascot, Waltham St Lawrence, White Waltham, Wraysbury are all currently involved in the parish paths initiative.

Old Windsor and Cookham parish council's maintain the majority of public rights of way in their areas. For the work they do they each receive grants of £1000 per annum from the borough. From September 2012 Old Windsor parish council took on extra maintenance for rights of way including the Thames Path. The parish has been dealing with routine vegetation clearance works on all public rights of way in the parish since April 2013. A Parish walks leaflet produced with Hurley Parish Council is to be published shortly.

7. STREET LIGHT SCOUTING

Contact: Alan Marshall – Principal Officer, Street lighting & electrical
alan.marshall@rbwm.gov.uk
01628 796798

What we can offer

The Council manages the borough wide street lighting service. Maintenance of street lighting is carried out under contract but the Council inspects street lights to identify lights that are not working and require maintenance. Street light scouting is undertaken fortnightly during the winter and once a month during the summer.

Parish Councils, Local Neighbourhood Watch and Resident groups could become directly involved in the scouting of their local area supplementing the boroughs service. Local involvement would help the borough better prioritise which street lights should be attended to, as well as improve repair times.

Street Lighting is recognised by residents as being an important service and helps diminish the fear of crime. This offer would enable improved levels of community engagement and ownership

Parishes that have taken up or are actively considering this offer:

Cookham, Cox Green, Hurley, Old Windsor parish councils undertake informal scouting and report defects back to RBWM.

Sunningdale undertake some basic level scouting (i.e the Parish Council identifies and passes faults to RBWM to carry out work). The Parish Council has considered engaging Neighbourhood Watch and volunteers to report on defective lights.

8. PLANNING DELEGATION

Suki Coe – Development Control Manager

suki.coe@rbwm.gov.uk

01628 796042

What we can offer

Planning is a key area where RBWM wishes to give parishes more influence.

Parishes already exercise influence through reviewing and providing commentary on planning applications and now through the neighbourhood planning process (in which all parishes are involved with the exception of Cookham) and RBWM is keen to extend parish influence over planning decision-making.

RBWM remains committed to the principle of extending parish influence over planning decisions and is keen to talk to parishes about how this could be achieved. A draft delegation agreement is available and the Development Control Manager is available to attend any parish council meeting to take this further.

RBWM is offering attendance of Borough Planning Officers at Parish planning meetings and support with information and advice about proposed developments. Borough officers would not be present or take part in the decision process.

RBWM will also arrange training for parish councils around planning decisions. This will take place following the May 2015 elections, when new parish councils are in place, to cater for new councillors and ensure that training is embedded in the corporate calendar.

Parishes that have taken up or are actively considering this offer:

Bray, Cox Green, Cookham, Datchet

9. SECTION 106 CONTRIBUTIONS

Gail Kenyon – Regeneration Manager
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01628 796157

What we can offer

The Council is keen to ensure development proposals contribute to local infrastructure in the most effective way. Our current S106 process has contributed significant funds some of which can be passed to the parish/town councils to deliver local infrastructure projects. Projects that could be delivered include those to expand and improve public open space, allotments, biodiversity, and community and youth facilities.

In order that these projects can be delivered in a timely manner the council transfers to the parish the funds collected in their area for these types of infrastructure. The parish/town councils are asked to sign a legal Memorandum of Understanding that sets out the terms of the transfer and use of the funds.

Parishes that have taken up or are actively considering this offer:

Eton, Bray, White Waltham, Old Windsor, Datchet, Sunninghill & Ascot

10. LIBRARIES AND ARTS

LIBRARIES AND ARTS

Mark Taylor

mark.taylor@rbwm.gov.uk

01628 796986

What we can offer

Libraries could potentially offer extended hours or an enhanced service if parishes wished to contribute extra funding or volunteer resource.

There could be a similar arrangement for local arts or heritage projects. Parishes could potentially influence the use of S106 receipts for arts or heritage projects if they didn't want to take on local budgets (but it is likely the sums involved would be small).

Parishes that have taken up or are actively considering this offer:

Cookham & Cox Green Parishes already support their library with funding for extra library hours for the benefit of their residents.

Sunningdale have introduced a Book Swap phone box.

EXAMPLES OF JOINT WORKING

In addition to the above, there are many examples of joint working between RBWM and the parishes outside the formal devolved services umbrella.

Recent examples include:

- The victory field project delivered by Sunninghill and Ascot together with support from Highways.
- Work with Sunningdale on: rationalising removing or replacing traffic signs, installation of new parish notice boards, removal of 100 plus of galvanised guard railing on the A30 London road and installation of more ornate black railings (funded through S106 and revenue funding), road safety advice re planters on A30, joint working through parish paths initiative.
- Deployment of speed indicator devices (SIDs) by the Traffic and Road Safety team to roads identified by parishes.
- Responding to road safety concerns raised by parishes and providing advice and works as required (e.g. current safety improvements near the Green in Datchet and safety improvements on Drift Road, Bray.).
- Discussions with Cox Green in relation to Ockwells Park and highways verge maintenance.

RBWM is keen to continue close partnership working with town and parish councils and is happy to talk to parishes at any time about projects that are of concern to them.

AREAS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION:

Access to Geographical Information Systems

The Council is investigating the possibility of giving parishes access to the QGIS Geographical Information System which will give parishes a clearer idea of what is within the grounds maintenance contract and who is responsible for what.

Licensing

Some Parishes are interested in having greater involvement in licensing discussions. The law is very prescriptive in this area but this may be something the borough can join parishes in lobbying for.

Adult and Children's Services

Parishes have indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to meet and interact with representatives of adult and children's service. There is interest in knowing about local facilities such as children's centres and residential facilities and in engaging with the Council's Loneliness project.

Parishes would like to understand more about these services that they have historically had limited involvement with and how they could get involved. A better understanding would allow parishes to sign post local people to appropriate services and make fullest use of local resources such as children's centres.

We would welcome further dialogue with parishes to explore what could be achieved.

Contacts:	
David Mason (Adult Services) david.mason@rbwm.gov.uk 01628 683701	Hilary Hall (Children's Services) hilary.hall@rbwm.gov.uk 01628 683893

Local Bus Services

There was a request at parish conference for parishes to be given more influence over local bus routes. A presentation on this topic will be taken to a future parish conference.