

Dear Parish, Town and City Council(s)

Parish Steward Scheme

Whilst the council has operated the Parish Steward Scheme previously, it continues to develop the arrangements and seek improvements.

The below details the current understanding of the new arrangements. It is anticipated that it will take the incoming contractor a number of months to fully implement the scheme, as training will be required, new vehicles supplied and staff will need to learn the new procedures.

The council will expect the scheme to be fully operational by the summer.

The Parish Steward Scheme will:

1. Have clear visibility and be immediately associated with the Council
2. Comprise personnel who combine excellent communication skills with sound technical knowledge
3. Strive for the highest standards of integrity and quality of service
4. Engage Town and Parish Councils and members of the Councils in identifying and addressing local concerns
5. Deliver a high frequency of visit with duration according to local needs

Programmes will be published. These will be sent to the appointed Parish or Town Council contact and to members of Wiltshire Council via the Local Highways Newsletter. The Newsletter includes seasonal advice and news and information on the scheme.

The programmes will be structured to provide a number of visits each year.

During May and August visits are conducted without prescribed dates. This break enables Stewards to respond rapidly around their area to collaborate to achieve greater objectives or simply to introduce a higher degree of flexibility to the programmes to accommodate annual leave.

During May, grass and other small plants grow very quickly indeed. This can create safety concerns at road junctions and other sensitive locations. It is very important that the Parish Stewards are enabled to address this need.

Ragwort is an invasive weed with a nasty tendency to bring about accumulative liver failure in horses and other creatures exposed to it. The Council has maintained a determined effort to reduce this plant's presence to a minimum. During the end of June or start of July one week is allowed for Parish Stewards and some other resources to remove these plants for incineration. Stewards are of course active in removing this plant at other times as a general duty.

There has always been a need to focus the available public resources on safety matters. It has always been equally clear that all communities respond to the tidy appearance of public and private property. During August Parish Stewards are assigned to the latter area. Hand rails, bollards, parapet rails and ancient mile posts will be prepared and re-painted. When combined with the general duties of traffic sign cleaning the appearance of much of the highway scene it will allow an improved asset. This work is both valuable and popular and makes a clear statement of Wiltshire Council's interest in all of its communities.

Throughout the year a wide variety of emergencies occur across the 2,400 miles of Wiltshire roads. Parish Stewards can move quickly to respond to these problems. The vehicles specially chosen for their proven record of strength and durability. Parish Stewards work to support emergency services where the need occurs. This may be managing traffic, clearing plants and clearing up resultant debris.

During the winter months the twenty Parish Stewards participate fully in keeping as much of the county's network clear and as free of ice as possible.

Throughout the year the weather provides the service with a multitude of challenges; flooding, land slips, fallen trees and collapsed buildings to name but a few. The Parish Stewards work with other resources to meet these challenges whenever or wherever they present themselves.

The Parish Stewards is the first line of resource in meeting the demands of highway maintenance. Parish Stewards are supported by many other resources, most managed locally and a few as a part of annual programmes.

The Parish Steward Scheme is a mobile works scheme comprising elements of programmed, seasonal and responsive work. The scheme achieves greater efficiency by having as much work as possible programmed in advance.

Programmed work offers minimal travelling time with maximum time at the place of work. Every effort is needed to move as much responsive work into a programme as can be done.

The Parish Steward Work lists are programmed in the Local Highway Office. The lists comprise input from Area Highway staff with the Town and Parish Councils.

Parish and town councils have already been given priority sheets. This allows them in advance of any visit to advise the Parish Stewards (through the Area Office) of the local priority work needing to be completed.

Parish Stewards will also have access to the MyWiltshire reporting system. Allowing them in real time to receive reports and feedback on works undertaken.

Parish and Town Council Involvement Evenings

The council is running its annual town and parish council involvement evenings in April.

We would be pleased to see you all there. We have put indicative areas to venues, but you are most welcome to choose a more convenient alternative if you wish.

The usual topics will be discussed, but this year we have the new: highway contract and arrangements; contact arrangements following the split in services; parish and town council involvement initiatives; public convenience policy.

The dates and times of the events are listed below.

Please could you confirm your attendance with your local Coordinator by the 1st March 2016.

Community Area	Date	Time	Location

Amesbury	Wed 20 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	City Hall, Salisbury
Salisbury	Wed 20 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	City Hall, Salisbury
Southern	Wed 20 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	City Hall, Salisbury
South West	Wed 20 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	City Hall, Salisbury
Warminster	Tues 12 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	County Hall, Trowbridge
Westbury	Tues 12 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	County Hall, Trowbridge
Melksham	Tues 12 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	County Hall, Trowbridge
Bradford on Avon	Tues 12 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	County Hall, Trowbridge
Trowbridge	Tues 12 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	County Hall, Trowbridge
Corsham	Tues 19 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	Council Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham
Malmesbury	Tues 19 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	Council Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham
Chippenham	Tues 19 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	Council Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham
Calne	Tues 19 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	Council Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham
Royal Wootton Basset and Cricklade	Tues 19 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	Council Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham

Pewsey	Wed 6 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	Kennet House, Hopton Industrial Estate, Devizes
Devizes	Wed 6 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	Kennet House, Hopton Industrial Estate, Devizes
Marlborough	Wed 6 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	Kennet House, Hopton Industrial Estate, Devizes
Tidworth	Wed 6 April 2016	1910hrs – 2100hrs	Kennet House, Hopton Industrial Estate, Devizes

Public Convenience Consultation

The council has only received one notification that a parish council is not interested in taking on the service. Wiltshire Council is now exploring the details of any transfer with the remaining interested parish and town councils.

The public convenience survey concluded on the 11th December 2015 and the council has now had the opportunity to consider the findings.

I summarise the salient results below:

1. We have circa 500 responses to the survey.
2. Over 95% of the responses were completed by residents.
3. Over 65% of those surveyed wished the facilities delegated to town and parish councils.
4. Just under 60% wanted better signage at public buildings to show if toilets were available.
5. A Community Toilet Scheme assisted by small grants should be introduced to encourage local businesses to open up their facilities to general users.
6. As you would expect there were concerns stated regarding any possible closure of facilities.

Urban Grass Cutting Arrangements

The grass season is once again upon us. Wiltshire Council and the Landscape Group have met to discuss the urban cutting arrangements for this year.

I am sure it will not have escaped anyone's attention that last autumn and winter was warm and wet. Ideal grass growing conditions. This means that the grass length is considerably longer than we would like. This will inevitably lead to a slower first cut and visual issues before and after cutting. Wiltshire Council and TGL will endeavour to minimise any issues.

The urban grass cutting will commence when conditions allow in March, weather and ground conditions allowing. As a circle will take approximately four to five weeks, this means that some grass will not be cut until in April.

The below link details the urban grass that will be cut.

<http://www.realitygeo.com/explorer.aspx?cfg=wiltsgf>

If you have an area of concern that is not marked, this can be cut by the Parish Steward on his scheduled visit if that is your local priority.

Shrub and Hedge Maintenance

Through the winter the priority amenity hedges have been cut and the shrubs maintained. In March the amenity hedge and shrub maintenance ceases. Any amenity hedge or shrub not maintained at that time will not receive a visit until the autumn/ winter. If you wish an amenity hedge or shrub maintained that has not been managed in 2015/ 16, this should be reported on your Priority Sheet for the council's attention next season.

Rural Grass Cutting Arrangements

The arrangements will be identical to the 2015/ 16 arrangements. The same rural verges will be cut at approximately the same time in 2016. If you have a verge that you do not wish cut please put this on your Priority Sheet for the council's attention for this summer's cut.

New Highway Arrangements

The current Wiltshire Highways and Streetscene Contract is to end in March 2016

The Landscape Group will maintain all the amenity services. These contracts will run to 2020 and will not be included in the new Highways contract.

Tarmac will operate the larger works for major road resurfacing and surface dressing and likewise will not be included in the new Highways contract.

Highways Consultancy contract awarded to Atkins December 2012 remains in place and again will not be included in the new Highways contract.

Jackson's will operate the annual rural highway verge cutting operations.

Wessex Tree Care will provide the tree works.

All the other services will be provided by the new Highways contract and I detail the arrangements below:

- Start April 2016
- Last for 5 years, with up to 2 year extension subject to performance.
- Contract will be open to Swindon Borough Council.
- Potential annual value of about £15,000,000

The services included are:

- Local Highways (With the exception of the above)
- Winter and Emergency Service
- Drainage Surveys and repairs
- Street Lighting
- Bridge Maintenance
- Integrated Transport Schemes

- Highway Maintenance (with the exception of road resurfacing and surface dressing)

Local Highway Services included in detail:

- Parish Stewards
- Pothole Gangs
- Masonry repairs
- Weed spraying
- Signs maintenance
- Gully emptying
- Road markings and studs
- Street sweeping
- Deliver winter maintenance
- Operate Council's gritters
- Operate snow ploughs
- Deployment of operatives for clearing snow and ice.
- Respond to flood events
- Respond to other emergencies

Let's Clean for The Queen (Reminder)

We'd love to have the support of your council and your communities in the biggest ever clean-up of the country, which will be taking place in March 2016.

In the run up to The Queen's 90th birthday on 21 April 2016, 'Clean For The Queen' aims to inspire a million people to take action and enjoy a few hours together litter-picking to make the places where we live more beautiful. For Her and for us all, they want to attack the blight of litter and reclaim our beautiful countryside, our fabulous cities, our world class parks, our wonderful beaches and waterways.

All of the litter charities across the country have come together in support of this campaign together with a growing range of companies, land managers and associations.

There will be 'Clean for The Queen' litter blitzes throughout the UK in January, February and March, and the most monumental of all litter clear-ups from Friday 4 to Sunday 6 March 2016.

'Clean For The Queen' love to have your support in making this event truly spectacular. They will shortly be sending through a downloadable resource pack for your council to use. It'd be great if you could encourage as many local community groups as possible across your wards to sign up to organise a clean-up through the 'Clean for The Queen' website. Furthermore, it would be fantastic if your council could stage its own local clean-up to allow individuals to come together and clean up a local grot spot.

Lots more will be announced over the coming weeks and months, as it builds a head of steam.

But it'd be great if you could respond to adrian@cleanforthequeen.co.uk indicating your willingness to engage in the campaign – and they will be back in touch shortly with more details.