

## Councillors' Briefing Note No. 147

*Service :* Neighbourhood Services

*Further Enquiries to:* Mark Smith      *Direct Line:* 07521 313323

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### Wiltshire Councils Highway and Streetscene Contract

Wiltshire Council's new Highway and Streetscene contract commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013 and covers a wide range of services including; highways maintenance, grounds maintenance, grass cutting, street lighting, bridge maintenance, winter maintenance and public convenience cleaning. The contract has an annual value of circa £25m, runs for five years with a possible extension of two years related to performance.

The contract will deliver savings of over £1million in the first year, with further efficiency savings in following years. The council has continued to promote awareness on the new contract, undertaking monthly Wiltshire Council, parish and town council briefings with community involvement meetings, the last one of which was completed at the beginning of June.

Naturally when transferring large scale contracts, from one provider to another there are service changes due to the practical requirements of introducing new ways of working, however Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) who are providing the service have considerable experience, with a proven track record in mobilising large scale contracts. The vast majority of services passed seamlessly from the previous providers to BBLP. However, some of the council's grass cutting arrangements have been affected during the transfer. The council is responsible for approximately 5.5 million square metres of grass across the county, the equivalent of about 900 football pitches. The grass is cut on varying cycles of between one week for a sports pitch and four weeks for low use amenity areas. BBLP have responsibility under the contract for cutting approximately 6,000 kilometres of rural highway verge throughout the county, this grass is cut twice a year, the first cut is nearing completion and is on schedule.

To ensure the disruption to council services was limited BBLP have continued to provide additional staff and equipment, worked extra hours, including weekends, and prioritised local community priority areas. Many areas have not been affected by the transfer, however some areas behind schedule. It is anticipated that all Wiltshire Council amenity areas will receive at least one cut during June and then cut to the previous frequency thereafter. BBLP have approximately 75 staff deployed on grass cutting, they have hired in additional machines and deployed additional staff to grass cutting activities at no cost to the council. Officers are liaising with the contractor on a daily basis as would be expected in a contract of this scale. In the event that Members have any specific queries that haven't been addressed through the normal channels please contact either Philip Whitehead, Portfolio Holder – Highways & Streetscene or Mark Smith, Service Director – Neighbourhood Services.

Philip Whitehead - Portfolio Holder – Highways & Streetscene 07769 894481

Mark Smith - Service Director – Neighbourhood Services 07521 313323