



Challenge and Improvement
Committee

8th January 2019

Subject: Rural Public Realm Report

Report by:

Grant White

Contact Officer:

Grant White
Enterprising Communities Manager
Grant.white@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Purpose / Summary:

To:

- 1) Present report from the Public Realm Task & Finish Group

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. Members acknowledge the Public Realm Report
2. Members agree to submit the recommendations detailed in Section 4 of this report to the Prosperous Communities Committee for further exploration and decision as appropriate

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: None

Financial: None

Staffing: None

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights: Not applicable

Risk Assessment: Not applicable

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: Not applicable

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

C&I Committee – 9th January 2018:
“Public Realm – C&I ToR Update Report”

C&I Committee – 26th June 2018:
“Public Realm Interim Report”

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman) **Yes** **No**

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications **Yes** **No**

1. Background

- 1.1 The Challenge and Improvement Committee established a member Task and Finish Group to scrutinise the effectiveness of services offered in maintaining rural public realm.
- 1.2 A Delivery Plan for this work was approved by Challenge & Improvement Committee on 9th January 2018. Since this date the Task & Finish Group have met on a number of occasions to progress actions within the Delivery Plan.

APPENDIX A – Rural Public Realm Task & Finish Group – ToR v1.1

2. Public Realm Survey for Parish/Town Councils

- 2.1 A key actions identified within the Delivery Plan was to conduct a public realm survey open to all parish and town councils in West Lindsey. The survey was designed to gather valuable information and local insight from parish and town councils on the current conditions, challenges and opportunities for public realm.
- 2.2 The Public Realm Survey was launched on 16th May 2018 and closed during November 2018 following an extension to encourage more responses. Information about the survey was sent to all parish and town council clerks via e-mail on multiple occasions. Members were also asked to further help promote completion of the survey and e-mailed copies to distribute.

APPENDIX B – Public Realm Survey 2018 results

- 2.3 A total of 21 responses were received for the survey. 16 were from parish councils, 4 were from WLDC members and 1 was from a church council.

Responses were received from the following parish councils:

- Northorpe Parish Council
- Somerby Parish Meeting
- Brookenby Parish Council
- Welton-by-Lincoln Parish Council
- North Owersby Parish Council
- Sudbrooke Parish Council
- Brookenby Parish Council
- Bigby Parish Council
- Searby and Owmbly Parish Council
- Middle Rasen Parish Council
- Morton Parish Council
- Keelby Parish Council
- Hemswell Cliff Parish council
- Brattleby parish council
- Kexby parish council
- Marton and Gate Burton Parish Council

- 2.4 The following are emerging messages/themes under the each public realm heading obtained from the survey:

1. Street Scene

- Average to very poor rating for standard of **highways**
 - Concerns over quality of pothole repairs – not being filled in properly
- Average rating to standard of **street lighting**
 - Villages with LCC street lights go off at midnight
 - Villages with WLDC street lights operate full night
- Average to poor rating for **street cleaning**
 - Blocked drains cause flooding
 - Have to request cleaning following a problem occurring
- Poor to very poor rating for **roadside grass cutting**
 - Some parish councils have taken on additional grass cutting

2. Rights of Way

- Average to very poor rating for **roadside footpaths**
 - Overgrown footpaths
 - Poor maintenance and repair
- Average rating for **public/field footpaths**
 - Lack of paths
 - Overgrown and access for disabled not possible
- Poor rating for **cycle paths** (over 50% not applicable)
 - Lack of cycle paths
- Average to poor rating for **accessibility of rights of way**
- Average rating for **signage of rights of way**
 - Better signage is required

3. Rural Environment

- Average to good rating for **community green spaces**
- Average to very poor rating for **grass verges**
- Poor rating for **hedges**

4. Environmental Crime

- Sometimes to often rating for **fly tipping, dog fouling and littering**
 - Initiatives to target dog fouling can achieve results
 - Lack of enforcement on dog fouling

5. Rural Crime

- Often to very often rating for **traffic offences** (i.e. speeding)
 - Major concerns around speeding in villages
 - Parking causes issued including parking near schools
 - Lack of enforcement on speeding and parking
- Average rating for **anti-social behaviour**
 - Criminal damage to community assets

6. Public Realm Responsibilities

Challenges experienced by parish councils in maintaining their public realm:

- Getting a response from WLDC
- Vandalism and criminal damage
- Burden of having to raise precept to cover reduction in LA services
- Lack of funding and resources

2.4 The survey also gave participants the opportunity to provide additional information and comments on how to make improvements under the above areas.

3. Task and Finish Group Findings

3.1 During the past 12 months the Task and Finish Group have met on a number of occasions. At each meeting the group has reviewed the on-going progress of the survey and also discussed key themes of public realm. This has included looking at known issues and looking into potential options and solutions.

- Ownership of grass verges
 - Opportunity to transfer grass verge ownership/responsibility to Parish Councils that want to take on their maintenance/grass cutting
- Awareness of how to report issues
 - Awareness of reporting mechanisms and who does what.
- Awareness of equipment available from WLDC for litter picking
 - Possibly promote more but subject to availability and resources
- Speeding identified as big concern in villages
 - Opportunity to explore joint working with Lincolnshire Police and Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership

3.2 During the past 12 months the Task and Finish Group have also acknowledged on-going work by LCC and WLDC that has made improvements to public realm. This includes:

- On-going work to upgrade LCC street lights to LED
- Introduction of CCTV by WLDC to target fly tipping

4. Recommendations for Prosperous Communities Committee

- 4.1 Based on the research and information obtained by the Task and Finish Group this report proposes that the Challenge & Improvement Committee considers and recommends the following recommendations to the Prosperous Communities Committee for consideration and action.

Recommendation 1:

Undertake to review existing communication and reporting channels between WLDC and parish/town councils

It was highlighted in the survey results that the response from WLDC to reports made by parish/town councils does not always meet expectations. Coupled with on-going issues around awareness of how to report and who is responsible for what service, a review of how WLDC communicates and identification of any areas for improvements is now timely.

Recommendation 2:

Establish a scheme or clear suite of tools/support that WLDC can provide to parish/town councils to support local action on dog fouling, fly-tipping and littering

Dog fouling, fly-tipping and littering are offences that cause issues in many rural communities. WLDC already provides support such as litter picking equipment, dog waste bins and signage. This provision is not actively promoted or clearly communicated to parish/town councils as being available. A clear scheme or suite of tools/support would help local communities to tackle these issues.

Recommendation 3:

Undertake a review of legal responsibilities for grass verges and explore options for transfer of ownership/responsibility with LCC

Many parish/town councils already perform grass cutting and green space management. Some of these councils may want to take on additional grass cutting of grass verges in order to provide a consistent approach and service locally. A key barrier to this has been the lack of knowledge and understanding around legal ownership and responsibility for grass verges. A review of legal responsibilities and the options for transfer from LCC, WLDC and other agencies will help provide a clear understanding for local parish/town councils.

Recommendation 4:

Review current ability to provide community support and advice to parish/town councils on local issues and community projects

The survey results highlighted a number of specific local issues. The meetings of the Task & Finish Group also included discussion of specific issues in communities some of which occur in multiple places across the district. There is an expectation from parish/town councils that WLDC will help address local issues. It is important to review the current ability to provide support and advice on local issues and WLDC's responsibility and ability to help tackle or resolve them.

Recommendation 5:

Consider the need to re-allocate funds within the Community Grants Programme to respond to and support local issues around public realm

The survey results have highlighted potential areas where grant funding support could help to improve public realm. With WLDC's Community Grants Programme about to enter year 2 of 5 there may be benefits to reviewing its current remit and exploring opportunities to make changes that would enable local public realm needs to be supported.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Members acknowledge the Public Realm Report
- 5.2 Members agree to submit recommendations to Prosperous Communities Committee for further exploration and decision as appropriate