



Leicester
City Council

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

5th MARCH 2009

**Report of the Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Task Group review
of Highways Maintenance charges**

Report of Councillor Russell, Task Group Leader

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the findings of the hearing held on 9th February 2009 into charges imposed by the City Council by the Highways Maintenance Department.
- 1.2 To make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB).
- 1.3 To ask OSMB to make recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Recommendations from the Task Group are that:
 - 2.1.1 officers prepare an information leaflet on vehicle crossings in straightforward language which can be made available at Community Meetings and Customer Service Centres and on the website. It will include reference to the on-going maintenance provision and the interest free re-payment
 - 2.1.2 when a letter is sent out with a quotation for a dropped kerb the above mentioned leaflet be also sent, together with a suggestion that a detailed breakdown of the costs will be provided on request
 - 2.1.3 a comparison of our 'family' of local authorities be made to ascertain whether our charges are comparable

3 Introduction

- 3.1 This hearing arose from debate at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) on 22nd January 2009. The draft minutes from the Task Group hearing are set out in Appendix 1.

- 3.2 The minutes of the OSMB meeting of 22nd January 2009 can be found through the link
<http://www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.asp?CId=427&MIId=2455&Ver=4>
- 3.3 Debate at the OSMB had been prompted by concerns raised by residents in the Knighton Ward about the level and range of charges quoted by the Regeneration, Highways and Transportation Division for the work involved in lowering kerbs (prices ranged from £300 to £1,000). Competitive schedules of charges were used to price work.
- 3.4 However Cllr Hunt said that in other authority areas prices varied between £300 and £700 for similar footway crossings. Information on charges made by comparable authorities has been requested and will be reported direct to OSMB at the meeting on the 5th March if available.
- 3.5 Officers said a number of factors influenced the cost and extent of the work. These included whether:
- 3.4.1 Signing and traffic management was required if site was on a busy road
 - 3.4.2 Access covers had to be replaced
 - 3.4.3 Cables or other services had to be re-located
 - 3.4.4 Trees had to be pruned.
- 3.6 Prices were often quoted and work subsequently not proceeded with, the Task Group was told. Cllr Russell suggested that some residents might not be clear about the scope of work required and that leaflets in plain language would help.
- 3.7 Information explaining why work had to be done in a particular way – for example, safety or maintenance reasons – could be put on the Council's web site.

4 Legal implications

- 4.1 No legal Implications to add

Jamie Guazzaroni: Solicitor, Environment and Employment team.
Ext 296350

5 Departmental Comments

- 5.1 It was a very useful meeting and it identified where Highway Management could improve the service delivery of footway crossings. The recommendations of the Task group would be taken on board.

Jeff Miller Regeneration, Highways & Transport Service Director
Tel: 29 6380

6 Financial implications

- 6.1 The charges for highways works is intended to recover costs. If prices charged to the public are reduced below cost there will be a financial impact on the service.

Martin Judson, Head of Finance R&C, ext 7390

Chair of the Regeneration and Transport Task Group:

Cllr Sarah Russell:

Tel: 39 8855 (internal) 0781 453 2928 (external)

Email: sarah.russell@leicester.gov.uk

Member support officer:

Jerry Connolly

Tel: 229 (39) 8823

Email: jerry.connolly@leicester.gov.uk

Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	N/A
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)

Appendices

Minutes of meeting held on 9th February 2009

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Russell – Task Group Leader

Councillor Hunt

Councillor Palmer

Officers Present:

Manager	Alan Adcock	Head of Highway Management
	Martin Fletcher	Quantity Surveying and Finance
Highways	Mike Keen	Democratic Services Officer
Strategy	Jeff Miller	Service Director, Regeneration, and Transportation
	Philip Thompson	Acting Team Leader Highways

* * * * *

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made at this time.

3. REVIEW OF CHARGING FOR HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Jeff Miller, Service Director, Regeneration, Highways and Transportation stated that this review had been suggested following discussion at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting on 22nd January 2009 when the issue of the levels of charging being imposed by the City Council for providing dropped kerbs, following requests received.

Councillor Hunt stated that he had raised the issue at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, as Ward Councillor for the Knighton Ward, and this was an area where a lot of requests for dropped kerbs had originated. Feedback from residents had indicated that the final costs for constructing dropped kerbs varied from just over £300 to over £1,000.

Officers stated that the variations in the amounts invoiced were dependent on a number of factors, for example: -

- Whether signing and traffic management was required if site was on busy road
- Whether access covers had to be replaced
- Whether cables or other services had to be re-located
- Whether trees had to be pruned.

Officers further stated that there were many occasions when requests for dropped kerbs were received, quotations were prepared and the quotations were not then pursued.

Councillor Russell suggested it might be a question of how the information was communicated to residents and whether residents were informed of exactly what they were being charged for.

Councillor Hunt stated that he had visited a number of other Council websites and was able to gather that the range of costs for dropped kerbs ranged from £300 to over £700 for the same job.

Officers stated that competitive schedules of costs were used to calculate the cost of providing dropped kerbs and it was suggested that maybe a leaflet could be drawn up and sent out to persons making requests, setting out the additional costs that could be incurred, over and above the actual construction costs. The leaflet it was suggested to also include reasons as to why the Council should carry out such work on the basis that it was on a public highway, public footpath, safety reasons and the provision of on-going maintenance. Officers were asked to consider putting the information outlined above on the City Council website

RESOLVED:

- 1) That officers prepare an information leaflet on vehicle crossings in straightforward language which can be made available at Community Meetings and Customer Service Centres and on the website. It will include reference to the on-going maintenance provision and the interest free re-payment.
- 2) That when a letter is sent out with a quotation for a dropped kerb the above mentioned leaflet be also sent, together with a suggestion that a detailed breakdown of the costs will be provided on request.
- 3) That a comparison of our 'family' of local authorities be made to ascertain whether our charges are comparable.