

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL –RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

DECISION NO:

22/00018

For publication

Key decision: YES

Subject Matter / Title of Decision: Highway Rural Swathe Contract -Maintenance Frequencies

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, I agree to increase the biodiversity provision of the Rural Swathe, Visibility and Hedge Maintenance to Option 3 (Two swathe cuts with a tiered approach to all biodiversity assets).

Reason(s) for decision:

The Council has a legal duty to keep roads and pavements clear of vegetation for safe passage of highway users. The main service areas comprise; rural grass cutting (swathe); visibility cutting at road junctions; maintenance of rural hedges owned by KCC and the managed maintenance of Conservation verges. Three swathe contracts expire in March 2022 and as a statutory requirement they are being re-tendered to continue service provision.

The Council has implemented Plan Bee as part of its environmental strategy to improve the biodiversity across its assets. There is an opportunity at this point to change the service policy of the Rural Swathe, Visibility and Hedge Maintenance Contracts to address this strategy and improve the biodiversity of its road verges.

Reason for Urgency

A decision needs to be taken before the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee meeting on the 17th of March 2022 to allow Contractors to mobilise in time to provide the works set out in Option 3. The main works of Option 3 commence on the 1st of May 2022. A failure to provide a decision within 8 weeks(early March) of the main works associated with Option 3 will mean that they will not be able to be implemented until 2023. Option 1 or 2 will then be the only choice for 2022.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 8 September 2021 identified the potential opportunity to support the Council's Plan Bee strategy through a revised specification, but that it would require additional funding.

This funding has been allocated in the 2022/23 budget approved by County Council on 10 February 2022.

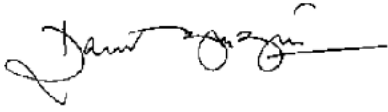
Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Option 1: Existing specification – provides little additional biodiversity benefit.

Option 2: Single Swathe with two conservation cuts – has greater biodiversity benefit than option 1 but has less flexibility than the preferred option.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the

Proper Officer:



25 February 2022

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signed

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date

David Brazier