

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 11 MARCH 2002

REPORT ON: COMPLAINTS RELATING TO STREETLIGHTING, ROADS AND FOOTPATHS

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE PLANNING

REPORT NO: 121-2002

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To recommend new arrangements for dealing with public complaints relating to streetlighting, roads and footpaths.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee:

- a) agree that, for an initial pilot period of one year from April 2002, all complaints relating to streetlighting, roads and footpaths should be reported to the Planning and Transportation Department, with the cost of basic repairs being recharged to the department which currently has responsibility.
- b) instruct the Director of Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Directors of other relevant departments, to develop criteria against which the priority for all repairs can be assessed, to apply consistently across all departments responsible for payment.
- c) instruct the Director of Planning and Transportation to liaise with other Directors to ensure that a comprehensive inspection regime is introduced for all streetlights, roads and footpaths.
- d) instruct the Director of Finance to closely monitor expenditure during the pilot project.
- e) instruct the Director of Planning and Transportation, in conjunction with the Directors of Finance, Housing, Economic Development and Leisure and Arts, to bring forward a report evaluating the impact of the pilot project and considering the issues in relation to the Planning and Transportation Department taking over full responsibility for the maintenance of all streetlighting, roads and footpaths currently owned by other departments.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In itself, making one department responsible for dealing with all complaints does not necessarily have financial implications. However, there is a possibility that repairs will be authorised which the department responsible for payment would not itself have instructed, and therefore a potential for overspend on budgets. Proposals to minimise the risks of this are outlined in paragraph 6.5.

4. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

This report has implications for a number of key Local Agenda 21 themes, including efficient use of resources, accessibility of services and creation of safe environments.

5. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

There are no equal opportunities implications associated with this report.

6. **BACKGROUND**

- 6.1 At present, a number of different departments are responsible for the maintenance of streetlighting, roads and footpaths depending on their location. For example, while Planning and Transportation are responsible in many cases, the Housing Department have responsibilities for certain lights, roads and paths within housing estates, Economic Development have responsibilities in industrial estates, and the Leisure and Arts Department are responsible in parks and cemeteries.
- 6.2 This situation can be confusing for the public, and can lead to them contacting 'Streetlighting' within Planning and Transportation only to be transferred to another department. It can also lead to inconsistency in the priority given to repairs by different departments.
- 6.3 This report recommends that, for an initial pilot period of one year from April 2002, any complaints relating to streetlighting, roads and footpaths should be reported to the Planning and Transportation Department, with the cost of basic repairs being recharged to the department which currently has responsibility. The aim is to provide a less confusing and more consistent service to the public.
- 6.4 A dedicated 'hotline' number will be established and advertised to allow the public to report complaints, and this will be added to the list of online transactions being developed on the Council's website. The CONFIRM software recently introduced in the Planning and Transportation Department allows contact to be recorded, progress to be monitored and a range of management reports to be produced.
- 6.5 The major concern about this proposal is the potential for one department to incur costs on behalf of another, where the department responsible for payment would not necessarily have authorised the expenditure if it retained control over the instruction of repairs. For example, if Planning and Transportation were to instruct all repairs requested in housing estates in an uncontrolled way, this could lead to an overspend of the Housing Department's budget outwith that department's control. To minimise the risks of this, it is therefore proposed that:
- Planning and Transportation authorise and prioritise repairs (with specific regard to public liability) according to an agreed set of criteria (including pre-agreed budget limits) which apply equally to their own departmental responsibilities as well as those of other departments
 - expenditure is very closely monitored during the pilot project, with monthly reports being produced by the Finance Department
 - evaluation of the pilot project pays particular attention to the impact of the new arrangements on expenditure patterns in the relevant budgets during the year

A protocol will also be put in place to reduce the risk of duplication in works identification and ordering.

- 6.6 In addition to responding to complaints, it is proposed that a comprehensive regime of regular inspections is put in place to identify any hazards and assist with the planning of maintenance to all street lights, roads and footpaths. The Director of Planning and Transportation should liaise with other Directors to ensure that officers in the relevant departments (for example, estate supervision officers in Housing) participate in this inspection process and take a consistent approach to the identification of maintenance needs.
- 6.7 It is also proposed that, during the course of the pilot project, an evaluation is made of the feasibility of Planning and Transportation taking over full responsibility for the maintenance of all streetlighting, roads and footpaths owned by other departments. This will require analysis of the capital expenditure including design costs required to achieve an acceptable initial standard and the feasibility of identifying and transferring budgets and resources for repair and maintenance.

7. **CONSULTATIONS**

All Directors have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Director of Corporate Planning Date