

APPENDIX A(i)

Extract from Committee

EXECUTIVE

25 MARCH 2013

SUBJECT:	MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2013-18: PROPOSAL TO WITHDRAW AND CLOSE THE URBAN RANGER SERVICE [PART A]
REPORT BY:	DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
LEAD OFFICER:	STEVE BIRD, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (COMMUNITIES AND STREET SCENE)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present to Executive the Business Case relating to a proposal to close and withdraw the Urban Ranger Service in order to contribute to the required budget savings targets set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The attached Business Case examines the implications of a proposal to close and withdraw the Urban Ranger Service. The proposal, if implemented, would require the deletion of 3 posts from the staffing establishment and the redundancy (or potential redeployment if possible) of 3 full time staff.

3. Background

- 3.1 The key drivers underpinning this review are:

- The local government finance settlement the City Of Lincoln Council received in December 2012 has left the Council needing to find £1million of ongoing savings in 2013/14, rising to an estimated £3million per annum by 2016/17.
- Whilst the organisation is still committed to Lean systems reviews in order to achieve cost efficiencies the scale of reductions required now mean that the Council finds itself at the point where it can no longer make the size of savings demanded without impacting on front line services.
- Towards the end of 2012 the Leader of the Council, along with Executive members and the Corporate Management Team conducted a detailed review of our spending.
- A driving principle of this review was to accept that the organisation must do fewer things well and therefore, although the Strategic Plan was only approved last year, careful consideration was given to further refocusing the Council's priorities. A number of considerations has led to these now being defined as:

- **Growing the local economy**

- **Protecting the city's poorest people from the effects of the recession**
 - **Increasing the supply of affordable housing**
- Once this had taken place the Executive and Corporate Management Team undertook a detailed review of the Council's current budgets, including a review of all savings achieved since 2008. Budgets were considered from a number of perspectives including the way in which they contributed to these priorities.
 - In addition to ensuring that the Council balances its budget it is committed to achieving a position of financial sustainability from which the Council has a steady base and is in the best position to grow moving forward. A revised strategy entitled "Towards Financial Sustainability" (TFS) has been developed to deliver this.
 - As part of this fundamental review and the TFS Strategy a number of potential savings have been identified for 2013/14 over a wide range of services. These savings include, amongst others, a proposal to withdraw the Urban Ranger Service during 2013/14.

These drivers are set out in the attached Business Case.

3.2 The proposed closure and withdrawal of the Urban Ranger Service was put to staff and key stakeholders in January 2013.

- Formal presentations to trade unions through the Joint Consultative Committee on the Council's financial position and an initial face to face meeting with trade union representatives have been held and formal consultation in relation to this proposal began on 17 January 2013 with those staff directly affected.
- The various Parks Advisory Panels were also advised of the proposal and invited to submit their views and comments and the Commons Advisory Panel considered the matter at its meeting on 11 February 2013.

3.3 A number of responses were received from staff and interested stakeholders in response to these proposals and these responses are set out in the attached Business Case.

4. Business Case (attached)

4.1 A Business Case setting out the proposal and an examination of the risks and service impact is attached including:

- Details of the scope and objectives of the review
- Summary of existing service provision including staffing arrangements and staffing establishment
- Summary of the proposal and reasons for the proposed withdrawal and closure of the service
- Appraisal of the proposal including financial and staffing implications
- Stakeholder responses to the proposed withdrawal and closure of the

service

- Analysis of the service impacts, principle risks associated with the proposal and equality impacts.
- Outline implementation plan and timetable if the proposal is approved.
- Key decisions required

5. Stakeholder consultation

5.1 The proposal to withdraw and close the Urban Ranger Service has been subject to consultation through the various Parks Advisory Panels and the Commons Advisory Panel and views and comments have been received from the following organisations/individuals:

- Lincoln Commons Horse Association
- Long Leys Residents Association
- West End Residents Association
- Ramblers Association (Lincoln Group)
- The Café at Hartsholme Park Ltd
- Monks Road Neighbourhood Initiative (incorporating combined comments from Park Advisory Groups)
- Staff at Hartsholme Park Café

These responses are summarised in Section F of the Business Case and set out in full in Appendix E(i) of the document. All of the responses received to date express objections to or concerns about the proposed withdrawal of the service.

5.2 The Commons Advisory Panel discussed the proposal to close and withdraw the Commons Warden Service and Urban Ranger Service at its meeting on 11 February and resolved that:

- Commons Advisory Panel to make its views expressed collectively on the proposed cuts to the Commons Warden and Urban Rangers Service via the formal consultation process, expressing its deep regret and requesting in the strongest terms that the Council should not go ahead with the proposals.
- In the event that the Council should have to take the decision to withdraw the Commons Warden and Urban Ranger Service; a special meeting of Commons Advisory Panel be convened to look at a way forward in the coordination of volunteers within organisations across the City and to set up a watch scheme for the Commons.
- Members of the public, Karl McCartney, MP for Lincoln, and Alan Hardwick, Police and Crime Commissioner for Lincoln be invited to attend the above special meeting of Commons Advisory Panel.
- Lincolnshire Police be invited to nominate an advisory representative to serve on the Commons Advisory Panel.

5.3 The Council has also received a 67 page petition signed by some 1200 people objecting to the proposed closure of the Urban Ranger Service. A copy of the

petition will be available for inspection at the meeting, and the front sheet is attached as Appendix Eiii.

- 5.4 In accordance with the Council's adopted Petition Scheme petitions containing more than 900 signatures would normally be submitted to Full Council for debate at the next meeting of Council and the organiser given 5 minutes to present the petition at the Council meeting. However due to the timing of the submission of the petition (the next Council meeting is on 16 April) and the fact that it was submitted in response to a proposal that is due for consideration by the Council's Policy Scrutiny and Executive Committees prior to that date, the organiser of the petition has been advised that the petition will form part of the formal reports to the aforementioned Committees. The organiser of the Committee has been invited to attend the Policy Scrutiny Committee and it is recommended that the organiser of the petition be invited to present the petition to the Committee if they so wish.

6. Timeline

- 6.1 The outline timeline for withdrawal and closure of the service is included within Section H of the Business Case and is designed to allow for an orderly wind-down and exit from the service, the requisite redundancy notice period for affected staff and consideration of opportunities for redeployment through the Council's redeployment pool
- 6.2 The proposed withdrawal and closure of the service may be accelerated if employees under notice of redundancy have opportunity of redeployment elsewhere in the authority or job offers outside the authority conditional upon them taking up employment prior to the planned closure date.

7. Resource Implications

Finance (including impact on Savings Targets)

- 7.1 The forecast budget savings arising from a decision to close the Urban Ranger Service measured against the forecast expenditure over the five years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) are as follows:
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| • Net saving 2013/14 (part year) | £29,960 |
| • Net saving 2014/15 | £86,170 |
| • Net saving 2015/16 | £87,680 |
| • Net saving 2016/17 | £89,220 |
| • Net saving 2017/18 | £90,800 |
| • Total saving over the 5 year MTFS | £383,830 |
- 7.2 Savings in 2013/14 assume withdrawal and closure of the service by July 1st i.e. 9 months of savings only and also include redundancy costs and other salary adjustments in 2013/14 that may be incurred in relation to the deletion of the 3 posts of Urban Ranger. Such costs will be funded from the Invest to Save fund.
- 7.3 The full cost breakdown is detailed in a separate report under Part B of this agenda.

- 7.4 These savings are costed against current budget expenditure. There is a possibility that one of the consequences of the withdrawal of the service may be an increase in the level of vandal and other damage to parks, play areas and open spaces as a result of the withdrawal of the regular patrols made by the Urban Rangers but this cannot be accurately forecast and would need to be monitored.

Staffing

- 7.5 Staffing implications are set out in **Section E** of the Business Case. The Council's Management of Change Policy has been applied.
- 7.6 Consultation has taken place with staff and unions on the proposed closure of the service. The end of the first stage of formal consultation period was 21 February 2013. The Council's Joint Consultative Committee will consider the proposal at its meeting on 19 March 2013. The issues highlighted in the responses received have been summarised in the Business Case (**Appendix D**).

8. Policy Impacts – Strategic Priorities

- 8.1 The City Council needs to find £1million of ongoing revenue savings in 2013/14, rising to £3million ongoing revenue savings by 2016/17. Every effort has been made to implement savings without impact on front-line services but the Council has now reached a point where it is necessary to cease provision of some discretionary non-statutory services in order to achieve the level of savings required as a result of the Government's austerity programme. The Council has therefore refocused its strategic priorities as follows:
- Growing the local economy
 - Protecting the city's poorest people from the effects of the recession
 - Increasing the supply of affordable housing
- 8.2 The Urban Ranger Services is a discretionary service that provides a valuable service to users of the city's parks and open spaces but does not directly contribute to the Council's refocused strategic priorities set out above and withdrawal of the service would contribute significantly to achievement of the necessary financial savings set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 8.3 The risks and impacts of withdrawal of the Service are set out in the Business Case. Should the Council's Executive decide not to proceed with withdrawal and closure of the service, equivalent levels of savings would need to be identified from other service areas.

9. Recommendations

9.1 Executive is asked to:

1. Consider the attached Business Case relating to the proposal to withdraw and close the Urban Ranger Service taking into account:
 - a. The need to find significant financial savings in the General Fund Revenue budget to meet the targets set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy
 - b. The responses received to the proposal from stakeholders and the public petition objecting to the closure as set out in the Business Case
 - c. The views of the Policy Scrutiny Committee meeting 20 March
 - d. The views of the Joint Consultative Committee meeting 19 March 2013.
2. Subject to consideration of the Business Case and responses to the proposed closure of the service to approve or otherwise the proposal to withdraw and close the Urban Ranger Service.
3. In the event of a decision to close the service, to authorise the Director of Housing & Community Services to issue notices of redundancy to the 3 affected staff and to proceed to implement the decision in accordance with the Council's managing change policy and procedures.

Key Decision Yes

Key Decision Reference No.

Do the Exempt Information Categories Apply No – Any exempt information is contained within a separate report in Part B of the agenda for this Committee

Call In and Urgency: Is the decision one to which Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply? No

Does the report contain Appendices? Yes:

If Yes, how many Appendices? 1 : Business Case and associated appendices

List of Background Papers: Medium Term Financial Strategy

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