

Launch of the Enhanced Highway Maintenance Pilot and Volunteer Training

Following an online meeting with Somerset Council and a representative from Kier the following information was given to Parish and Town Councils regarding the launch of the enhanced Highway Maintenance Pilot and Volunteer Training

From the 2nd September a pilot scheme will be started by Kier for Parish and Town Council are being asked to register their interest in the scheme. This is only a pilot and will run for a year to see the uptake and how viable it is.

Once registered the Council, the community engagement manager will come and speak to the council and put together a cost for the services which include the following –

Enhanced Routine Maintenance

- Pothole repairs (where potholes are not considered to be a safety issue by the highway authority)
- Localised grass cutting
- Localised hedge cutting
- Localised siding / ploughing on footways and carriageways
- Localised 'grip' clearance (channels from the roadside leading to ditches)
- Single sign and / or post installation
- Sign cleaning
- Timber fencing repairs
- Minor aesthetics works (painting, cleaning, etc)
- Other minor civils as identified and deliverable by minor works crew

Specialist Services

- Gully emptying
- Surface water drainage jetting
- Ditching
- Drainage repairs
- Road and / or footway lining (refresh)
- Tree surgery
- Minor masonry works
- Traffic management for local events

The costs were originally calculated per item of work to be carried out but it was becoming complicated so there are now day rates which are below: -

Monday to Friday	£684.71
Saturday	£778.41
Sunday	£935.72

Although the above services are part of the statutory services, when requested they will be included within a work programme but the wait could be six months or even a year, this way if requested a definite date is given at the start but will cost the Council.

Half day rates could be arranged but only if work was also required in a neighbouring parish so the work could be carried out on the same day.

Volunteer Training

Somerset Council is also preparing a Highway Safety Awareness Course to enable people such as volunteers or locally skilled people to undertake agreed types of work safely in the vicinity of the highway with the appropriate risk assessment.

The course will be available online when fully developed, however, an interim solution is being explored.

The course content covers safety matters and risk assessment preparing the volunteer to work safely in the vicinity of the highway.

The activities covered are considered low risk activities, and do not include working at height, manual handling, chemical hazards, and traffic management, signing, lighting and guarding.

The scope of the course covers the following activities

- Minor sign maintenance
- Clearing weeds
- Grass cutting
- Hedge cutting
- Cleaning gullies of detritus
- General cleaning and sweeping
- Litter picking

In conjunction with the training course, a Highway Volunteer Handbook will be available. This handbook has been designed to provide simple guidance to volunteers working alongside and adjacent to the highway. It provides information on where to find support if an incident occurs, as well as guidance to help ensure all volunteers remain safe whilst helping to enhance the local highways.

Recommendation

To consider registering Councillors and volunteers for the Volunteer Training and to register for the enhanced routine maintenance service, because the Council needs to have registered and set up an agreement before any works can be started so the recommendation is to registering an interest in the scheme, put a list together of the works that might need carrying out (with Kier as they come out and do a site visit), and obtain some costs and the Council can decide at a further date as to whether to move forward with the scheme.

Litter Bins and Dog Waste Bins

From April 1st 2025 Somerset Council will start charging for the emptying of litter and dog waste bins, further information is yet to be received but the suggested cost is £7.82 + VAT per bin per collection.

The Parish Council has 5 dog waste bins and 2 litter bins, if these were emptied weekly the annual cost would be £2846.48 + VAT per year.