

**Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills,  
Executive Director for Environment & Economy**

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| Report to: | <b>Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee</b> |
| Date:      | <b>28 July 2017</b>                              |
| Subject:   | <b>Effective Highways Communication</b>          |

**Summary:**

To give an update to the members of the Committee with a review of measures being undertaken to improve the highways and transport service users' experience.

**Actions Required:**

1. The members of the Committee are requested to note this review and comment on any other measures necessary to improve the experience of our highways and transport service users.
2. The Committee is requested to consider the timing of future updates on highways communication.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 As listed under the background papers, the Members of the Committee were briefed on actions being taken in improving the highways and transport services users' experience between July 2015 and October 2016.
- 1.2 The Future Operating Model for the Local Highways Management service requires that we carry out all necessary engagement with the public in accordance with the current Communication Strategy and develop the Communications Plan to ensure that constant and timely information is provided to our customers.
- 1.3 Following the latest County Council Elections, all Councillors were briefed on the highways service on 24 and 25 May 2017. Subsequently, all presentation slides, staffing structures and record of discussion were sent to all Councillors. The attached leaflet on highways contacts details and useful information (Appendix A) was handed out at the induction sessions.

**2. Communications Strategy**

- 2.1 The current communications strategy (Appendix B) has been in place since summer 2015. It is being reviewed continually to ensure that we are providing all stakeholders with accurate, up-to-date information in a timely fashion using the most effective and efficient methods. In addition, each of our major projects has its own individual communications plan.

2.2 We currently carry out a range of communications activities when required to make stakeholders aware of the works we are doing and why we are doing them. We do this for both standard roadworks (for example surface dressing) and major projects (for example Peppermint Junction Improvements).

2.3 We have recently revamped the transport and roads page on the county council website, [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/transport-and-roads/](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/transport-and-roads/). This has made it easier for people to find the latest highways-related news releases. There are also links to: [www.roadworks.org](http://www.roadworks.org), a comprehensive listing of roadworks being carried out by all local authorities and utility companies; more detailed information on our major highways projects; and our planned works programmes.

Our major projects section, [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/majorprojects](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/majorprojects), has also recently been improved. This section of the website is now easier to find and navigate, while the information on each project has been simplified to make it easier for a general audience to understand.

2.4 We now have more than 5,000 people following the county council's highways-specific Twitter account, @LincsCC\_Roads. This is particularly useful for making people aware of urgent issues, such as emergency road closures. We will continue to develop this channel. We also use the main LCC Twitter account (@LincolnshireCC) to share messages. This channel has over 26,000 followers. In recent months, we have started to make better use of infographics, videos and targeted Facebook advertising to spread our messages more effectively. This has included communications around key issues such as street lighting, grass cutting and potholes.

2.5 Despite the ever-growing importance of online and social media, the local press remain a key way of getting messages out. During the first quarter of 2017/18 (April to June 2017), there were 291 highways-related items in the local media. Of these 1 was negative, 190 were neutral and 100 were positive. Comparative figures for the previous quarter (January to March 2017) were 6, 243 and 152 respectively from a total number of 401 (An item is classed as 'negative' if it is a news article that is negative in tone and does not contain a comment from LCC or an explanation of our position. If a news article is negative in tone, but there is a mitigating comment from LCC, it is classed as 'neutral').

### **3. LAGAN (Lincolnshire Citizen Portal)**

3.1 Highway Fault Reporting Online System LAGAN was launched in June 2015 with the intention of achieving a channel shift in reporting faults.

3.2 Since the system's launch, we have been working with Serco to resolve a number of issues around access, information from / to customers and interface with our works ordering system Confirm. Subsequently, an improved version of the system was launched in December 2016.

3.3 Additional issues have come to light over the last six months, for example the map freezing on mobile devices and some faults not being displayed on the

map. These are being addressed with Serco and a further improved version of the system will be launched next month. Mapping functionality remains an issue that will take longer to resolve.

- 3.4 It is worth noting that had customers emailed the CSC rather than using the online system, this it would have cost us £65,476 since its launch to end June 2017.

#### **4. Communications with Councillors**

- 4.1 Councillors are being copied into all written responses to the Members of Parliament and Parish Councils for information on relevant local issues.
- 4.2 Highways Alliance Planned Works Programmes are updated and published routinely on our website and issued to the councillors. The latest edition can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/transport-and-roads/highways-maintenance/highways-works-programmes/130284.article>. We will be looking at improving the usability of this information over the coming months, to make it easier for people to find out what is happening in their area.
- 4.3 It is intended the Councillors will be informed of any major incidents in their area as soon as known by the officers to help deal with any local enquiries.

#### **5. Future Liaison with Councillors and Parish Councils**

- 5.1 Local Highways Managers will offer monthly surgeries to the Councillors. This has started and initial meetings will be concluded by next month.
- 5.2 Local Highways Managers will hold six monthly member liaison meetings to collectively discuss common issues and share works programmes. The next session will be in November.
- 5.3 Local Highways Managers will hold regular Parish Cluster meetings. Some initial ones have happened over this month and others are planned over the coming weeks. Additionally, annual parish walk about will be undertaken where required.
- 5.4 A live demonstration of the Highways Fault Reporting Online System was given to the County Councillors during the briefing sessions. This demonstration is also being given to the Parish/Town/District Council meetings. One of the main issues arising from this was difficulty around logging in and getting automotive responses from the system. These issues are being taken up with Serco for an early resolution.
- 5.5 A number of queries around grass cutting were raised during Parish/Town/District Council meetings. As the change in the grass cutting arrangements happened this financial year, actions are being taken to improve communications on grass cutting. It is suggested that a report on grass cutting is brought to the Committee in November 2017.

## **6. Consultation**

6.1 As part of this project, consultations have been ongoing with the following:

- Serco (Customer Service Centre and Channel Shift Project Board)
- Executive Portfolio Holder
- Elected Members
- Highways Alliance
- Communications Team
- Commercial Projects and Performance Team
- Highways Management Team

## **7. Conclusion**

7.1 Improving our communications, particularly making it easier to find information online and through social media, should support channel shift, helping reduce the number of calls to the Customer Service Centre and highways officers.

7.2 As seen from the above, progress is continually being made in improving customer experience for users of our highways and transport services. However, there is still more to do to improve our customer experience, especially with regard to electronic access to the latest and accurate information.

## **8. Background Papers**

8.1 Enhancing our Users' Experience - Report to Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee on 13 July 2015.

8.2 Update on Enhancing our Users' Experience - Report to the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee on 7 March 2016.

8.3 Update on Enhancing our Users' Experience - Report to the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee on 24 October 2016.

## **9. Appendices**

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| These are listed below and attached at the back of the report |   |
| Appendix A  | Highways Contact Details and Useful Information Leaflet |
| Appendix B  | Communications Strategy                                 |

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