

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

Report to:	Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date:	12 March 2018
Subject:	Effective Highways Communication

Summary:

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

Actions Required:

Members of the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee are invited to consider and comment on the report and:

- 1) Highlight any additional measures to improve the experience of our highways and transport service users.
- 2) Highlight any recommendations on the future engagement with County Councillors and Parish / Town Councils
- 3) Consider the timing of future updates to the Committee on effective highways communication.

1. Background

1.1 As listed under the background papers, the Members of the Committee were last updated in July 2017 with the measures for improving the highways and transport services users' experience.

1.2 It is essential that the highways service users are consulted, communicated and informed appropriately in a timely and accurate manner. These helps us in improving our customer experience and ensure that we are continually providing value for money.

2. Communications Strategy

2.1 The current communications strategy has been in place since summer 2015. This is currently being updated. The existing strategy focuses predominantly on communications via the media and our digital channels. The new strategy will aim to improve the integration of these elements and our other communications activities, e.g. letter drops to affected residents/businesses, roadside signage, 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.

- 2.2 We will also be reviewing the information available on our website about popular topics, such as potholes. We want to ensure this information is presented in an easily understandable fashion and answers the most frequently asked questions, reducing the need for people to contact the CSC for general enquiries.
- 2.3 We now have around 6,000 people following the county council's highways-specific Twitter account, @LincsCC_Roads. We also use the main LCC Twitter account (@LincolnshireCC) to share messages. This channel has 27,500 followers.
- 2.4 Over the coming months, we will be looking to expand our use of social media to better promote the positive work that the highways team is doing. In particular, we want to raise awareness around the emergency works carried out by the network resilience team and start sharing more images showing the impact of resurfacing works. We will also continue to look at ways in which infographics can be used to create a better understanding of the work carried out by highways.

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 past year, for example the map freezing on mobile devices and difficulty in selecting fault locations on the map. We have been working with Serco as part of the Channel Shift Project in resolving identified issues. It was intended to launch the improved version of the system in January 2018 but due to the resource implications and extensive user acceptance testing needs we have encountered some delay. It is anticipated that the launch will now happen in July 2018.
- 3.4 It is worth noting that had customers emailed the CSC rather than using the online system, this it would have cost us £84,404 since its launch to end December 2017.

4. Communications and Engagement with County 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.](#)

- 4.3 All Councillors are receiving the winter gritting decisions to inform when we are undertaking precautionary salting along our identified routes. We are putting a process in place to inform the Councillors of any major incidents in their area as soon as known by the officers to help deal with any local enquiries.
- 4.4 Local Highways Managers' monthly surgeries with their Councillors are working well. Most Councillors are happy to have these surgeries on less frequent basis and appropriate arrangements (meeting or telephone discussions) are being made with the Local Highways Managers.
- 4.5 The latest set of Member Engagement Sessions (4 in total) were held in early November 2017. Subsequently, all presentation slides and record of discussion were sent to all Councillors. The attached leaflet on highways contacts details and useful information was handed out at the induction sessions.
- 4.6 The next Member Session is due in May 2018. Based on the feedback received at the November sessions, we are hoping to hold just one session (instead of one each for the four areas). It is suggested that this session could be held in the Council Chamber following a Full Council meeting as most of the Councillors will already be there. It is also suggested that this sessions has a common short item for sharing relevant information that is Countywide and then Councillors join their respective areas (north, south, east or west) to discuss local issues with the respective Local Highways Management teams.
- 4.7 The Committee is requested to give views on the future engagement with the Councillors.

5. Communications and Engagement Parish / Town Councils

- 5.1 Local Highways Managers held a total of 16 Parish Cluster meetings (four for each of the four areas) last year to give an overview of how the highways service operates based on the Future Operating Model and how we will be communicating with them. The following issues were discussed during each of the meeting.
- All policy changes affecting how we deliver services locally should be communicated to the Parishes to manage their expectations.
 - Could we inform Parishes when we need to tell them something? A lot of them are not interested in what is happening in other Parishes. Personal targeted communications would be appreciated. Electronic communications were preferred.
 - At one meeting a dedicated Parish webpage was suggested. This could work well with the above point as we can post information and email Parishes to let them know it is there.

- It would be appreciated if communications which may have an impact on the precept could be timed to allow the Parishes time to meet and discuss prior to setting the precept in November.
- We respond from the CSC on a strange and meaningless email address CSC_HP_OnlineForms. Could this be changed to something more meaningful?

5.2 With regard to the future engagement, the following were suggested.

- A multi-agency approach with other teams from LCC and / or District Councils.
- We could promote our events better. Our invite made the event sound quite dull but the event itself was not.
- One meeting suggested that as turn-out at the clusters had been so low maybe there is not the desire for this type of forum.
- Some Parishes felt that this sort of engagement was not useful to them as it is too big a forum and they had no interest in other peoples' issues. Smaller forums were suggested but this is impractical on our part as we could not attend that number of meetings.
- Some Parishes appreciated this type of engagement and suggest similar forums at six-monthly intervals and would like the opportunity to contribute to the agendas.

5.3 Local Highways Management teams would undertake annual parish walkabout when specifically requested to discuss complex and on-going issues.

5.4 The Committee is requested to give views on the future engagement with the Parish / Town Councils.

6. Consultation

6.1 As part of this project, consultations have been ongoing with Serco (Customer Service Centre and Channel Shift Project Board), Commercial Projects & Performance Team, Executive Portfolio Holder, Highways Alliance, Communications Team, Digital Engagement Team and 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 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 information and regular updates on the fault reports.

8. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

N/A

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

9. Background Papers

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

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

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

Update on Effective Highways Communication - Report to the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee on 28 July 2017.

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