

NHT Public Satisfaction Survey 2017

Results Analysis

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Lincolnshire County Council takes part in the annual National Highways and Transport Network (NHT) Public Satisfaction Survey, created in partnership with Measure 2 Improve, Ipsos MORI, The Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) and the University of Leeds. The NHT Public Satisfaction Survey collects public perspectives on, and satisfaction with, Highway and Transport Services in Local Authority areas. The NHT Survey is referenced in the DfT's Incentive Fund Self-assessment process
- 1.2. The following report is an analysis of the 2017 NHT public satisfaction results. It complements the NHT Summary Report and the 6 Theme Reports provided separately. The report identifies overall satisfaction and looks at improvement and decline in specific components of each question, linking it to possible contributing factors in the Highways and Transport service over the previous year. The Theme Reports highlight the key benchmarking indicators (KBIs) but also include other indicators within the theme on a separate page.
- 1.3. At the end of the report is an overall conclusion and an action plan for areas of particular concern.

2. Overall Satisfaction

2.1. At 51%, Overall satisfaction with the Highways and Transport service has reduced from 54%, returning to a level more like the 2015 result of 52%. Whilst this report is disappointing given the good work the authority has been doing in improving the service and the national recognition we have achieved such as our band 3 status in the DfT Incentivised Funding, the result is likely shaped by factors explored further later in this report.

2.2. Overall satisfaction is still slightly below the national average of 54%.

3. Accessibility Theme

- 3.1. The overall result for the Accessibility Theme stands at 68%, which is down from 72% in 2016 and below the national average of 70%.
- 3.2. All of the key benchmarking indicators for the theme are down from 2016 with ease of access for those without a car seeing the most significant drop of 7%. There has been no significant change in the provision of accessibility measures since 2016 so it would seem the reduction may be around perception rather than level of service.
- 3.3. The top 3 performers nationally in this theme are the London Borough of Southwark, South Tyneside and Solihull MBC, all smaller urban authorities. The top performers from authorities comparable to Lincolnshire are Cumbria County Council, Oxfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire County Council so it is worth making contact to investigate how they publicise their service.

4. Public Transport Theme

4.1. The overall result for the Public Transport Theme is 58%, which is slightly down from the 2016 result of 61% however the level has remained at a reasonably steady state with no downward trend as the level was at 58% in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

4.2. Satisfaction with the key benchmarking indicators for the theme are all down from 2016, however KBI 09 – Taxi/mini cab services returns to the level it was at in 2015, as does KBI 10 – Community Transport.

4.3. From the rest of the Public Transport Benchmarking Indicators (which are not used to calculate the overall result), there have been no improvements in satisfaction results however the following indicators remain at the same level:

- PTBI 05 – How easy buses are to get on/off
- PTBI 09 – Helpfulness of drivers

4.4. There are no obvious factors which could be linked to the decline in satisfaction. The CallConnect service has been expanded and their own customer survey received the highest number (98%) of satisfied customers in its 16 year history. This could point to a difference in perception from people directly affected by aspects of the service, which are more positive than the NHT customers who may have an indirect perception of public transport.

5. Walking and Cycling Theme

- 5.1. Satisfaction with the Walking and Cycling Theme has dropped very slightly by 1%, however this is still above the level has been at previous to 2016 which was the highest level recorded so far. The score of 53% is only 2% below the national average of 55% so with work to continue the overall trend of improvement the theme could be an area to focus on to attain above average scores.
- 5.2. Satisfaction with KBI 11 – Pavements and footpaths has risen this year. There has been no change in overall strategy to explain this so it is likely it is a difference of perception. The previous Transport Asset Management Plan reduced funding for footways in order to focus on carriageway condition but it appears this change has not filtered down to the satisfaction levels in the survey.
- 5.3. There has been a fairly significant decline in satisfaction with KBI 13 and 14 – Cycle routes and facilities. As there has been no change in the asset or level of service, it is likely this level of satisfaction is being negatively affected by other components of the Highways and Transport service overall.
- 5.4. Leicestershire and Derbyshire County Councils, both members of the Midlands Service Improvement Group, have high overall theme satisfaction so it would be beneficial to engage with them through the MSIG Asset Management Group for benchmarking and sharing of good practice.

6. Tackling Congestion Theme

- 6.1. Overall satisfaction with the Tackling Congestion Theme is marginally lower than 2016, at 50% down from 51%, however it is above the national average of 48% and there is a trend of continuous improvement since 2014.
- 6.2. It is worth noting that whilst answers to the overall questions produced a higher result than last year, responses to 2 out of 3 of the key benchmarking indicators (KBI 17 – Traffic levels and congestion and KBI 19 – Traffic Management) were lower than 2016. Whilst initially disappointing, this is suggestive that answers to the survey once again show a difference in perception around themes as a whole from the various aspects of the theme. If there were a direct correlation it would not be expected that overall theme satisfaction was higher when satisfaction with the areas which make up this theme are lower.
- 6.3. TCBI 02 – Efforts to reduce delays to traffic, TCBI 04 – Signposting of road diversions, TCBI 06 – Efforts to minimise nuisance to residents, TCBI 08 – Road signs, TCBI 09 – Location of permanent traffic lights, TCBI 10 – Waiting time at permanent traffic lights and TCBI 13 – Good park and ride schemes have all seen increases in levels of satisfaction. Unfortunately this has not been reflected in an increase in the overall satisfaction score.
- 6.4. It is likely the increases in satisfaction with signposting of road diversions and efforts to minimise nuisance to residents relate to increased consistency in the way works are ordered and delivered through the Highways Alliance. This should improve even more as the Future Operating Model changes embed further.

7. Road Safety Theme

- 7.1. Satisfaction overall with the Road Safety Theme is down 2% from 56% in 2016 to 54% this year. This is marginally below the national average, and continues a trend of a steady level since 2013.
- 7.2. KBI 20 – Road Safety Locally has seen a significant decrease in satisfaction with a drop from 57% in 2016 to 53% this year. It is worth noting that in 2015 it was at 54% so perception seems to vary year on year with little change in service. It is worth checking if this correlates with the amount of serious accidents on Lincolnshire's roads, or negative press surrounding this.
- 7.3. KBI 22 – Road Safety Education satisfaction has returned to the level it was at in 2014, down 3% since 2016.
- 7.4. It is worth noting that RSBI 01 – Speed limits (which is not a key indicator) remains at a high level compared to the picture nationally.

8. Highways Maintenance Theme

- 8.1. The overall satisfaction with the Highways Maintenance Theme has dropped 1% to 43% since 2016. Disappointingly this is the second lowest result from the authorities surveyed and Lincolnshire's results continue to be well below the national average, if remaining at a steady level over the last 5 years.
- 8.2. KBI 23 – Condition of highways actually remains at the same level as it was in 2016 and is up 6% in the past 5 years.
- 8.3. KBI 24 – Highways maintenance has dropped from 51% to 49%.
- 8.4. KBI 25 – Street lighting sees the most significant drop in public satisfaction by 15%. It is fairly safe to conclude this is as a result of the street lighting transformation project and part-night switch off of lights. This KBI alone may well have negatively impacted the response to other highway maintenance questions. There is evidence from other authorities who have gone through a similar change in service that public complaints drop significantly after an initial reaction, so it is possible that once the public become used to the change, levels of satisfaction will rise again. If levels remain similar in the next survey positive action may need to be considered.
- 8.5. It is worth noting that satisfaction with HMBI 07 – Speed of repair to damaged roads/pavements, HMBI 08 – quality of repair to damaged roads/pavements and HMBI 15 – Keeps roads clear of obstructions has increased. This may be due to the introduction of the Network Resilience team and an effort with Alliance Partners to provide a more efficient and consistent response to Category 1 defects.
- 8.6. There has been a significant decrease in satisfaction with HMBI 05 – Provision of street lighting which relates to 8.4 above.
- 8.7. Satisfaction with HMBI 17 – Undertakes cold weather gritting and HMBI 18 – Provides information on gritting are still higher than the national average which is a good news story but not reported as a key indicator.
- 8.8. The other most significant decreases are with HMBI 09 – Maintenance of highways verges/trees/shrubs, HMBI 10 – Weed killing on pavements and roads and HMBI 19 – Cuts back overgrown hedges. This is interesting because whilst the level of service for grass cutting has changed, changes to weed treatment are less recent and there should have been no change to the level of service around cutting back overgrown hedges. It is possible that the negative press around changes to grass cutting routines has bled into the perception of similar aspects of the service.

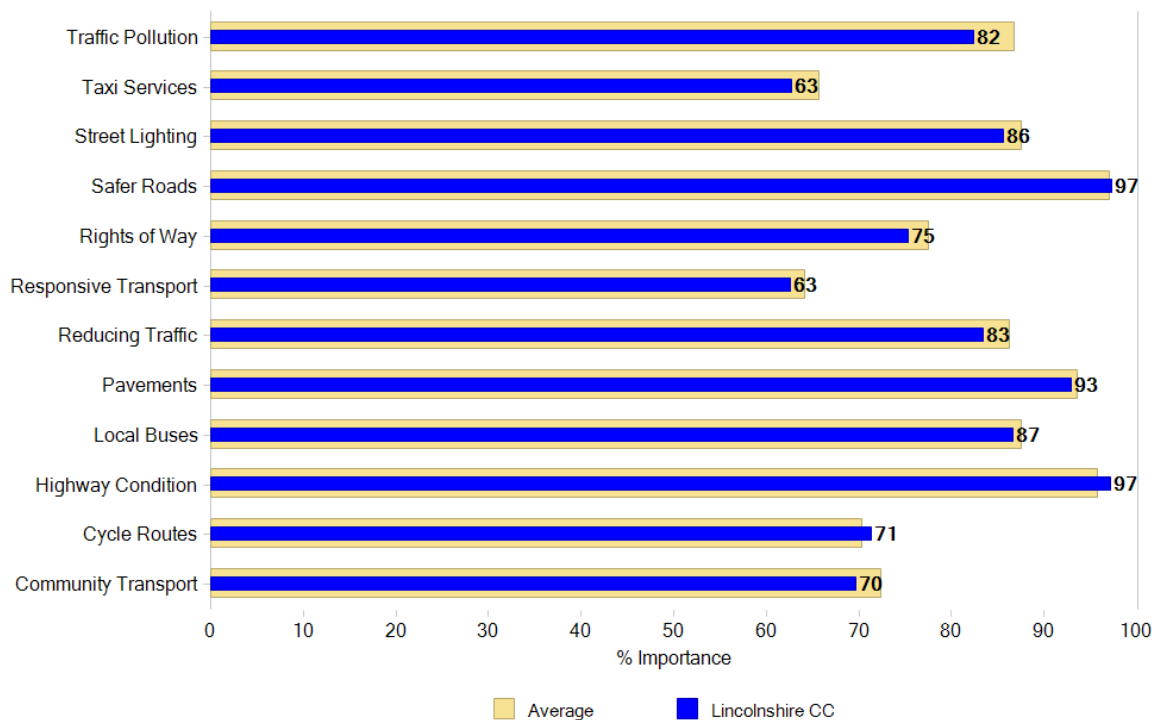
8.9. Whilst HMBI 13 – Deals with potholes on damaged roads is marginally lower than the 2016 result, it is still significantly higher than it was in 2013, showing an overall trend of increase in public satisfaction.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1. Overall the results from the 2017 NHT Public Satisfaction survey are disappointing with few areas of improvement.
- 9.2. Tackling Congestion is the only theme above the national average, however it is hard to pinpoint anything being done differently which has led to this change in satisfaction. Frustratingly areas where there has been focus on improving the service are not seeing this reflected in improved customer satisfaction.
- 9.3. The drops in satisfaction in the key benchmarking indicators lead to a drop in overall satisfaction with the Highways and Transport service as a whole. The most obvious factor for this is the significant drop in satisfaction with street lighting, which is likely driven by the Street Lighting Transformation project and part-night switch off. At the recent NHT annual conference, there was a lot of discussion around whether there is a direct link between levels of service and public satisfaction with that service. In future there will be more comparison work around condition indicators and efficiency levels to see if there is a direct correlation as many authorities feel they have seen reduced satisfaction in areas data would suggest they are improving. A good example of this is a PFI which has invested significant amounts in resurfacing the majority of its roads, yet still sees disappointing results for public satisfaction for highway condition. It is likely that perception is swayed by significant changes such as the Street Lighting Transformation Project and reduction in grass cutting, which are both very visible and high profile changes and this bleeds into the way other questions have been answered where evidence would point to no change or improvement in the service.
- 9.4. Lincolnshire was one of the first 2 authorities to achieve a Band 3 in the DfT self-assessment and despite plenty of areas which we recognise still need improvement, there is confidence that on a national level the Authority is in a good place and running the service in the correct way. The challenge is in communicating this to the public in a meaningful way and shaping the perception of the service, if results alone do not necessarily affect perception.
- 9.5. It is important to consider the participants in the survey. Interestingly, question 20 in the survey considers satisfaction with how easy or difficult it is to travel to various places. The only aspect which has a higher than average public satisfaction is "where you work (if you do)". Given the largest groups taking the survey were between 65 and 75, and wholly retired from work there could be some link to this result being higher than the national average because the people who were eligible to answer the question would have to be in work and would likely be of a younger demographic. This is important because the way in which we engage with Lincolnshire's public and in particular the best way to communicate with different aspects of it needs careful consideration. Discussions with Measure 2 Improve and Leeds University indicate that getting a more balanced demographic response will be a priority in future years.

10. Action Plan

10.1. The following graph shows how important those surveyed considered various aspects of the service:



10.2. It would be sensible to focus on the areas which are indicated to be the most important which are Highway Condition, Safer Roads, Pavements, Local Buses and Street Lighting.

10.3. Assuming the conclusions in this report are correct, it would be best to engage with those authorities identified as having the highest scores in these areas and enter into a dialogue about how they communicate with the public and what they are doing differently from us.

10.4. Following on from gathering best practice, a short term communication strategy to focus on the areas of weakness and also push positive developments in the service further should be put in place before the next survey takes place in 2018. The amount of resource dedicated to this needs balancing against the benefits of attaining better public satisfaction results however this is something which can be discussed with higher performing authorities.

10.5. The UK Asset Management Board has recently been established and Lincolnshire is part of this, reporting directly to the UK Roads Liaison Group. A piece of work has been initiated around communication of asset management principles both internally and with

the public, with various new approaches to highlighting the positive aspects of highways services being collated. This provides an opportunity to learn from others.

10.6. The Infrastructure Commissioning team is looking into developing "Public Dashboards" following on from the dashboards which are made available to councillors and the ones which have been put together for the Value for Money scoring. The idea of having a more public-friendly version of these to distribute through social media and for Local Highways Teams to push in their communication with Parishes and members of the public may see positive results.

10.7. One of the next research themes for the Future Highways Research Club which Lincolnshire is part of is around community engagement. The research question is as follows:

Community engagement (and participation) remains a high political priority. It also presents an opportunity for reducing costs and improving services delivery. How can the concepts of "Community Commissioning (CC)", "Community-Delivered (CD)" and "Community Funded (CF)" services be applied in a highways context?

Findings from this research should be incorporated into the strategy around community engagement within Highways and Transport. Collaboration through such groups is vital to identify new ideas and best practice rather than continuing as we always have.