

Open Report on behalf of Keith Ireland, Chief Executive

Report to:	Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date:	22 October 2018
Subject:	Effective Highways Communication

Summary:

To give an update to the members of the Committee with a review of measures being undertaken to improve the highways service communication.

Actions Required:

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

1. Background

- 1.1 As listed under the background papers, the members of the Committee were last updated in 12 March 2018 with the measures for improving the highways service communication.
- 1.2 It is essential that the highways service users are consulted, communicated with and informed appropriately in a timely and accurate manner. This helps us in improving our customer experience and to ensure that we are continually providing value for money.

2. Communications Strategy

- 2.1 The current communications strategy is being updated. The strategy currently 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 As part of the Council's website refresh project, we will also be reviewing the information available on our website about popular topics, such as potholes. We want to ensure that this information is presented in an easily

understandable fashion and answers the most frequently asked questions, reducing the need for people to contact the Customer Services Centre (CSC) for general enquiries.

- 2.3 We now have around 6,800 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 30,000 followers.
- 2.4 We continue to expand our use of social media to better promote the positive work that the highways team is doing. In recent months, we have produced short videos explaining our approach to pothole repairs and the jet-patcher. We are planning to produce something similar around our gritting operations towards the end of October. We also 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. Highways Online Fault Reporting Portal

- 3.1 Highway online fault reporting system LAGAN was launched in June 2015 with the intention of achieving a channel shift in reporting faults. LAGAN was withdrawn on 25 May 2018 due to the General Data Protection Regulation compliance issues and a decision was made to replace it with FixMyStreet Pro.
- 3.2 FixMyStreet Pro was launched on 21 August 2018 following a period of 3 months without an interactive web portal. FixMyStreet Pro is a MySociety product and interacts directly with Lincolnshire County Council's (LCC) Highways Asset Management system Confirm. Officers use Confirm to manage fault reports and issue jobs for repair. FixMyStreet Pro is accessible from the LCC website and also from the FixMyStreet national site and app.
- 3.3 FixMyStreet Pro offers several improvements over the previous solution. The map proactively displays assets dependent on what customers are reporting e.g. street lights and gullies. Customers receive many more updates from FixMyStreet Pro than they used to get from Lagan. All updates on a fault are displayed to all customers. Further functionality includes creating personalised links to view faults in a division or area, email updates when a new fault is reported in a division or area and viewing all faults you have reported. FixMyStreet Pro also enables LCC to see how many faults have been fixed in the last 4 weeks.
- 3.4 The CSC is promoting the use of FixMyStreet Pro to enable customers to find updates on their reports. It is anticipated that this will actively encourage channel shift. In September 2018 we received 1,084 reports from FixMyStreet which can be compared to 958 reports in September 2017 through the LAGAN portal. If these reports had come to the CSC half by email and half by phone it would have cost the authority £3,285 for September 2018.

3.5 The FixMyStreet app has been deployed to all LCC devices to enable access while on the go. A live demonstration of FixMyStreet Pro will be done following the presentation of this report.

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/updates 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' routine surgeries with their Councillors are working well where used. 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. To ensure that all Councillors have regular engagement with the Local Highways Managers, the Portfolio Holder has made arrangements with the Democratic Services to set up some of these sessions.

4.5 The last Councillors Session was held at the Council Chamber on 12 May 2018 following the Full Council meeting, which was very well attended. This session had a common short item for sharing relevant information that is Countywide and then Councillors joined their respective areas (north, south, east or west) to discuss local issues with the respective Local Highways Management teams.

4.6 The next Councillors Session is planned for 14 December 2018 at the Council Chamber again following the Full Council meeting that day. It is intended that this session will have short briefings on works programme prioritisation, highway inspections & response times and highways input into the planning applications. There will also be opportunities for questions and engagement with the Local Highways Management teams.

4.7 The Executive Portfolio Holder had communicated a message to all councillors with an escalation through the local Business Support Teams when Local Highways Managers are away or responses need to be chased. Using this process has been patchy across the highway areas.

5. Communications and Engagement Parish/Town Councils

- 5.1 At the time of last update, it was agreed to maintain annual liaison with the Parish/Town Councils. With this, we are looking at most effective way of doing this by the end of this year.
- 5.2 The action of a dedicated web page on our website for the Parish/Town Councils has unfortunately not progressed. This will be actioned as part of the Council's website review project.
- 5.3 The Local Highways Teams are supporting the Executive Portfolio Holder and the Support Councillor in their bid to visit all the Parish Councils. This process started a few months ago and a number of Parish Council visits have been done across the 4 highway areas.
- 5.4 We are attending the Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils (LALC) AGM at Navenby on 17 October 2018 to deal with any highways communication matters.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Consultations have been ongoing with the Customer Service Centre (CSC), Commercial Projects and 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 the 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 quality updates on the fault reports.

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

N/A

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 and 24 October 2016.

8.3 Update on Effective Highways Communication - Report to the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee on 28 July 2017 and 12 March 2018.

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