

**Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson,
Interim Executive Director for Place**

Report to:	Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date:	11 March 2019
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 consider 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 to be updated this summer. 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 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 easily accessible and presented in

an easily understandable fashion. This will reduce the need for people to contact the Customer Services Centre (CSC) for general enquiries. As part of the website project, we are also reviewing some transactional processes to simplify online payments for the chargeable services.

2.3 We now have around 7,100 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. We have produced short videos explaining our approach to pothole repairs and the jet-patcher. We also want to raise awareness around the reactive works carried out by the highways teams 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 As reported last time, the current highways online faulting reporting portal, FixMyStreet Pro was launched on 21 August 2018. 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.

3.2 FixMyStreet Pro maps proactively display assets dependent on what customers are reporting e.g. street lights and gullies. Customers also receive more updates from FixMyStreet Pro as their enquiries progress through Confirm. 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.

3.3 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 the period 1 September 2018 to 31 January 2019 we received 6,534 reports through FixMyStreet. This is 46% of the total faults received. In the period 1 September 2017 to 31 January 2018 we received 7,494 through the previous Lagan web reporting system. This represented 42% of the total faults received and demonstrates a gradual shift towards web fault reporting.

3.4 A gap analysis was undertaken with Highways Network staff to understand where further FixMyStreet responses were required. This led to three new messages being developed with regard to inadequate information, enforcement and cyclic programme.

3.5 A review is being undertaken of all Confirm and FixMyStreet codes to ensure all faults reported at the CSC are visible on FixMyStreet. This will give complete visibility of all fault reports in the County.

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 meetings 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.

4.5 The last Councillors Session was held at the Council Chamber on 14 December 2018 following the Full Council meeting, which was very well attended. This session had short briefings on works programme prioritisation, highway inspections & response times and highways input into the planning applications. There was also an opportunity for questions and engagement with the Local Highways Management teams.

4.6 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 and a note is to be sent to all Councillors to use this mechanism.

5. Communications and Engagement Parish/Town Councils

5.1 We are still looking at most effective way of maintaining annual liaison with the Parish/Town Councils. Hopefully this will be done through the Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils (LALC).

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 during their visits to the Parish Councils. The Highways Officers are also meeting with the Parish Councils as and when required.

5.4 We attended the LALC AGM at Navenby on 17 October 2018 and subsequently met them on 6 December 2018. A further meeting is being arranged to look at how communications with the Parish Councils can be improved. It is agreed that the Highways Officers will attend the LALC networking events every 6 months.

5.5 The issue of outgoing emails to the Parish Councils is also being addressed.

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 and it is recognised that there is still more to do.

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, 12 March 2018 and 22 October 2018.

This report was written by Satish Shah, who can be contacted on 01522 782070 or cschighways@lincolnshire.gov.uk.