

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

14 MAY 2009

REPORT OF REGENERATION & TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE

CABINET DECISION

Regeneration & Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Bob Cook

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF HIGHWAYS NETWORK MANAGEMENT

1. Summary

This report presents the findings of the Regeneration & Transport Select Committee following a review in to Highways Network Management. The Committee considered evidence covering several key areas which, collectively, contribute towards the overall maintenance and operation of the Council's highway network, which covers roads and pavements maintenance. These include the Council's inspection and maintenance regime, finance, risk and insurance and working relationship with the utilities companies. The Committee considered evidence arising from residents' perceptions and experiences of the service and it also consulted with fellow Members and Parish and Town Councils.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended to Cabinet that:

1. Highways officers issue Roadworks Reports to Ward, Parish and Town Council Members on a timely basis thereby ensuring Members are adequately briefed on highways schemes affecting their local area, and are able to provide suitable feedback to local residents as and when required.
2. Ward, Parish and Town Council Members are given the opportunity to accompany highways officers undertaking highway inspections or site specific inspections.
3. To enable Members make 'right first time' contact with the relevant service area, Members are provided with relevant contact details showing the best way to report defects (e.g. through the service area's generic email address).
4. Ward, Parish and Town Council Members reporting defects to highways officers are provided with adequate and timely feedback.
5. Highway Officers produce an annual report on the performance of Utility companies operating in the highway. The report should include numbers of sample and third party inspections undertaken, defective repairs, statutory notices issued and a summary account of income generated e.g. from fines.

6. Networks are developed with other highways authorities in the Tees Valley area and regionally to further enhance working relationships, share benchmarking data and to promote and disseminate best practice.
7. Members are kept fully up to date on highways policy through a programme that places highways policy documents on the Forward Plan, followed by Cabinet approval, and ensures copies of all Cabinet approved plans and strategies relating to the management and maintenance of the highway network are provided in the Members' library and that all new and updated versions are similarly made available.
8. The development of a fully integrated ICT Highway Asset Management system be investigated and procured to provide best value for the delivery of the highway service. This should include hand held devices for recording highway condition and raising repair orders to allow for accurate, robust and reliable management information systems.
9. Briefing notes on the following highway-related subjects are provided in the Members' library and on the Council's intranet:
 - A summary of the policy on highway repairs together with the criteria used to determine carriageway and footway maintenance and the priorities for repair.
 - The procedures for recording, processing and defending insurance claims received from members of the public as a result of damage to vehicles arising from road defects and injury claims resulting from falls on footpaths.
 These briefing notes will also help inform Members when responding to residents' questions and concerns raised in Ward surgeries.
10. Residents are provided with suitable information so they know who to contact if they are having problems with roads or pavements.
11. Opportunities to publicise and promote the Council's performance on highways are maximised through a series of positive news articles in Stockton News and on the Council website.
12. Officers explore the development of web-based systems (including those featuring web mapping) to report highways defects by Members and the general public, ensuring the system selected is both user friendly and easy to navigate.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

The request to carry out this review had first been suggested by Members in 2008 in determining the areas to be considered for scrutiny. As a result, the Executive Scrutiny Committee included this topic in its Scrutiny Work Programme for 2008/09.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE**

CABINET DECISION

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF HIGHWAY NETWORK MANAGEMENT

SUMMARY

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RECOMMENDATIONS

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DETAIL

1. The attached report presents Cabinet with the findings and recommendations of the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee following its review of Highway Network Management within the Borough, which took place between July 2008 and March 2009.
2. The Highways Act 1980 places a statutory duty on local councils, as highway authorities, to maintain the highway. In addition to statutory legislation, there is national guidance in the form of 'Good Practice' documents for highway authorities to set their standards. For highway maintenance, there is the "Well Maintained Highways – A Code of Good Practice for Highway Network Management." The Council has achieved or exceeded the National Code of Practice's recommended frequency of inspection for carriageways and footways.
3. Local authority performance is measured annually through a series of statutory performance indicators. Four of these indicators measure the condition of surface footways, principal, non-principal and unclassified road networks. Stockton's performance in national indicators remains high, with three of the four national performance indicators illustrating that, nationally, the Council is in the top quartile (2007/08 data) based on 'All England' (i.e. all single tier and unitary councils) results. Roads and pavement maintenance continue to feature in the top ten most important services for local people. The Council achieves high satisfaction ratings among local residents for its highway maintenance service. The review noted the high performance and satisfaction of highways, and the many areas of good practice in Stockton Borough.

Following consideration of the recommendations by Cabinet an action plan will be submitted to the Select Committee setting out how approved recommendations will be implemented detailing officers responsible for action and timescales.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4. Dependent on the outcomes of the investigations requested in recommendations 8 and 12, capital investment would be required to implement ICT systems.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5. None

RISK ASSESSMENT

6. This scrutiny report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

7. This report and the issues contained within have relevance mainly to Key Improvement Priorities: Economic Regeneration and Transport, specifically 'Provide a sustainable and effective transport framework to support economic regeneration' and 'Ensure good and sustainable design in regeneration schemes and new developments'.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8. When an Equality Impact Assessment is carried out, it will need to consider the suggested recommendations.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

9. The Group received evidence from a range of sources including Viewpoint focus groups and a questionnaire forwarded to Parish and Town Councils. The Committee also considered relevant results from the Council's Ipsos MORI Residents Survey 2008.
10. Senior officers within DNS, and the Cabinet Member responsible for Regeneration & Transport, were consulted on the scope of the review, and the findings and recommendations.

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Background Papers None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: Not Ward Specific

Property None