

### **EIT - Gateway Review of Highways, Lighting and Network Management**

#### **Response from the Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee**

##### **Baseline Information Challenge**

This took place at a meeting of the Committee on 9 September 2009.

Members were presented with the baseline information which was divided into the following services:

- Street Lighting
- Highway Improvement Works
- Highway Network Management
- Consultation on Improvement Works

The Committee agreed with the planned way forward for the review and the further exploration of all of the efficiency opportunities identified as a result of the baseline analysis.

##### **1. Street Lighting**

Members supported exploration of providing the service in house as there was the potential for significant savings to be realised owing to the high operating costs of the current contract. The Committee also commented that there may be opportunity to rationalise fleet to achieve this, for example utilising CFYA cherry pickers.

The Committee strongly supported exploration of funding opportunities to invest in dimming technology and replace old and obsolete columns thereby significantly reducing energy and maintenance costs. The Committee were advised that all capital investment options would be assessed in relation to affordability and risk.

Committee Members commented that there were occasions when the operatives replacing the bulbs could not repair other faults and this then necessitated an electrician also attending to the street light on a separate occasion. The Head of Technical Services advised that the new street lighting technology would diagnose the fault in advance of corrective action being taken and thereby avoid this situation occurring.

Members questioned whether solar power could be utilised more. The Head of Technical Services advised that, at present, solar power would not generate enough energy in itself to power a street light but could be considered in conjunction with other power sources as the technology developed.

Members queried whether the Council was required to utilise a specified amount of "green energy" which was more expensive. The Head of Technical Services commented that there were likely to be cost savings through utilising a percentage of "green" energy due to other carbon incentive schemes.

## **2. Highway Improvement Works**

The Committee supported the development of a procurement strategy to engage two/three construction partners for highway improvement works removing the need to competitively tender every single project and supported efficiencies in the management of highway improvement works to avoid any duplication.

Post meeting note: In aligning this with the commercial services EIT review, further exploration on deliver highway works in house is being explored, which is tied into an exercise linked to overhead recovery.

The Committee stressed the need identify efficiency savings in this area as there was likely to be a cut in LTP capital allocation in future years.

## **3. Highway Network Management**

The Committee supported the transfer of bus shelter maintenance to Direct Services so that it could be absorbed into routine unscheduled highway maintenance activities.

The Committee supported the continuation of ADSHEL advertising on bus shelters as a source of revenue for the Council.

## **4. Consultation on Improvement Works**

The Committee supported greater use of e-communications on highway and footpath schemes provided that residents who wanted to continue to receive paper based correspondence were able to do so.

The Committee also suggested that officers could work more closely with ward Councillors with a view to getting more information in Councillors newsletters and on Councillors websites.

The Committee asked about the cost of advertising legal orders. The Head of Technical Services advised that this was being investigated by Legal Officers who were considering the scope for joint procurement across the Tees Valley and the extent to which Council publications such as Stockton News could be used in order to reduce advertising costs.

## **Options Challenge**

The Committee were presented with the final efficiency options that were being developed for consideration by Cabinet together with indicative timescales and cost savings. The opportunities and estimated cost savings were as follows:

- Street Lighting maintenance delivered in house - £200,000
- Street Lighting and obsolete column replacement for dimmed street lights - £150,000
- Decommissioning of lit road signs and bollards, replaced with reflective equipment - £25,000
- Appointment of delivery partners/in-house commercial delivery for capital highway works – Savings unknown
- Develop a project management delivery function shared between Technical and Direct Services – Operational efficiencies

- Bus shelter maintenance to be consumed with Direct Services existing revenue maintenance - Negligible
- Highway related consultation delivered through e-communications - £20,000

The Committee were advised that funding had been secured from the Tees Valley Major Bus Scheme to replace bus shelters on all core routes over a three year period and that this would help to reduce maintenance costs. The Committee asked for reassurances that previous comments/complaints in relation to design would be taken into account in the replacement programme. Officers confirmed that this was the case.

The Committee reiterated their comments made at the previous Select Committee meetings that officers could work more closely with ward Councillors with a view to getting more information in Councillors newsletters and on Councillors websites to reduce paper based correspondence.