

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PLACES**

**17 September 2014**

**REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY**

**COMMITTEE – PLACES**

**REVIEW OF HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE – PROGRESS REPORT**

**1. The Purpose of the Report**

To inform the Committee of the progress made by the Highway Maintenance Review Working Group.

**2. Information and Analysis**

The Committee, at its meeting on 16 July 2014, agreed to undertake a review of highway maintenance process and a working group was appointed to conduct the review (Cllrs Lauro, Southerd, Hill, Spencer and Atkins).

The first meeting of the working group was held on 5 August 2014 to consider the potential lines of enquiry. It was agreed that the maintenance role of the Council can be broadly split into three main functions and that each of these areas of activity should be explored:

- Identification and initiation of the work required
- Planning, co-ordination and scheduling work
- Physical completion of the work

The review working group members met with Geoff Pickford (Service Director for Highways), Glyn Dutton (Principle Engineer – Maintenance) and Paul Millership (Technical Policy and Highway information Officer) on 12 August 2014 to consider how highway defects are identified. Glyn Dutton gave an overview of the current systems in place and explained the inspection principles set out in the Derbyshire County Council Safety Inspections Manual.

The following key points were noted:

- The rationale for conducting highway inspections is to keep the highway safe for users by identifying and dealing with hazards on the network.
- Safety inspections follow the procedures set out in DCC's Highway Safety Inspections Manual. This manual reflects the recommendations in the national guidance (Well Maintained roads - Code of Practice for Highways

Maintenance Management) and latest standards adopted by members of the Midland Service Improvement Group (MSIG).

- Each part of the highways network is assigned a hierarchy which relates to its importance to transportation and its usage. A road's position on the hierarchy will determine the frequency of inspection. For example a strategic route is scheduled to be inspected monthly whereas a local access road would be inspected annually.
- A road's position on the hierarchy is not static and can be reviewed and amended by an inspector as and when required. If there is a temporary change in usage or volume of traffic the classification of a carriageway can be amended.
- A new hierarchy system is under development: The Road Users' Strategy for Derbyshire is a project which aims to determine the hierarchy for different sections of the same carriageway by using traffic count data and other sources of information. For example the pedestrian flow alongside the A6 is dramatically different in Bakewell (a busy tourist and shopping destination) compared to the pedestrian flow alongside the A6 in Ambergate. Through this new approach of determining the hierarchy it will be possible to assign appropriate inspection frequencies for different sections of the same road.

On 28 August 2014 the working group met with the Graham Harris (Highways Systems Manager) to discuss how reported defects are managed.

The following key points were noted.

- Currently information relating to highways defects and inspections are recorded in "Confirm", a computer based asset management system.
- Using hand-held devices inspectors and maintenance gangs can send and receive information to and from Confirm. Familiarity with the technology is variable and improvements in the volume and quality of information captured by the system could be achieved through staff training.
- The Control Centre is responsible for allocating maintenance work to relevant teams. Some enquiries are automatically routed, for example, in the case of a "potentially urgent" defect such as a pothole the enquiry is routed by the Control Centre directly to a patching gang to repair the defect. However if the maintenance task is a complex one appropriate technical expertise and knowledge maybe required before the work can be allocated in order to determine what materials and equipment and which personnel are most suited to the task.
- Over the next 18 months five separate asset management systems used by the Highways division will be brought together into a single asset management system (SAMS). This will enable information about different operations (countryside, structures, street lighting, street works, finance,

performance and engagement, highways maintenance, highways design, traffic management, highways development control and the AllRoads Control Centre) to be more easily shared.

- The vision for SAMS is to be able to observe real-time activities. Potentially “dashboards” could be tailored to the needs of individuals or groups. For example elected members could be notified about highways maintenance activity in their electoral division or a member of the public could register to receive emails or text messages about a specific geographic location.

### **Further work**

Members of the working group have been invited to visit their local highway maintenance depots. These visits will enable members to meet with highways inspectors and to see first-hand maintenance work being undertaken.

Information will be gathered to allow members to identify and learn from best practice examples of highways inspection and maintenance processes adopted by other councils.

### **Considerations**

The relevance of the following factors has been considered in preparing this report; Finance, Human Relations, Legal and Human Rights, Prevention of Crime and Disorder, Equality and Diversity, Environmental, Health, Property and Transport

### **3. Recommendations**

The Improvement and Scrutiny Committee – Places is asked to note;

- (1) the investigations already undertaken by the highways maintenance review working group,
- (2) the further investigations which the working group proposes to undertake.

**Councillor Kath Lauro**

**CHAIR, IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PLACES**