

Report To: Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 4th July 2013

Lead Member/Officer: Lead Member for Public Realm/
Head of Highways and Environmental Services

Report Author: Head of Highways and Environmental Services

Title: Improving our Highway/Public Realm Service Delivery
Methods

1. What is the report about?

The current reorganisation of the Council's highway/public realm services delivery methods.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

On 18 December 2012 Cabinet decided how it wanted to reorganise the Council's highway/public realm services. This report outlines how those ideas are being developed and implemented, and gives the Committee an opportunity to question what has been done to date and/or to shape the final outcome.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That members endorse the general direction of travel, and give any guidance they feel appropriate on anything else they would like to be considered/incorporated.

4. Report details

4.1 Why was change felt to be necessary?

The key aims, set out in the cabinet decision were;

- a) To engender a culture-shift via a well-planned and carefully managed change programme that puts the customer at the heart of how services are delivered
- b) To develop a strong management team that will deliver the change programme and manage continual improvement thereafter.
- c) To improve the Council's resilience when dealing with winter maintenance and emergency situations.
- d) To develop operational systems that are lean, efficient, and flexible.
- e) To engage positively with the national drive towards a regional transportation service.

In the months/years preceding the Cabinet report, the highways collaboration with Conwy had proved to be undeliverable. A side effect of the Conwy collaboration had

been that many modernisation/service delivery improvement ideas, had been held in abeyance, pending the (expected) implementation phase.

This left us with some catching up to do. Within Denbighshire, there were also a number of historical duplications and/or artificial demarcations across the work areas of the two internal services (highways & public realm), which needed to be removed, i.e. in the interest of overall efficiency.

4.2 What service improvements are we aiming to deliver?

The set up being established is shown diagrammatically in Appendix 1

We want the **strategic team** to focus on maximising the value we get from our highways-spend, by analysing road conditions and identifying/proposing the optimum maintenance treatments, in a systematic (i.e. planned and programmed) way. This will be particularly important in a time of reducing budgets

We want the new **Works Unit** to procure our works in the most cost effective manner. This may mean doing things like (for example); using local contractors, on work items that had previously been done in house. We intend to provide closer supervision of the works that we are paying for. This won't reduce our direct costs (it will increase them). However; this will provide better value for money overall, because the quality of the work will be higher and the work will therefore last longer.

Not only will we be “doing things right” (as per paragraph above), but the works unit will also be charged with making sure that we are far more careful about “doing the right things”. For example; the presence of direction on site (e.g. via a clerk of works) can often result in a superior solution being built.

We want our **routine maintenance** activities to be undertaken by truly joined-up operational teams, with one point of contact controlling each team. This is often referred to as the Streetscene model.

The Streetscene model will allow us to balance our winter /summer service demands, and our urban/rural service demands. It will also increase our resilience when we are dealing with emergency situations. It is a service area where demand currently exceeds the resource levels. The development of new and innovative arrangements for dealing with this imbalance is therefore crucial, and it is important that this service area is managed effectively, with a strong customer focus.

Overall; there will be fewer service managers, with more delegation to front line teams. We are not proposing any significant reductions in the numbers of front line staff. The main thing we will be asking of our frontline staff is a commitment to flexibility (in their roles and their working patterns). If we can develop a lean and efficient workforce, working flexibly, that will be the best way to safeguard jobs.

4.3 Where are we up to in the change process?

We have appointed the **Strategic Highways** manager (Mike Hitchings), and the Highway Asset Manager (Tim Towers). There is another report to Communities Scrutiny (4 July 2013) that explains more about this arm of the service.

A brand new **Works Unit** has been established, bringing together three different work strands, i.e. procurement of county road schemes, the management of street lighting, and the design work for the Trunk Road Agency. The new Works Unit is managed by Andy Clark.

Brian Evans has been appointed as the **Routine Maintenance** Manager. His role is essentially that of a change-manager, and the need for this post will be reviewed after two years. The Streetscene managers have also been appointed (Mark Evans in the north, and Robin Jones in the south),

The next 6 weeks or so will be a transitional period, when the new appointees will be getting to know their new service areas, and the staff that they are likely to be working with. We are in the process of establishing a series of defined geographical areas, each with its own single point of contact. Over this period, we will be engaging with supervisors / chargehands and front line staff, in order to work out the best "supervisory configuration" for the Streetscene model.

The consultations and negotiations with front line staff are likely to take several months, and may not be completed in time for this year's winter maintenance season. However, we expect the whole process to be concluded by April 2014.

4.4 How will we know whether the new systems are improving things?

The longer term benefits to the highway network will include; fewer return visits to locations where work has already been done, and greater longevity on the works that we have procured/constructed. By definition; longevity can't be proven instantly, but our highway condition indicators will give a good indication of the progress that we are making. See the Highways Maintenance paper to this Committee (also 4 July 2013).

Streetscene issues are frequently at the forefront of the Council's interactions with the public and with members. The Streetscene benefits should be felt fairly quickly; with members having a "one stop shop" for many of the things that they get most customer contact about.

Customers should receive quicker and more definitive responses to any queries that they submit, and this is measurable.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

Improving our Roads is identified as a priority in the Corporate Plan 2012-17.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

Managing cost alone will not deliver significant financial benefits. We need to manage cost effectiveness instead. This is a key message from the systems thinking principles that we are using (see list of consultation documents – Appendix Two). So (for example); although there will be a reduction in the number of service managers, the main financial benefit will derive from better use of available resources.

There should be no adverse effects on other departments of the Council. There will be some demands, e.g. upon ICT to help us to eliminate paperwork at the frontline, but these will be self-financing.

The Service will also be in a better position to align itself with corporate priorities, for example in the fields of economic ambition and tourism.

7. What are the main Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) implications?

The creation of a strategic team will make it easier to identify and prioritise themes. This is outlined in the other highways report to today's scrutiny committee.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

List is given in Appendix Two

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Not obtained – update/information report only.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

Risks are being mitigated via widespread consultation, and major decisions are being challenged by a project team prior to those decisions being made.

Frontline risks are covered in today's Highways Maintenance report (to Communities Scrutiny)

11. Power to make the Decision

Highways Act 1980 & Section 2(1) of the Local Government Act 2000.

Articles 6.1 and 6.3.4(b) of the Council's Constitution

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