

Report To: Performance Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 24th October 2013

Lead Member / Officer: Steve Parker, Head of Highways and Environmental Services

Report Author: Tim Towers, Asset Manager

Title: Dropped Kerbs Strategy Update

1. What is the report about?

To update Members on progress with the development of a Dropped Kerbs Strategy, the establishment of key routes in communities, and prioritised schedule of installations.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To provide information regarding progress on various dropped kerb issues relating to performance measures in the Corporate Plan??

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Members note the progress made to date.

4. Report details.

The 2013/14 Service Plan states

Outcome 1 - Residents and visitors in Denbighshire have access to a well-managed road network

To support the Outcome there is an Improvement Activity:

Develop and implement policy and key routes regarding delivery of increased dropped kerbs at strategic locations

This was also included in the 2012/13 Service Plan but was not progressed.

To measure overall progress an indicator has been developed:

The percentage of key routes where a dropped kerb route is in place.

The first step in this process is to develop a policy and understand what a key route is e.g. between centres of population and health or leisure facilities, between care facilities and bus routes, from day nurseries and local housing, etc.

To start this process a draft project plan was prepared and developed with the Corporate Equalities Officer. The plan is attached as Appendix A. The overall aim of the project is summarised in the strapline: Creating unencumbered movement for everyone.

Kerbs are a necessity for highway safety but do cause a potential difficulty or hazard in different ways for visually impaired people, wheelchair and mobility scooter users, people with pushchairs and prams, ambulant-disabled people, and even for shoppers with heavy shopping bags/trolleys.

Dropped kerbs will improve or ensure access to shops and services and support individual independence and potentially regeneration of local town centres.

Meetings have been held to understand what information may be available internally regarding the location of potential users and also to discuss the possibility of providing a specific budget for use by Social Services to deal with 'one-off' requests outside of the established criteria.

The next step is to establish consultation with the local community. This will focus on local access champions/groups and will be used to develop criteria. This meeting is arranged for 5th November 2013.

The Council allocates a rolling block of capital for highways covering traffic schemes, patching works, street lighting etc. It would be appropriate to set aside an element of the Highways block allocation for dropped kerbs. A typical installation costs approximately £600 per individual crossing which would indicate that an initial allocation of £30,000 would be appropriate to develop a sustainable programme. Whenever possible external funding will be used e.g. when cycle routes are being developed.

Even a brief audit of locations indicates that there is a real need to improve the situation but resources will be limited and therefore the policy needs to reflect these limitations by giving clear guidance (derived from feedback with stake holders) on how routes can be prioritised. Such factors may include:-

1. Immediate safety issues – e.g. dangerous or damaged existing crossings.
2. Maximum benefit/impact
 - a. focus on main pedestrian routes between centres of population and local facilities
 - b. when creation of one crossing links up existing routes
 - c. where there are known large numbers of potential users e.g. Health Centres, Day care/sheltered accommodation, residential care homes, nursery provision, Bus Stations, Leisure facilities, Railway Stations
3. Car parks – all car parks provide disabled parking and many provide parent and child spaces. Many don't ensure access outside of the car park perimeter.
4. On street parking – access from disabled bays on to and across the highway in close proximity

5. Maximise any opportunity to develop routes when other maintenance or highway activity is taking place including utility undertakings.
 - a. Formal process to ensure all highways schemes include, wherever possible, dropped kerb installations.
 - b. Regular discussions with Utilities regarding any potential investment opportunities for the Council to install a dropped kerb
 - c. Maximising opportunities afforded through the planning process

Complaints already received should be reviewed as additional evidence and then dealt with through this process or via SS specific allocation.

Once it has been determined as to which strategic routes will be addressed we can then enhance the approach by carrying out the following:-

1. Wheelchair/pram friendly routes maps – although the aim is to remove the necessity this will take some time
2. Protection of dropped kerbs – implementation of yellow or white lines where possible and pro-active enforcement
3. Clearly defined guidelines relating to planning applications for new developments tied in with complete routes to access to local facilities.
4. Programme of access audits of all town centres.
5. Ongoing discussion with focus group
6. Social Services dealing with issues that fall outside of the above criteria

An opportunity has arisen to undertake work linking the Medical Centre in Rhyd with the Town Centre. The Traffic team are undertaking work on West Kinmel Street including 2 dropped kerbs. This will be increased to 13 dropped kerbs and will link through to the town centre. This complies with the criteria described above but is primarily being undertaken as the opportunity became available.

Other immediate works will be undertaken following the meeting with the consultative group.

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

The agreed strategy will lead to the provision of more dropped kerbs across the County in locations where there will be maximum benefit. This has been developed as an improvement action to support the Council's priority of improving the roads. The will also support the priority to ensure vulnerable people are protected and are able to live as independently as possible and may assist in developing the local economy.

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

The overall budget will be allocated from within the existing Highways block allocation. Within that budget there will be an element provided for one-off requirements which do not fit with the agreed criteria but are deemed essential. These ad hoc projects will be prioritised by Social Services but procured by Highways so as to obtain competitive rates.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

It is the intention to include the views of as many stake holders as possible so that the needs of all can be addressed in a focussed and sustainable way.

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

Consultation with Social Services

Consultation with focus/user groups

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

This Strategy should be delivered within the existing budget allocation for the Highways service and will mitigate the risks identified below

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

Currently there is a risk that we construct dropped crossings in an arbitrary manner which does not address the real needs and is therefore a waste of resource so this policy will take away that risk and will provide a focussed approach with suitable resources.

Whilst application of the Disability Discrimination Act, as it may apply to highways has not really been challenged there is always the risk that the county may be asked to show its commitment to complying with the Act in this regard and therefore this approach will mitigate such potential action.

11. Power to make the Decision

Highways Act 1980

Disability Discrimination Act 1995