



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

AGENDA ITEM: 9

DATE OF MEETING: 7th April 2015

REPORT AUTHOR: Alex Constantinides

SUBJECT: Highways and their performance - How are expectations being managed

PURPOSE:

1. To clarify how Luton Borough Council, (LBC), as the local Highway Authority is currently;
 - i. managing customer expectations
 - ii. approach to customer care; and
 - iii. an overall picture of service delivery

RECOMMENDATIONS:

2. **The Overview and Scrutiny Board is recommended to:**
 - i. **note how customer expectations are being managed**
 - ii. **note approach to customer care; and**
 - iii. **note the overall picture of service delivery as captured in the annual Work Programme, which is approved by Executive every year. The 2015/16 Work Programme will be reviewed by Executive on 07 April 2015**

REPORT:

OVERVIEW

3. Luton's highway network is an essential communications link that serves everyone every day of the week, its plays a critical role in the economic growth of Luton and is vital to the operation of businesses, public institutions and the service industry. Accordingly, the Highway Services carries out an annual programme of vital work to maintain and improve the highway network.
4. Luton Borough Council's, (LBC), Highway Services team is the Highway Authority for the borough which confers various statutory responsibilities and the need to operate within statutory duties, existing policies, benchmarking and legal frameworks.

5. Funding for highway work is both capital and revenue funded. The main funding sources for Highway Services is a Department for Transport grant, (DfT) funded through the Local Transport Plan, (LTP) and LBC funding. From time to time there is the opportunity to bid for additional funding for specific works. Most recently additional funding has been received through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, (LSTF).

MANAGING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

6. There are customer expectations relating to the highway network ensuring the highway is inspected, defects are treated on time, the highway remains safe, street lighting is working and congestion is managed.
7. In order to manage these expectations, Highway Services works to an approved programme of capital works as detailed in paragraphs 14-16. In addition to this there is a Highway Maintenance Plan and Winter Maintenance Plan which applies current methodologies and best practice for maintaining the highway and keeping the highway accessible in exceptional weather.
8. There are Key Performance Indicators, (KPI's) in place for both delivery of work and dealing with customer enquiries that are built into current systems meaning that when an order is raised or a customer enquiry is logged they need to be resolved within set measurable timescales.
9. Customer Service Centre (CSC) processes ensure that customers' expectations are correctly managed by giving timescales and explaining procedures fully. For example if a customer contacts the CSC with a lighting issue, they would be advised there is a 3 day turn around or 24 hours in the event of an emergency. This means that customers are well informed and understand CSC processes better. This also reduces repeat contact from the customer calling in to chase.
10. When a customer calls into the customer service centre with a request they are asked a number of probing questions to ensure that their query is clearly understood. For example if a customer calls regarding a pothole the CSC establish the size, depth and location in order to provide the most comprehensive details to the Highway Inspector who will be going out to address the defect. By investigating the query they ensure that the correct information is collated on the system so that the issue can be resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. As part of the customer service charter CSC aim to treat every customer as important individuals giving equal care and respect whilst providing accessible services throughout a variety of means.

APPROACH TO CUSTOMER CARE

11. Highway Services officers are extremely accessible and can be contacted directly by telephone, email and via Customer Services as well as LBC social networking and Complaints/Comments forms.
12. In addition to this Highway Services receives enquiries from members, constituent enquiries via councillors and MP's regarding highway issues including;
 - Highway defects, (such as potholes or rocking paving slabs)

- Street lighting
 - Traffic signals
 - Speeding traffic
 - Parking problems
 - Congestion
 - Pedestrian facilities
13. The majority of schemes involve statutory and public consultation. Within Highway Services, it is deemed important to seek the views of local residents prior to schemes being implemented. For Area Studies, schemes were designed including the wishes of local residents.
 14. For public consultation, leaflets or letters are physically posted to every property within a scheme area. In addition to this, consultations are available on line and for some schemes, public exhibitions are held.
 15. During scheme works update letters are sent to residents to advise of progress. All letters contain contact details for the engineer managing the scheme.

OVERALL PICTURE OF SERVICE DELIVERY

HIGHWAYS WORK PROGRAMME

16. The capital funded Work Programme for Integrated Transport and Highway Maintenance consists of various core areas of work which fulfil statutory duties of the Highway Authority and duties as prescribed in the Traffic Management Act 2004. This includes duties such as reducing the number of people injured in road traffic accidents, through the implementation of road safety schemes and safer routes to school schemes, or the expeditious movement through the highway network and managing congestion through work such as bus priority and Urban Traffic Control, (UTC).
17. The Work Programme is an annual programme approved by Executive that consists of approximately 100 small to medium scale schemes and lists schemes for the following four years. The majority of schemes are included in the programme based on a data-led approach such as the number of accidents and road condition. However, schemes may also be instigated at the request of local residents and organisations that may raise concerns such as speeding traffic or requests for improved crossing facilities. These requests are investigated and if they are within the remit of the highway authority and within available budgets they can be included in the five year programme for further investigation and consultation. However, on some occasions expectation to realisation might vary or might not be feasible due to factors such as cost, not physically possible or lack of public support at consultation.
18. Schemes that have been implemented are reviewed in order to establish whether they have achieved their purpose. This will include speed surveys to establish whether speeds have been reduced.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

19. The highway is an extremely valuable asset and in Luton its Gross Replacement Value is £614.9m. In order for Luton's roads to remain in their current state, £3m will need to be spent annually on road resurfacing or reconstruction.
20. Highway maintenance involves maintaining carriageways, footways, footpaths, cycle and bridleways. In this context, this is revenue funded reactive work that is mainly generated by Highways Inspectors inspecting the highway and highlighting defects that require immediate or short-term repair.
21. The criteria and intervention levels are taken from the Highway Maintenance Plan, which is based on national guidelines and codes of practice, i.e. Well Maintained Highways, Well Lit Highways and the Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme, (HMEP).
22. Highway defects are also raised by members of the public and logged on to the Customer Services database, APP. When defects are reported, a Highway Inspector will attend the site and raise an order to contractors to address the fault. The response time is dependent on the severity of the fault. Response times are summarised in the table below.

Fault Category	Response Time	Details
Service Request	24 hours	Raised by a member of the public and logged on to Flare
Category 1	1 hour	Critical faults are treated immediately
Category 2	7 days	Response time is dependent on the severity of the defect and the location
	28 days	
	90 days	

23. The above information contributes to quarterly KPI's and is used for benchmarking along with other performance metrics including reducing the number of Killed or Seriously Injured, (KSI) or the number of refuted insurance claims.
24. As part of Executive approved savings, in 2014/15 the footway reconstruction programme was cut from the Work Programme. Footways are now only maintained through routine or reactive maintenance.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT SCHEMES

25. As part of the remit of the LTP, public transport has been prioritised over the private motor car. Coupled with car ownership in the borough being lower than the national average, it is important to ensure that the borough is accessible by public transport.
26. The works programme includes specific sections of work for public transport and includes works to assist the punctuality of buses including improvements to bus lanes, bus stops and waiting restrictions. Mobility is addressed through the installation of high bus kerbs which allow for level entry on to busses.

27. As a member of a real-time passenger information (RTPI) system consortium involving Cambridgeshire County Council, Peterborough City Council, Northamptonshire and the three Unitary Authorities in Bedfordshire there is a programme of introducing passenger information at bus stops (and ultimately other locations) to supplement the printed timetable information, as well as on the Web (www.TravellLuton.co.uk)

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

28. There are currently 96 sets of traffic signals in Luton with a Gross Replacement Value in excess of £15.5m. Each set has a nominal life of 15 years and there are currently 11 sets overdue for replacement.
29. To manage the problem of ageing, obsolete and difficult to maintain traffic signals three to four sets need to be replaced annually. Without this annual investment signal faults will increase and in some cases the only option may be to switch the signals off. If the signals are switched off road user safety will be severely compromised and the liability of the Council will be put into question. In 2014/15 a total of £315,000 of LTP funding was spent on upgrading five sets of signals.
30. Changes to the highway layout following the completion of the Town Centre Transport Scheme and M1 Junction 10a have and will have an impact on traffic flows and the management of congestion in and around the town centre. The traffic flows are currently being monitored and an appropriate course of action will be decided once this has been completed.

STREET LIGHTING

31. Street Lighting is an integral part of the highway infrastructure with a Gross Replacement Value in excess of £30m. In common with the majority of Highway Authorities throughout the country, LBC's street lighting stock has suffered from historic under funding with 2398 columns that exceed the 'action age' as defined in the ILP's Technical Report 22.
32. Unless these structurally unsound columns are replaced there is a high risk that they will collapse and the lights will have to be turned off permanently until they are replaced. Some local residents may feel unsafe when walking or cycling for shorter local journeys, particularly in the evening if routes are unlit.
33. There is a five year street lighting replacement programme in place to address these issues and to provide improved columns or and more energy efficient lighting.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS AND ROAD SAFETY

34. It is the duty of the highway authority to '*carry out studies into accidents in their area and must in the light of those studies, take measures as appear to be appropriate to prevent such accidents including the dissemination of information and advice relating to the use of the road, the giving of practical training to road users or any class or description of road users, the construction, improvement and maintenance of roads that they are responsible for*'.
35. The Council receives injury accident data from Bedfordshire Police and this is stored on a database. This database is used to monitor and analyse these accidents on an annual basis as set out in the Road Safety Plan.

36. The focus of the LTP3 has changed from engineering measures to improve road safety to changing road users attitudes and behaviours through education, training and publicity. The road safety team have an annual programme of education, training and publicity and work closely with Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough and where appropriate other authorities in the region.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

37. Luton Borough Council, as the local Highway Authority has a statutory duty to maintain the highway in a safe condition. Accidents caused by failure to repair may result in damage to vehicles, personal injury or death, leading to civil claims against the Council, or conceivably, criminal prosecution.