

Local Members' Interest
N/A

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee – 14th November 2017

Infrastructure+ Improvement Plan and Performance Review

Recommendations

That the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee:

1. Receives an update on the progress of the previously agreed Infrastructure+ Action Plan; and
2. Is provided with an update on the progress of the extra £5m in-year (17/18) investment in highway maintenance.

Joint report of Cllr Mark Deaville, Cabinet Member for Commercial and Cllr Helen Fisher, Cabinet Support Member for Highways and Transport.

Summary

What is the Select Committee being asked to do and why?

3. The Infrastructure+ contract commenced on 1 October 2014. During the summer of 2015 Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee (PSSC) scrutinised the governance and reporting arrangements and on 24 April 2016 agreed an action plan of improvement with the then Cabinet Member for Economy, Environment and Transport. The first update was reported to PSSC on 15 November 2016. This report provides PSSC with a second update on progress against the agreed action plan.
4. The nature of the Infrastructure+ Strategic Partnership is that it is readily able to adapt to the Council's changing needs. This flexibility is being demonstrated during 2017/18 by delivering at short notice the commitment of extra investment in highway maintenance. This paper provides an update on the progress and achievements to date.

Report

Background

5. Staffordshire's Infrastructure+ contract is a strategic public-private partnership providing synergies in the holistic management and improvement of physical public infrastructure across Staffordshire. A principal ambition for the Infrastructure+ partnership is to enable effective collaboration, risk management

and innovation to continuously improve efficiency and Outcomes for Staffordshire's residents.

6. The core element of the Infrastructure+ contract is the maintenance, management and improvement of over 6,300Kms of highway network. Best use of resources is achieved by adopting preventive maintenance strategies and targeting resources as set out in the council's Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP), approved by Cabinet in January 2017. However, having to work within the limits of the available funding means that achieving locally desirable service levels is not always possible. This elevates the need for effective local engagement, timely communication and clear information for local Members and residents.
7. During the summer of 2015 PSSC established a working group to scrutinise progress. The working group's final report (please see link to this at the end of report) was endorsed on 17 December 2015 and a resulting Action Plan agreed on 24 April 2016.

Action Plan Update

8. Table 1 lists the recommendations within the previously agreed Action Plan.

Table 1 - Previous recommendations of Select Committee

Recommendation	
1.	Officers review the technical language used in customer feedback report with a view to making it easier for customers to understand (ref 6.1)
2.	A copy of Infrastructure+ organisation chart be made available to all Members on the Members' intranet and be kept up to date (ref 6.3)
3.	Details of the Members' Guide be placed on the Members' intranet (ref 6.3)
4.	Gulley Emptying programme be added to the Members' Guide (ref 6.5)
5.	That a review be made of highways information available on the Members' intranet to add details of local highways staff contacts, divisional highways programmes, planning applications in Members divisions (ref 6.5), local improvement plans and cyclical highways programmes (ref 6.6) and that officers investigate if a routine, reactive and cyclical performance pack for each Member's division could be provided (ref 6.6)
6.	A scrutiny Member (who is not a Member of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee) be invited to join the Customer and Communications Outcomes Group (6.3)
7.	A request is made to Staffordshire Borough and District Council planning officers that they publish highways (planning) responses that could pertain to housing developments as part of their Planning Committee minutes (ref 6.5)
8.	Members recommended that Community Highways Infrastructure Managers be asked to share details of meetings arranged with Parish Councils with elected members (ref 6.6).

What progress has been made against the previous recommendations?

9. **Recommendation 1 (Continuous):** In accordance with the Infrastructure+ Governance Structure a 'Customer and Communication Outcome Group', now chaired by the Cabinet Support Member for Highways and Transport, has ownership for Customer Satisfaction, including:
 - a. Establishing customer service improvement priorities for Infrastructure+;
 - b. Agreeing communications and media strategies; and
 - c. Defining the Customer Service performance management framework.
10. An initial priority of the Customer and Communication Outcome Group was to establish an automated update system in response to reported highway defects. This has been a significant IT challenge, initially requiring an interim manual solution until the automated version was launched in summer 2016.
11. Earlier in 2017 the group completed the initial review of the language used in the standard scripted automated responses. The system will continue to be refined and improved in response to customer feedback and technical advancement.
12. **Recommendation 2 (Complete):** Senior officer structure, responsibilities and contact details have been made available on the council's internet. Key officer contacts for local Members are their local Community Infrastructure Liaison Managers (CILMs).
13. **Recommendations 3, 4 and 5 (continuous):** The established Customer and Communication Outcome Group developed and launched a Highways Portal within the Member's intranet pages on 1 November 2016. The portal aims to serve as a Member's guide to help them respond directly to the many local highway enquiries they receive. Greater visibility of service information, performance and forward works programmes continues to be developed and will be routinely updated. To date the Highways Portal provides access to:
 - a. General 'hot-topic' highways information;
 - b. Key officer contact details;
 - c. Member's locally identified Divisional Highways Programme (DHP) priorities;
 - d. Live roadworks information;
 - e. Highway responses to local planning applications; and
 - f. Some cyclical maintenance work programmes e.g. grass cutting, with others e.g. gully emptying, in development.
14. **Recommendation 6 (Complete):** A member of Corporate Review Committee, initially Cllr. John Francis, has now been included within the membership of the Customer and Communication Outcome Group.
15. **Recommendation 7 (Complete):** Planning officers of local Borough and District Councils have been asked to publish highway consultation response conditions as part of their formal planning decision notice. This has generally been accepted and is being achieved by including a summary of the required conditions.

16. **Recommendation 8 (Complete):** Community Infrastructure Liaison Managers (CILM) continue to be reminded to share details of any meetings arranged with Parish Councils with the respective local elected County Councillors.

SCC's Extra £5m investment in Highway Maintenance during 2017/18

17. Maintaining Staffordshire's 6,300kms of roads and 4,500kms of footways is a job for the Council's Infrastructure+ strategic partnership. Following the original procurement, value for money continues to be ensured through commercial competition within the supply chain (subcontractors, plant and materials) as well as benchmarking of direct labour costs and operational performance. In addition exclusivity for additional scheme work is subject to demonstration of Best-Value.
18. Road maintenance is funded in two parts capital (life adding) government grant funding and local revenue (day to day upkeep) investment from the County Council. Between 2009 -2013 the County Council provided an extra £50m of its own capital investment. This improved the overall condition of the network by around 10%, adding durability that then enabled a series of subsequent savings to be made from the annual revenue funding in support of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). However, over the last two years parts of the network have deteriorated, with a corresponding increase in the number of defects, customer complaints and third-party claims for injury and property damage related claims.
19. In response to these circumstances Cabinet provisionally set out a new 4-year, £20m 'extra investment' programme. The priority in year 1 is to reduce the number of long-standing low-risk carriageway and footway pothole repairs to a more proportionate level, enable faster response times to new low-risk customer reported pothole defects and embrace a right-first-time and single visit approach wherever possible. Continued investment in subsequent years would aim to retain the improved level of service, whilst also providing added durability to reduce the number of pothole defects from occurring in the first place.
20. The extra £5m investment strategy for 17/18 is made of three core elements:
- a. £2.5m to provide an extra 45,000m² of localised pothole repairs to reduce the overall backlog and enable faster and more comprehensive repairs;
 - b. £2m towards hotspot-patching and resurfacing programme, targeting those locations with high levels of customer complaints and risk of personal injury or property damage e.g. Barton Turns, Burton; Hill Top, Hednesford; and Bridgecross Road, Burntwood;
 - c. £0.5m drainage improvements, targeted to locations causing repeat surface defects.
21. Progress:
- a. The extra investment has seen the overall number of potholes repaired increase to 31,000 in the past year compared to around 20,000 in a typical year.

- b. In terms of area this means the localised pothole repair programme is on track an extra 30,000m² of pothole patching repairs have been delivered in the first 6-months of 17/18, making a combined total of 80,000m², which is the same amount delivered in the whole of 2016/17.
 - c. The hot-spot and resurfacing programme is also on-schedule with 19 of the identified 32 schemes complete or in progress.
 - d. Sample survey customer-contact has started to show improvement in satisfaction with speed of response, scale of repair and quality of the work done.
 - e. Notably there has also been a sharp decrease in media enquiries and associated largely negative coverage since the extra programme of investment. This has been complemented by a decline in comments on social media.
22. The outline strategy for a continued £5m/year Extra Investment during years 2 – 4 (2018/19 to 2020/21) is set out below:
- a. £2m/year to achieve the optimum amount of low-cost preventative maintenance treatment i.e. an extra 70 miles of ‘amber’ condition roads treated each year to help prevent potholes from forming;
 - b. £0.5m/year towards routine and reactive pothole repairs, maintaining a more acceptable speed of response;
 - c. Continuation of £0.5m/year of targeted drainage improvements; and
 - d. £2.0m/year towards high-cost resurfacing of worn out carriageways and footways.

Conclusions

23. Of the eight recommendations within the agreed Infrastructure+ Action Plan 6 are complete and 2 will remain continuous.
24. The first-year of extra investment in road maintenance is having a positive effect in terms of reducing the number of long-standing low-risk carriageway and footway pothole repairs to a more proportionate level, enabling faster response times to new low-risk customer reported potholes and embracing a right-first-time and single visit approach wherever possible.

Link to Strategic Plan

25. The Infrastructure+ contract is aligned with the “Leading for a Connected Staffordshire” business plan most significantly through helping to make Staffordshire a Great Place to Live. Its contribution is assured through: clear and visible performance management frameworks and targets, governance structures and improvement plans to deliver the agreed Critical Success Factors, Contractual Outcomes and the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) commitments.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

26. The Infrastructure+ Action Plan was agreed with the Cabinet Member for Economy, Environment and Transportation on 26 April 2016. This report provides the second monitoring update of progress.

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Appendices/Background papers

Working group's final report:

[Infrastructure+ - Review of Scrutiny of Governance and Reporting Arrangements to Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee](#)

Appendix A - 2017/18 Extra Investment programme / tracker (October 2017)