

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Thursday 06 July 2023

Future Highway Delivery Model – Functional Plans

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Comments on the approach being taken to the development of Functional Plans for the delivery of the highway service.
- b. Comments on the format and main content headings using the draft Functional Specifications for highway urban and rural grass cutting as an example.
- c. Considers how the Scrutiny Committee inputs into the annual Functional Level service commissioning plans.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. At its meeting on 7th June 2023, the Committee received the latest update on the Highway Transformation Programme including the future functional approach to be adopted as part of the move to a Hybrid Mixed Economy operating model for the future highway service agreed by Cabinet in July 2022.
2. As part of this latest update the Committee were asked to consider the role of the Scrutiny Committee in agreeing the annual Functional Level service commissioning plans. To assist in this consideration the committee requested an early opportunity to consider a draft plan. This report therefore outlines this approach and provides a first draft of the Functional Level Specifications for highway urban and highway rural grass cutting as an example of the way the approach is being developed.

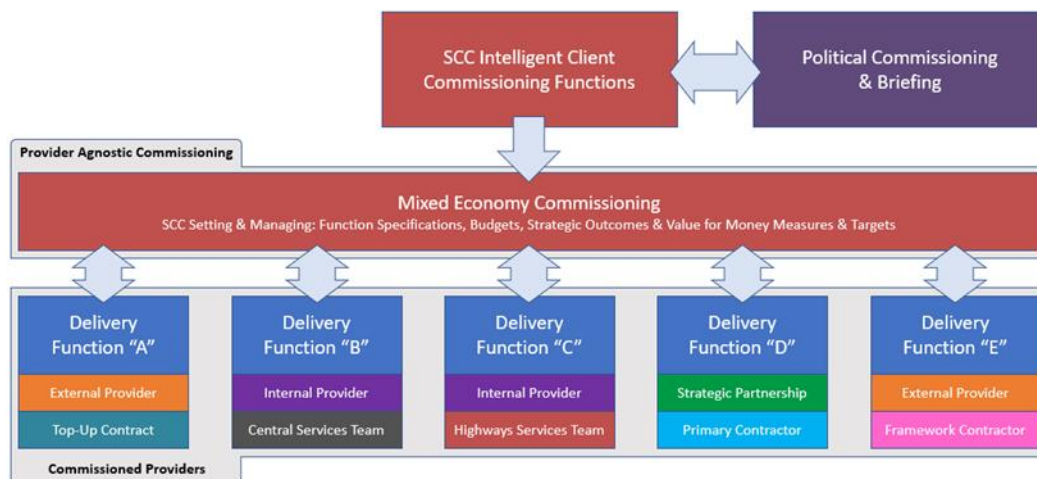
Report

Background

3. In July 2022, Cabinet approved moving to a Hybrid Mixed Economy operating model (Diagram 3 below) for the future highway service, ensuring continuous improvement and the best possible customer service, quality and value for money is achieved from each delivery function.

Mixed Economy Commissioning Commissioning Framework & Provider Abstraction Layer

Hybrid Operating Model 2



ADEPT / Proving Research Partnership: Executive Briefing

Diagram 3 Hybrid Mixed Economy Model

4. A key element of the Future Delivery Model includes a clearer focus on a functional level approach which will include strengthened client commissioning to provide additional assurance on service delivery against the identified requirements.
5. It is intended that Functional Level Service Specifications will be developed and provided for each service or activity and will represent the base specification for all delivery arrangements irrespective of the provider.
6. The Committee has been receiving regular updates about the Highways Transformation programme and at its meeting on 7th June 2023 were asked to consider whether there is a role for Scrutiny Committee in

agreeing the annual Functional Level Service commissions and if so, what this could look like.

Functional Level Approach

7. As part of the Functional Level approach, strategies, policies, programmes & services will continue to prioritise statutory responsibilities, reflect local insight and will be set by Cabinet.
8. A strengthened client commissioning role will ensure the right things are being done and this will be embedded with functional leads with clear responsibility for the following:
 - a. The development of Functional Level Service Specifications to support the approach set by Cabinet will sit with the service area responsible in Staffordshire County Council - whoever is responsible for the budget will authorise works against the Functional Level Service Specification.
 - b. Requests for works will be assessed in line with the agreed decision-making criteria for that service area or programme to support effective budget control – escalation by exception rather than as standard.
 - c. Greater control will be devolved to functional leads to manage and resolve issues (within the client/commissioning functions).
 - d. Responsibility for client management will be embedded across the service in all roles.
 - e. Service providers performance will be measured against an agreed Functional Level Service Specification that will set out service level, specification, and budget. A performance management framework will be used to monitor all Service providers including quality and quantity measures against the specification.
 - f. Clear accountability and leadership will be reflected at all levels within the system including between Staffordshire County Council and providers.
 - g. All functions will be responsible and accountable for the customer journey in their area.
 - h. All functions will be responsible and accountable for internal and external communications in their area in line with responsibilities outlined in Pitching the Message.
 - i. Responsibility for responding to service level enquiries will sit with the service best placed to respond to the enquiry rather than the point of enquiry – enquiries will be quickly triaged and signposted to the correct service.

Functional Level Service Specification

9. The Functional Level Service Specification for a service or activity will represent the base specification for all delivery arrangements

irrespective of the provider. This is intended to ensure that the County Council as highway authority is able to fulfil its statutory duty to maintain, to ensure that any maintenance activity is carried out safely and, information is available to support customer enquiries.

10. The Functional Level Service Specifications will generally form part of a wider suite of documents for the commissioning of a service including the form of contract or agreement and, the payment mechanism.
11. It is intended that the new specifications will be updated annually and will reflect any changes in service agreed through the transformation process and any changes in budget set through the medium-term financial process (MTFS). The first versions of the documents will represent the way the service is currently delivered, the "As Is".
12. The first activities that are intended to be covered by a Functional Specification include carriageway, footway, drainage, and grass cutting. The first drafts of these documents for highway urban grass cutting, and urban rural grass cutting are provided in Appendix 1 and 2.
13. Taking grass cutting as example, other providers such as the District or Parish Councils, may choose to locally enhance the specification for amenity purpose at their additional cost including for example, increasing the frequency of cut. The draft plans for grass cutting include an example of an improvement activity that is currently being considered.
14. The service provider will respond to the Functional Level Service Specification with a proposed Annual Plan for delivery of the service against that specification. The submitted Annual Plan will be reviewed and either approved or, further information requested by the functional lead for the service. The content of a typical annual plan for grass cutting is expected to include the items below:
 - a. A copy of the proposed method statement.
 - b. The order and timing of the work (programme).
 - c. Details of the number and type of plant he proposes to use to undertake the work.
 - d. Provisions for meeting health and safety, environmental and quality requirements.
 - e. Arrangements for training and ensuring the ongoing competency of People employed in the delivery of the service.
 - f. When the Contractor will require access to any Affected Property, acceptances required from the Service Manager and any other things to be provided by the Employer.

- g. The name of any subcontractor proposed to carry out the work, the subcontractors Annual Plan and the proposed conditions of contract in accordance with the Contract.
- h. Proposed performance management measures.

Current delivery arrangements – grass cutting

- 15. All highway rural grass cutting is currently delivered through the Infrastructure Plus Strategic Partnership with Amey and is subcontracted to two Staffordshire based companies. C M Rowlinson Ltd whose head office is near Oakamoor in the Staffordshire Moorlands and, M&R Williams Farm Services Ltd whose head office is near to Gnosall, in Stafford Borough. Collectively, these two contractors cut over 14,000 km of rural highway grass each year.
- 16. Urban grass cutting is delivered through a number of different arrangements as outlined below. A full list of current providers is given in Appendix 3.
 - a. Through the Infrastructure Plus Strategic Partnership with Amey
 - b. Through agreements under the Local Government Act 1972 and 2000 with Cannock Chase District Council, Lichfield District Council, Stafford Borough Council, Tamworth Borough Council and South Staffordshire Borough Council
 - c. Arrangements with a further seventeen City and Parish Councils.

Link to Strategic Plan

- 17. One of the five priorities of the County Council in its Strategic Plan 2022-26 is to “Fix more roads and improve transport and digital connections”.
- 18. Great places enjoy great connections. Whether by road, rail or ultrafast broadband, we want to make sure the people and businesses of Staffordshire are well-connected to one another, to the UK and across the globe.
- 19. Roads and transport are essential to everyday life, enabling us to see family and friends, get to work and school, access healthcare, shopping, and leisure activities.
- 20. Smooth, efficient, and increasingly greener transport supports our economy to grow. However, vehicle emissions play a significant role in climate change. We will work in partnership to reduce these emissions, promote greener travel, and increase cycling and walking.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

21. At its meeting on 24th April 2023, the Audit and Standards Committee received a Position Statement on the Highways Transformation Programme.

Community Impact

22. No immediate implications to the way the service is delivered as a result of this report. Should any future changes be proposed, a Community Impact assessment would be prepared, if required at the relevant time.

Legal and other implications

23. Although there are no immediate implications that arise from the review of these draft functional specifications, the future production, maintenance, and annual review of these documents will have an impact on the level of resource required in the highway service and this is being considered as part of the highway transformation.

24. Depending on the approach taken to annual review, this may have an impact on wider resources to support any additional governance that is required.

25. Where services are delivered through the Infrastructure Plus Strategic Partnership with Amey, the form of contract provides for the Service Manager to instruct changes to the specification for the Service.

26. Should future arrangements for delivery change, there would be implications across corporate services including for example, legal services where additional contracts are required, commercial services to support any procurement, people services in the event of any transfer of staff, finance to set up different mechanisms for payment and ICT if systems and software change. The impact would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis should delivery arrangements change.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Report to Cabinet on the Highways Future Delivery Model on 22nd July 2022

Director Delegated Decision - 5-year extension to the strategic partnership between the County Council and Amey on 14th March 2023.

Quarterly Updates to Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14th April 2022, 15th June 2022, 7th July 9th January 2023, 22nd March 2023, 7th June 2023.

Appendices are provided in separate documents as below.

Appendix 1 - Functional Specification – Highway Urban Grass Cutting DRAFT
v1.1.2 June 2023

Appendix 2 - Functional Specification – Highway Rural Grass Cutting DRAFT
v1.1.2 June 2023

Appendix 3 - List of Urban Grass Cutting Providers

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