

# Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Highways issues

**Thursday, 17 September 2009**

**Present:** Councillor Mike Devaney (Chair) and Ken Ball, Nora Ball, Doreen Dickinson, Adrian Lowe, Marion Lowe and June Molyneaux

**Chorley Council officers:** Ishbel Murray (Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods)), Martin Walls (Service Manager - Streetscene Services) and Ruth Rimmington (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

**Also in attendance:** Jo Turton (Executive Director for the Environment), Rick Hayton (Traffic and Safety Network Manager), Sarah Palmer (District Partnership Officer) and Keith Iddon (Chair of LCC Sustainable Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

## **09.HTG.15 WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed Jo Turton, (Executive Director for the Environment), Rick Hayton (Traffic and Safety Network Manager) from Lancashire County Council and Councillor Keith Iddon to the meeting.

## **09.HTG.16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Roy Lees and County Councillor Keith Young (Executive Member for Highways and Transport).

## **09.HTG.17 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Highways issues held on 3 August 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

## **09.HTG.18 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS**

No Members declared an interest in respect of items on the agenda.

## **09.HTG.19 DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT**

Members considered the scoping document, which had been updated to reflect the amendments made at the last meeting.

**RESOLVED – The document be approved for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

## **09.HTG.20 COLLECTING AND CONSIDERING EVIDENCE**

At the suggestions of the Chair it was AGREED to consider this information at the next meeting of the Task and Finish Group to enable the focus of this meeting to be the following item.

## **09.HTG.21 DISCUSSIONS WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Jo outlined that the services provided in this area were being named “public realm”, although it was difficult to find a name for this “green and black” area that was so important to customers and had reputational issues for the County Council.

The customer doesn't care how as long as the service is delivered – the challenge was how to deliver the best services and between LCC and Chorley Council. Clear accountability on service delivery and the provision of good services were needed.

Relationships were not as good as they should be following the termination of the Highways Partnership. A pilot had recently been undertaken with South Ribble, funded by Team Lancashire; to see how alternative arrangements could work. The two authorities considered the services to be delivered, the budget available and between them worked out how best to deliver them.

South Ribble now do all the grass cutting and maintenance of shrubs and trees. LCC previously delivered five cuts per year whilst South Ribble could deliver ten cuts per year and tailor the service to different parts of the district. There was better co-ordination, for example, litter was picked before the grass was cut. LCC still maintain the roads and pavements, and co-ordinate road closures with other agencies.

The customer satisfaction figures had not yet been received but positive anecdotal evidence had been received. The challenge now was how to roll this out with other Districts. A report would be presented to the LCC Cabinet on 8 October 2009 setting out project plan for this with the aim being to have agreements with all twelve districts by October 2010.

The Locality Plan was discussed as the potential monitoring mechanism for this, to enable monitoring from LCC, the District and the Lancashire Local. Members were keen to progress this project with a drive to work closely with districts. The Environment Directorate would need to look forward on how to be organised and deliver on a district footprint going forward.

The aim was to roll out with Districts, then have the option in the second year to involve parishes. In response to a query Jo agreed to take parish views on planning applications and highways comments through the public realm strategy negotiations.

Members suggested a pilot for Chorley, although the key would be in the detailed arrangements. There were particular areas where the Council would like to be proactive during a pilot, such as highway or footpath obstruction, parking on footpaths, shops in town centre encroaching, advertising boards etc.

Internal communication between offices would be an area of improvement in the coming months. The Directorate could work more efficiently with the contact centre and done some work had been undertaken relating to street lighting which had improved service efficiency. The contact centre would be relocated from the Hub to Preston City centre. The LCC website had been used by several Councillors to report issues.

Jo distributed a document containing key contacts for use by Chorley Councillors and undertook to forward the Highways Plan and map with grits bins to officers. The Public Enquiry Manager system received 1,000 calls a week, feedback was not offered out right but this would be developed in the future. 80% of enquiries were dealt with promptly – this needed to be communicated to the public more. Currently Councillors and officers were treated the same as members of the public. It was suggested that for County or Borough Councillors automatically receive feedback – this would be looked into.

A highways bulletin was in development which could be rolled out to Districts. Going forward there would be regularly meetings with District officers. Keeping people informed of progress would reduce the need for repeat contacts from customers and Councillors.

The issue of enforcement, for example, encroaching trees was considered. If trees were privately owned the owner would be given fourteen days to cut it down or LCC

could cut it down and claim the cost back. "A" boards were a sensitive issue, purges were occasional could be resource intensive. Communication was an important factor with this issue.

Chorley officers outlined their aspiration to undertake some enforcement activities, for example, fly tipping. Chorley would like to provide a wrap around service in conjunction with neighbourhood working the proactive and preventative activities this entailed. A well worded letter could be very effective. It was agreed this would be a positive way forward.

Members raised the provision of highways comments on planning applications as Chorley had recently had an appeal overturned, the traffic surveys were out of date and not done at right time. Jo advised she was looking at how to take this forward with the Corporate Director (Business) at Chorley and an officer would be based one day a week in Chorley as a pilot to pick up local intelligence.

Members considered the Streetscene Services Agreement and that Chorley have not yet signed this three year agreement. Rick advised the agreement represented a historical approach, the issue was the need to build in lessons learned from the pilot in South Ribble and put these into future agreements. The intention was to be flexible and to review the agreements in twelve months.

This issue of information being cascaded with Police, in particular between meetings was considered, between PACT, road safety and other meetings. Jo advised there was liaison with the Police, with regular road safety liaison meetings, although feedback could be improved. A further discussion would be needed on how PACT and Lancashire Locals could work together, for example, a regular bulletin could be produced.

The relationships with Utility companies were discussed, United Utilities had attended and Overview and Scrutiny Committee at LCC and there were quarterly coordination meetings. The outcomes were produced into a spreadsheet distributed to the Police, LCC, United Utilities and Chorley Council. This meeting was evolving and Chorley officers would be invited to future meetings.

Sarah advised that the Lancashire Local Chorley had a number of delegated powers relating to LCC highways functions, as well as a wider shaping and influencing role. Sarah had previously provided Ruth with a copy of the Lancashire Local Constitution as background information to the Task Group. In response to a question about the future of Lancashire Local's under the new administration, Sarah outlined that while it was likely that the new administration may want to review the Lancashire Local initiative, she was not aware of any plans to abolish the Lancashire Locals.

Sarah explained that the Lancashire Local would be responsible for performance monitoring the Chorley Locality Plan which contained a number of joint LCC / Chorley Council commitments around highways and street scene services.

It was agreed to send a copy of the final report of this inquiry to Lancashire Locals for their information.

The Neighbourhood Working action plan sign off meetings had recently been held, where the some projects have been the subject of traffic management and safety. These could be used to identify funding going forward.

Jo noted the duplication of meetings needed to be streamlined and the team structure at LCC supported this. There were some successes to report with recent changes, for example, the Police now will monitor speeding traffic without a set criteria of accidents.

The Chair thanked Jo and Rick for their attendance and expressed his hope that some of the initiatives discussed would go forward from this point.

Councillors Adrian and Marion Lowe left the meeting at 7.45pm.

## **09.HTG.22 PROJECT PLAN**

Members noted that communication between all partners would be vital going forward and that the proof would be in the delivery. There would be a need to be clear on performance measures, costs and accountability. Officers advised that Chorley have been assured consultation on LCC spending plans.

It was AGREED to review the information considered so far to enable Members to review the inquiry objectives at next the meeting. This would ensure any points that have been missed to be picked up, this would include budget implications in time for next budget round.

Chair