

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Highways issues

Tuesday, 20 October 2009

Present: Councillor Mike Devaney (Chair) and Ken Ball, Roy Lees, Adrian Lowe and Marion Lowe

Chorley Council officers: Martin Walls (Service Manager - Streetscene Services) and Ruth Rimmington (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

09.HTG.23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Alan Cullens (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Nora Ball and June Molyneaux.

09.HTG.24 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Highways issues held on 17 September 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

09.HTG.25 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

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

09.HTG.26 COLLECTING AND CONSIDERING EVIDENCE

Having considered the evidence presented the Group moved on to consideration of the draft final report.

RESOLVED – The evidence be noted.

09.HTG.27 DRAFT FINAL REPORT

The Group used a flip chart to document the findings and recommendations for each objective.

Objective one – Ongoing provision of information

Findings

Lancashire County Council Highways will only refill grit bins which they have supplied or have been taken over by them. A review had been undertaken of grit bins in Chorley and the results of this were requested for the next meeting.

Recommendations

1. To set in place a formal information sharing system between Councillors and officers on a practical and strategic level utilising email and other communication tools.
2. To use “intheknow” to notify Members of roadworks, highways and neighbourhoods information.
3. To present an update report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee every six months on the inquiry recommendations to ensure robust performance monitoring by the Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods).

Objective two - Communication cycles

Recommendations

1. To implement an information sticker to be used on grit bins, street lights and generally which displays contact telephone numbers and location information to enable easier fault reporting.

Objective three - Consulting and influencing

Findings

Minor repairs: Discussions were undertaken whether Chorley Council should undertake minor repairs on roads and pavements and it was agreed this would not be appropriate at this time.

Enforcement: It was felt that a more robust approach was required to enforcement. In particular, health and safety issues arising from vegetation that encroaches onto footpaths, street lights and signage and advertising boards on pavements. The group felt strongly that discussions take place to ensure that enforcement is consistent, positive and effective. Currently, the responsibility for some enforcement matters rests with Lancashire County Council. Chorley would be better served if this was delivered by Chorley.

Of major concern is the issue of market stalls and pavement cafés encroaching. As this is currently a District function there is no reason for this.

Recommendations

1. Officers to enter into negotiations with Lancashire County Council with respect to Chorley delivering some enforcement functions, such as advertising boards and overhanging vegetation.
2. To increase enforcement relating to encroaching market stalls and pavement cafés.
3. To include performance monitoring information on enforcement activities on the quarterly report presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
4. To introduce quarterly meetings between the county (Environment) and district (Neighbourhoods) portfolio holders.
5. To introduce regular between Lancashire County Council (Environment Directorate) and Chorley Council (Neighbourhoods Directorate) officers.
6. To streamline existing meeting arrangements to make them more effective and ensure the correct people are in attendance.

Objective four – Inconsistencies

Recommendations

1. To enter into an agreement whereby the County has responsibility for maintaining roads and pavements and the Chorley Council has responsibility for the grass cutting.
2. The Lancashire County Council call out officer to notify, by the most appropriate means, Members and the Service Manager – Streetscene Services when gritting wagons are dispatched.
3. The Service Manager – Streetscene Services to set in motion the gritting of Chorley car parks on receipt of the above notification.

General points

A further request was made for each Member to have a copy of the gritting routes and the financial benefit of having clean streets as mentioned in the Public Realm Integration Project report considered at the previous item.

The cleaning of bus stops was discussed and a report would be presented to Executive Cabinet in the next few months on this.

The Highways Maintenance Agreement had been received from the County. Martin would request to provide a summary version of this for the next meeting.

The Chair undertook to write to Jo Turton regarding an issue raised by Councillor Ken Ball at the last meeting relating to overhanging vegetation.

09.HTG.28 PROJECT PLAN

It was AGREED that the next meeting be held on the rising of Executive Cabinet on 12 November 2009.

Chair