

Highways & Transport

Continuous Improvement

Improvements to communications and resident satisfaction

Overview and Scrutiny Meeting
March 2024



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Overview

We are responsible for all adopted roads and footways across the borough, as well as asset management, transport planning, streetworks, traffic management, highway planning, active travel and corporate transport.

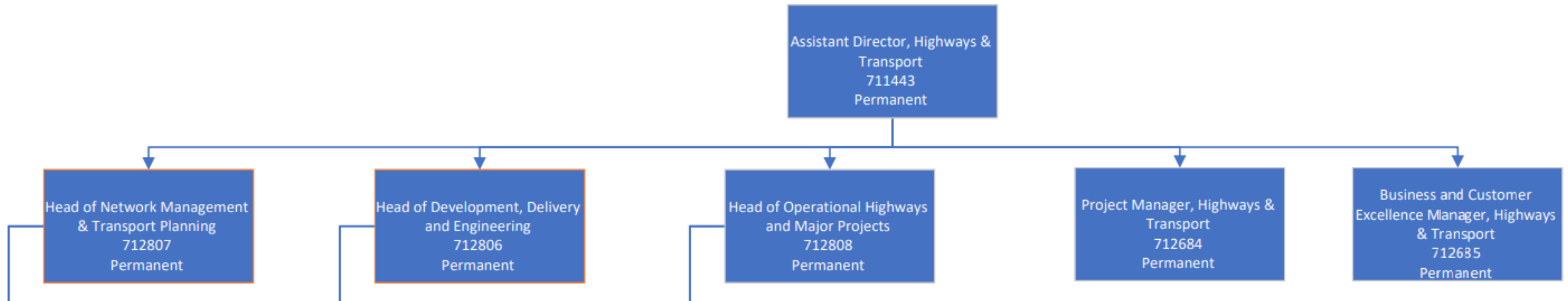
VolkerHighways are the council's main contractor for highways and are responsible for the maintenance of our highways network.

The safety of our residents is our main priority and scheduled safety inspections are carried out regularly to ensure our road network is kept safe. However, residents have the ability to report issues online or on the phone if they have any concerns. They can also contact us to ask a question about anything highways related.

Asset Group	Description
Roads and footways	725 km of roads (including 9 km of motorway) 829 km of roadside footways 5 km of linking footpaths 53 km of off-road cycleways 9 km of on-road cycleways 35,000 Road Gullies 4,500 manholes
Structures	243 structures (including 85 bridges, 77 footbridges, excluding earthworks/VRS system)
Street lighting	16,953 lighting units 2,152 lit signs and traffic bollards Various other associated equipment
Street furniture	Signs, fencing, bins, bollards, benches, street name plates, cycle stands, etc.



Restructuring the department – Phase 1



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As a universal service used by all Wokingham Borough residents, there has always been a huge demand on the Highways and Transport Department.

In 2023 it was agreed the volume of calls and emails were becoming unsustainable which was affecting the quality of the responses and the time in which it takes for a resident to get a response.

It was decided that a restructure and a more proactive approach to customer excellence from within the department was required to reduce enquiries and complaints to improve the customer experience.

In September 2023, a Project Manager and a Business and Customer Excellence Manager joined the department, closely followed in October by a Contract Manager.



New and improved CRM system

Google analytics to shape website updates

Structure review and recruitment

KPI review / change

Call listening and scoring

Review of front and back end of current systems

3C's Training

Improved contract management

New pothole reporting system

Cross directorate working

Review processes to improve what we do and how we do it collectively

Track a fault

Traffic and Travel newsletter and bespoke newsletters for major projects

Continuous Improvement Programme

Training

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Traffic and Travel social media

Update template responses

Empower VolkerHighways team to answer all H&T queries

Gov metrics analysis

Regular meetings with WBC and VolkerHighways customer services

NSL to manage PCN calls

Support improvement where systems are used by other P&G officers

Website updates and improvements

New Microsoft Team chat – H&T Hub

Helping shape the messaging going out via CEM team

Move VolkerHighways to Netcalls

Policies, plans and strategies



Examples of improvements in action

Good Afternoon Alistair,

I hope you are well.

I understand that there was a request at the O&S meeting on Monday to update the website so that the 'report it' system referenced footways as well as roads.


I just wanted to advise that this amend has been made and thank you for your suggestion.

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/roadworks-and-outdoor-maintenance/report-problem-roads-and-streets>

Kind regards,
Jo

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Business and Customer Experience Manager

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Report a problem with roads and streets

Report potholes, road damage, faults and more

In this section

Report flooding and problems with drainage	Report potholes and road/footway damage	Report problems with street lights	Report problems with traffic lights
Report broken or missing signs	Report problems with road markings	Report problems with public rights of way	Report problems with manhole covers
Report debris or obstruction in the road/footway	Request dead animal removal	Report an abandoned vehicle	Report a problem with litter bins

We take onboard feedback from residents, local businesses, councillors, town and parish councils and partners to continuously improve the customer journey. There is a significant amount of work being carried out to improve our website to allow people to self-serve 24/7.

Examples of improvements in action

Comment

On the new website, I can find no record of my expired permits or more importantly, my current country park permit.

Apply for a car park permit

| How to apply

| [Parking permits for school drop off and pick ups](#)

| [Parking permits for market stall holders](#)

| [Parking permits for country parks](#)

| [Season ticket parking permits](#)

| [Terms and conditions](#)

New parking permit system

A new online parking permit system went live in September 2023, offering drivers more control and flexibility, as well as providing reduced waiting time for renewals and new applications.

If you currently have a parking permit that hasn't reached its expiry date, then it is still valid and you can continue to use this permit until it is due to expire.

You will then need to apply for a new permit through the new system. You will not receive a physical permit as all permit information will be stored online with parking inspectors having access to all valid permit information electronically.

[Apply for or renew permit](#)

We experienced an increase in calls and some negative feedback on gov metrics after the launch of the new parking permit system.

As a result, we updated the website with information about [on street parking permits](#) and [car parking permits](#) to make the process clearer.

Further discussion have been had since the launch in August and lessons learnt about ensuring information is communicated in advance of future launches.



Examples of improvements in action

Response – Southern Gas Network (SGN)

Thank you for bringing this issue to our attention.

Our team have visited the site and carried out a safety inspection.

We have been in contact with Southern Gas Network (SGN) who are responsible for the maintenance of this apparatus to update them on our findings. We have high expectations of companies working on our road network and our streetworks inspectors are in regular contact to ensure that they are working efficiently and safely across the borough.

We thank you again for making us aware of this situation and we will liaise with our contacts at SGN to ensure they get this resolved. Should you wish to discuss this further with SGN, you can contact them directly on 0345 454 1111

Wokingham Borough Council Highways Team.

Residents can report issues through our ‘report it system’ on our website and we have updated our responses to provide relevant information including reasons why we sometimes do not carry out works after inspection.

We have also upgraded the ‘track a fault system’ to allow residents to track the progress of their issue by simply typing in the reference number of their enquiry.

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Reason - No Repair Required

Thank you for bringing this issue to our attention.

We have carried out a safety inspection of the issue you reported and upon investigation and the issue has been found not to be safety critical at this time.

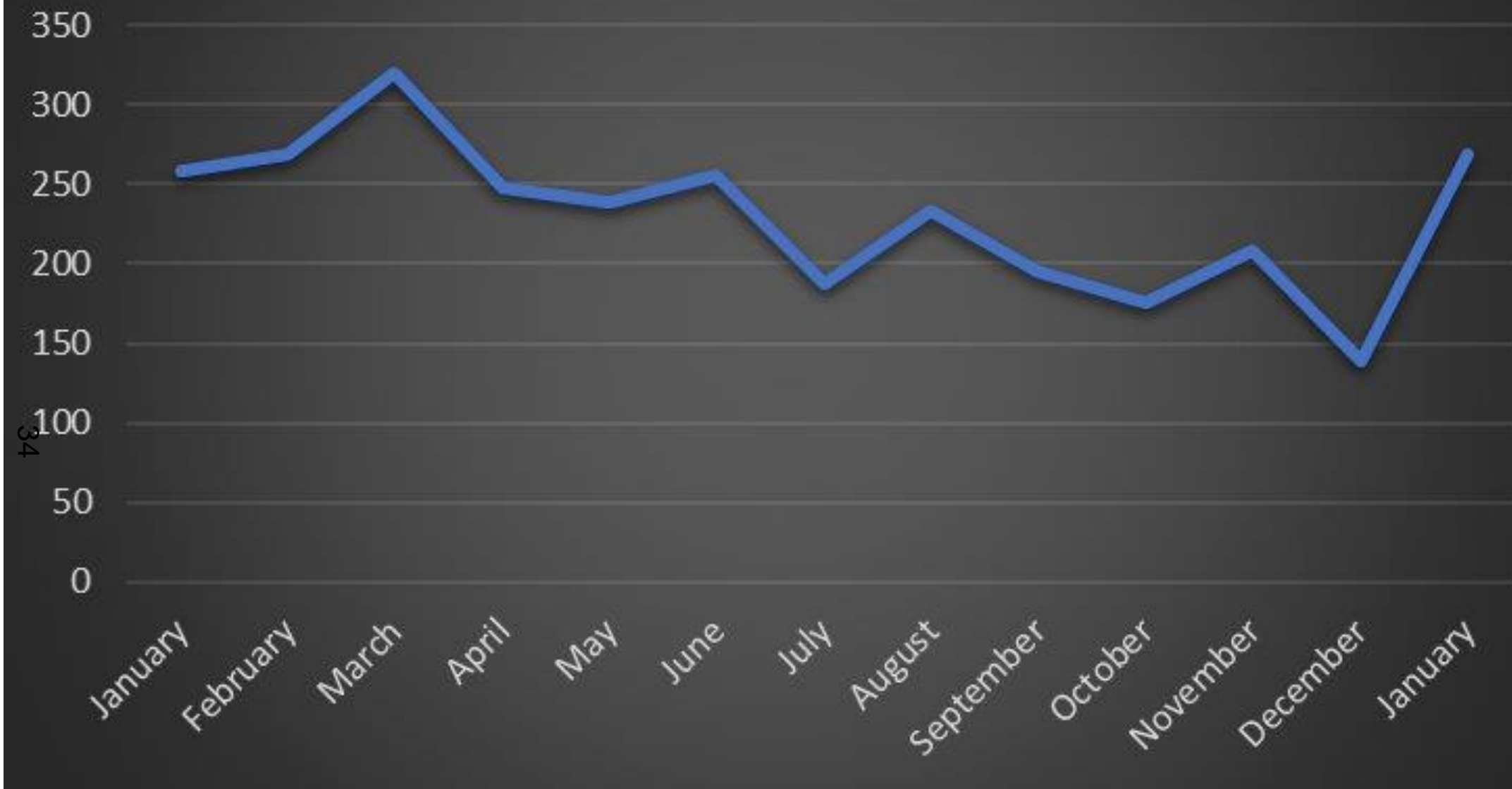
However, we want to assure you that all roads and footways across the borough are regularly inspected by our highways team. Further information about the frequency of our safety checks can be found in our [Highways Maintenance Management Plan](#) on our website.

During our scheduled checks, we will monitor the issue you have raised and carry out any necessary works to ensure it remains safe. If you feel in the future that it has become a safety issue, please do not hesitate to get in contact via our [reporting system](#) on our website quoting the reference number for this case and we will arrange for a site visit to take place.

Our [Highway Network Maintenance Plan](#) is available on our website where you can find out more about how we determine if something is safety critical.



Highways General Enquiries



Our aim is for our customers to be able to self-serve. Where this isn't possible, it is our aim that all highway enquiries should come in directly via our Customer Relations Management (CRM) system.

The only exception is reporting an issue which can be done via our website.

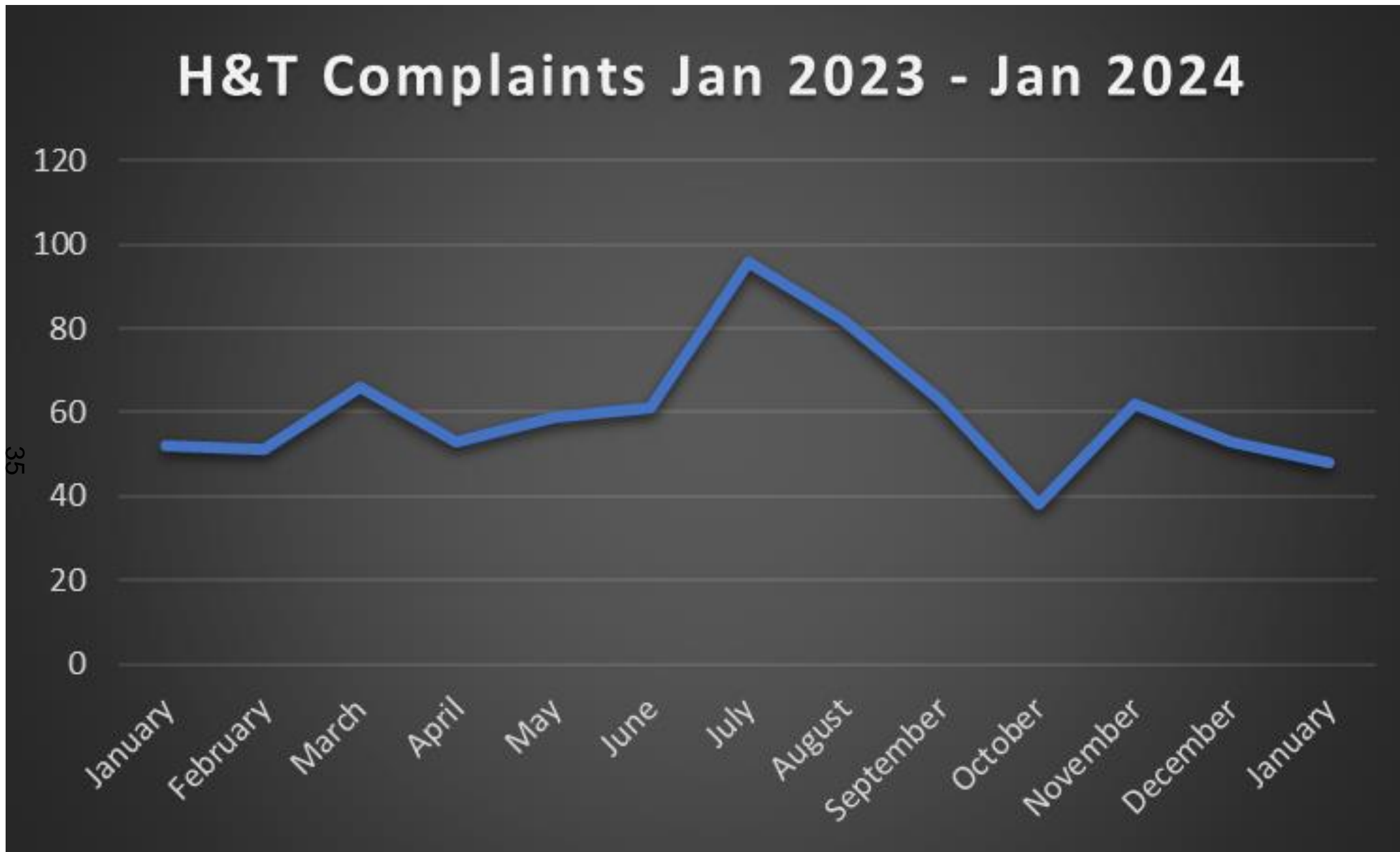
If customer calls or emails in via contact us page, these enquires are then logged onto the CRM system.

Using this system allows us to track the responses and the time it has taken to respond (working successfully to a current 10 working day SLA)

This avoids duplications with emails being sent to multiple members of staff and provides a more efficient service, replying quicker to customers.



Customer Relations Management System - Complaints



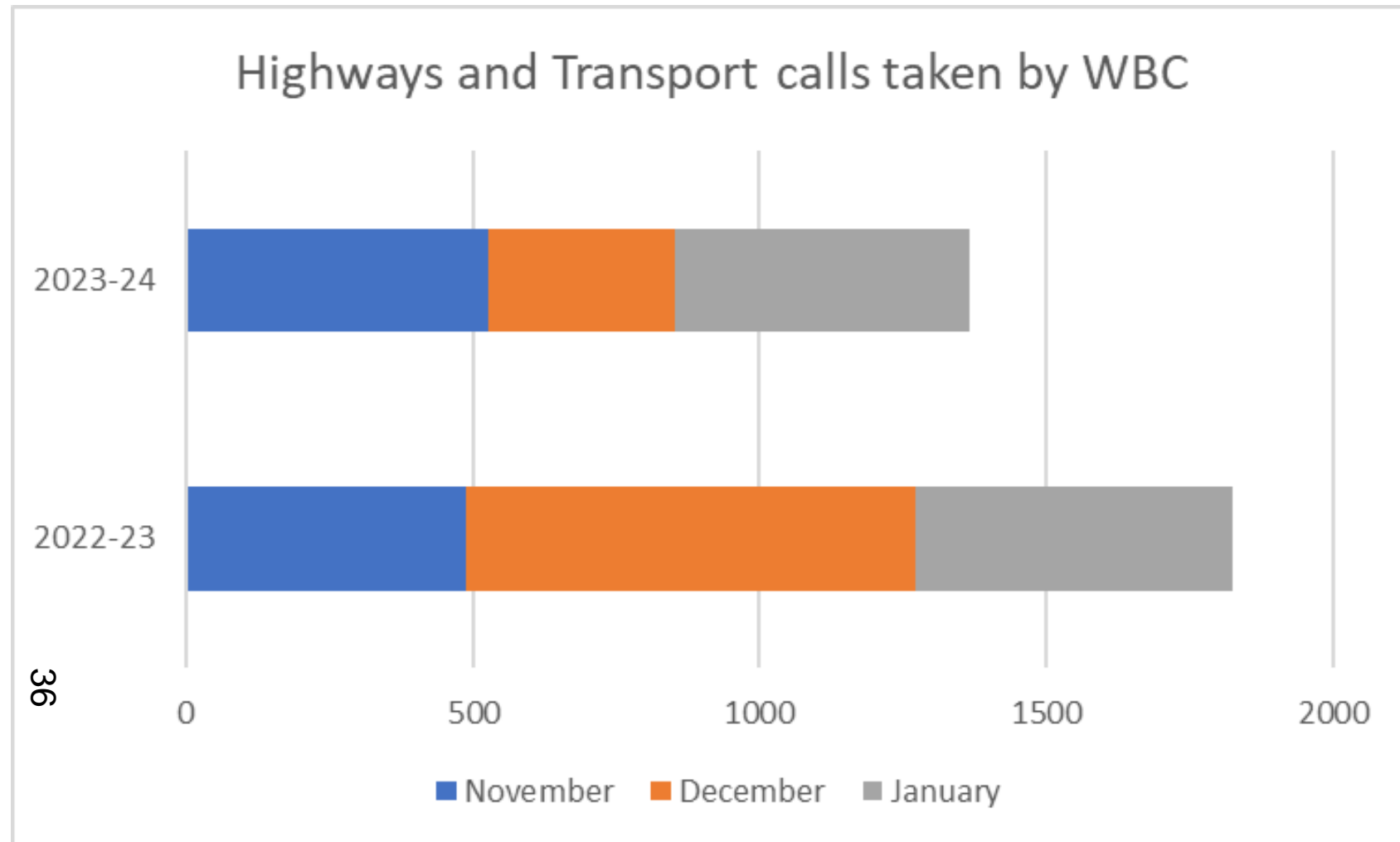
All highways complaints are also logged on our CRM system with a response deadline of five days.

Again, this is to avoid duplications as we have a big problem with complaints being dealt with from the top down.

Issues are being sent to Chief Exec's Office, directors, multiple councillors and MPs at times. These are then forwarded on to multiple officers who are then dealing with the same issue. This delays our response times to enquiries which are then escalated to complaints.

Funnelling all enquiries and complaints into the CRM system avoids people bypassing the system and causing multiple people working on the same issue.





25.3% decrease in H&T calls taken by WBC year on year for November – January

Callers into the council are directed to VolkerHighways when selecting Highways options. However, a high number of callers still select the option to go through to WBC switch board.

November 2023 – January 2024 WBC took 1365 Highways and Transport calls compared to 1827 in the same period last year.

VolkerHighways saw a 9.18% increase in calls compared to the same period last year

This increase could be attributed to the work we have done with VolkerHighways to take ownership of all highways calls and not transfer them back to WBC.

Our long-term aim is to reduce calls coming into both WBC and VolkerHighways by improving the way in which customers are able to self-serve.

Next Steps – Top 5

Increase reach - Traffic and Travel branded communications, both social media and newsletters

Improve website - Continue with website updates and improvements including Highways and Transport A-Z to improve customers' ability to self-serve

Answer questions first time - Continue to support VolkerHighways call centre to own customer service team and increase first fix – call listening and scoring using new KPI scoring system to highlight a focus for training sessions

More efficient service – including new system to report potholes to help reduce number of 'no further action' reports

New Customer Management system – we are continuing to improve how we liaise with our customers and the new system will allow us to build on what we have achieved so far and continue to improve.



Questions?

