

# Agenda Item 35.

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Update on Communications Issues in Highways and Transport</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2016
<b>WARD</b>	All
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Heather Thwaites, Director of Environment

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Members and the public will be well informed of highways projects

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The committee is asked to comment on the proposals and plans for improving communication of highways and transport projects.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

Good communication of the highways and transport works programme is essential to the service being delivered effectively. The service needs to work closely with the customer service team as the Council implements wider reaching customer service improvements

## **Background**

Highways and Transport is a front line service and its activities have an impact on people every day. Keeping the travelling public and local members aware of the service's plans and programmes is fundamental to providing an excellent service..

## **Analysis**

Highways projects are enormously varied in their complexity and scale. Whilst we carry out major multi million pound projects such as Station Link Road the majority of our works are very small scale and cost just hundreds of pounds or less. In between there are numerous other projects and each of them has some impact on the travelling public and local residents.

It has always been our intention to keep local members and the public informed about works in their localities. However members have recently expressed some level of discontent with the level and quality of information being provided and we are hoping to improve this for forthcoming works.

To do this we will be working closely with the Council's customer care team so as we provide a consistent message to all enquiries and with the Council's web team to provide a better more comprehensive web based service so as people can self serve. All larger schemes or programmes of works have a communications plan developed with the Councils communications team

In order to provide better information we need greater surety about our own programmes. To this end we have been working with our contractor to develop a more

robust forward programme for 2016.17 works. This has been completed in draft and shared with the executive member. We will share this with all members in the coming few weeks via a web link and it will be available to the public via the web site as well. We have recently integrated the roadworks web site in to our own web site and on this all works on the highway are shown.

Inevitably there will be changes to the programme and as these occur the on line programme will be updated.

Where larger works are being carried out we try to letter drop residents who are likely to be directly affected. We will ensure that local members are always copied in to these letters so as they are aware of upcoming works. In addition we make use of social media, on site signs and electronic variable message signs. For very large projects we inform the local media and are assisted with bulletins on radio Berkshire and for some (such as the forthcoming Loddon viaduct works) we have utilised radio adverts to inform the public.

We will continue to hold monthly programme meetings that are open to all where the latest works programmes are discussed for not only the Council’s works but also those of the utility companies. We will endeavour to put the notes of these meetings on the web site so as they are easily accessible.

Looking further ahead we are aiming to develop a 3 year programme of works and commit to this. We are also working with the customer care team to provide better feedback to enquiries about road defects that link directly to activity to fix that defect.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	0	0	
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	0	0	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0	0	

**Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision**  
None

**Cross-Council Implications** (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)  
N/A

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