

## **REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE**

**29 June 2004**

### **PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HIGHWAY SERVICE REVIEW ACTION PLAN**

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

To inform Members of the Environment Select Committee on the progress of implementing the Action Plan emanating from the Highways Service Review.

#### **2. Background**

Members will recall that the Final Report and Action Plan for the Highways Service Review was approved by Cabinet on 4 June 2003 following progress reports to, and endorsement by, the Highway Service Review Ad Hoc Committee and the Overview Select Committee.

#### **3. Progress against the Action Plan**

Detailed progress against all the individual components of the Action Plan is shown in **Appendix 1**. As Members will note, good momentum has been maintained and the majority of actions have been progressed as planned. Where slippage has occurred corrective measures have been taken to ensure that the service improvements envisaged as part of the review will take place albeit slightly behind schedule. Of the 45 discrete actions within the improvement plan, 33 are complete, 9 have been subject to minor delays and 3 remain areas of concern, the details of which are itemised below.

#### **4. Areas of Concern**

##### Action No.14 - Street Lighting

A bid for PFI funding was made as planned but unfortunately it has been unsuccessful. Discussions have been held with the Department for Transport in order to strengthen the business case for PFI funding, and as a result another submission is being considered. In the event this bid is unsuccessful other funding options will need to be considered by the County Council given the extent of the backlog and ongoing funding requirements.

##### Action No.20 - Partnership Working

Work to secure a partner for the delivery of Highway services was deferred pending the outcome of extensive negotiations with District Councils on the Manage and Operate Partnership as this could have had a considerable impact on the size and type of the partnership needed to deliver quality highway services. It is pleasing to report that the three District Councils concerned have now signed the MOP Agreement. To expedite progress a

dedicated project manager has been appointed and work is now progressing well to form a partnership that is considered vital to deliver increased workload and indeed demonstrate Best Value through successful LTP settlements as well as the Building Better Communities initiative.

#### Action No.19 - Highway Asset Management System (HAMS)

The development of an Asset Management System (HAMS) has proved to be far more complex than originally envisaged. This can largely be attributed to the fact that the system is multi-faceted, covering areas such as policies, standards, condition of inventory and performance management. Furthermore the development of the system has to dovetail with the County Council's strategy for improved Public Access to Services and e-government agenda. In recognition of these factors and bearing in mind that this is an innovative development it is considered appropriate to seek external advice from experts in these areas following which a project plan for implementation will be developed. To expedite progress, Opus a recognised company in the field, has been commissioned by the Department.

#### Best Value Inspection

5. On a related matter, Members are reminded that the Audit Commission Inspectors are anticipated to be 'on site' shortly as a follow up to the Best Value Review of Access to Services. It is a possibility that their reality checks could include Highway Services and as such, the access related actions from the Highway Review are being positively implemented.

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