

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES**HIGHWAYS OUT OF HOURS SERVICE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Committee with an overview of the highways out of hours service and an update on the associated emergency response by Via East Midlands Limited across Nottinghamshire.

Information

2. Via EM provides an incident response service to Nottinghamshire County Council which covers 24 hours each day of the year. During normal working hours there is a dedicated team that attends to incidents that have been reported, while out of hours this response service is covered by Via EM staff on a rota basis.
3. Each week there are fifteen Via EM individuals available to respond to emergencies that occur out of hours, eleven Bronze Officers, three Silver Officers, and one Gold Officer. These staff are able to deal with issues that relate to highway maintenance, street lighting and traffic signals, and forestry related issues, such as trees that have fallen onto the highway. During periods where storms have been forecasted, then additional staff are placed on standby, with sub-contractors also made available if required. In large-scale incidents, the Via EM Duty Officer will be contacted by the NCC Emergency Planning Team Duty Officer and will be linked into any multi-agency response being coordinated through the Local Resilience Forum. Such incidents may include severe weather (including widespread major flooding) or transportation accidents, or other emergencies affecting the highways network in any way.
4. The period between 4pm and 8am Monday to Friday, and from 4pm Friday through to 8am on Monday of the following week, are considered as the 'out of hours' period. Calls that are received between 4pm and 6pm each weekday are dealt with by the Nottinghamshire County Council Customer Service Centre, after which calls are dealt with by a bespoke call management service, First Call Communications. This arrangement has been in place for over twenty years and the system in place works well. The use of First Call is also reviewed on a regular basis for value for money and customer service.
5. On receipt of a call, the call handlers will initially assess the circumstances of the issue being reported and decide whether the call needs to be passed to the Via EM Silver Duty Officer to arrange attendance. Not all calls received are related to the highway or fall under the responsibility of Nottinghamshire County Council, and callers are on occasions informed that they need to contact a neighbouring authority, or National Highways if the issue relates to the Motorway or Trunk Roads. The role of the call handler is to obtain the details of the incident, location and contact details of the person reporting. As the majority of the calls received are

from the Police, an incident number is also recorded to allow follow up action if required. This service ensures that staff on the standby rota concentrate their efforts on highway related issues and do not deal with erroneous calls. In the event that further information is required on a reported issue, First Call will act as the intermediary and contact the initial caller to discuss a matter further, again saving time and effort for call-out staff.

6. The number of calls received out of hours can vary from week to week, but typically this can amount to over 1500 calls on an annual basis. During a severe weather event the number of calls can be significant over a relatively short period and therefore alternative arrangements for call receipt into Via EM are considered and implemented. This provides a dedicated point of contact to deal with calls from First Call to allow Silver and Gold Officers to concentrate on emergency response. An additional benefit is that First Call are able to quickly upscale call handler numbers in times of an emergency to deal with increased call numbers.
7. Costs associated with delivering the out of hours service fluctuate depending on the number and complexity of the emergencies that are handled. Basic annual costs for the service amount to approximately £220,000, covering employee standby, vehicles and associated plant, and including the charges associated with the First Call service of around £13,000. Additional costs are incurred with incident attendance, and also if follow up remedial works from the day-time Operational teams are required, with these costs being accrued against the emergency action budget. However, in the event of a third-party involvement in an incident, Via EM will aim to recover all costs associated with attendance from the insurers of the individual or organisation.
8. This report, together with an accompanying presentation by Via EM will provide the Committee with an overview of the highways out of hours service and the associated emergency action response provided across the County.

Other Options Considered

9. This report provides an overview to Committee of the highways out of hours service and associated emergency action response and members of the Committee are asked to consider if there are any further actions they would like to consider in respect of the report.

Reasons for Recommendation

10. This report and presentation highlight details and benefits of the current highway out of hours service which is being provided by First Call to Via EM, as part of our emergency action response service provided to the Council.

Statutory and Policy Implications

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

12. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) That Committee consider the report and the presentation by Via East Midlands and identifies any actions that may arise.

Derek Higton
Service Director, Place and Communities

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Kevin Heathcote, Via EM - Head of Environmental and Operational Support (0115 804 2131)

Constitutional Comments (LW 31/03/2022)

13. Highways and Transport Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report.

Financial Comments (SES 01/04/2022)

14. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All.