

15 June 2021

Agenda Item:7

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE**HIGHWAYS REVIEW****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval for:
 - the commissioning of a review of the County Council's highway services to take place following on from the motion agreed at Full Council on 27th May 2021.
 - the setting up of a cross-party Highways Review Panel to steer the review, led by the Chair of this Committee
 - the draft scope (to be confirmed by the Highways Review Panel) as set out in Appendix 1

Information

2. There is a high level of public interest in many of the services which fall under the remit of this Committee; services such as public transport and waste and recycling are county wide services that everyone living, visiting or working in Nottinghamshire benefits from, and often use on a regular basis. This is particularly the case for highways provision. As such, the Council and individual Councillors receive more queries about highways matters than any other area of the Council's work.
3. Nottinghamshire's highway network is a vital asset for:
 - The transport of people and goods;
 - The provision of access to homes, businesses and other premises;
 - The provision of space for people to shop, socialise and relax;
 - Support for the local and regional economy;
 - Support for the infrastructure that provides communications and vital services/utilities to society
4. Nottinghamshire is a large County, with a complex highway network of over 2750 miles. The highway network is a significant asset to the County, with a gross replacement value estimated at over £10 billion. It is within this context that the Council's current capital maintenance investment programme of over £22m, and its annual maintenance revenue budget of £26m, should be seen. These significant levels of investment and cost, coupled with the vital role the network fulfils, make it important that the network is maintained and managed in a cost effective and efficient way.
5. The condition of the highway network is measured annually based on nationally agreed standards and is split across road classes as follows:

- A Roads (approx. 362 miles) – 2% to be considered for repair, compared with the national average of 3%.
- B and C Roads (approx. 695 miles) – 3.6% to be considered for repair, compared with the national average of 6%.
- Unclassified Roads (approx. 1700 miles) – 21% to be considered for repair, compared with the national average of 16%. The unclassified network is clearly an area of challenge, reflects community concerns and will form a focus of the proposed review.

Highways Review

6. The motion presented and agreed at Full Council on 27th May 2021 stated:

This Council agrees to establish a cross-party Highways Review Panel, to be led by the Chairman of the Transport & Environment Committee, with a remit to examine the current methods and technologies used to repair and maintain roads across Nottinghamshire.

The Panel will consider whether additional or different approaches can be adopted to deliver maximum value from this Council's significant extra and ongoing investment in highways maintenance.

The Panel will report its recommendations as soon as possible to the Policy Committee for final consideration and decisions.

7. It is intended that external support is commissioned to facilitate the review. It is envisaged that this will incorporate both a peer review facilitated by the Local Government Association (LGA) and more detailed work externally commissioned during the course of the review. The review process will be informed by the national guidance available in the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme suite of guidance produced in conjunction with the Department for Transport. The LGA has a strong track record of supporting local authorities with reviews including over 30 reviews of highway services over the last ten years, including fourteen other County Councils. It is intended that the commissioned work includes a comparative review, including input from industry and benchmarking. The review is not intended to cover the public rights of way network.
8. A detailed timeline for the review will be developed in conjunction with the Highways Review Panel, but it is intended that the review will conclude and report back to Policy Committee with recommendations during Autumn 2021.
9. The membership of the Panel will be agreed by the Committee Chair with political group business managers, with membership drawn from the Committee, based upon the political proportionality of the Committee. The Panel itself will determine the frequency of its meetings.

Other Options Considered

10. Other aspects of the highway service were considered for inclusion, beyond those identified in Appendix 1 and these will be subject to final endorsement by the highways review panel.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

11. The review provides an opportunity to renew and develop the service to match the ambitions of the County Council and expectations of residents to ensure the right services are being delivered in the most cost effective way.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. 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

13. The cost of the review will be accommodated within the existing highway budget and is estimated to be £20-£40k . Any financial implications arising from the review will be considered as part of the review outcomes and report to Committee.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

14. Any public sector equality duty implications arising from the review will be considered as part of the review outcomes and report to Committee.

Implications for Sustainability and the Environment

15. Effective highway maintenance approaches can reduce congestion, its knock-on effects on air quality and its impacts on local communities. The recycling of materials and aggregates is also considered when delivering highways schemes. Any specific implications for sustainability and the environment will be considered as part of the review outcomes and report to Committee

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that,

- 1) A review of the Council's highway services takes place following on from the motion at Full Council on 27th May 2021, with an estimated cost of £20-£40k funded from existing highway budgets.
- 2) a cross-party Highways Review Panel is set up to steer the review, led by the Chair of this Committee, as described in paragraph 9
- 3) the draft scope of the review is approved (to be confirmed by the Highways Review Panel) as set out in Appendix 1.

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Constitutional Comments (SJE 03/06/2021)

16. This decision falls within the Terms of Reference of the Transport & Environment Committee to whom responsibility for the exercise of the Authority's functions relating to the planning, management and maintenance of highways and pavements has been delegated.

Financial Comments (RWK 02/06/2021)

17. The report proposes a review of the Council's highways services which is expected to incur additional costs of £20,000 to £40,000. These additional costs will be contained within the existing 2021/22 revenue budget for the Highways service.

18. Any financial implications arising from the outcomes and recommendations of the review will be considered in future reports to committees.

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

Highways Review – Nottinghamshire County Council

Draft Scope – June 2021

Key lines of enquiry

1. **Context setting** – Review of relative performance against national and county council metrics, both financial and non-financial including NHT survey results, relative spend, condition indicators and maintenance backlog- to include a review of insurance costs and claims performance.
2. **Practice, Policy and Guidance** For the relevant key areas under consideration, a review to confirm that relevant NCC practice, policy and guidance fits within national policy, strategy and guidance framework.
3. **Capital Maintenance Programme** – Review capital scheme selection processes and how funding is allocated across the County for the annual capital maintenance programme, to include repair methods, use of technology and innovation.
4. **Revenue Maintenance Programme** - Review highway and associated footway repair treatment selection processes and techniques to ensure right repair at the right time and value for money – to include review of the use of Viafix / insitu-recycling and consideration of longer lasting repairs, to include use of technology and innovation.
5. **Work Quality and Value for Money** - Review of processes in place to ensure good quality work and value for money is delivered this to include review of performance management / programme management / quality testing of works / risk and issue controls and supply chain controls in Via.
6. **Performance Management** - Review of performance management arrangements, budget management and reporting and contract management of Via EM.
7. **Communication** - Review of internal and external highways communications, focussing on any areas of best practice from other Local Authorities, which could further enhance our communications approach.
8. **Drainage, Tree Maintenance and Verge Maintenance** - Review of progress made to improve service provision and outcomes in the areas of drainage, tree maintenance and verge maintenance, focussing on any areas of best practice from other Local Authorities which could further enhance outcomes for residents.
9. **Functions and Leadership** - Based on the experience since Via was established, a review of functional split of between NCC and Via. Key aspects of the functional review are to consider whether adequate quality assurance is in place and if arrangements are fit for purpose, with functions best placed to communicate with and enhance outcomes for residents. The review will cover asset management, district management and overall approaches to leadership and governance.