
Meeting: Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date: 21 June 2011
Subject: Member engagement with the Local Area Transport Plans and Highway Programme
Report of: Cllr Brian Spurr Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Services
Summary: The report proposes how Member consultation on LATP and Highways Programmes should take place in developing the 2012/13 programmes of work.

Advising Officer: Gary Alderson, Director of Sustainable Communities
Contact Officer: Basil Jackson, Assistant Director for Highways and Transport and Trevor Saunders, Assistant Director, Planning
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The proposals will focus the attention of members on strategies aligned to the Council's priorities.

Financial:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Legal:

None

Risk Management:

None

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None

Equalities/Human Rights:

None

Community Safety:

None

Sustainability:

None

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That members of Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee adopt the approach to engagement with Local Area Transport Plans and the Highways Work Programme as outlined in this report.**

Introduction and scope

1. Consultation forms the basis of all decision making by Central Bedfordshire Council. Stakeholder consultation takes place before Councillors set policy and direction or before officers implement Council decisions. The process and practice are well developed and embedded in the organisation, not least in the Sustainable Communities Directorate.
2. All Councillors (through their roles as ward Members, Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Executive Members) have a role in setting policy and strategy to direct the delivery of services. This role is outside the scope of this report but for context, the opportunity for Councillors to direct policy is set out in 'Policy Framework' below.
3. In accordance with the policy set by Members, officers make decisions about how to deliver the services and carry responsibility for that delivery. To do so, the Council adopts an area based approach to consultation, based on economic and population centres, in line with current national policy.
4. While Councillors' main responsibility is to direct strategy and policy for the Council, as ward members, they also carry a significant workload regarding issues within their ward which are of interest to residents, such as works carried out on the Highway. To do so Councillors need a level of familiarity and access to current information. This paper considers ways to support the involvement of Councillors in shaping tactical deployment within their ward, while retaining their focus on the strategic direction of the Council.

Policy Framework

5. Following extensive consultation, the Council's Local Transport Plan was adopted by Full Council in February 2011 and set out the approach over the next 3 years to develop each Local Area Transport Plan. The objectives of the Council's Local Transport Plan will be delivered through the Local Area Transport Plans and their associated Improvement Works.
6. The Council has developed four Local Area Transport Plans covering the growth areas, reflecting the priorities set by Executive for the LTP. Over the next two years, further Local Area Transport Plans will be produced to cover the whole of the council's area. These plans contain a programme of Improvement Works (the Integrated Scheme) arising from their respective Local Area Transport Plan. For 2011-12 the 4 areas are Biggleswade & Sandy; Arlsey & Stotfold; Dunstable & Houghton Regis and Leighton Linlade.
7. As Highway Authority, the Council also plans and undertakes maintenance of the highway. Across the whole network, maintenance work is carried out in the following two categories, regardless of where the Improvement Work for that year is taking place:

- Planned structural maintenance work (Highways Work Programme, planned 3 years in advance, including bridges and street-lighting. The order of works within the Programme is 'refreshed' annually to take account of shifting priorities and for consultees to agree and verify the programme)
 - Responsive repair and maintenance work
8. The Highways Work Programme includes work identified by structural surveys, inspections and reports to the helpdesk. Ranking is determined by the Highway Network Management strategy. The expenditure on Highways Work programme for 2011-12 was approved by Full Council in Feb 2011.

Improvements to Information

9. In addition to the existing Highway Bulletin of responsive repair and maintenance works in each ward area, we will publish details of the other categories of works taking place on the Highway. This means that at any one time, Members will be able to see what work is taking place, is planned, and why.
10. Two schedules of information are proposed:
- All planned highway works** taking place in each area will be updated regularly and presented based on ward areas. It will include:
- Improvement Works (arising from the current Local Area Transport Plan)
 - Highway Works Programme (including work arising from development)
 - Work carried out by Utility Companies, some of which we 'permit'
 - Public Rights of Way work (Outdoor Access Improvement Plan)
- Responsive maintenance works** listed in the Highway Bulletin will continue to be provided, based on ward areas.
11. These documents are intended to help Members keep abreast of forthcoming work in their areas and to timetable the consultation stages in advance of each. With this information, Councillors will be able to consider and plan their participation in advance. It is hoped that improvements to the provision of information in this way will allow well-timed involvement in decision making about local works and a comprehensive awareness from day to day.

Improving Member Engagement in Highways Works

12. Elsewhere on today's agenda the Committee are recommended to set up a Task Force to review road and footway maintenance, the managing agent contract (MAC) with Amey LG and the developing approach to car parking. Given its remit and ability to take a Council-wide perspective, it is proposed that this Task Force replaces the previously existing Member Advisory Group on Highways.

13. The individual projects in the Local Area Transport Plan Improvement Works, the Highway Programme and the Outdoor Access Improvement Plan for countryside access, are developed collaboratively with Ward Members and Town and Parish Councils from their inception. As such there is considerable community ownership and support for each scheme which we hope will reduce the number of objections and need for retrospective scrutiny. It is this model that we wish to develop further.
14. By engaging on a ward level, alongside and in discussion with other consultees, Councillors can most effectively contribute their views. These meetings will enable discussion in more detail and give breadth and depth to the consideration of local issues.
15. Area based engagement will also minimise the duplication that may result from the committee considering the results of consultation that its own members have actively taken part in. For this reason, it is proposed that the outcome of consultation are reported directly to the Executive (with the conditions outlined below), streamlining the process.
16. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and members of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be invited to attend any or all of the local meetings. The views of those meetings will be submitted to Executive for their decision, taking into account the collective views of Members.
17. Throughout 2009–2011 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee delegated powers to the Chairman to report recommendations directly to the Executive, except where these recommendations are considered to be controversial.

It is proposed that this model is adopted and the LAMP, Improvement Works or Highway Programme will only be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if the Chairman or Vice-Chairman feels this is necessary. Any Member, under Part E3 of the Council's Constitution, may request the inclusion of an item on the agenda if they feel it necessary.

Appendices:

None

Background Papers: None

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands