

Item 4

Transport update

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This paper provides updates on the Streetworks Summit, Highways Maintenance, the Staffordshire Town Hall Debate on Transport and Growth and the Parking Inquiry.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report and comment as necessary.

Action

Officers to take actions as directed.

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Item 4

Transport update

1. LGA is currently dealing with three significant transport fronts:
 - 1.1. Streetworks - following up on the successful summit with utilities.
 - 1.2. Highways maintenance - responding to the Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey.
 - 1.3. Parking - preparing for the Select Committee inquiry into council parking enforcement.

Streetworks

2. A streetworks summit was held on 14 March. The summit resulted from the LGA publication of [Holes in Our Pockets – how utility streetworks are damaging local growth](#). At the launch of the report, at the House of Commons in December 2012, Cllr Peter Box, Chairman of the Economy and Transport Board made the commitment to call the major utility companies to a summit so that the issues raised in the report could be addressed.
3. The major utility companies across electricity, water, gas and telecommunications, responded to the call and attended the summit.
4. Business representative organisations, Louise Ellman MP, Chair of the Transport Select Committee and the Transport Minister Norman Baker MP also attended. The Board was represented by Cllr Peter Box who chaired the meeting and by Cllr Nick Clarke. The full attendee list is set out at the end of this section.
5. The summit focused on the issues of coordination of streetworks and the poor quality of reinstatements and sought to address the following questions:
 - 5.1. How are we going to improve streetworks organisation and reinstatements?
 - 5.2. How can we work together to better inform business of the works being carried out and of compensation schemes?
 - 5.3. How can we work together to ensure contractors do a better job?

Outcomes from the summit

6. The summit was a success. Utility companies acknowledged the issues that were being raised and readily agreed to work with the LGA to improve matters. The summit highlighted that there is a need for:
 - 6.1. A clear and common understanding of what “good” looks like in the organisation and delivery of streetworks and how this is managed and delivered.

Item 4

- 6.2. A means of assessing and challenging the performance of contractors engaged in streetworks.
- 6.3. Better communication on planned streetworks and relevant compensation schemes to businesses.
7. The utility companies agreed to establish a joint working group with the LGA to look at these issues and develop a plan for action in the next three months. The working group will set out a protocol covering the above issues. It will be important for the membership of the working group to include a representative from the Economy and Transport Board as well as senior executive from the utility companies. Officers are now working with utility representatives on the establishment of the working group.
8. Officers' initial assessment of what "good" looks like is that:
 - 8.1. There are fewer works as a result of coordination and fewer works that take place after resurfacing by local authorities.
 - 8.2. Works are reinstated correctly.
 - 8.3. Major works are combined with maintenance and pothole filling where appropriate.
 - 8.4. When major planned works are carried out a relationship is established between contractors and local businesses that results in minimised disruption.
 - 8.5. Works are not left unattended (e.g. over weekends).
 - 8.6. Contractors know what they are supposed to do, how to do it and take responsibility for their work.
 - 8.7. Poor contractors do not get work for utilities or highway authorities.
 - 8.8. Businesses are aware of and understand compensation schemes and how to access them.
 - 8.9. Best practice is understood and adopted by both highway authorities and utilities.
9. Members are invited to express a view on this list.
10. The Department of Transport's (DfT) Highways Maintenance and Efficiency programme has expressed an interest in funding work on streetworks. A proposal is being developed to go to their board and will be circulated at the meeting.
11. The summit discussed developing a protocol which would include ideas on how we communicate better to business on planned work timetables and compensation schemes and how we can collect data to assess contractor performance.

Item 4

12. In addition to the positive response from the utility companies, the Minister, Norman Baker MP, announced at the summit that the DfT will no longer seek to remove the need for streetworks supervisors to have the relevant qualifications. This is a significant achievement following extensive lobbying by the LGA and the utility companies.

Full attendance list at the Streetworks summit

Electricity North West
National Grid
Scotia Gas Networks
UK Power Networks
United Utilities
Western Power Distribution
BT Open Reach
Affinity Water
Anglian Water
Northumbrian Water
Severn Trent Water Limited
South West Water
Thames Water
Wessex Water
Yorkshire Water
National Joint Utilities Group

Scottish Power sent its apologies

Highways Maintenance

13. The [Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance \(ALARM\) survey](#) was published on 14 March. It shows that last year highways teams fixed 2.2 million potholes, 500,000 more than the year before. However, despite their best efforts, the backlog in repairs is growing longer, now estimated at £10.5 billion, and one-in-five roads are classed as being in 'poor condition'. The average English authority was £6.2 million short of what it needed to properly maintain its roads, up from £5.3 million in 2011. It also found the road damage cost to councils of last year's flooding was £338 million.
14. Compounding matters is the spiralling cost of compensation to drivers whose vehicles get damaged by potholes. Councils paid out £32 million last year, 50 per cent more than 2011.
15. The LGA's response was conveyed on television (ITV Daybreak) by Cllr Tony Ball and widely reported in the media. The key message was that if council budgets were to be cut further the roads would deteriorate further and that without more money for road maintenance councils are doing the best they can.
16. On the same day, the Future of Highways Delivery Conference was held at the Oval Cricket Ground in London. The focus of the conference was how highways services can

Item 4

improve customer responsiveness and meet the priorities of local areas at the same time as securing efficiency savings.

17. Cllr Tony Ball, spoke and took questions in a panel alongside Graham Pendlebury, Director of Local Transport DfT, Alan MacKenzie Chair of the Asphalt Alliance Industry and Carmel McKeough, Deputy Chief Executive, Blackpool Council.
18. Cllr Ball highlighted the impact that years of underfunding and recent severe winters have had on highways and reiterated that the LGA has been calling on government to invest money in resurfacing.

Staffordshire Town Hall Debate on Transport and Growth and the Strategic Road Network

19. The Staffordshire Town Hall Debate on Transport and Growth was hosted by Staffordshire County Council and took place on 5 March 2013. The debate was chaired by Cllr Peter Box.
20. The debate was an opportunity for local business representatives and councillors to discuss the role of transport in supporting and generating growth. The important role that councils play in creating the environment for growth was stressed and Cllr Philip Atkins, set out what Staffordshire County Council and Wolverhampton Council had done to invest in infrastructure aimed at securing business investment.
21. The Transport Minister, Norman Baker MP, outlined the government's investments in transport, its recent devolution of Local Major Transport Scheme funding and the creation of local transport boards.
22. An essay from Localis, [The Road to Growth](#), commissioned by the LGA was launched at the Staffordshire event. The essay looks at examples from Europe to demonstrate the benefits of greater local control of transport decision-making. The essay also calls for greater local authority influence over decisions on the strategic roads network.
23. Future investment in the strategic roads network, and the organisational structures needed to support investment, will be the subject of the roads strategy and the government's feasibility study into future funding for the strategic roads network. It is expected that any publication will be part of the spending review in the summer.
24. As roads reform is considered it will be important for local authorities to continue to make the case for increased influence over all transport decisions including those relating to the strategic roads network. A position paper on local government and the strategic roads network was discussed by the Board in November 2012 and this continues to form the basis of our discussions with government.
25. There is recognition within DfT and the Highways Agency that the agency's approach to planning must reflect the need for growth and sustainable development. The DfT is currently consulting on a draft Circular 'The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development' which:

Item 4

- 25.1. places more emphasis on the highways agency's role as a delivery partner to growth.
 - 25.2. removes the expectation that the traffic impact on the Strategic Road Network as a result of development should be mitigated so as to be no worse off after the 10 year review period.
 - 25.3. provides that where proposals would take a road or junction over-capacity after impact reduction measures, mitigation will only be required to the extent that capacity is adequate at the time of opening, thus removing the requirement to cater for future background growth.
 - 25.4. eases restrictions on new access/junctions on motorways to enable delivery of strategic growth where this is identified as appropriate.
 - 25.5. simplifies policy for signed roadside facilities.
 - 25.6. removes minimum spacing requirements between signed roadside facilities.
26. The changes outlined chime with the call by local government for the Highways Agency to be more responsive to local growth requirements. Views are sought from members on the proposed proposals.

Parking Inquiry

27. Members will be aware of a forthcoming inquiry by the Commons Transport Select Committee, looking at local authority parking policy. A written submission to the inquiry is being agreed through the Board Lead Members and will be available at the Board meeting.