

Item 4

Streetworks

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

Members will recall that following a discussion at the board last year, the LGA produced a report entitled [*Holes in our Pockets – How utility streetworks are damaging local growth.*](#)

The report was well received and the utility companies responded positively to a subsequent invitation to a summit. This took place on 14 March 2013.

At the summit, the LGA invited utilities to work with us to address the issues. Utilities agreed that there was a problem to be solved and accepted this invitation. A task force was established to take matters forward.

Matthew Lugg, Director of Environment and Transport at Leicestershire County Council and a special Adviser to the HMEP programme at the DfT, will attend the Board on 30 May to give a brief overview of HMEP and how it can support councils' work.

Recommendation

Members are invited to comment on the work so far and proposals for future work.

Action

As directed by members.

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Background

1. Launched at the House of Commons, [Holes in our Pockets – How utility streetworks are damaging local growth](#), found:
 - 1.1. 57 per cent of shops have had roadworks nearby over the past three years.
 - 1.2. 72 per cent of these were negatively affected, with issues including forced closure, delivery delays, reduced footfall and reduced sales.
 - 1.3. 31 per cent say roadworks reduced their footfall by at least a quarter with, at worst, some losing about 2,500 customers a week.
 - 1.4. Half say they lost at least 10 per cent of sales with, at worst, some losing about £7,500 a week.
2. The Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey found that contractors poorly resurfacing trenches after digging up roads cost taxpayers almost half-a-billion pounds over the past two years – the equivalent of filling eight million potholes. Last year 20 per cent of utility works were not up to standard meaning they had to be redone properly at the expense of local councils, causing more disruption and delays. This was up 3 per cent on 2011 and over the two years cost £435 million.
3. The report was well received and the utility companies responded positively to a subsequent invitation to a summit. This took place on 14 March 2013.
4. At the summit, the LGA invited utilities to work with us to address the issues. Utilities agreed there was a problem to be solved and accepted this invitation. A task force was established to take matters forward.
5. At last Board, members agreed that a key issue was what does good look like and discussed officers' initial assessment that good means:
 - 5.1. There are fewer works as a result of coordination and fewer works that take place after resurfacing by local authorities.
 - 5.2. Works are reinstated correctly.
 - 5.3. Major works are combined with maintenance and pothole filling where appropriate.

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- 5.4. When major planned works are carried out a relationship is established between contractors and local businesses that results in minimised disruption.
- 5.5. Works are not left unattended (e.g. over weekends).
- 5.6. Contractors know what they are supposed to do, how to do it and take responsibility for their work.
- 5.7. Poor contractors do not get work for utilities or highway authorities.
- 5.8. Businesses are aware of and understand compensation schemes and how to access them.
- 5.9. Best practice is understood and adopted by both highway authorities and utilities.
6. This has been shared with utilities and businesses and utilities have shared their own assessments.
7. The task force met for the first time on 20 May. Cllr Tony Ball, Cllr Mike Haines and officers attended for the LGA. Cllr Haines chaired the meeting and Cllr Ball spoke for the LGA.
8. Other attendees were: Paul Jewel - Western Power; Jeremy Bending - National Grid; Anita Solanki - National Joint Utilities (NJUG) and SevernTrent; Samantha Brothwell - NJUG and Western Power; Dave Capon - Joint Authorities Group UK (JAGUK); Mark Beasley - Transport for London (TfL); Shane Brennan - Association of Convenience Stores (ACS); Barbara King - Department for Transport (DfT); Matthew Lugg - Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP). The British Retail Consortium sent apologies.
9. The contractors trade association, The Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA) has written to Peter Box expressing a desire to engage with the task force and will be invited to the next meeting (as will BT to represent the telecoms sector).

Key issues

10. The key issues discussed at the meeting were:
 - 10.1. What does good look like? The LGA's list was broadly accepted, subject to legal clarification on one point. The meeting agreed that the LGA would take forward further work on 'What Good Looks Like' combining existing documents from NJUG Severn Trent and TfL with the list previously discussed by the Board.
 - 10.2. We therefore have a way forward towards agreement on a framework against which performance can be judged.

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- 10.3. Business Compensation - The most significant outcome so far from the task force is a commitment from the utilities to make public in one place all compensation schemes. NJUG will produce a draft list indicating what businesses can expect from different sectors/companies conducting streetworks outside their premises to which Highway Authority information can be added. This will include but not be limited to, information on compensation schemes. Potentially this list could be circulated by the LGA to councils and by the ACS and other business organisations to their members.
- 10.4. Performance information - One of the issues discussed at the meeting was the need to share data across sectors in order to effectively monitor contractor performance. JAGUK will work on how data can be shared more effectively and report back to the group.
- 10.5. There was a discussion on the data collected through the Electronic Transfer of Notices system to monitor and improve contractor performance. This data covers all streetworks including councils' own work and is reported by councils who produce notices or permits for all street openings.
- 10.6. All councils and utility companies will be obliged to use the new system - known as the electronic transfer of notices (or ETON) system - when legislation comes into force in October. Councils and utility companies will be given a 6 month window to move over to the new system, with all councils being encouraged to use the new technology by 1 April 2014.
- 10.7. It would be helpful if members could feed back any difficulties that councils are encountering with this new data collection system.

Working together on improvements

11. The Highways Maintenance and Efficiency Programme (HMEP) is a sector-led transformation programme designed to maximise returns from highways investment and deliver efficient and effective services. Aimed at the local highways sector, the programme runs to 2018 and is sponsored by DfT who are providing £6 million funding. HMEP is a partnership between public and private sectors, and the programme team consists of representatives from local and highway authorities, companies and central government.
12. Following the publication of our initial report and its reception HMEP wanted to incorporate work on streetworks into its programme. LGA officers have worked with HMEP to draft a project proposal.
13. Utilities have been invited to work with HMEP on this project to drive improvement across both sectors.

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14. Early progress is being made. Another meeting will be held in July. Both LGA and utilities are committed to further work on this issue.
15. Matthew Lugg, currently Director of Environment and Transport at Leicestershire County Council and a special Adviser to the HMEP programme at the DfT, will attend the Board on 30 May to give a brief overview of HMEP and how it can support councils' work.
16. To note: a HMEP/LGA conference is being held on 10 July 2013. It will showcase the work of HMEP and good practice examples across England.
17. Members are invited to comment on the work so far and proposals for future work