

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
3 DECEMBER 2013**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

16

TITLE OF REPORT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT ON HIGHWAYS

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

1. SUMMARY

1.1 This report invites the Committee to comment on and approve the report of the Task and Finish Group on Highways.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Committee is asked to:
a) Consider the comments of the Senior Management Team (SMT) at paragraph 7.5;
b) Consider and approve the report of the Task and Finish Group on Highways.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To enable the report of the Task and Finish Group on Highways to be considered by Hertfordshire County Council and NHDC's Cabinet.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

5.1 None.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 The draft report of the task and finish group is attached at Appendix A. Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC's) officers chose not to participate in the task and finish group although three county councillors from North Herts attended and made helpful contributions.

7.2 The scoping document for the task and finish group focused the review's investigation and subsequent recommendations primarily on communication issues in order to improve the relationship between all stakeholders.

- 7.3 The conclusions and recommendations are at section 2 of the report and have already been endorsed by the task and finish group prior to the highways locality meeting on 7 October. The evidence is simply a record of what was said on the night.
- 7.4 The recommendations are mostly for HCC to consider, but there are some for NHDC as well, namely that:
- NHDC's website gives greater prominence to the highways fault reporting link **(Rec 5)**;
 - HCC trains NHDC's Customer Service Centre staff to help with inquiries about HCC's services, especially highways **(Rec 6)**;
 - good practice by area committees on highway matters be shared with other area committee **(Rec 8)**;
 - District Councillors be informed of how best to get items on the agenda of the Highway Liaison Meeting **(Rec 10)**.

SMT's Comments

- 7.5 SMT considered the report and had one substantive comment which was about recommendation 6 - that NHDC's customer service centre staff receive training to improve their navigation of HCC's website to help customers with highways inquiries. SMT considered that although the recommendation was well intentioned, NHDC should not pick up HCC responsibilities unless the extra work is accompanied by a corresponding budget. SMT did not support this recommendation.

Next Steps

- 7.6 Once approved, the report will be sent to County Councillor Terry Douris, Executive Member for Highways at HCC and he will have two months in which to respond.
- 7.7 It will be considered by NHDC's Cabinet at its meeting on 28 January 2014.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None.

9. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None.

10. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None.

11. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1 October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5 April 2011. There is a general duty, described below, that public bodies must meet, and this is underpinned by more specific duties which are designed to help meet them.
- 11.2 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its functions: give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

11.3 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

12. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no social value implications arising from this report.

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

Author

13.1 Brendan Sullivan, Scrutiny Officer, 01462 474612
brendan.sullivan@north-herts.gov.uk

Contributors

Ian Fullstone, Head of Development and Building Control, 01462 474480
ian.fullstone@north-herts.gov.uk

14. APPENDICES

14.1 Appendix A – Report of the Task and Finish Group on Highways