

## **Highway Communications with Parish Councils**

Report of the Head of Highways, Capital Development and Waste

### **1. Background/Introduction**

This Committee reviewed its work programme at the January meeting and agreed to request a report on Highways communications with local Parishes regarding works in their area to this meeting.

### **2. Direct Communication**

The responsibilities of the Neighbourhood Teams include providing regular liaison with Town and Parish Councils and community groups, informing them of planned work programmes and identifying local community priorities. A procedure was developed to ensure a consistent and equitable quality of service is available to all parish and town councils. The procedure is attached at Appendix I.

A similar procedure for Community Groups was developed for those parts of the County, not served by Town or Parish Councils.

### **3. Engagement Survey**

In December 2015 a measuring engagement web survey was made available on the Devon Highways webpage for Town and Parish Councils.

402 parish/town council contacts and all County Members were invited by email to complete the survey. Following a reminder in early January a total of 155 responses were received and analysed.

Full details of the survey results will be available on the Devon Highways webpage for Town and Parish Councils, and a summary of results relating to communication on highway works is attached at Appendix II.

### **4. Conferences**

Two highway conferences for Town and Parish Councils were held in October 2015, at Ashill and Bradford & Cookbury Parish Halls. 84 people representing 65 local councils attended and subjects covered included:

- Current status & recent achievements
- Future service changes
- Winter service
- Safety inspection policy
- How can we work together to manage the impact of the reduction in services?
- How can we improve our communication?
- Community mobilisation
- Live online information (routine & reactive)
- Pothole safety defects – types of repair

Following on from this, officers worked with Devon Association of Local Councils to support their Highway Conference held in March at Exeter City Council Football Club. Presentations were made by the Cabinet Member and senior managers, and the main part of day was workshops covering:

- Community Road Warden Scheme
- Road Safety
- Development and Highway Planning

## **5. Work programmes**

As part of our strategy to manage demand we are focussing on providing up to date information on our work programmes on-line that local councils and Members, together with the general public, are able to access.

Our overall Highways Structural Maintenance programme for the year is available on both our public Maintaining Roads web page:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/maintaining-roads/>

and the Devon Highways webpage for Town and Parish Councils:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/devonhighways/programmes-of-work>

Annual programmes for routine cyclic work such as gully emptying, grass cutting and the parish lengthsman service are also available via these pages.

More detailed information regarding works planned for the coming weeks is available on [Roadworks.org](https://www.roadworks.org), the largest single source of local road works information in the UK, publishing over 2 million roadwork records annually.

The roadworks.org application pulls information directly from our streetworks register, within which all statutory undertakers are obligated to notify us of all works they are undertaking affecting our highways. Our own maintenance works are also readily available to view along with works on the highway being undertaken by private individuals and contractors.

Members and local councils have been encouraged to set up an email alert to receive regular notification of works on highway in their local area. Details of how to do this are available on the Devon Highways webpage for Town and Parish Councils:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/devonhighways/programmes-of-work>

and in Member Highways briefing notes:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/councillors-nav/briefings-for-members/highways/>

under the “What’s happening in your area” link.

We are also working towards making live information that we hold available on the public website detailing parish lengthsman, gully emptying, and pothole repair work undertaken.

David Whitton

Head of Highways Capital Development and Waste

## **Electoral Divisions: All**

Cabinet Member for Highway Management and Flood Prevention: Councillor Stuart Hughes

*Strategic Director, Place: Heather Barnes*

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Tony Matthews

Room No: Lucombe House, County Hall, Exeter. EX2 4QD

Tel No: 01392 383000

Background Paper	Date	File Ref.
Town & Parish Council Engagement Survey Results	February 2016	

tm120516psc highway communications with parish councils  
hk 04 030616

Neighbourhood Highway Group Procedure  
**CM 1.2 - Liaison with Parish and Town Councils**

**Paragraph**

1	Introduction
2	Purpose of Procedure
3	Scope
4	Roles & Responsibilities
5	Liaison
6	Town Clerks
7	Local County Councillors
8	Documentation & Records
	Associated Procedures
	Appendices

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Neighbourhood Highway Teams are the focus for liaison with Parish and Town Councils. The Teams' responsibilities include "Providing regular liaison with Town and Parish Councils and community groups, informing them of planned work programmes and identifying local community priorities;"

**2. PURPOSE OF PROCEDURE**

- 2.1 This instruction details the procedure to be followed to ensure a consistent and equitable quality of service is provided to Parish and Town Councils.

**3. SCOPE**

- 3.1 This procedure is aimed at staff in the Neighbourhood Highway Group to guide them in contact and liaison with Parish and Town Councils.

**4. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 4.1 List the responsibilities of the key personnel involved in this process.
- **Neighbourhood Highway Group Manager** – Responsible for ensuring the procedure is being carried out consistently Countywide, and agreeing improvements to the procedure
  - **Neighbourhood Highway Managers (NHM)** – Responsible for ensuring the procedure is being carried out consistently in their allocated Teams, developing

improvements to the procedure, and for dealing with any higher level complaints and politically complex issues

- **Neighbourhood Highway Engineer (NHE)** - Responsible for ensuring the procedure is being carried out consistently in their Team, identifying cover in times of staff absence, and for dealing with any Level One Complaint and contentious issues.
- **Neighbourhood Highway Officers (NHO)** – Responsible for implementing the procedure for Parish and Town councils in their allocated area
- **Neighbourhood Highway Technician (NHT)** – Responsible for undertaking liaison in accordance with procedure in Highway Officers absence when instructed by NHE

## **5. LIAISON**

- 5.1 Each Neighbourhood Highway Officer is allocated a geographical area for which he/she is responsible. The Officer will ensure each Parish and Town Clerk within their allocated area has their personal mobile phone and email contact details, and is clear they are available as their first point of contact on highway matters. The contact details are for the use of the Clerk and they will be made aware they should not be passed on to members of the public
- 5.2 The Officer will deal with routine enquiries aiming to provide a response within corporate standards. For more complex matters or matters outside the remit of the Highway and Traffic Management Service the parish representative may be referred to other members of staff or teams for a response, with appropriate contact details being provided.
- 5.3 Where information or feedback is requested for a forthcoming Council meeting every effort will be made to provide a timely response.
- 5.4 For enquiries regarding programmes of work in the parish the parish representative will normally be signposted to the works programme and roadworks information available on line, and encouraged to use these facilities for future enquiries.
- 5.5 The Officer will encourage the parish representative to report routine highway problems using the on line reporting facility, rather than via email to the Officer.
- 5.6 The local County Councillor will be copied in to all correspondence (email and letters) with parish representatives, and advised by the Officer of any significant telephone discussions.
- 5.7 If requested, the Officer will periodically arrange to travel around the parish with representatives of the Council to look together at any long standing problems. The local County Councillor will be invited to attend if he/she wishes.
- 5.8 For specific contentious issues Officers will arrange specific site meetings with representatives of the Council. The local County Councillor will be invited, and where necessary the Neighbourhood Highway Engineer will be involved to provide support and advice

- 5.9 Officer attendance at formal Parish/Town Council meetings will be the exception. Matters should normally be dealt with through routine liaison, or specific site meetings during normal working hours for contentious issues.

## **6. TOWN CLERKS**

- 6.1 In addition to the liaison with the Officer detailed above, if requested the Neighbourhood Highway Engineer will arrange to periodically meet with the Town Clerk and/or Chairperson to discuss any major/contentious issues in the Town. The local Officer will usually accompany the Neighbourhood Highway Engineer, and the local County Councillor will be invited to attend if they wish.

## **7. LOCAL COUNTY COUNCILLOR**

- 7.1 The local County Councillor should be advised of liaison as above see 5.6.
- 7.2 The local County Councillor will be invited to meetings as detailed in 5.7, 5.8 and 6.1, in accordance with the DCC Corporate Meetings Protocol, September 2009.

## **8. DOCUMENTATION & RECORDS**

- 8.1 Email correspondence as detailed in 5.6 will either be stored on the Officer's personal email account or the I Ways system, and any letters sent will be stored on I Ways.
- 8.2 Records of issues discussed and actions agreed will be made for meetings detailed in 5.7, 5.8 and 6.1. These may be recorded and agreed by exchange of email or letter, and stored as in 8.1
- 8.3 Records will be distributed to all attendees. See document and record control BM 2.1 for details of document recording and retention

## **ASSOCIATED PROCEDURES**

- A. CM 1.3 - Liaison with Elected Members
- B. BM 2.1 - Document & Record Control

## **APPENDICES**

- A. Devon County Council Corporate Meetings Protocol, September 2009

## **APPENDIX A**

### **D.C.C. CORPORATE MEETINGS PROTOCOL, September 2009 (updated for current post titles)**

Corporate Meetings Protocol - Public/Parishes/MPs for staff in Highway Management only.  
(Key: LCC = Local County Councillor's)

#### **1. Meetings with Members of the Public**

Meetings arranged with members of the public to be attended by officers, with LCC(s) informed by email when the meeting will take place, with a brief synopsis of the issue and an option to attend.

#### **2. Meetings with Parish Councils**

Meetings with parish councils, who must be represented by the clerk, to be attended by officers with reasonable notice (7 days) given to the LCC to enable them to attend. Where meetings are urgent they shall go ahead giving as much notice in advance to the LCC wherever possible. Where meetings take place with any parishes which have not been able to be attended by the LCC and are contentious a short briefing note shall be sent to the LCC(s) and copied to the Cabinet Lead and the Head of Highways Capital Development and Waste as soon as possible after the meeting and within 3 days.

#### **3. Meetings with District Council Members**

Meetings are **not** to be arranged with District Council members unless the LCC can be in attendance.

#### **4. Meetings with MPs**

Meetings with local MPs are not to be arranged without the foreknowledge of the Cabinet Lead, the LCC, the Head of Highways Capital Development and Waste. Meetings with MPs shall generally be arranged by the Cabinet Lead. If meetings take place with an MP and any of the foregoing Members or Senior Officers do not attend a briefing note will be prepared by the officer for the Members and Senior Officers as soon as possible after the meeting and within 3 days.

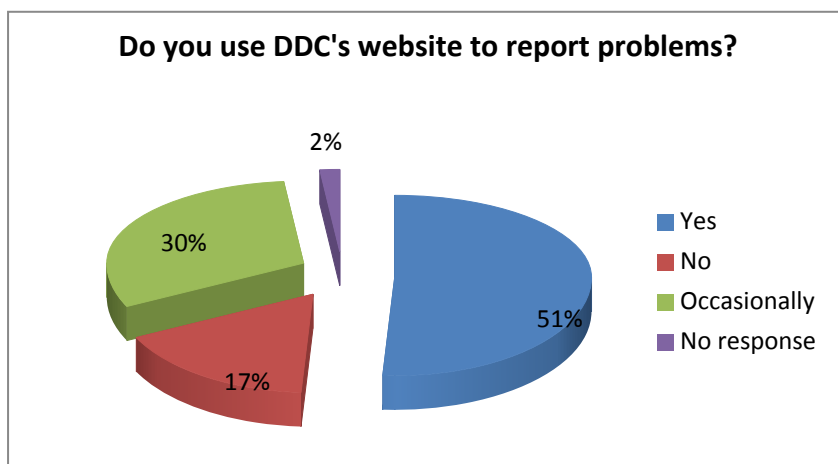
#### **5. Meetings arranged by 3rd Parties with MPs**

Where third parties arrange meetings involving MPs or parish councillors or clerks, officers shall notify the Cabinet Lead, the LCC and the Head of Highways Capital Development and Waste as soon as possible. If officers attend in the absence of any of the foregoing Members or Senior Officers a briefing note will be prepared by the officer for the Members and Senior Officers as soon as possible after the meeting and within 3 days.

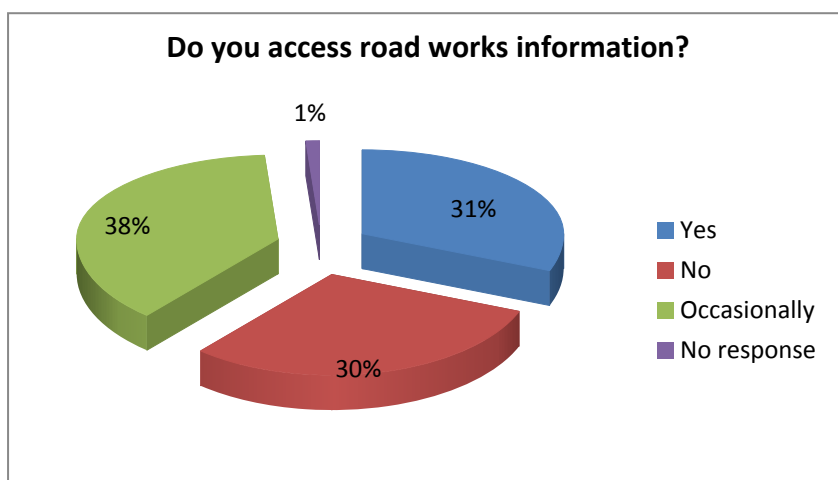
## Communication of Highway Works

### Results taken from the Measuring Engagement Survey

Do you use Devon County Council's website to report problems?

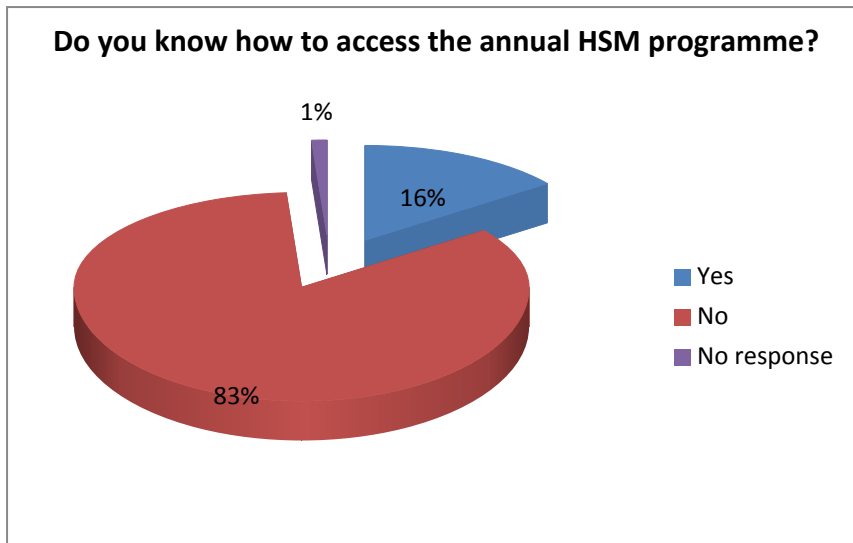


Do you access road works information?

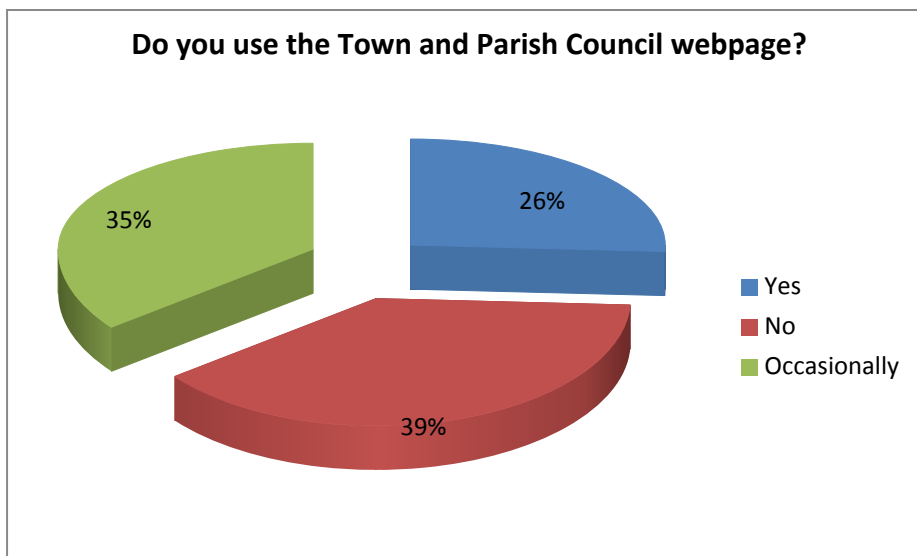




**Do you know how to access the annual Highway Structural Maintenance (HSM) programme?**



**Do you use the Town and Parish Council webpage?**



**Do you receive a response from Devon Highways within 15 working days?**

