

Service Delivery for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste: In-Year Briefing

Briefing Paper by the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

1. Introduction

This report provides an in-year briefing on service delivery within Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste.

2. Current Position Statements

2.1 Highways and Traffic Management

The key focus over the last 12 months has been reviewing our methods of delivery in light of the corporate approach to 'Doing What Matters'. The Service has been working in three key areas;

- Publicly reported potholes;
- Development of work programmes;
- Management of defects.

The detail of this work is included in the performance dashboard report of this Committee (HIW/19/101).

The performance of Skanska has been much improved within year 3 of the contract. The management of the cyclical works including grass cutting, ditching and cleaning is being delivered to a high standard. We are currently working through issues associated with gully cleaning after carrying out a series of internal audits.

Following the development of a successful business case the Service has been working on a Roadworks Permitting scheme across the County. This new approach gives the Authority more control over roadworks. The Traffic Manager can also add conditions to the roadworks, such as the time when works can start and end, limits on the number of days they can be in place and where equipment should be stored, to ensure disruption is kept to a minimum.

At the time of writing we have yet to carry out any gritting operations however all of our plant was operational and calibrated in advance of the traditional start date of 15 October.

We continue to make good progress regarding support for volunteers that want to assist their community. We now have;

- 75 road warden agreements in place (up from 60 in 2018);
- 21 trained in traffic management so far this year from 12 different parishes (total 226 since 2014);
- 4 trained in community events;
- 115 signed up for the Highway Safety Awareness online course. We have now also adapted the course so it can be issued as a guidance pack (some identified issues

with access/IT skills, etc). We have also shared the course and content with a number of other authorities;

- 15 parishes have had pothole repair material since November 2018;
- 20 bids received so far for the Highway Maintenance Community Enhancement Fund this year, approved 14, refused 1, 5 to be assessed in December.

We continue to work towards full compliance with the Well Managed Highways Infrastructure code of practice. Devon Audit Partnership are being asked to review our progress and offer advice on the work done to date.

The threat of the Ash Dieback to Devon's highway infrastructure has amplified this year, with an increased workload.

We have professionally inspected four of Devon's eight districts of responsibility this summer being, East, West, Teignbridge and South Hams; each of these districts is highlighting an increase in Ash infected trees at 50% crown loss (our marker for intervention) and needing to be removed through planned works. We have also asked our professional inspectors to gather further intelligence on Ash lightly infected that we will need to be removing in future years. This is also showing a discernible increase in trees lightly infected across the four districts, next year we will continue with this intelligence gathering and have a clearer picture of the future workload across the County. We have also inspected a 20km area of Mid Devon at Bickleigh which has been recognised as a hot spot area, this has highlighted more infected trees to be removed for the third year running in this area.

We have started a campaign through Devon's Ash Dieback Resilience Forum and Devon's Communications Team titled "My tree My responsibility" to encourage landowners, to check trees in their ownership. This was promoted through the recent parish council conferences.

Both Stover and the Grand Western Canal country parks have retained their prestigious Green Flag awards. Significant improvements to the quality of Stover Country park have been realised through the construction of 3800m² of reed beds. Initial water sampling indicates the system is already having an effect by improving the quality of water entering the lake. As the reeds develop and establish there should be a marked difference in both water quality and species diversity in the park. Stover Country Park also became the first Dragonfly Hotspot in Devon as declared by the British Dragonfly society.

The streetlighting contract is shortly due to go out to tender, with an anticipated start date in 2020. It is through this contract that the roll out of LED lighting will continue.

The Civil Parking Enforcement service has been named the winner of the best practice reporting: Customer Service award at the PATROL PARC Awards (Parking Annual Report Awards by Councils). The award recognises excellence in customer service. In particular, Devon's online reporting tools were highlighted for enabling the public to identify concerns around pavement parking and abuse of residents parking permits, and the approach to transparency and "open" data was also praised.

2.2 Infrastructure Development

The Infrastructure Development service is delivering a large programme of capital funded schemes including highway (trails, roads and bridges) schemes, schools maintenance and new schools projects. As part of this work there is a need for a top up consultancy contract for the Transportation and Engineering Professional Services, which is currently being re procured. Tenders have now been returned and being evaluated and the project is on program to meet the contract start date of April 1st 2020.

Works continue on developing a number of multi-use trails and cycle projects including, Clyst Valley trail, Teign Estuary trail, Exeter to Cranbrook cycle route, Langaton Lane cycle route, Sidford to Sidbury route, as well as the completion of the Wray Valley trail by the end of the year.

The main scheme and town centre works for the Modbury Flood risk management has been substantially completed, this will provide a greater standard of protection for up to 80 homes and business, and the Ivybridge Flood Risk Management, scheme is completing design for commencement of construction in January 2020.

On the A361, North Devon Link road, design is progressing on the next phase of the Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension junction. The main improvements between South Molton and Bideford are currently out to tender, with returns due in March 2020, but the tree planting in advance of the works is currently underway. Additionally, with the granting of planning permission for Bishops Tawton, design work progresses on the roundabout and subway.

Other major schemes include Sherford High Street which is under construction and progressing well and construction of the A382 widening is due to start shortly.

Major schemes which are under development include the A382/A383 link along with Dinan Way in Exmouth. Preliminary design has also commenced on Baulk Bridge on the B3181, over the M5 south of Cullompton for delivery probably in 2021/22.

The service is assisting in delivering some of the Capital Maintenance work by designing and delivering resurfacing schemes on the A-Road network as part of the 2019/20 capital programme. Additionally, the £1.2m replacement of Alma Bridge in Sidmouth and strengthening of Broom Bridge on the border with Dorset Council are underway along with a large number of retaining wall schemes across the county. The second phase of Shaldon Bridge pier foundation resilience works will commence in November. A CCTV camera has been installed at Bickleigh Bridge, near Tiverton and this has been successful in both reducing accident damage and identifying those that cause it which allows our team to recover costs.

Progress on the new Marsh Barton Station is slow, however we have recently managed to reach agreement with Network Rail on the Asset Protection Agreement, and it is anticipated that by the time of Committee we will be in a position to give approval to commence design on the revised scheme. Planning permission is therefore now likely to be in March 2020.

There are currently 54 schemes within the Schools Maintenance Programme of which 54% (29 schemes) have already completed this year. The schools basic need programme has seen the opening of the new 210 place St James C of E Primary School in Okehampton (Energy Performance Certificate Rating A), the refurbishment of the former Charlton Lodge Care Home in to a new Special School provision in Tiverton, and new sixth form accommodation in Okehampton similarly by the refurbishment of the former Wardhayes Care Home. In addition, this year has also seen the completion of expansion projects at Honiton Primary School, Ellen Tinkham Special School (Bodley House site) and Totnes St Johns Primary School.

Although opened last year it is pleasing to be able to report that Loddiswell Primary school has just won the SPACES (Society for Public Architecture, Construction, Engineering and Surveying) award for innovation.

2.3 Waste Management

The 2018/19 data has showed a welcome increase in the recycling rate to 56% making Devon provisionally the 3rd best recycling county in the country. East Devon's and Torridge's service changes contributed significantly to this achievement. A reduction of 0.1% in waste arisings was also welcomed.

Behavioural change campaign work over the first six months of this year has included:

- food waste prevention project "Keep an eye on food waste" with roadshows held across the county providing helpful tips and advice on reducing food waste
- promotion of home composting with the "Get composting" scheme, whereby subsidised compost bins were advertised at Recycling Centres.
- promoting less use of single use plastic with a "Feel good, do good" campaign <https://www.recycledevon.org/single-use-plastic-pledge>

The Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee (DASWC) funded Waste and Recycling Advisors (WRA) contract has focussed on talking to householders' face to face to assist them to improve their recycling habits. To date over 10,000 residents have been spoken to, with 8,596 recycling boxes given out. There has been a drop in contamination of recycling, and an increase in food waste collection tonnages.

Over the past year the Schools Waste Education team have seen a notable increase in demand for their support to schools due to the heightened public interest in the topics of plastic, Climate Change and the youth strikes. During the 2018/19 academic year the Waste Education Team worked with 64 schools across Devon reaching 12,508 children and 1,471 adults. Several of these schools received more than one school visit and some have also visited an EfW plant and recycling centre. The Education team have also recently launched the Recycle Devon Scouts Badge, are working with the Libraries on a poetry competition for young people and supported 13 schools to run a School Community day to raise awareness of waste issues among parents and the wider school community.

During 2018/19, the Community Action Groups in Devon (CAG Devon) project has expanded beyond Tiverton to cover all of Mid Devon and Teignbridge, with the number of groups in the network increasing from 4 to 13. Together these groups put on 79 community events ranging from food surplus events and Repair Cafes to Give or Take swapping events, compost workshops and clothes swaps. The groups directly engaged with 5,616 people and contributed a total of 4,353 volunteer hours. During the year CAG Devon carried out 2 compost training days and 2 Love Food Hate Waste days, working in partnership with local CAG groups to deliver the training. They also ran a Skill Share event in partnership with Eden Project Communities with 65 people attending from over 30 organisations.

Phase II of Ecowaste4food (a 4-year EU funded project aimed at reducing food waste in the supply chain) has seen a successful bid for a Pilot Project providing cooking skills classes to householders across the county. Alongside this, an application to the National Lottery is ongoing to provide 15 community fridges in Devon's market towns.

The Devon Reuse Project has focussed on supporting repair cafes across Devon and in particular the Big Fix 2019 held in Exeter where 268 items were repaired in one day by a team of 40 menders. The organisation of the Big Fix, Devon Reuse week and Devon Upcycling Day contributed to Devon's Reuse Project Officer winning the Outstanding Achievement Award at the national LARAC Conference in October.

New waste operational contracts have been let for processing separately collected food in North Devon and Torridge District Council areas and separately collected garden waste in East Devon, North Devon and Torridge District Council areas.

3. Budget Update - Revenue Expenditure Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

- 3.1 Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste overall is forecasting an under spend of £402k at Month 6.
- 3.2 Highways and Traffic Management is showing an overspend of £725k. This is for a number of reasons, but primarily the level of anticipated income is not being achieved, and although the level of potholes is significantly down on previous years the service set an ambitious saving, which has not been fully realised. There are a number of risks associated with the current projections, particularly in relation to reactive works. Weather patterns over the winter period can have a significant impact on expenditure and this will be monitored closely to identify pressures, and potential management action, as early as possible.
- 3.3 Infrastructure Development is currently generating an over-recovery of income through capital recharges. As a result, the service is now projected to exceed income recovery by £180k.
- 3.4 Waste tonnages are below forecast, and along with a number of other factors including fluctuations in the price of recycled materials being better than anticipated this has led to a forecast overall under spend on the waste budget of £947k. However, waste tonnages can be very volatile depending on both weather and economic factors.

Meg Booth
Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Highway Management: Councillor Stuart Hughes

Cabinet Member for Infrastructure Development and Waste: Councillor Andrea Davis

Cabinet Member for Community, Public Health, Transportation and Environmental Services:
Councillor Roger Croad

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Ref.
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Nil