

**Meeting:** Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024

**Title:** Highways Delivery – Task and Finish Group

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**Wards affected:** All

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## 1. Purpose of Report

The Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee (O&S) has agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group and this report contains an initial draft terms of reference (ToR) for the current committee members to give feedback upon. The current committee would prefer that work begins soon after confirmation of the membership of the committee following the Local government election that same month.

The group will also take into consideration the proposed transfer of the engineering service back into the management of North Tyneside Council to gain a greater understanding of the operational environment, the challenges faced and to establish any opportunities to enhance future delivery of the highways function.

## 2. Introduction

The objective of the Task and Finish Group is to gain a greater understanding of how the strategic partnership operates with reference to a review of working practices within the highway delivery function taking into account national, regional and local policies with particular regard to:

- The North East Transport Plan and its integration with devolved transport powers, and how this can be used to support delivery of the highways function.
- The Council's Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP), the overall condition of the network and the allocation of resources aligned with legislative and corporate policy aims and objectives. This will assist in

identifying potential opportunities to reshape strategic highways delivery when the engineering service is back under the management of the Council, with recommendations to the Mayor and Cabinet.

- The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) is available through the new combined authority. The Council would like to set key policy and priority objectives aligned to the HAMP to maximise all opportunities for additional investment into our highways infrastructure.

Attention should also be given to the delivery of the highways function and a deeper, clearer evaluation of the KPIs and PIs to discuss if these are the correct metrics to benchmark service delivery, during the remainder of the partnership. This will be achieved with reference to the statutory duty aligned to highways and any national codes of practice used to provide assurances that delivery meets the basic duty to maintain the highway network safely.

The group is to concentrate on specific aspects of the highways delivery partnership and to write a report detailing observations and recommendations for consideration by the Mayor and Cabinet in the future delivery of the service when it returns back to the management of the Council. The report will reference national and regional policy objectives and how they align with the Council's own policy priorities, including

- Policies and procedures for the monitoring and repair of highway assets.
- The role that communications and engagement play in the delivery of all highways functions.
- Developing a narrative that covers the whole transport network for the Borough, provides clear, transparent communications and appropriate engagement.
- The legislative framework for the delivery of the highways function.
- How the partnership adheres to the Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A National Code of Practice for the effective asset management of highway infrastructure.
- Understanding the structure of the partnership and relevant roles and responsibilities of staff.
- Developing an understanding of what constitutes an actionable defect, the risk-based approach to inspections and the prioritising of repair categories into P1, P2 and P3.
- Developing an understanding of how repairs are undertaken with regard to flexible and modular paving, the materials used and expected lifespans of the repair.

- Developing an understanding of how reports are triaged, and repairs allocated to the relevant gangs.
- Understanding how Key Performance Indicators are monitored and reported on and whether they could be improved.
- Identifying strengths and weaknesses in the recording and monitoring system.
- To consider Community and resident voices / views and the perception of repair completion.
- Compare highway asset management delivery with a neighbouring Council.
- Identify any gaps in delivery outside the statutory duty to maintain the network that could be considered to enhance future service delivery.

### 3. Details

- **Method**

It is proposed to hold a number of focused days of Scrutiny to consider the issue. There will be input required from the local authority and Capita officers and an officer from Durham County Council. There is potential for visits to the Killingworth depot and to observe live repair and maintenance works at various locations, coupled with a visit to Durham County Council to observe their repair and maintenance processes. Members will consider other input and material as they develop the Task and Finish Group.

- **Reporting**

The Task and Finish Group will report to the full Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee. And, should the Committee agree, onward to Cabinet and the Mayor with details of recommendations to be considered to improve future delivery of the highways function following the transfer back of the engineering function to the Council's management in 2025.

- **Timescales**

The aim is to supply the July committee with an update on its progress and to complete the study and report to the committee by 9 October 2024 meeting.

- **Membership**

A cross party membership, open to all Members, of six representatives.

Paul Watson, Mark Newlands – North Tyneside Council

Harry Wearing, Head of Communications and Marketing

Vicki Nixon, Head of Engagement, Participation and Advocacy

Nick Preston – Capita.

Paul Anderson – Durham County Council.

Durham County Council are currently the only Council in the UK with the ISO55001 Highways Asset Management accreditation and were approached to assist in this process and have agreed to help where necessary.

#### **4. Next Steps**

- Once agreed the ToR will be circulated to all existing members of O&S.
- Democratic Services will take names of currently elected members interested in the Task & Finish group and use these as the basis for the membership.
- Agree a scope and strategic direction for the Task & Finish group to work to.