

1. Cabinet decisions since the last Report from the Executive to the County Council

- 1.1 There will have been four Cabinet meetings (20 April 2015, 18 May 2015, 15 June 2015 and 3 July 2015) since the last Executive Report to County Council. There were no items of business specifically attributed to this portfolio.

2. Consequences of Cabinet decisions before the last meeting of the County Council

- 2.1 None.

3. Anticipated/future decisions to be made by Cabinet

- 3.1 None.

4. Key Partnerships

- 4.1 None.

5. Other comments**5.1 Street Lighting**

At the March 2015 Council meeting I reported that I would be meeting Ringway on a weekly basis to seek a recovery of the street lighting service. I am pleased to report that the service achieved the contractual performing zone at the end of May. This was as a result of applying special measures, including deployment of additional resources, but more importantly, a review of working practices and the implementation of the systems originally envisaged by the contract.

Ensuring sustained performance is now of key importance. Ringway's new Head of Street Lighting has now started and is tasked with both optimising resources, given that fault reporting tends to be seasonal and by devising a more pro-active strategy to pre-empt faults in advance of winter 2015/16, when reported faults may otherwise rise.

I will continue to meet officers and Ringway managers, but with the aim of discussing service evolution, given the opportunities of LED and Central Monitoring Systems (CMS) technology, but also the continued challenge of an ageing stock of lamp columns. I will seek to consult the Highways Cabinet Panel as and when ideas emerge.

I can also report that Phase 2 of the LED and CMS project, which will see the replacement of all the remaining lanterns that are in full night lighting, is on track to start in August 2015. These energy saving projects are particularly important,

as the Council is facing a 24% rate increase for street lighting energy prices this year.

5.2 Works and Events Communications and Variable Message Signs (VMS)

The service has been looking at different ways of communicating with residents and road users.

Temporary road signs were erected along the route inviting road users to the A602 scheme public consultation and nearly 50% of the attendees confirmed that it was those signs that attracted them to the event.

This year the Council is providing residents with information of local roads maintenance works in more attractive leaflets, rather than letters.

The use of mobile variable message signs (VMS) to give important advanced warning and safety messages on our high speed, main roads is also being trialled.

The use of the permanent VMS signs will also be reviewed this year.

5.3 A120 / A602 Project updates

Both the A120 Bypass (Little Hadham) and Flood Alleviation Scheme and the A602 Improvements (Ware to/from Stevenage) projects have now been subject to pre-planning application public consultation processes.

5.3.1 A120

Exhibitions for the Little Hadham Bypass project were held last Autumn and were well attended. Feedback received both at the exhibitions and during the consultation period that followed has been carefully considered and, where appropriate, the scheme design has been refined. For example

- an alternative pedestrian route, allowing walkers to choose to pass under the new bypass alongside the Albury Tributary Spillway has been included in addition to the diverted Right of way which crosses the new bypass at grade
- Changes have been made to the height of structures along the route, to both reduce visual impact and reduce the volume of excess material produce from the works
- The Hadham Park roundabout (at the eastern end of the bypass) has been realigned by a small amount which reduces the amount of existing vegetation that needs to be removed and replaced, and increases the distance of the roundabout from nearby properties.
- The case for and against a junction between Albury Road was reviewed against policy, safety, environmental and cost criteria, and the proposed

design of an overbridge, to allow the bypass to pass under Albury Road, has been retained; being the safest in terms of minimising conflicts between traffic flows and aligning with the County Council's policy of not providing direct accesses on strategic routes.

5.3.2 **A602**

The pre-planning public consultation for the project opened in May and closed on 14 June 2015.

An initial analysis of the feedback has highlighted the following themes:

- Concerns about joining the A602 from side roads due to perceived increases in vehicle speeds and the free flow of traffic
- Requests for increased provision for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians
- Comments that the new traffic signals should be part-time
- Congestion caused by HGVs on Westmill Road by the Household Waste Recycling Centre and Landfill sites.

All of the comments received will now be carefully considered and, where appropriate, the scheme design will be refined.

The planning application for both projects will be submitted to Hertfordshire County Council as the Planning Authority within the next few months. Subject to satisfactory progression through statutory processes, the projects remain on programme for commencement of works on site in 2017; opening in 2019.

5.4 **Highways Member Enquires**

In December 2014, Highways launched a new Member enquiry service with the aim of ensuring enquires from County Councillors were being dealt with in an appropriate time of 5 working days.

Following an initial trial period of a month, the new service was launched to all County Councillors in January 2015.

Up to the 22 June this year, 59 Councillors have made use of the service; sending in 1,863 enquiries.

Of the 1,845 enquires which should have been responded to by now, 1,561 were responded to within the 5 working day target; a compliance of 84.6%. A further 284 were dealt with, but outside the target timeframe. 18 enquires have yet to be replied to, but these are all still within the 5 working day target.

Members can still contact officers directly but, if they copy in the Highways Member Enquiry Service, the team will ensure the request is tracked and responded to. This is particularly useful where an officer is on leave.

5.5 IWP Maintenance Programme Progress

Progress to date on the main maintenance programmes to mid-June 2015 was as follows:

- Surface dressing programme – approximately 50% complete, and completion forecast for July/August.
- The package of 2016-17 surface dressing works is currently being commissioned, so that the planning process can start.
- Carriageway micro surfacing is progressing well and following the planned programme, with completion forecast for October/November 2015.
- Local carriageway resurfacing is programmed to complete in November/December 2015. There have been some issues around coal tar - a contaminant that can be present in old surfaces and needs special handling, but these are being managed.
- The A-Roads resurfacing programme is progressing well. There are some similar issues around coal tar, but the programme is on track at 50% complete; with an expected completion of August/September 2015.
- Footway micro-surfacing is progressing well with a small programme of works due to be completed in August 2015.
- Footway resurfacing/reconstruction; this programme got off to a relatively slow start but has a long window of opportunity. As such it is expected to be completed in December 2015 as originally planned.
- The Drainage programme is progressing well. The scheme to provide additional resilience against the long standing flood risk at Burns Road, Royston has just been completed.

5.6 Highways Together

Monday, 29 June saw the countywide launch of Highways Together, our new initiative that enables Parish and Town Councils to carry out basic environmental maintenance works on the public highway. I was part of the launch event, held at Wheathampstead Memorial Hall, along with the HAPTC County Officer, Parish Clerks and HCC and Ringway Officers. I was very pleased to see so many Parish and Town Councils represented at the event.

HAPTC, Parish and Town Councils, HCC and Ringway worked together on the pilot and, as you would expect with a new venture, there were problems to overcome, however, the result is a number of ways that Parish and Town Councils can carry out environmental works on the highway in their communities by using volunteers, their own staff and the Community Payback Team. Parish and Town Councils can approach their County Member for contributions from

their Highways Locality Budget and now have some guidance on overgrown vegetation and what they can do about it.

A consistent theme throughout the pilot, and one I am very keen to improve, is communications. Parish and Town Councils have now received contact details for relevant HCC and Ringway officers. Additionally, useful highways information, as identified by Parish and Town Councils, will be available on the new Highways Together webpage that is currently undergoing user testing and will be live at the end of July. We had thought we were days away from going live with the webpage, however, there are a number of amendments to be made to ensure it runs smoothly, such as links etc., and our web team are working hard to resolve these.

Of course all of the above can be available to our District and Borough colleagues through existing or new agency agreements. I am very excited about this initiative and I look forward to seeing more positive results as Parish and Town Councils take part.

6. Cabinet Panels

- 6.1 Since the last Executive Report to Council, the Highways & Waste Management Cabinet Panel has met on 12 May 2015. The matters discussed can be found at the following location:

12 May 2015

<https://cmis.hertsdirect.org/hertfordshire/Calendarofcouncilmeetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/29/Committee/20/Default.aspx>

- 6.2 Since the last Executive Report to Council, the Highways Cabinet Panel has met on 7 July 2015. The matters discussed can be found at the following location:

7 July 2015

<https://cmis.hertsdirect.org/hertfordshire/Calendarofcouncilmeetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/434/Committee/49/Default.aspx>

Terry Douris
Executive Member for Highways
July 2015