

TITLE OF REPORT: Review of the Council and Partners' approach to roads and highways

REPORT OF: Director of Development, Transport and Public Protection

SUMMARY

The Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee have agreed that the focus of its review in 2016-17 will be the role of the Council and its partners towards roads and highways. During the course of the review it is proposed that the Committee will consider evidence of the approach principally in the four areas of road safety/accidents, road and pavement repairs, bus lanes and traffic congestion.

This report sets out the proposed scope of the review and the process for taking it forward.

Background

Vision 2030 sets out the 6 Big Ideas for Gateshead. Transport relates closely to the themes of "City of Gateshead", "Sustainable Gateshead" and "Active and Healthy Gateshead".

The Tyne and Wear Local Transport Plan, which sets out the transport policy framework for Gateshead, identifies three main challenges for the transport network:

- Supporting economic development and regeneration;
- Addressing climate change;
- Supporting safe and sustainable communities.

Policy CS13 of the Gateshead/Newcastle Core Strategy seeks the enhancement and delivery of an integrated transport network to support sustainable development and economic growth through:

- Promoting sustainable travel choices;
- Improving the operation of the transport network and its wider connections;
- Ensuring new development is located and designed to promote sustainable travel choices, minimise unnecessary car trips, and connect safely to the network.

Scope of the Review

An effective transport network underpins many aspects of modern life. It provides access for residents and visitors to jobs, education, health, leisure, recreational and social activities. For business it enables employees to travel to, from and within work, allows the supply of raw materials and the delivery of finished products.

Modern society's need for mobility does though have negative impacts. Large numbers of people are still injured in road accidents, with a number of fatalities each year. Transport is also a major source of pollution, contributing to problems of global

warming and poor air quality. High traffic volumes, or travelling at excessive speed, can be detrimental to nearby communities, causing severance and deterring social interaction. Sedentary lifestyles associated with high levels of car use have been identified as a factor in a range of health problems, ranging from certain types of cancer to mental wellbeing.

The demand for travel in itself can cause problems for the effective operation of the network. Parts of the borough suffer from traffic congestion, with a consequential impact on residents and businesses. Future growth threatens to worsen these problems if action is not taken to manage them.

New technology has provided the opportunity to reduce some of the need for travel, but it has increased pressures in other areas. While the growth in car traffic nationally has moderated somewhat in recent years, there has been a substantial growth in light van traffic, in part related to the growth of internet shopping. An effective and affordable transport network also has a role in reducing the impacts of social isolation and loss of local services that are one of the side effects of new technology.

The road network is a particularly important element of the transport network, and is the main one for which the Council has specific responsibility. Within Gateshead it has a total length of more than 560 route miles, and is the most single valuable asset the Council controls, with an estimated value of about £1 billion. How to maintain an asset of this extent and value in the face of current funding pressures remains a particular problem.

The suggested scope of this review includes a consideration of a number of factors affecting the road network, and its ability to meet the needs of residents and businesses in Gateshead now and in the future. The four areas proposed to be covered in the review are:

- Road safety/accidents;
- Road and pavement repairs;
- Bus lanes;
- Traffic congestion.

The Process

The process and timescale for the review in this paragraph is set out in Appendix 1. It is proposed that the review will take place over a ten month period from 19th June 2017 to 13th April 2018. It will involve the presentation of expert evidence, research and may, if appropriate, also include site visits.

Who will be involved?

It is proposed that the identified topics will be dealt with individually in separate evidence gathering sessions. A provisional order for these is:

- Session 1 – road and pavement repairs
- Session 2 – road safety/accidents
- Session 3 – traffic congestion
- Session 4 – bus lanes

Evidence will be sought from a variety of sources including Development, Transport and Public Protection, and Street Scene. It is envisaged that external bodies from

which evidence will be sought will include Highways England, NECA, the emergency services, Nexus and Go Ahead.

Recommendation

Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to agree:

- The scope, process and timescale as set out in this report

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Progress of the Review

This appendix sets out the standard framework for Overview and Scrutiny Committees to agree and conduct policy reviews and includes proposals specific for this review.

Stage 1

The scope, purpose and intended outputs of the Review should firstly be agreed by the Cabinet and the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The recommendations of Advisory Groups may also be considered if appropriate.

Proposal

- 19th June 2017 - Scoping report to Scrutiny Committee

Stage 2

Evidence may be gathered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee making visits as necessary or inviting persons and organisations to give evidence before it. Relevant Group or Strategic Directors and the Chief Executive will assist the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as necessary. The evidence gathered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be written up by officers.

Proposal

- 11th September, 30th October, 4th December 2017 and 29th January 2018 - To have evidence-gathering events that will involve research, presentations by relevant officers, outside organisations and site visits if appropriate (details to be confirmed).

Stage 3

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will then meet (as many times as is necessary) to analyse the information gathered and prepare its conclusions.

Proposal

- 5th March 2018 - Committees to consider an interim report, prepared by the Lead Officers, and to analyse the evidence presented.

Stage 4

Officers will then prepare a report on the issue based on the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Officers will submit this report to the next practicable meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to secure agreement that the report is a fair, accurate and complete reflection of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's conclusions.

Proposal

- 23rd April 2018 - Draft final report to be considered by the Committee.

Stage 5

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will then present this report to the Cabinet. The Cabinet may take note of the report, approve all or some of the report's recommendations or refer the report to full Council or to an Advisory Group for further consultation.