

Scrutiny Committee

Date: 3 November 2016

Highways Services Contract

Information in this report was produced on behalf of	
Director or Assistant Director	<i>Director of Resource Management</i>
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Title:	<i>Highways Services Contract</i>
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Introduction

1. This evidence set has been provided by county council officers and representatives of the Highway Services Contractor provider, Kier Infrastructure Services Ltd. This joint approach is consistent with the aspiration to adopt a 'one team' approach to the overall delivery of the highways service in Suffolk.
2. This evidence set responds to the key questions set out in the Scrutiny Focus.
 - a) **What actions have been taken as a result of the recommendations made by Scrutiny Committee on 29 October 2015 (as set out in Evidence Set 1), and**
 - b) **If no action has been taken, what are the reasons for this?**
3. The following paragraphs set out the recommendations made by Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 29 October 2015, followed by the actions taken or an explanation as to why such recommendations have not been acted upon:-

Recommendation a) To recommend that the Cabinet should support the Cabinet Member for Finance in ensuring that the County Council's commissioning and procurement function continued to be strengthened as a priority for the Council, bringing in outside support as necessary.

4. This was not a specific recommendation for either the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport or Assistant Director Operational Highways to personally respond to. However, since October 2015, the Corporate Procurement and Contract Management Team has worked closely with relevant colleagues across the organisation and has undertaken the following actions to respond to this recommendation:
- Developed a formal risk assessment process for each contract held by the Council;
 - Established corporate guidance and training at both basic and advanced level for all contract managers across the Council which has since been attended by over 100 officers and a member of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group;
 - Briefed the Contract Management Board on commercial skills specifically in the use of active contract management to drive service efficiency and savings from external spend;
 - Continued to use the Contract Management Board as an opportunity for officers to share learning and best practice when undertaking procurement and contract negotiations;
 - Held 'Savings Clinics' with individual directorates via Contract Management Board representatives;
 - Provided commercial input to major highways and construction infrastructure projects including the development of market intelligence from early market engagement, and strategy development for future procurement and contracting activity.
5. Since the date of the recommendation, the Scrutiny Committee considered a further report on 'Procurement and Contract Management' from the Director of Resource Management at its meeting on 10 February 2016 and subsequently established a Task and Finish Group to consider this area in greater detail. The Corporate Procurement and Contract Management Team provided input to the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group and supported the development of its recommendations which were reported back to Scrutiny Committee in September 2016. These recommendations will be received by the Contract Management Board at its meeting on 27 October 2016 and an action plan is being developed in response.

Recommendation b) To recommend that the Babergh lean systems pilot should be completed as a priority, so that this learning and lean systems could be rolled out across the county at the earliest opportunity.

6. As set out in the report of 29 October 2015 to Scrutiny Committee, the Babergh lean systems pilot set out a number of objectives. These objectives are repeated below with an indication as to how they have been progressed/delivered:
- (i) Defining more clearly the role of an area highway office. In the development of a revised Highways Transformation Programme, the area highways offices indicated a number of activities that drew heavily

on officers' time. These areas have been progressively tackled so that consideration of speed limits, progression of Local Highways Budget schemes and identification/prioritisation of major works programmes are all now being dealt with by other parts of Suffolk Highways. This allows the area highway offices to focus primarily on routine/condition inspections and tackling customer service requests.

- (ii) Developing and publishing the core offer from Suffolk Highways. Work is continuing through the Communications Workstream of the Highways Transformation Programme (through emailed messages to county, district, borough, town and parish councillors in Suffolk and on the County Council's Suffolk Highways webpages) to clarify what will and will not be done on highway maintenance matters. The recent changes to the Highway Maintenance Operational Plan (as reported to Cabinet on 12 July 2016) is an example of this.
- (iii) Ensuring that, where possible, customer enquiries are directed to the customer service/contact centre or the web portal, thereby ensuring resources are much more efficiently used. The Integration Workstream of the Highways Transformation Programme continues to make improvements to the online highways reporting tool. In 2014, online contacts were at an average of 485 per month (just over 23% of all forms of contact for highways issues). In 2016, this has risen to an average of 1145 contacts per month (about 43% of all forms of contact since the beginning of the year).
- (iv) Undertake a lean systems review of a range of key processes to ensure they are as effective and efficient as possible. The application of lean/systems thinking has been applied across all Suffolk Highways activities through a series of workshops managed by the aforementioned Integration Workstream. The outputs of these workshops are directly influencing how Suffolk Highways are delivering (and will deliver) future local highways services.
- (v) Centrally managing the strategic asset management of the highway network thereby releasing some resources. The asset management approach was endorsed by Cabinet on 10 November 2015 and is being applied on a consistent, centrally managed county-wide basis. This is the subject of a separate report to the Committee's 3 November 2016 meeting.
- (vi) Devise training and support to staff and customers in new ways of working. The implementation of temporary integrated teams has enabled Council officers to more fully appreciate the challenges previously faced by Kier personnel and vice-versa. This has led to jointly developed simplification of works processes for collective benefit. Clarity is being provided to the public through improvements to the Suffolk Highways webpages, including the highways online reporting tool.
- (vii) Develop ambassadorial roles, supporting local communities to obtain information on works in their area and support them to undertake self-help basic maintenance work. The lack of progress with this objective

has been one of a number of drivers towards abandoning the divisive and inconsistent area office arrangement. Suffolk Highways is now moving towards creating 'service delivery centres' in early 2017 that co-locate and integrate Council and Kier resources, thereby enhancing service performance, information accessibility and communication with local communities.

Recommendation c) To recommend that mechanisms for monitoring the quality of works provided under the contract should be developed to provide clear evidence of the results achieved and any corrective measures without incurring high inspection costs. Sampling of work and customer surveys should be considered.

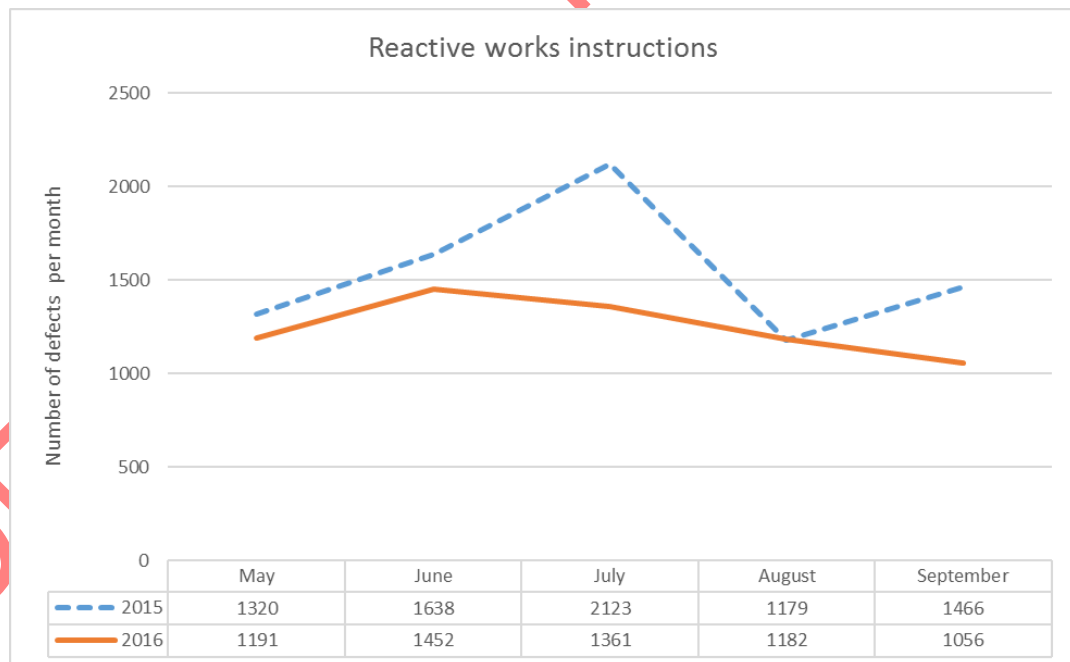
7. The four area highways offices have not worked in a consistent manner across the county. Each area highway office has prioritised works and used its historic, arbitrary budget allocations differently. Furthermore, there has been insufficient focus on planning and the development of schedules/programmes of work, thereby inhibiting cost-effectiveness. A significant proportion of work has been ordered on a reactive basis at high cost. The unnecessarily high volume of reactive work and an associated set of punitive output performance indicators were compounding the inconsistent area highways office approach – resulting in rushed work of less than satisfactory quality.
8. The priority was therefore to replace the inconsistency in contractual requirements. The existing Highway Maintenance Operational Plan (HMOP) was either ill-defined or not followed in terms of identifying reactive work as opposed to the less costly preventative maintenance work. On 9 May 2016, a replacement draft HMOP was introduced with far clearer intervention levels for all forms of defect. Those expected to raise works orders received initial training and there was a series of workshops at which feedback on the replacement HMOP was provided and slight amendments made. A 'final' version was presented to and approved by Cabinet on 12 July 2016 and this document is now out to public consultation.
9. A temporary role of 'superintendent' was created so that one person in the control hub at Phoenix House could review all works order requests so that these were all consistent with the HMOP requirements. Orders were rejected if they did not comply. The superintendent role was filled on a rotational basis to ensure that as many of the individuals raising works order requests had the opportunity to both challenge inconsistency and see first-hand its potential negative impact.
10. A supplementary requirement was that photographs of the defect to be tackled and of the surrounding environment (to enable better determination of the traffic management required to undertake the repairs safely for the workforce and the public) be submitted with works order requests. This has further helped clarify what type of treatment (temporary or permanent repair) is necessary.
11. The number of reactive works orders raised has fallen significantly and enabled a reorganisation of the operational workforce. During 2015/16, there were 25 2-man gangs operating on a cost-plus basis (i.e. paid for the

day, irrespective of work output, size or quality). Since the changes in May, the number of 2-man gangs has reduced to 3 (focused on reactive repairs required within 48 hours) and the remaining workforce has changed to either 3-man gangs or 4-man gangs (of which there are 15 in total). The cost of the arrangement in 2015/16 was around £3.8m whereas the new configuration is likely to only cost £2.5m.

12. The following table shows that the proportion of carriageway repairs that are temporary is steadily falling. This clarifies that a greater proportion of repairs are being completed on a permanent basis. Photographs of completed work are being submitted by all reactive works gangs so that this can be checked for quality and consistency.

	Apr 2016	May 2016	Jun 2016	July 2016	Aug 2016	Sept 2016
Percentage of temporary carriageway repairs (out of total number of carriageway repairs)	21%	21%	11%	9%	7%	3%

13. The total number of reactive repairs that have been ordered has fallen from the levels identified in 2015. There has also been a more consistent month-by-month demand during 2016, making service delivery more manageable. The HMOP impact on reactive repairs is as shown in the following chart.



Recommendation d) The Committee recognised that the Assistant Director (Operational Highways) was committed to improving performance under the amended highways contract and the strategy for reviewing and improving the contractual and working arrangements was encouraging, in particular a move towards incentives rather than penalties in the contract was recommended to bring about improvements.

14. The aspiration of the Highways Services Contract between the County Council and Kier was that a 'one team' relationship would emerge. Regrettably, little had been done to achieve this aspiration prior to the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 29 October 2015.
15. The Highways Transformation Programme at that stage did not sufficiently address the need to develop an appropriate partnership between the two parties. Rather than maintaining a 'master/servant' relationship, the new Highways Transformation Programme had to create an alliance between two partners looking to take shared responsibility for the delivery of a better quality service than existed at that time. That alliance would be simply called 'Suffolk Highways'.
16. A list of activities that either needed creating or addressing was compiled. This was then segregated into six specific workstreams: contract management; integration; programme management; finance; asset management; and communications – collectively treated as the new Highways Transformation Programme. The communications workstream would provide the tools to allow communication of progress with the Highways Transformation Programme to all councillors, Suffolk Highways personnel and to the general public.
17. In early February 2016, Suffolk Highways' personnel identified the existence of an HM Treasury document entitled 'Improving Infrastructure Delivery: Alliancing Code of Practice'. In its preface, it states that "This document provides accessible and valuable support to those embarking on an alliance journey and to those who are already developing an alliance." Reference to this document was therefore considered entirely valid to assess the Highways Transformation Programme against and to better enable a 'one team' delivery model to be put into place.
18. The document, which was created by the Infrastructure Client Group (in essence, central government and major infrastructure clients working together) goes on to clarify that:

"An alliance is:

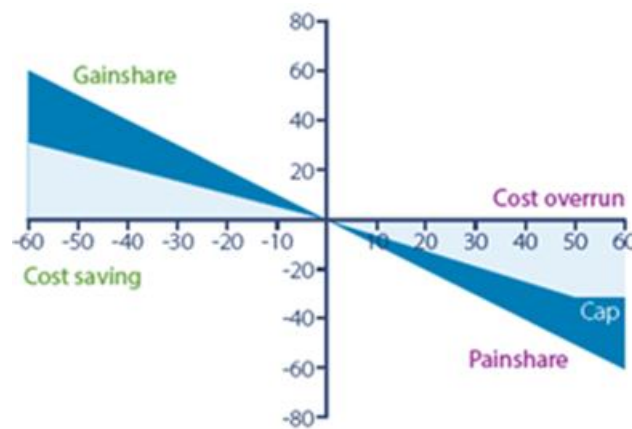
 - A collaborative and integrated team brought together from across partners and owners to deliver a programme or project;
 - Shared commercial goals, aligned directly with customer or project outcomes;
 - Integrated teams, developed on a best for task basis;
 - Underpinned by a commitment to key working principles and trust based relationships;

- An emphasis on creating the right culture and behaviours, including no-blame;
 - Strong, collective and unanimous leadership.”
19. The document identifies four key themes: behaviour; integration; leadership; and commercial. In order to address the need to move towards incentives from a penalty-driven approach, it suggests that *‘the proposed commercial model demonstrates how partners will generate a return, the level of performance required to generate that return and how performance remains aligned with the client’s business requirements’*.
20. The transition required is best demonstrated by the following figure from the document:



21. The last bullet point for the ‘Alliance Approach’ is most relevant here. Failure to meet the Operational Performance Measures (OPMs) set out in the contract meant that a financial penalty would be imposed. However, these OPMs were driving the wrong behaviours between the two ‘partners’, particularly in the way in which the highways service was geared heavily towards reactive maintenance, rather than preventative maintenance.
22. There was also no clear link between these OPMs and the County Council’s priority objectives – particularly to ‘maintain roads and improve Suffolk’s infrastructure’. The Council’s Local Transport Plan identifies four specific desired objectives: a prosperous and vibrant economy; creating the greenest county; safe, healthy and inclusive communities; and learning and skills for the future.
23. A new Performance Management Framework (PMF) was built round these four themes and replaced the OPM-based approach with effect from 1 April 2016. The report to Cabinet on 18 October 2016 regarding the extension of the Highway Services Contract recommended that this new PMF should be used as the basis for determining overall contract performance delivery by Kier and thus whether or not any time should be deducted from the contract extension. However, the PMF is also being considered as a mechanism for rewarding Kier for good performance (set out in paragraphs 37 to 40 below) – perhaps linked to receiving a share of any efficiency savings generated.
24. One issue that is important to the Council and any external party (such as parish councils) that seek to commission work is cost-certainty. At present, most works estimates are derived from a schedule of prices submitted at contract tender stage, uplifted in a defined manner by a set of standard industry indices. Although more effort is now taken to provide accurate estimates for the cost of all stages of scheme preparation and the construction itself, there is no direct incentive to adhere to these estimates.

25. An alternative available within the contract is to use a 'target price' approach. An estimated final cost for a scheme is established and, if this estimate is exceeded, then the 'pain' of the extra cost is shared between the client and the service provider – but, equally, so is the 'gain' of delivering the scheme for less than the estimate.
26. There is no standard apportionment of who bears the most 'pain' or benefits from the most gain. However, the Alliancing Code of Practice suggests that 'there should be a fair distribution at all levels of performance'. The following chart shows how the pain/gain allocation under the target price payment mechanism could work in general terms. This shows that each partner equally shares all of the gain (i.e. the benefit of the actual cost being less than the original estimate) but there is a limit on one of the partner's pain by placing a 'cap' on that potential liability.



27. The contract currently stipulates that the distribution of pain and gain shall be as shown in the table below:

Share Range (Variance from estimate)	Contractor's Share Percentage	Council's Share Percentage
Less than 90%	0%	100%
From 90% to 100%	25%	75%
From 100% to 105%	75%	25%
Greater than 105%	100%	0%

This is an uneven distribution of pain and gain in favour of the Council with caps on both pain to the Council and gain to Kier. To put this into context, if a scheme had a target cost of £200k but ultimately costed £150k, £30k would fall in the 'less than 90%' range and £20k would fall in the 'from 90% to 100%' range. The gain to the Council would be 100% of the £30k and 75% of the £20k – i.e. £45k. The gain to Kier would only be £5k so represents poor incentivisation.

28. The potential for a fairer distribution of pain and gain is now being explored. The latest consideration is as shown in the table below:

Share Range (Variance from estimate)	Contractor's Share Percentage	Council's Share Percentage
Less than 80%	0%	100%
From 80% to 100%	50%	50%
From 100% to 120%	50%	50%
Greater than 120%	100%	0%

In this instance, the gain to the Council would be 100% of £10k and 50% of £40k – i.e. £30k. The gain to Kier would be £20k and thus represents an enhanced incentivisation. Full incentivisation would be achieved if the share of gain was equal, irrespective of the percentage.

29. The application of the target price approach is currently being developed for the future provision of the cyclic drainage service. The same approach could also potentially apply to next season's surface dressing programme.

Recommendation e) To recommend that an action plan and timescales should be developed to underpin the proposed improvements, supported by a communications plan which should include raising public awareness of the plans for improvement.

30. The overall composition of the Highways Transformation Programme was shared with Suffolk County Council and Kier highways managers at a 'leadership event' held at Ipswich Town Football Club on 17 December 2015. Details were provided about each of the six workstreams and volunteers were sought from the audience as to whom wished to work in the sub-groups for the Highways Transformation Programme workstreams.

31. The following targets were set at that stage:

- (a) Contract Management Workstream – new PMF by end of March 2016
- (b) Integration Workstream – end-to-end reviews completed by June 2016
- (c) Programme Management Workstream – revised HMOP by June 2016
- (d) Finance Workstream – closure of contract year 1 & 2 payments by end of March 2016
- (e) Asset Management Workstream – HIAMP by Nov 2016
- (f) Communications – substantial work completed by June 2016
- (g) All elements of the Highways Transformation Programme completed by the end of March 2017

32. As identified above, target (a) was achieved by the switch to a new performance management framework on 1 April 2016. A trial of the revised Highway Maintenance Operational Plan began on 9 May 2016 (and formally endorsed for public consultation at Cabinet on 12 July 2016) so target (c) was met. Although target (d) involved considerable effort from a large

number of people, it was nonetheless achieved. For target (e), a draft Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan was presented to Cabinet on 12 July 2016, has been publicly consulted on, is the subject of a separate report to Scrutiny Committee and is on track to be finalised by November 2016.

33. A significant amount of effort has gone into making the highways service more transparent. Programmes of work are now available on the Suffolk Highways pages of the County Council's website and a number of messages from the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport ('Highways Matters') have been issued. Replacement Suffolk Highways vans have been delivered with revised 'Suffolk Highways' livery and the branding deployed appears on operatives' personal protective equipment and advance warning signs. There is still much to be done on enhancing the website content for highways issues and more information is to be provided for forward works programmes but, in essence, target (f) has been met.
34. The timescale for target (b) was not met but this overall task was completed during September 2016. Business Change Team personnel were involved in applying systems thinking to a number of highways end-to-end processes and this aided the generation of the HMOP. However, more detailed reviews were required to fully map out existing processes, identify where improvements could be made and help inform what Suffolk Highways' integrated team organisational structure should ultimately look like.
35. Although challenging, the overall changes identified in the Highways Transformation Programme are still on track for completion by the end of March 2017. However, it is recognised that there will be scope for further improvement and development of the services provided by Suffolk Highways – as the alliance will be seeking to implement continuous improvement.
36. In addition, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and the Assistant Director Operational Highways have been working with local media to clarify how the service is changing. Furthermore, the latter has been giving presentations at local Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) meetings and at an Our Place meeting in West Suffolk – and will be presenting at a West Suffolk parish councils meeting in mid-November 2016.

Recommendation f) To welcome the adoption of performance measures that were outcomes (as opposed to outputs) based, for managing and monitoring the contract.

37. As identified above, the Performance Management Framework comprises of outcome-based measures. As identified in the report to Cabinet on 18 October 2016, the PMF draws information from a number of sources (such as data submitted to Central Government bodies – particularly the Department for Transport) as well as primarily focusing on the results of the annual National Highways and Transport (NHT) public satisfaction surveys. The NHT survey (undertaken in June/July each year) provides three levels

of comparative benchmarking - at national, regional and county council levels.

38. In keeping with the principle of making Suffolk Highways' activities more transparent, the contents of the PMF and an associated action plan (which will respond to those measures where performance is less than satisfactory) should be shown on the Suffolk Highways webpages on the County Council's website. It is also considered entirely appropriate to provide an annual performance update to Scrutiny Committee. As the NHT survey results are not released until the end of October each year (to coincide with the NHT Annual Conference), reporting to Scrutiny Committee in December would work best.
39. Although the report to Cabinet recommended extending the contract to its full ten-year duration, it was agreed that this should be conditional on satisfactory performance against the PMF outcome measures in a manner that is to be defined by the end of December 2016. Through annual assessment, it could be readily determined whether to deduct time from the approved five-year extension or not. Such deduction could be in full or part-year time periods, depending upon the severity of any under-performance.
40. Whilst Scrutiny Committee could potentially feed into this process by way of its above mentioned annual review, it would only be able to make recommendations. The decision would need to rest with those with the delegated authority to make such deductions – the Director of Resource Management, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Heritage.

Recommendation g) To welcome greater collaboration between Kier and the County Council through the development of an integrated team.

41. An opportunity arose early in 2016 to revise the manner in which the street lighting service was being delivered. Operational street lighting was, in essence, a subcontracted service that was recognised as under-performing in the first two years of the contract. With the departure of some of the senior managers involved, consideration was immediately given to creating an integrated street lighting team, drawing together the County Council 'client' function with the residual operational arrangement.
42. The principle of a proposed integrated team structure was formally approved by the Highways Services Contract Strategic Board (chaired by the Director of Resource Management) on 18 January 2016. The structure came into formal effect on 1 April 2016.
43. The integrated team is responsible for the following aspects of street lighting: asset management; works scheduling; works programme development; financial control; quality control; resource allocation; and operational delivery.
44. The identified benefits of this integrated street lighting team are as follows:
 - (a) A reduction in management resource need, equivalent to three members of staff, has yielded an ongoing in-year saving of around £100k;

- (b) Personnel are working as 'one team' with peaks and troughs in workloads being balanced accordingly amongst all team members, with assistance being provided where required;
 - (c) All capital works sites are visited, assessed and detailed using a standard form containing all relevant information prior to works commencing – previously, this was not carried out;
 - (d) A programme of work has been developed to clear the backlog of revenue and capital works from the first two years of the contract;
 - (e) Team members are assigned to roles that focus on their specialisms - the right person doing the right job at the right time;
 - (f) Communication at all levels and in all directions has significantly improved;
 - (g) Feedback from operatives is that morale has increased;
 - (h) The payment process was reviewed to ensure costs are agreed prior to works commencing with variations agreed as and when they occur;
 - (i) A greater understanding of work pressures within the team has led to a number of working barriers being removed;
 - (j) A 7-year asset management plan has been created to target the actual condition of the lighting asset, as opposed to its age;
 - (k) A full-year works plan was developed for 2016/17 – the first time this has ever been in place
 - (l) As a consequence, 1500 lighting columns have been replaced in the first six months of 2016/17, compared to just 400 in the entirety of 2015/16;
 - (m) There has been improved general maintenance performance:
 - The average percentage of working street lights is now 99.6% compared with 97.8% last year;
 - 94.2% of lighting repairs are now complete within 10 days - last year it was 86.3%.
45. In view of the growing backlog of schemes being funded by Local Highway Budgets (LHB) but not being delivered in a timely or cost-effective way, an integrated LHB team was established in May 2016, comprising three Kier personnel and three Council officers (one each from the West Area Highways Office, the East Area and the Central Area). At that stage, the backlog of schemes that the area highways officers had agreed with local County Councillors (and any contributing parish/town councils) and were therefore ready for implementation stood at 103 schemes of which 51 had been ordered for construction but none had actually been delivered.
46. By mid-September, the total number of identifiable schemes had risen to 180 but the integrated team had delivered 82 schemes, identified with the relevant County Councillors that 15 schemes would not be progressed, 40 schemes were ordered for construction and the remaining 43 were in the 'design' stage – most of which involved public consultation for permanent traffic regulation orders.
47. The situation in mid-October was that the total number of schemes stood at 195, of which 101 had been delivered. An up-to-date programme of all

schemes was placed on the County Council's website in mid-October 2016 to clarify where all such schemes had reached in terms of implementation and the related dates for such schemes. This programme will be updated on a monthly basis for the 2016/17 schemes.

48. It was intended that the LHB team would only be in place on an interim basis to clear the backlog that had developed. The LHB team members have identified a number of benefits in the way that they have been working
- (a) Co-location:
- Faster, earlier, clearer flow of information between team members, colleagues and stakeholders;
 - Reduced misinterpretation of project briefs;
 - Flexibility of team to manage projects, cover leave and workload peaks;
- (b) Knowledge sharing:
- Bridging the previous divide between organisations;
 - Team able to access both the County Council's and Kier's systems, teams and processes;
 - The shared and varied knowledge, experience and background has enabled a wide range of projects to be progressed.
- (c) The positive 'Can Do' attitude of the team has resulted in finding the most effective way to deliver projects and feeling empowered;
- (d) Seeing the other organisation's perspective has improved understanding and relationships;
- (e) Minor works not involving traffic regulation orders (which entails lengthy consultation) can be delivered very quickly.
49. On the basis of the above, the integrated LHB team is being retained to not only ensure that the remaining backlog schemes are delivered but to become the first point of contact, rather than area highways officers. In this way, it is expected that the entire end-to-end delivery of Local Highway Budget-funded schemes will be delivered far quicker and cost-effectively than in the past.
50. Through the Council's revenue budget and capital allocation setting process, an additional £10million capital funding was allocated to highway maintenance over the two financial years, 2016/17 and 2017/18. In order to obtain optimum value from this funding from an asset management perspective, it was determined that a significant increase in the surface dressing programme was required.
51. Surface dressing work is essentially best spread over a two-year period for each annual list of sites. In the first year, the hardness of the road surface at each surface dressing site needs to be checked so that the dressing design can be optimised. In addition, any deterioration in the road surface should also be treated, primarily through patching work but this may also entail regulating any undulations in the existing road surface. The following year, the surface dressing work is undertaken at some point between April and

August. Continuing such work into September is ill-advised as both day and night temperatures begin falling and there is increased likelihood of rain.

52. Preparation for the planned 1 million square metres of surface dressing for 2016/17 (comprising 151 sites) took place during 2015/16 – and cost £4.6million. It was felt that up to 2 million square metres of additional surface dressing might be deliverable during April to August 2016 if the weather was good and additional surface dressing crews could be brought in early enough.
53. An integrated surface dressing team was therefore created in March 2016, comprising 6 Kier personnel, 6 County Council officers and 4 temporary staff, all co-located at Phoenix House. 431 additional possible surface dressing sites were considered but this was reduced to 247 sites for possible treatment.
54. All 247 of these additional sites underwent testing and preparatory works costing £830k. Tackling these sites earlier in the degenerative process that all flexible roads experience (through both trafficking and weathering) meant less preparation costs compared to the original programme – in other words avoiding future patching and regulation work. Had the 247 sites been allowed to deteriorate to the same level as the original 151 sites, that would suggest preparation cost of £9.2m. Earlier dressing would therefore avoid £8.4m preparation costs.
55. As 17 full days and 5 partial days were lost to wet weather, progress was slower than hoped for with the surface dressing gangs already committed to Suffolk. Gangs elsewhere in the country were also hampered by the poor weather and thus they did not arrive in Suffolk until August (during which time 4 surface dressing days were in operation). However, 309 sites out of the total 398 identified sites received surface dressing, equivalent to 2.474million square metres.
56. Earlier in 2016/17, the decision had been taken to trial the use of a 'temporary closure 15-minute delay' sign as an alternative to implementing a full road closure. Trials were successfully implemented in a manner agreed by the Network Assurance Team. The trial showed that, in many instances, the roads being worked were rarely being trafficked at the same time and, in most cases, traffic could be safely steered past the site without any delay.
57. This alternative traffic management approach was used on 89 of the sites. Instead of incurring the cost of implementing a temporary traffic regulation order and setting up traffic management along a diversion route, this approach merely required some additional personnel and barriers at the entry points to where the works were taking place – a significant reduction in cost. The net saving from this was £135k. The same approach is being rolled out across as much of Suffolk Highways maintenance work as possible – and will save a further estimated £400k.
58. These are all examples of the positive impact of the integrated teams that have been introduced – some permanent and some starting out on a temporary basis. However, these teams will now be established on a

permanent basis and the principle of integrated teams will apply across all of Suffolk Highways.

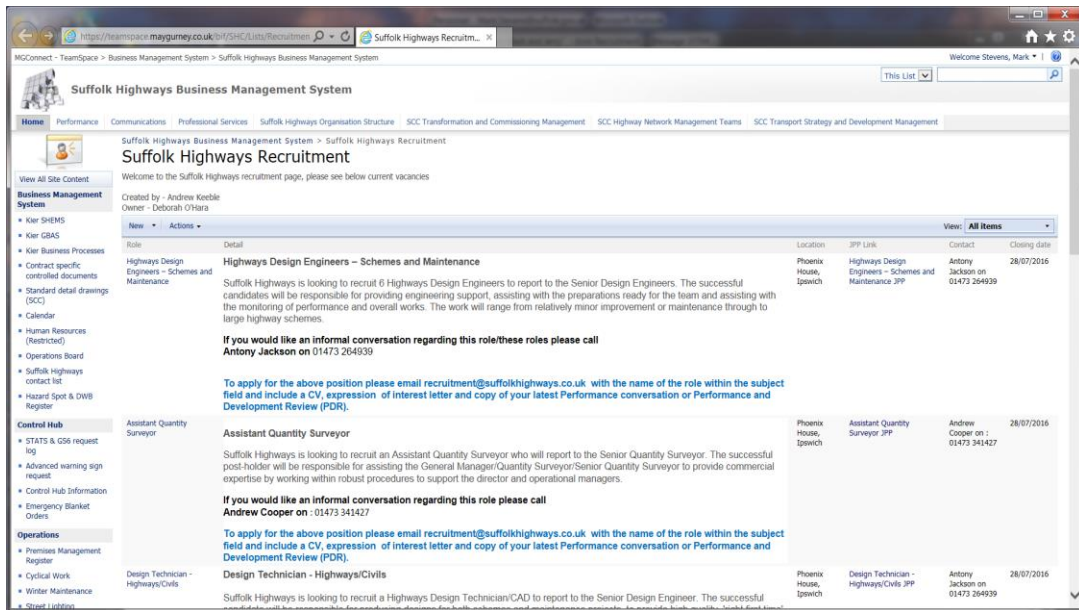
59. The latest integrated team to be established is a drainage team, set up to tackle a significant backlog of sites around the county where flooding of the highway is being experienced and causing varying levels of disruption. The funding required to address these flooding issues has been allocated and the various schemes are being prioritised. Direct contact can be made with the team through a dedicated email address – to supplement rather than replace the ability of the public to access Suffolk Highways via the customer service centre.

Recommendation h) To recommend the reduction of design process costs and time by adopting a more pragmatic design approach through greater use of standard details rather than the more onerous 'fit for purpose' service standards.

60. The 'fit for purpose' contractual design requirement arose from the desire at contract tender stage to shift all design risk to the incoming contractor. The entire design function transferred to Kier at the beginning of the contract but not all existing design staff transferred at the same time, preferring to take alternative roles within the retained County Council organisational structure.
61. The consequence of the fit for purpose requirement was that designs were made 'watertight' from a risk perspective rather than a more simplistic, pragmatic design approach – for which the risk could be shared. The time taken to design to a fit for purpose standard was long and therefore costly – and resulted in considerable frustration from those requesting work.
62. The establishment of the integrated teams identified above has resulted in quicker agreement over what would constitute a 'pragmatic design'. Those involved are using standard drawings and details, although work is ongoing through a 'materials, specification and innovation' sub-group to simplify and simplify these standard drawings and details yet further. A recent example has been consideration of the design for a 'gateway' – simplifying the gateway configuration, the sign to be used and the gateway material to ensure low levels of maintenance liability.

Recommendation i) To recommend that as much design work as possible be done by staff living and working in Suffolk rather than other counties, in particular for routine jobs and where a site visit was beneficial.

63. Earlier in 2016/17, a number of posts were vacant within the Kier organisational structure, including a number of positions in the Kier design team. The opportunity was taken to adapt Kier job descriptions into the County Council's 'job and personal profile' configuration and were then taken through the job evaluation process. Following this, the vacant posts were internally advertised, as set out in the screenshot below.



64. Following an interview process, a number of Suffolk County Council Operational Highways employees have secured posts in the design team. A number of these will be working in the new integrated drainage team referred to above.
65. Organisational changes are being put into effect through the Highways Transformation Programme. Every opportunity will continue to be pursued to ensure that the design function is delivered from within the existing pool of Kier and County Council employees, rather than use resources from outside of the county.

Recommendation j) To recommend that the work to improve highways on-line information and reporting systems should continue, ensuring problem reporting was easy and feedback effective. This work should take into account feedback from councillors about how systems could be improved to become more intelligent and responsive.

66. The changes to the Highway Maintenance Operational Plan (HMOP) identified above meant that changes were necessary to the highways on-line reporting tool. In addition, there was considerable feedback from councillors that, for those instances where reported defects did not meet the old HMOP intervention criteria, the defect was shown with a green 'pin' – giving the false impression that work had been completed when none, in fact, had. Councillors also identified that the highways online reporting tool did not allow accurate reporting close to boundaries with adjacent local authorities.
67. On that basis, work has taken place with the software provider of the highways online reporting tool and a number of important updates have been recently implemented:

- where work is ordered to fix the reported defect, the date of the order and timescales for repair (as set out in the HMOP) are now provided;
- new blue pins appear on the reporting tool map to show the defects that do not currently meet HMOP intervention levels – this is the penultimate pin shown in the legend. These defects are added to the highway inspection programme and will also be taken into account when programmes for future preventative maintenance are being developed;
- the automated responses have been improved to provide greater clarity and links to further information available on the Council's and other organisations' websites – this is of particular relevance when the issue being raised is not one that Suffolk Highways would address;
- reports can now be plotted outside the Suffolk border on highways which the County Council maintains in agreement with neighbouring authorities.



Recommendation k) To recommend that officers and councillors should make every effort to ensure that enquirers use the on-line information and reporting system.

68. A concerted effort has been made to improve all forms of communication and, in each instance, the opportunity is taken to encourage online reporting. The last message on each 'Highways Matters' communication to all councillors from the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is encouraging everyone to 'report a fault' by making contact via the website at <http://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/>.
69. In 2014, online contacts were at an average of 485 per month, representing just over 23% of all forms of contact for highways issues. In 2016, this has risen to an average of 1145 contacts per month, representing about 43% of all forms of contact. Work will continue to encourage as much of the remaining 57% to use the online reporting tool.
70. It is worth noting that the highways online reporting tool was 'highly commended' in the V3 Digital Technology Leaders Awards 2016, and was a runner-up in the O2 Digital Champions Award category of the O2 NextGen Digital Challenge Awards 2016. This recognition related to the highways online reporting tool before the latest set of improvements.

Recommendation l) To request an information bulletin update in six months' time on progress including information about recruitment and training for Kier staff, activity to address long term sickness rates and improve staff morale, and what difference this had made.

71. As identified in the covering report, this matter was responded to in a report to the Scrutiny Committee on 7 June 2016.

Recommendation m) To request an information bulletin update for the Committee's February meeting providing details of:-

- i) predicted spend and actual spend on the contract to date;***
- ii) actual figures to demonstrate savings delivered;***
- iii) the volume of work delivered;***
- iv) an update on the resolution of outstanding accounts and details of current position;***
- v) an indication of the extent to which performance of the highways service was consistent across the county;***

72. As identified in the covering report, this matter was responded to in a report to the Scrutiny Committee on 10 February 2016.

Recommendation n) To recommend that every effort should be made to ensure that materials which were sympathetic and appropriate for conservation areas and listed buildings were used, recognising that these materials should be both cost effective and readily available.

73. A sympathetic and appropriate approach is being taken in the selection of materials that are used. From an asset management perspective, it is important that the selection of material is cost effective for the particular location in which the material is used. If a location is particularly prone to vehicular damage (which may be difficult to prevent) or is in a location where there are a multitude of public utility mains, cables, equipment and services, it is highly likely that a less costly product is used.
74. The matter of being readily available is also important. If a particular product or material is rarely used, it is unlikely to be held in stock so may require manufacture or import. In either case, the lead-in period can be lengthy and thus cause frustration to those who are keen to have a replacement article or material in place.
75. A recent example of where due consideration was given to ongoing material cost and maintenance was in the Princes Street/Queen Street highway improvement scheme – designed and supervised by the Transport Strategy Group and delivered 'on the ground' by Suffolk Highways.
76. The Giles Circus statue area was seen as the point where two significant roads meet in the town centre: Princes Street from the railway station; and Queen St/St Nicholas St/St Peters Street from the waterfront. The Transport Strategy Group considered that the palate of materials going towards the waterfront should be consistent and that the palate going towards the station in Princes Street should be more contemporary.
77. It was decided that the best location for a differentiation in material finish should be at Giles Circus. York stone (with tegula setts) was therefore used in Queen Street whilst more readily available concrete paving was used in Princes Street. Had York stone paving been used in Princes Street as well, the cost would have been £44,400 but, by using the concrete paving, the cost is £8,000 – i.e. a total cost saving of £36,400. Any future maintenance work in Princes Street will therefore also be less costly and permanent

repairs quicker than may be experienced in Queen Street, depending upon the amount of replacement York paving that is required and its availability.

Recommendation o) To welcome the County Council's developing approach to highways asset management, which would be reported in more detail to Cabinet on 10 November 2015.

78. A separate report on highway infrastructure asset management has been submitted to Scrutiny Committee to consider in conjunction with this report.

Recommendation p) To request a further report on progress in 12 months' time.

79. It is hoped that the preceding and following paragraphs provide sufficient reassurance to Scrutiny Committee that significant progress has been made with the improvement to the highway service and the relationship between the County Council and Kier.

c) What are the current staff vacancy rates, to what are they attributable and how do they impact on the organisation?

80. Out of a desired staff structure numbering 138, Kier has 39 permanent employee vacancies. However, all but 5 of these are filled with agency staff. The majority of the vacancies (17) are within the design function. The high vacancy rate is in part due to the lure of more attractive positions further south and, in part, to the poor reputation of Suffolk Highways that existed until recently.

81. Recruitment has become easier with the improving performance of the contract and the increased stability of the Kier senior management team. Impact on the organisation is negligible in all areas except design although the recent recruitment of County Council personnel to some of these roles will begin to ease that pressure. Further progression of the integrated team approach will also have a positive impact, particularly in the delivery of sensitive and minor works for which local knowledge and expertise will be invaluable.

82. In terms of operatives, Kier currently employs 121 across all disciplines. A recruitment drive was recently launched for a further 22 operatives. These additional operatives will increase the resilience to severe weather events, and enable more works to be self-delivered.

83. Within the County Council, there are a number of vacancies within East Area Highways that are proving challenging to fill for the reasons given above. All the area offices have, at various stages, suffered from staff losses arising from movement within the County Council, to the private sector or to neighbouring local authorities.

84. In addition, the need to resource the integrated teams referred to above through a secondment process has also meant that area offices have not always been fully resourced – although the integrated teams have simultaneously taken away some of the workload pressures. Agency staff have been sought to provide temporary cover but this is a lengthy process and the salary rates being offered are not particularly competitive in a market where the demand for skills and experience is high.

85. The area offices with less than a full complement of staff must therefore prioritise their work accordingly. The completion of statutory highway inspections within the required timescales has remained the highest priority but this has been to the detriment of responding to customer service requests. The area offices have therefore seen an increase in complaints, mainly linked to response timescales.

d) What skills gaps have been identified and how is this being addressed?

86. One major area of training identified has been that of National Highways Sector Scheme 12D T7. This is targeted at all levels of management, client officers, technicians and any person not actually installing temporary traffic management (TTM), but requiring a knowledge of basic practice of TTM on urban and rural roads. This is currently exclusively being targeted at designers and design managers and will see an improvement in initial designs and design estimates as the correct traffic management is more likely to be identified at the outset.
87. A further area where this a problem lies within the Structures Team. Structural engineers are limited in number across the country and those that are suitably qualified (in order to fulfil a legal 'technical approval authority' role) are rarer still. The Structures Team is therefore developing the existing in-house resource to attain the recognised professional status of Incorporated Engineer or Chartered Engineer.
88. To overcome the longer term potential shortfall in suitably trained and experienced staff needed to deliver the local highways service, Suffolk Highways has had a fresh intake of 8 new apprentices to supplement 8 technical trainees. The intention is that all of these 'new' recruits will rotate amongst the various Suffolk Highways teams to ensure they receive a thorough grounding in all aspects of the services provided by Suffolk Highways and become well-rounded individuals that can be deployed to where the demands are greatest in the future.

e) What data is available to demonstrate how Kier is currently performing against the contract and how does this compare with performance in previous years?

89. As clarified above and, as recommended by Scrutiny Committee on 29 October 2015, the performance measures used in the early part of the contract are no longer applied as they were punitive, output focused and driving the wrong behaviour. These have been replaced by outcome-focused performance measures in a new performance management framework.
90. Given that the revised Highways Transformation Programme began in January 2016, though, a more effective assessment of service performance would be not to focus on Kier but to focus on Suffolk Highways instead. The joint development of the new Highway Maintenance Operational Plan enabled joint consideration of the operational gang structure and the potential to pursue controlled reactive maintenance and focus on the effectiveness of the integrated teams.
91. The reduction in the percentage of temporary repairs (as set out in paragraph 12 above) and the stabilisation of reactive works orders

(paragraph 13 above) are clear indicators of in-year improvement. The acceleration in the delivery of Local Highway Budget schemes, the improvement in street lighting activity and the immense amount of surface dressing delivered during the summer are key indicators that Suffolk Highways is performing at levels far in excess of previous years.

f) To what extent is Suffolk's highway's work sub-contracted to third parties?

92. The split between delivery by direct labour/associated Kier companies and third party delivery is approximately 50/50. The drive over the next year is to recruit more labour so that the reliance on third parties will decrease and workforce resilience and flexibility can increase. This, in turn, will provide greater responsiveness to severe weather events.

g) What changes are being made under the highways transformation programme?

93. This has already been extensively covered in the paragraphs above.

h) What has been done to improve sharing of information, processes and systems between the County Council and Kier, and what difference has this made?

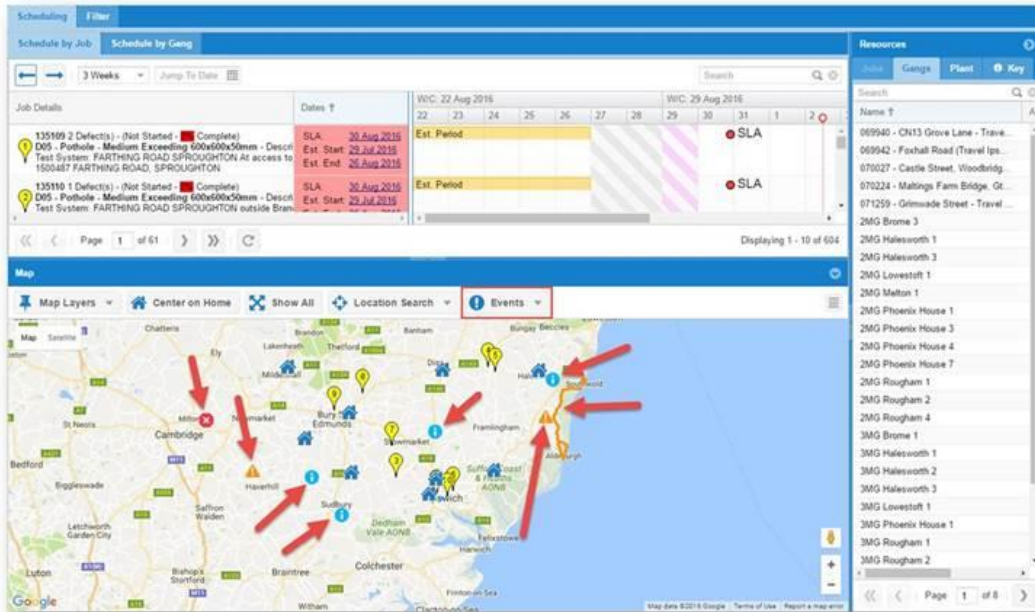
94. Development is under way for an integrated works programme (IWP) in Kier's Works Manager software system (WMS). A 'Gantt Chart' facility has been introduced in the live system together with co-ordination opportunity and conflict management. Below is a summary of the new functionality that is available in WMS and how this will assist the future management of the contractor's plan (which is the in-year value of work, broken down into various categories).

95. The use of the IWP is being trialled for the rest of the year for drainage and major schemes, with the view to full integration for 2017/18 onwards of all works programmes. A number of programmes have been provided on the County Council's website but the IWP may prove to be a simpler mechanism for sharing this information

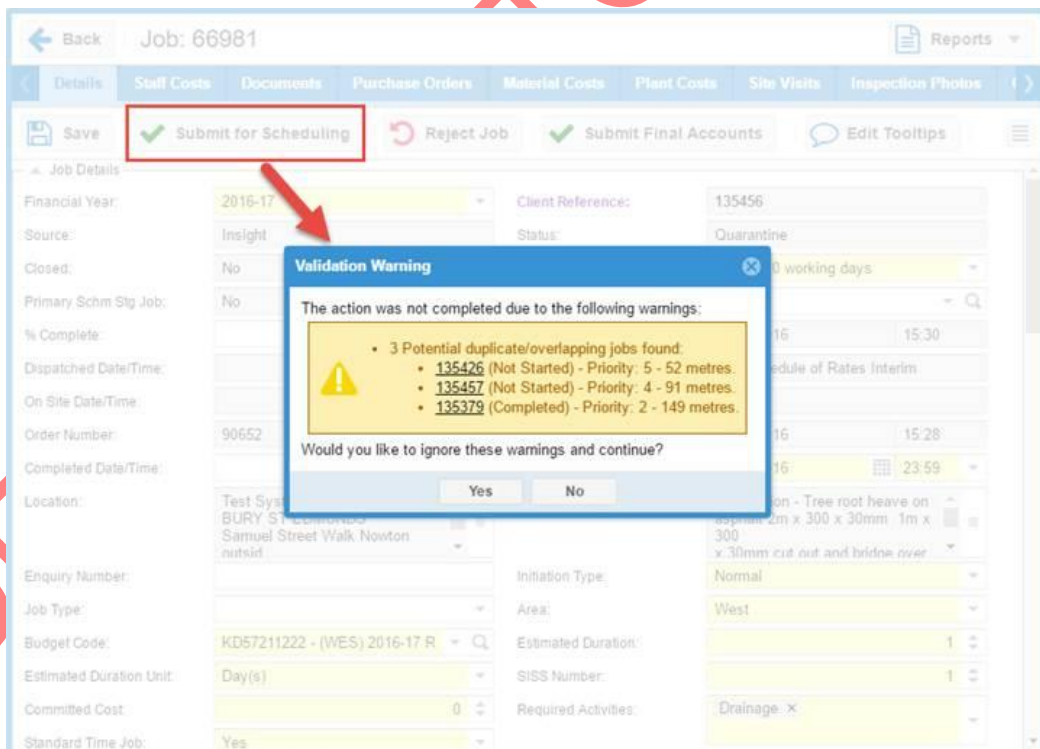
96. Linked to this is the development of the forward planning module of Insight (which is used to record all defects and asset information, as well as ordering works) to provide a list of schemes. This list can, in turn, be uploaded into the WMS schemes module to create the integrated works programme. Through its asset management approach, lists of different forms of works for 2017/18 are being generated and provided far earlier in the year than in the past and this will allow the IWP to be developed

97. This development will provide better visibility of programmes, particularly the overall forward programme, and monitor progress as the year progresses. It will also provide the opportunity to filter out the different types of works programmes.

98. When the integrated works programme is fully populated, managed and orders are associated, the spend profiling report below will automatically create the graph to represent the anticipated spend profile which can, in turn, be used in the monitoring of the contractor's plan progress. This spend



100. When a scheme or works package is accepted from a works commissioner, the system can be configured to check for jobs within a specified radius. If any existing known jobs are close by, the system will warn the user as follows:



101. This is configured against each job priority - indicating the warning radius for jobs with other priorities and also how long a warning remains in place after a job is completed. For example, if a pothole is added to the system and is then completed, it can remain in the system and warn against a later notification for the same defect – and thereby avoid an abortive site visit.

102. The distance to adjacent pieces of work can be anything up to 5 kilometres. This provides flexibility about managing both conflicts and opportunities for proximity of similar works for cost-effective resource deployment.



- i) **How does the target costing work and how successful has this been in enabling shared savings?**

103. This was covered in paragraphs 25 to 29 above.

- j) **Are reported savings to date sustainable?**

104. This report has identified a number of areas where savings have been made. Each of these savings will be considered in turn to clarify to what extent these are sustainable:

- Paragraph 11 referred to a saving of £1.3m by the reduction in reactive maintenance work. This is sustainable if the intervention levels set out in the HMOP are adhered to. However, much of what was ordered previously as high cost, reactive 2-man gang work should have been ordered as programmable or cyclic maintenance works (such as preventative carriageway patching, cutting back grass overgrowing footways, sign cleaning, hedge cutting etc). These works can be more cost-effectively undertaken in bulk with the right machinery rather than with the hand tools that the 2-man gang would have. There are therefore sustainable savings to be derived by more cost-effective ways of working – i.e. in a planned manner in the right way at the right time;
- Paragraph 44 referred to a saving in street lighting personnel in the sum of £100k. This is a permanent saving and consideration is being given to further rationalisation of the team, particularly after it has cleared the backlog from the first two years of the contract;
- Paragraph 54 identified a cost avoidance of £8.4m. This arose from a large-scale programme of surface dressing, undertaken at an earlier point in deterioration of the road network. This cost avoidance will re-occur if intervention remains at an early stage but the scale of the cost avoidance will depend on the scale of future surface dressing programmes, Whilst 0.5million square metres of road identified for surface dressing in 2017/18 has already been prepared, a further 817 individual sites are currently being assessed – to achieve a total surface dressing programme of 3 million square metres next year. If the roads selected are in a worse state than those undertaken this year, the cost avoidance will be less – but if in the same or better state, the savings

could be repeated. Ideally, surface dressing should take place in sufficient quantity on a 10-year cycle so as to avoid the need to treat potholes or even patch at all – which would make the saving sustainable;

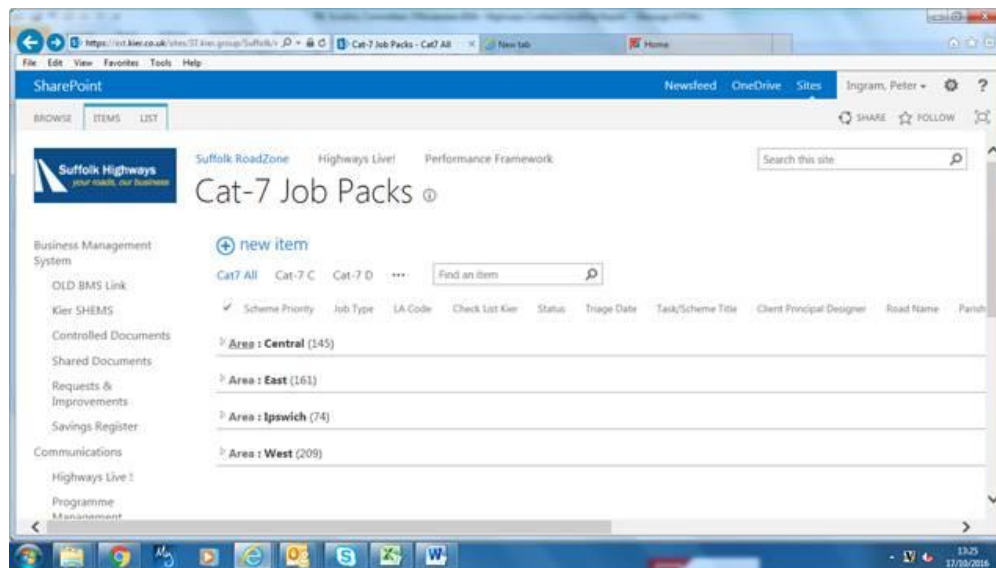
- The extent to which the £135k saving identified in paragraph 57 is less, the same or more in 2017/18 depends on the suitability of the sites for the use of the 'temporary closure 15-minute delay' sign. However, the sign has generally only been used on rural unclassified roads. Only around 25% of the roads surface dressed this year were unclassified – this is likely to be higher in 2017/18 so the savings could be greater;
- The additional £400k saving from use of the sign for general maintenance work is regarded as sustainable;
- The £36,400 saving from the use of concrete paving instead of York stone paving in Princes Street has the potential to be sustainable, albeit in different locations on different schemes but applying the same level of pragmatism and practicality.

k) To what extent have issues relating to final account disputes been resolved?

105. The final accounts for Years 1 and 2 are now agreed. Works are on-going to agree Year 3 but this should be completed by the end of November 2016. Once this has been achieved, the focus will shift to resolving Year 4 accounts. The development of practical means to avoid disagreements over payments has taken longer than was hoped for. However, the principle of having a 13-week final account lead time has now been adopted and the Works Manager system (WMS) software has been enhanced to allow better financial tracking and management.
106. Although this has now been implemented, it requires the passage of time to take full effect and enable all schemes to be closed out within the agreed 13-week target. Every opportunity will be taken to reduce this period in the future so that accounts are settled far sooner – the switch to integrated teams should also assist in this regard.
107. WMS development means that claims over 105% of the ordered value are now automatically prohibited without the upload and presentation of supporting documentation to the claim. Additional developments have also been made to complete the works commissioner's assessment through WMS, giving greater visibility of the assessment and any reason for deductions against the claim line. The intention of these developments is to minimise commissioner deductions prior to the submission of any final account.

l) What has been done to improve the programming and visibility of minor works?

108. The programme and visibility of minor works (HMOP Category 7) continued to be enhanced through 2016. Improvements have been achieved by introducing a new electronic Category 7 process on Sharepoint. This system manages the design and mobilisation of the work within Suffolk Highways, and assists with the delivery of the works through WMS.



109. The advantage of this process is that all Suffolk Highways personnel can see progress with the end to end delivery of such works. The system provides automated updates and requests to carry out tasks to assist in works delivery and provides a single location of the work programme.

110. Since the introduction of the Cat 7 process, together with monthly progress reviews, there is more confidence in the delivery of these works. Approximately 1100 jobs have been delivered since Oct 2015, at a cost of £1.4m. By the end of September 2016, there were only 12 jobs overdue (excluding road markings works) but these are planned for delivery by the end of October. This process now includes the delivery of minor Local Highway Budget works.

m) To what extent does the County Council liaise with other councils who contract with Keir for Highways services, to share information and experience?

111. There has been extensive liaison with other Kier contracts, particularly with respect to development of IT solutions. The new integrated works programme functionality, for example, has been scoped and developed by a user group comprising representatives from many contracts. New working methods, such as Roadmender (which recycles existing extracted road materials with additives), have also been trialled across Kier contracts on local and strategic roads, as well as utility contracts (such as Anglian Water).

112. Surrey and Lincolnshire County Councils also have highway maintenance contracts with Kier. They and Suffolk County Council are part of a national working group linking up with the Department for Transport to develop a performance management framework that can be used consistently across all local highway authorities.

n) How have changes to the design process made this quicker and more cost effective (using actual examples)?

113. Much of this has already been addressed above. However, the design estimating process has also been revised, including a more rigorous

checking procedure and to ensure that a greater understanding of the many and varied design briefs is achieved.

114. The outcome of this process change has meant greater assurance that the estimate covers all known aspects of the scheme design works. Fewer challenges to the monthly claims will therefore arise, which reduces back-office commercial time spent on reconciling the claims and payments each month. Risks and opportunities are also highlighted so that commissioners can be certain that what they will receive is in line with their expectations.

o) What are the arrangements for gully clearing and how is this work prioritised and monitored?

115. At present, the known surface water drainage asset comprises 129,000 gullies and 22,700 kerb offlets which are cleansed on a 9-month cycle. In addition, a number of associated assets (including catch pits, interceptors and linear drains) are cleansed on an ad-hoc basis as instructed by the area highways offices. This approach comes to an end on 21 November when the existing subcontract arrangement with the current service provider expires.

116. The mobilisation of a new service provider is in progress and brings a new approach to the delivery of the drainage service. Initially, the service will move to a 12-month cycle but will include the cleansing of the gully connection (the link between the road gully/offlet and the surface water sewer or adjacent watercourse). The gully cleansing operation is invariably ineffectual unless both operations are undertaken which does not happen with the current service provider. Looking ahead, further savings are anticipated as the service evolves to a needs-based approach.

117. The new service model is based upon an asset-led approach. Significant effort is being invested in developing the asset data to enable smarter use of resources and to deliver targeted services in the future. Furthermore, a target cost model is being developed with a pain / gain mechanism to incentivise the subcontractor to become more efficient and for the County Council to share in any savings delivered.

118. The subcontractor performance will be monitored as follows:

- Daily verbal update: Suffolk Highways' drainage supervisor will discuss the previous day's work with the subcontractor, highlighting any safety or operational issues together;
- Weekly scheduled meeting: Suffolk Highways' drainage supervisor will meet with the subcontractor to discuss previous week's progress and forthcoming week's schedule, highlighting potential risks;
- Monthly service review meeting: Suffolk Highways' Head of Operations will meet with the contract manager of the incoming service provider to discuss overall adherence to programme, quality, safety and operational issues;
- Audit regime: Suffolk Highways' drainage supervisor will conduct a minimum of four site visits per month to check the quality of work completed and the accuracy of data recorded in the asset management system.

p) What are the arrangements for responding to requests for Highways attendance at local parish and town council and area committee meetings?

119. The new organisational structure of Suffolk Highways will result in area office personnel being co-located and fully integrated with other County Council Operational Highways and Kier personnel. Reactive maintenance work will be identified, scheduled and delivered primarily from three service delivery centres, based at Rougham, Halesworth and Phoenix House depots.
120. Each of these service delivery centres will have customer liaison officers whose role will be to provide daytime clearer linkage between Suffolk Highways and local county, district, borough, town and parish councillors. It is planned that each such depot will have a formal reception desk for visitors.
121. Attendance at all local parish town and area committee meetings would represent a significant level of resource diverted from delivery of the day-to-day highways service. At present, senior managers within the County Council have been attending larger scale meetings (as identified in paragraph 36 above) to improve contact between Suffolk Highways and external parties. However, it is recognised that the development of this customer liaison role needs to be progressed in a sensible manner to ensure that the right level of local interaction is achieved.

Supporting Information

Cabinet (10 November 2015); Adoption of Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy Documents; Available from:

http://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/LoadDocument.aspx?rID=09002711819c53f2&qry=c_committee%7e%7eThe+Cabinet

Cabinet (12 July 2016); Strategic Highway Asset Management Plan; Available from:

http://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/LoadDocument.aspx?rID=0900271181cbcd9b&qry=c_committee%7e%7eThe+Cabinet

Cabinet (12 July 2016); Highway Maintenance Operational Plan; Available from:

http://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/LoadDocument.aspx?rID=0900271181cbcd9d&qry=c_committee%7e%7eThe+Cabinet