

Scrutiny Committee
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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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Introduction

1. This evidence set has been provided by county council officers and representatives of the Highway Services Contract 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 provides information on the Suffolk Highways performance management framework (PMF) which came into effect on 1 April 2016. This evidence set has a particular focus on the public satisfaction scores obtained in 2016 as a consequence of the County Council's involvement in the National Highways and Transport (NHT) public satisfaction survey.

The origins of the PMF

3. A review of operations across all UK public sector services was conducted in 2003/4 by Sir Peter Gershon. As a consequence of this review, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), as the central government sponsoring department, introduced the need for local authorities to save £6.45bn over the next 3 years. Central government has continued to seek efficiency savings for local government ever since.

4. In 2011, central government determined that it would initiate a new 'Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme' (HMEP) to bring about greater consistency amongst the 150 or so local highway authorities across England in the way in which local highway networks were managed. Whilst this new initiative was assigned £6m to enable the Department for Transport to deliver HMEP, the ultimate aspiration was to reduce the combined central government revenue and capital expenditure on highway maintenance by around 25% (from around £4bn per annum to around £3bn per annum).
5. A significant proportion of the HMEP expenditure was on delivering guidance and toolkits to enable local highway authorities to deliver local highway maintenance services more cost effectively. However, there was no specific driver in place to make local authorities use any of the HMEP products.
6. In order to encourage the use of these HMEP programmes, the Department for Transport determined that the annual capital maintenance allocation for 'structural maintenance' would no longer be solely 'needs-based', directly linked to network length. Central government responded to calls from the highway sector for greater long-term certainty over allocations by allocating £6bn over a 6-year period, commencing in 2015/16.
7. In 2015/16, all allocations would essentially be determined as it had been in the past – linked to road length. However, for 2016/17 onwards, the proportion of needs-based funding would reduce but such reduction could be retrieved by local authorities securing 'Incentive Fund' money. The total value of needs-based funding and Incentive Fund would remain the same each year (i.e. circa £1bn) but the needs-based allocation would decrease over a three-year period with a corresponding increase in the Incentive Fund.
8. To secure the Incentive Fund element, each local authority would have to complete a self-assessment questionnaire – comprising 22 questions. The questionnaire would help determine whether a local authority was ranked as a Band 1 authority (i.e. poor implementation of asset management principles and little use of HMEP products), a Band 2 authority (partial asset management approach and some take-up of HMEP products) or a Band 3 authority (full asset management approach and good use of HMEP products).
9. The third question in the self-assessment questionnaire indicates that:

“A set of performance measures and a monitoring regime have been developed to support the implementation of the asset management strategy, the works programmes and other aspects that will support continuous improvement. This includes measures of stakeholder satisfaction, safety, serviceability and sustainability of the network. These are measured and reported on a regular basis and the approach is clearly documented, together with relevant action plans.”
10. Whilst the intention of HMEP was to bring some degree of standardisation to the way in which local authorities maintain their local road network, no standard set of performance measures or monitoring regime was provided

or defined in any detail. Suffolk Highways therefore developed an outcome-focused PMF, as suggested by Scrutiny Committee on 29 October 2015.

11. County Council officers are currently engaged with other local authority officers and the Department for Transport to try to define a standard performance management framework so that there is greater consistency across England, thereby better enabling the benchmarking of performance.
12. Depending on the extent to which Suffolk Highways' PMF differs from the emerging standard performance management framework, there may be a need to amend certain aspects of the Suffolk Highways PMF in the future. However, the early indications of this work is that little change will be required.

The Suffolk Highways PMF

13. In keeping with the general advice set out in the self-assessment questionnaire (particularly in relation to highway infrastructure asset management), the Suffolk Highways PMF has been built round the four Local Transport Plan objectives of: a prosperous and vibrant economy; creating the greenest county; safe, healthy and inclusive communities; and learning and skills for the future.
14. The extract from the self-assessment question 3 refers to 'measures of stakeholder satisfaction, safety, serviceability and sustainability of the network'. In previous years, the County Council has made negligible use of the results of the annual National Highways and Transport (NHT) public satisfaction surveys – in which it has participated since its inception in 2008. It was therefore evident that use of previous years' data would provide some helpful context when reviewing the public responses to the 2016 survey. Whilst consideration of some NHT measures would address the need to consider 'stakeholder satisfaction', it would equally be inappropriate for the PMF to be solely focused on these responses.
15. When considering the subject of 'safety' performance, the natural inclination would be to focus on the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSIs) or those slightly injured. However, such data is not actually that reflective of highway maintenance but more related to what traffic management measures are deployed to make the network safe. As the decisions over the deployment of such measures rests with Transport Strategy than Operational Highways, it was considered that KSIs would be the wrong metric.
16. The extent to which the network is 'safe' would therefore be more related to adequate skid resistance on specific roads across the county, the completion rates of highway safety inspections, the timeliness with which observed highway defects are 'made safe' and data related to highway insurance claims.
17. The extent to which the highway network is considered 'serviceable' links back to its overall condition. The County Council already gathers and provides data to the Department for Transport on the proportion of A-roads, B and C-roads, and unclassified roads are in need of highway maintenance.

This information is primarily derived from machine surveys and is therefore arguably as independently assessed as the NHT public satisfaction results.

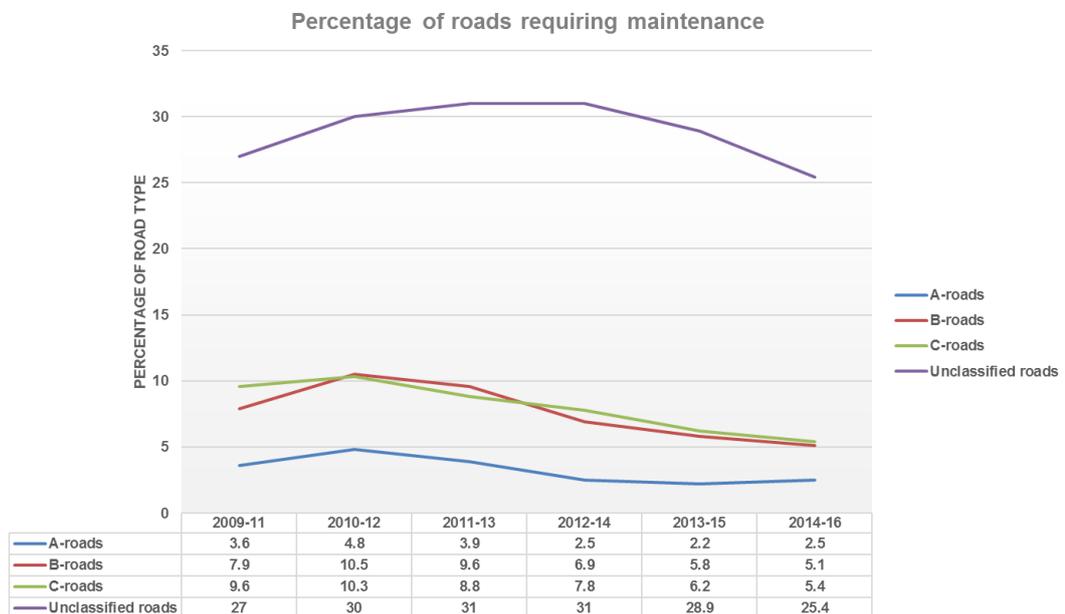
18. The matter of highway maintenance 'sustainability' is not linked to the availability or condition of sustainable travel mode facilities. This relates more closely to recycling practices, fuel consumption, community engagement and the extent to which Suffolk Highways develops its own staff to better ensure that there is continuity of local resource to delivery highway network upkeep.
19. The Suffolk Highways PMF therefore draws upon these sources of information. Whilst it can currently benchmark with other authorities on the NHT results, it will only be through greater national standardisation of performance management framework outcome performance data that comparability will be fully achieved.
20. Whilst it is possible to compare the County Council's NHT results against all participating local highway authorities (of which there were 106 in 2016), comparison is far more relevant against the County Council's peer group – i.e. other county councils round the country (of which 28 participated in 2016). National and regional comparison may provide some different and interesting context but there is such variability over the size of highway networks that more detailed comparison would need to be heavily qualified and therefore of limited use.

PMF Performance Interpretation

21. Appendix A to this Evidence Set sets out the 82 performance measures, split out over four separate tables – representing the measures related to the four Local Transport Plan priority objectives (as shown in the top right hand corner of each page). Some indicators require results that increase, others that seek a decrease.
22. The trend (over a period of months, quarters or years, depending on the relevant circumstances) for each performance measure is depicted by either an upwards or downwards arrow – coloured red for where the measure's trend is heading the wrong way and coloured green for a trend in the right direction. In many instances, no figures or trends are available as there are a number of new indicators for which there is no or limited data.
23. The first three pages contain performance measures that are shaded pink. These are the performance measures where data is taken directly from the NHT public satisfaction survey.
24. The information shown is as submitted to the Highway Services Contract 'Operations Board' (which draws representation from senior managers of Kier and the County Council). The information was presented for Quarter 2 of the 2016/17 financial year (i.e. July 2016 to September 2016) on 6 December 2016.
25. The focus of the rest of this Evidence Set will be on the PMF performance measures that have been ascribed a red trend performance arrow.

PMF Measure 1

26. This PMF Measure and the following two measures represent the general road condition of Suffolk's highway network. Whilst the media is keen to compare the number of potholes that different local authorities have, the varying definition of what a pothole actually is renders comparison of such numbers as somewhat meaningless. PMF Measure 1 provides a far clearer indication of the state of Suffolk's A-roads, as assessed during 2015/16 but using data from the preceding two years to identify a three-year average.
27. Although the trend is negative, this is because the focus in 2015/16 was more heavily directed towards surface dressing and resurfacing the B-roads, C-roads and unclassified roads in Suffolk. This is illustrated in the chart below.

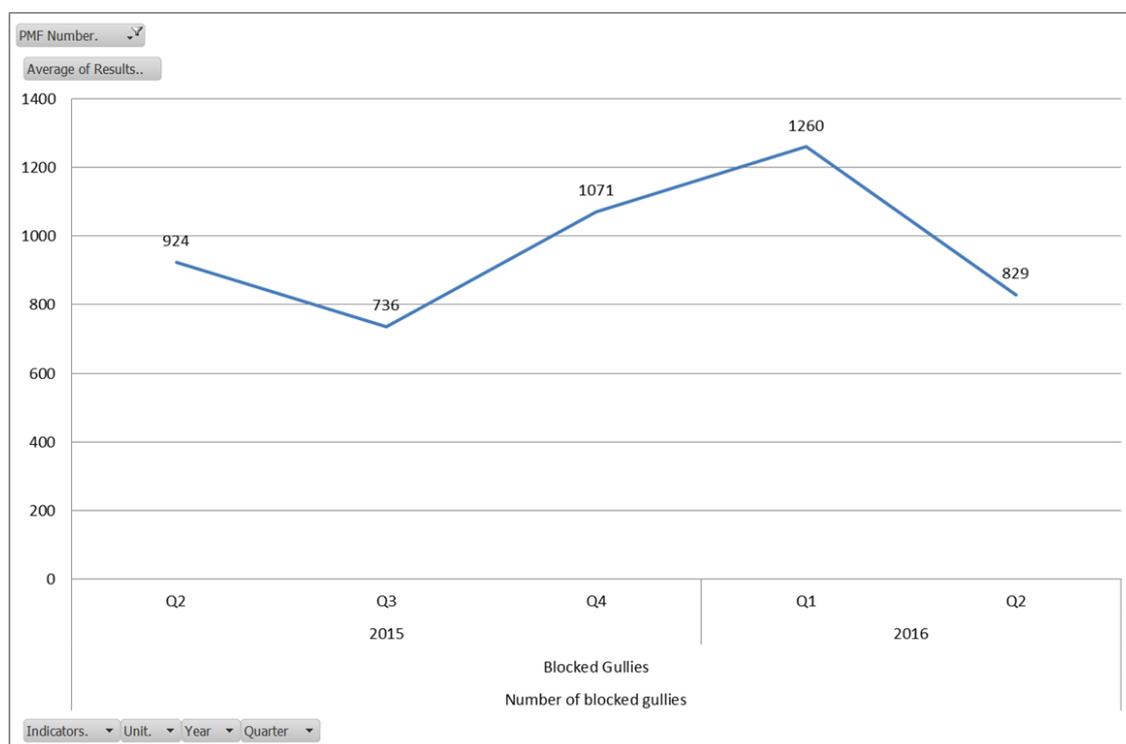


28. It is anticipated that there will be improvement in this performance measure as a consequence of the significant programme of surface dressing work undertaken during the summer of 2016 (which was evenly spread across all road classifications and Suffolk's districts/boroughs).

PMF Measures 4 and 42

29. As shown in the chart below, the number of blocked gullies has increased during 2016 due to under-performance of the drainage sub-contractor. That under-performance resulted in more flooding incidents that would otherwise have been expected and generated additional complaints. The level of service has therefore been far from satisfactory. Unsurprisingly, this was reflected in the public response to the NHT question related to 'Keeping drains clear and working' (which appears as PMF Measure 42 in Appendix A).

30. A new drainage subcontractor commenced on 21 November 2016 and is expected to deliver a more robust, consistent service. The trend is shown as negative because the number of blocked gullies in 2016/17 Quarter 2 is higher than the number identified in Quarter 3 of 2015/16.

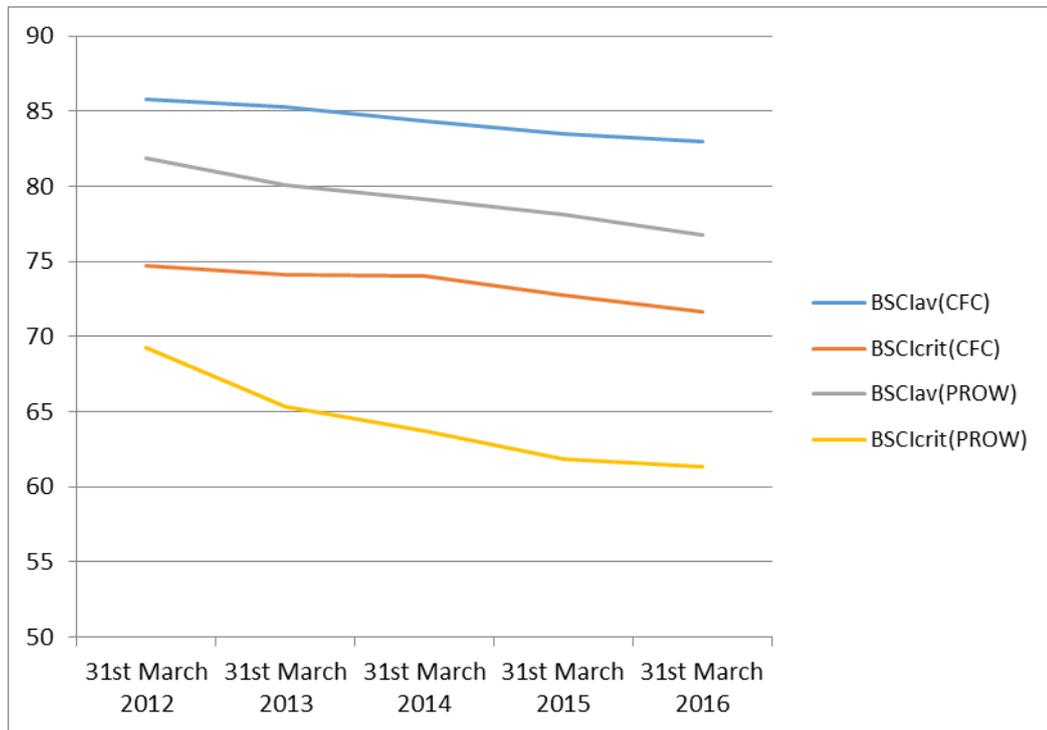


PMF Measure 5

31. Until the creation of the Performance Management Framework, the scale of the problem with bridge maintenance had not been particularly visible. Work has been undertaken in the preparation of the 'structures' section of the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan which has helped to identify the scale of future capital funding that will be required to begin to return the bridge stock in Suffolk to a far better state. However, the more detailed situation as at April 2016 is as follows and the numbers identified in Appendix A relate to carriageway, footway and cycleway structures only, rather than including public rights of way structures:

Condition Description (BCI Range)	Carriageway/footway Cycleway Network				PROW Network			
	BCI _{Ave}		BCI _{Crit}		BCI _{Ave}		BCI _{Crit}	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very Good (100-95)	112	7	338	21	22	7	38	12
Good (94-90)	240	15	58	4	34	10	2	1
Fair (89-80)	617	38	303	18	103	31	39	12
Poor (79-65)	582	35	445	27	117	36	124	38
Very Poor (64-40)	87	5	353	21	50	15	63	19
Severe (39-0)	6	<0.5	147	9	2	1	62	19

32. The overall trend in previous years is as follows:



33. This is a strong indicator that the County Council either needs to begin investing far more in the maintenance of its highway structures to stave off further decline in this element of highway infrastructure.

PMF Measure 11

34. Funding was assigned for the 2016/17 financial year for the cleaning of road signs. However, in the absence of any inspection reports indicating that sign cleaning was required, resources were deployed to begin cleaning signs on the more heavily used A-road network. A wider list of sites where sign cleansing is required is being compiled.

35. The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 provides greater scope for sign decluttering and also relaxed the requirement for sign illumination. As this will pose an increasing difficulty for highway inspectors to differentiate between illuminated and non-illuminated signs (and therefore whether an electrical or non-electrical repair is required), future sign maintenance and cleansing will be undertaken by street lighting crews – who have the advantage of the right equipment to work safely at height.

PMF Measure 14

36. This measure relates to instances where the opinion of local residents is sought. In previous years, a feedback form and freepost envelope would be provided with works notification letters and this would generate a reasonable response rate. Around 12 months ago, this approach was abandoned in favour of asking those affected to go online and comment. As

the response rate has been poor, the process will revert to a Suffolk Highways A5 card freepost response method.

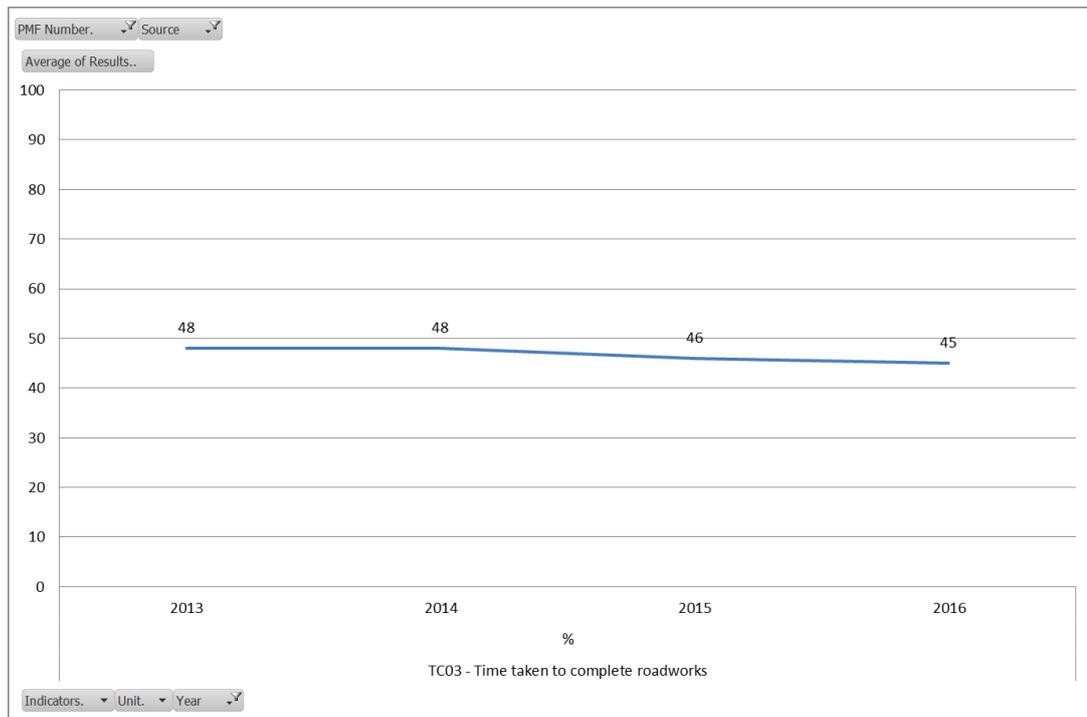
PMF Measures 15 and 20

37. There is a common misunderstanding that all roadworks in Suffolk are instigated by the County Council whereas, in reality, around 50% of roadworks activity is generated by the public utilities. Whilst there are instances where the public utilities are slow in clearing away upon completion, the occasions on which there is an overrun on the permitted works period is relatively few in number (given there are around 10,000 utilities opening per year across the county). The following table relates to a recent Freedom of Information request on roadworks overruns in Ipswich over a three-year period ending on 30 September 2016.

DATE	UTILITY	ROAD NAME	OVER RUN DAYS	S74 Charges
18/10/13	ES PIPELINES	ASTER ROAD	33	£6250
23/10/13	NGG	FELIXSTOWE ROAD	1	£1500
23/10/13	AWA	RANSOMES WAY	1	£1000
07/11/13	BT	TINABROOK CLOSE	1	£250
08/11/13	AWA	CHELTENHAM AVENUE	1	£250
06/12/13	BT	FORE STREET	2	£500
12/12/13	AWA	TREFOIL CLOSE	1	£100
18/12/13	NGG	MEADOWVALE CLOSE	1	£250
18/12/13	UKPN	ASHCROFT ROAD	1	£100
20/12/13	BT	ATHERTON ROAD	1	£250
16/01/14	BT	COLCHESTER ROAD	1	£100
24/01/16	NGG	SELKIRK ROAD	1	£250
24/02/16	NGG	WOODCOCK ROAD	1	£2500
15/09/14	VIRGIN	GODDARD ROAD	3	£750
09/12/14	BT	LANERCOST WAY	1	£250
28/01/16	AWA	FOUNDATION STREET	1	£750
03/02/16	NGG	MALLARD WAY	1	£250
10/02/16	UKPN	SIDEGATE LANE	1	£100
25/04/16	AWA	BIXLEYROAD	1	£250
25/04/16	SCC	THANET ROAD	1	£250
03/06/16	FULCRUM	SIDEGATE AVENUE	1	£250
16/06/16	AWA	ELMCROFT ROAD	1	£250
29/06/16	UKPN	FOUNDATION STREET	1	£100
18/08/16	AWA	RUSHMERE ROAD	1	£100
19/08/16	AWA	HENLEY ROAD	2	£500
16/09/16	AWA	HAWTHORN DRIVE	1	£250
16/09/16	AWA	DALES VIEW ROAD	2	£500
26/09/16	NGG	FOXHALL ROAD	1	£250
26/09/16	AWA	NACTON ROAD	6	£9000
29/09/16	AWA	SIDEGATE LANE	25	£6250

38. To clarify the situation, Highways Matters Edition 2 provided clarification on general 'roadworks'. However, as that was directed to Suffolk's various councillors, a message to the wider general public was needed.

39. Appendix B is an extract from the East Anglian Daily Times of 6 December 2016. The same article appeared in other newspapers (such as the Ipswich Star) and online. The Suffolk Highways communications team and the corporate Communications Team are now working together to provide more proactive clarification over a range of highways issues, of which roadworks is one.
40. Whilst PMF Measure 15 is shown as having a downward trend, the trend is relatively flat, as shown in the following chart:

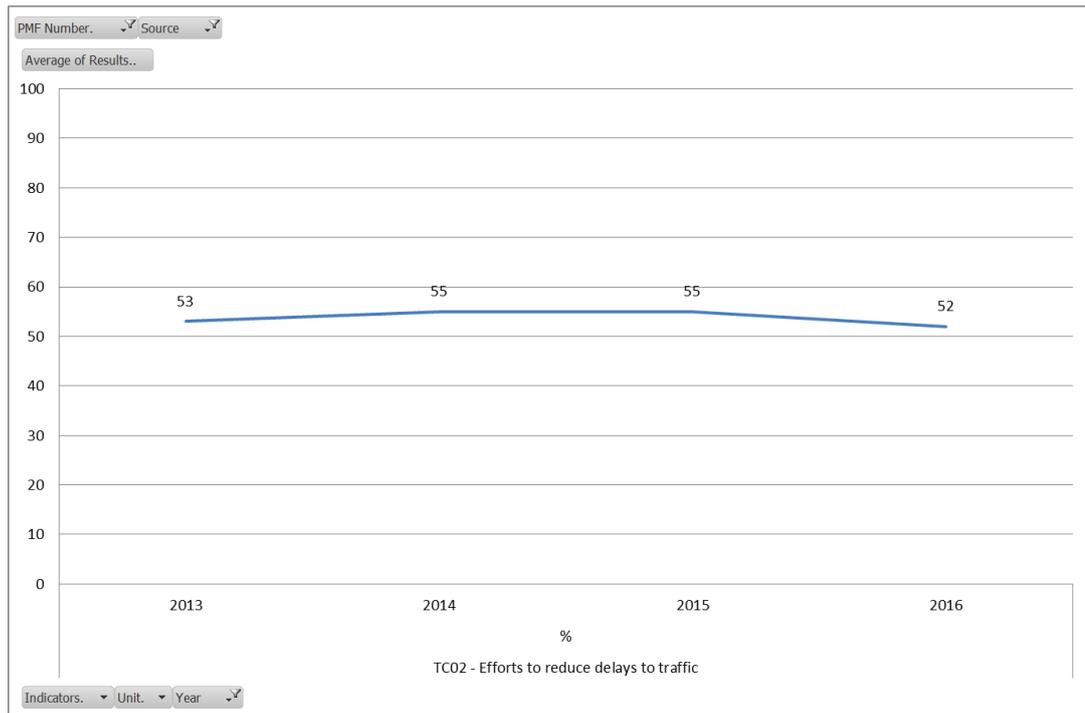


PMF Measure 19

41. As identified in Evidence Set 1, the focus during 2016 for the area highways offices has been, first and foremost, to complete the statutory safety inspections on time. With staff changes and secondments, there has been a drop-off in performance. However, the impending reorganisation of Suffolk Highways is set to address customer service requests in a more focused way through customer liaison officers, by ensuring that information is more readily and clearly accessible from the Suffolk Highways webpages, and to broaden out the range of Suffolk Highways personnel able to respond to enquiries.

PMF Measures 25 and 26

42. In some respects, PMF Measure 25 has been addressed above in the comments on PMF measures 15 and 20. However, it should be noted that surveys were sent out in May 2016 which was before the public would have begun to experience the benefit of the successfully trialled 15-minutes temporary obstruction sign which has served to avoid the need for lengthy diversions. However, as shown in the following chart, there is not a huge variation from one year to the next in the public opinion associated with PMF Measure 25:



43. If the public utilities make greater use of this sign, there should be an improvement in PMF Measures 25 and 26. It is recognised, however, that there is also scope for improvement in the sub-contracted service for traffic management (particularly for diversions) which will also have a beneficial effect. Whilst there has been much media coverage of lengthy diversion routes arising from road closures, there has not been equivalent coverage of the reduction in the number of road closures (PMF Measure 24) and the flexibility afforded by the 15-minutes temporary obstruction sign. This latter point needs to be addressed.

PMF Measure 29

44. This particular measure will always be variable due to the level of street lighting and illuminated sign energy consumption rising during the autumn to a winter peak before tailing away during spring to lowest levels in the summer. However, over time, this PMF Measure may need to switch over towards greater monitoring of the annual trend rather than monthly.
45. The challenge, however, is to ensure that energy reduction at least keeps pace with the acquisition of additional street lights and illuminated signs through highway adoptions and local traffic management schemes. In that way, overall increased annual energy consumption can be controlled and continue to fall. Central to this, though, will be the continued roll-out of LED lighting and the de-illumination of traffic signs wherever practicable.

PMF Measure 31

46. There is limited data for this particular measure which makes analysis difficult. There is no apparent cause for an increase in the average miles covered other than perhaps the ever-reducing number of reactive maintenance requests. This falling number may mean that reactive maintenance gangs are having to travel further between consecutive repairs as the condition of the network begins to stabilise. A further year's worth of data for this PMF Measure will be helpful in understanding the performance better.

PMF Measure 45

47. A reduction in the tonnage of road planings recycled during the autumn compared to the summer is to be welcomed as this is a reflection that road maintenance (particularly road resurfacing) is being undertaken during warmer weather. This enables the laid material to achieve a longer life, consistent with the County Council's asset management approach.

PMF Measure 67

48. The number of hits to Suffolk Highways webpages has seen a gradual reduction during the year. This is partly down to high levels of webpage activity during the summer where many searches for information took place on the grass cutting schedules but also attributable to the number of major schemes either in progress or about to start. The Majors/Mulberry scheme has been completed for a number of months now, as has the work at Nacton Road. The corresponding reduction in website activity is therefore to be expected.

PMF Measure 68

49. The number of editions of Highways Matters reduced in the second quarter as a result of a change in communications team personnel within both the SCC communications team and the corporate Communications Team. The area of 'communications and consultation' has recently been reinvigorated so that aspiration is to increase levels of communication in this area. The number of Highways Matters editions so far in the third quarter already matches the second quarter's performance.

Monitoring Kier's contractual performance

50. The report to Cabinet on 18 October 2016 on the extension to the Highway Services Contract identified that there was the potential incentivised safeguard against any future tailing off in performance by Suffolk Highways by making the extension subject to satisfactory performance assessed. It was suggested that such performance assessment could be directly linked to aspects of the Suffolk Highways performance management framework.
51. The performance management framework has been developed jointly by personnel from both Kier and the County Council so the inference was that a performance model could be mutually agreed by the County Council and Kier, based upon the PMF. The Cabinet determined that this task should be completed by the end of December 2016 with responsibility for the development, adoption and use of such a model resting with the Director of Resource Management, in agreement with the Cabinet Member for

Highways and Transport and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Heritage.

52. Segregation of Suffolk Highways' performance against the actions of Kier in isolation from the County Council using the PMF will become ever more challenging as the integration of the two workforces becomes increasingly embedded. However, the rationale would be that the model could comprise the following:
- A general public satisfaction trend from a selection of the NHT-based PMF measures. These measures could come from PMF Measures 11, 12, 13, 20, 25, 26 and 42;
 - The percentage of the public responding to surveys that are satisfied with completed works (PMF Measure 14);
 - The number of abandoned/ overrun notices for roadworks (PMF Measure 23);
 - The percentage of the operational fleet that is using alternative fuel (PMF Measure 33)
 - The tonnage of plantings used within reconstituted road construction (PMF Measure 45) AND/OR the total percentage of materials recycled (PMF Measure 46)
 - Attendance at community activities (PMF Measure 61) AND/OR community days/ volunteering days by staff (PMF Measure 62)
 - The number of Kier-sponsored trainees (PMF measure 72) AND/OR number of Kier-sponsored apprentices (PMF Measure 73)
 - The number of new maintenance techniques and materials implemented (PMF Measure 79)
53. These measures do not necessarily require an improvement but could be specified as to not fall below a baseline. For example, PMF Measure 46 could be specified as to not fall below 90% for three consecutive calendar months.
54. Work is ongoing on the development of this framework but the above is indicative of what is currently being considered.

Supporting Information

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 (18 October 2016); Extension to the Highway Services Contract; Available from:

http://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/LoadDocument.aspx?rID=0900271181d7326f&qry=c_committee%7e%7eThe+Cabinet