

## **Informal Member meeting regarding street lighting repairs**

**25 June 2008 – 10:00 am**

**Present:** Mr K Ferrin, Mr J Law, Mr R Parker, Mr I Chittenden and Mr G Horne.

**Also Present:** Mr N Bateman (Head of Technical Services) and Mr P Sass (Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership).

### Street Lighting repairs

1. The background to this informal meeting originated from the Budget IMG's consideration of the Provisional Outturn BVPI data for 2007/08 at its meeting on 11 June 2008. The IMG was advised that the average time to repair a street lighting fault, where response time is under the control of a Distribution Network Operator (DNO) (in Kent's case, EDF) had increased from 39 days in 2006/07 to 53 days in 2007/08. Instead of calling the matter in for formal scrutiny via the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee, the Chairman and Spokespersons of the Committee agreed to hold an informal meeting with a representative of each of the political groups, to which Mr Ferrin and relevant Officers attended. This meeting took place on 25 June 2008. Members were encourage to e-mail their questions to officers in advance of the informal meeting, to ensure that the information supplied was both relevant and useful.
2. At the informal meeting, the following documents were considered:
  - a. A briefing note prepared by the Head of Technical Services, which contained responses to the questions raised in advance of the meeting by Members
  - b. Comparative performance information for the last 3 years for streetlights under KCC control and those under the control of a Domain Network Operator (DNO), i.e. EDF
  - c. Detailed monthly performance information for 2008 by District/Borough, giving details about the number of faults raised; those completed and those outstanding at the end of each month
  - d. A document from the Office of the Gas and Electricity Markets (ofgem), detailing the regulator's enforcement powers
3. The key points made during the discussion at the informal meeting were as follows:
  - a. Detailed work was currently being tackled to review and improve the inventory information that KCC held about street lighting columns within Kent; not just their location, but also power supply details and the type of lamp used. It was noted that this would be essential to complete as soon as possible and would help to speed up repairs as less time would be taken in

future trying to find out whose responsibility a particular streetlight was to repair and which type it was. Unfortunately, it was noted that, due to resource constraints, it was likely to take a further 15 months to complete the detailed inventory work in respect of the 110,000 or so street lights in the County

- b. Work was also underway to review the process for dealing with complaints and seek to remove the non-value added stages in handling specific complaints.
- c. Mr Bateman commented on the excellent working relationships that he has developed and will continue to develop at Director level within EDF, which is beginning to have a positive impact on the performance figures for repairs to EDF streetlights.
- d. It was noted that street lighting performance was monitored on a monthly basis and a report submitted to the Alliance Board to take the necessary actions to rectify problems. Mr Ferrin stated that he was happy to support the submission of these reports to the Highways Advisory Board, together with a monthly performance report to Members of the Highways Advisory Board for information. It was also suggested that a regular report be made to the Environment and Regeneration Policy Overview Committee; Mr Ferrin also supported this suggestion.
- e. Mr Ferrin reported that EDF were working hard to introduce a new control system and had demonstrated an improvement in their performance between March and May this year. EDF were increasing their staffing resources to better respond to repair requests. It was also noted that, from 1 July 2008, EDF was introducing a new shift pattern, which would double the daytime resource available for all repairs. Some 50 additional staff would be phased in, working as mates for the skilled jointers and acting as the safety and security resource for work on the live systems. It was noted that there was no financial impact to KCC of these additional staff being employed by EDF.
- f. There was a discussion about the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between EDF and the regulator Ofgem, which was currently being negotiated. Mr Bateman agreed to provide further details to Members of the regulator's powers in the event of EDF failing to perform to the standards set out in the SLA.
- g. There was a discussion about 5 core cable systems and Mr Ferrin advised Members that KCC was a long way from having the resources to be able to replace street light wiring.
- h. Finally, Mr Bateman advised Members that his officers were exploring a number of other technologies, including LED lighting, which should increase the average amount of time a street light can operate without repair from 3 to 10 years, which in the longer term will reduce the number of repairs being tackled each year. Efficiency would also be improved greatly.

4. Summary of agreed action:

- a. Monthly performance information to be submitted to Members of the Highways Advisory Board, for information
- b. Performance reports to be added to the agenda of the Highways Advisory Board
- c. Mr Bateman to supply details of the powers of the regulator Ofgem with regard to the Service Level Agreement between EDF and Ofgem
- d. Members agreed that a further meeting should take place in the autumn to consider the progress made, particularly by EDF.

Peter Sass  
15/07/08

