

Kent Highway Services – The Director’s Update

A report by Geoff Mee, Director of Kent Highway Services, to the Highways Advisory Board on 16th September 2008.

Introduction

1. This Director’s Update sets out some of the key issues and developments going on in KHS.

Key issues and points of interest

2. **Opening of the new Office/Depot at Ashford** – a successful opening took place at the end of July and in recent weeks staff from across the Alliance have been moving into the new building and depot and getting to grips with their new surroundings and co-working teams. We continue to look at options for the west of the County to deliver our plan of delivering most of the highway services from two primary operational centres and Invicta House. In the interim we will be moving staff to Doubleday House complex by October.
3. **Highways Agency Area 4 Contract** – the tender was returned in August and we await, hopefully by Christmas, a decision from the Highways Agency. The tender was returned in the name of Ringway Jacobs with KCC acting as a key supply chain partner to this company. This has ensured that any commercial risk remains with the private sector companies but still allows KCC to be part of, and influence, the delivery team and services to the public of Kent.
4. **Performance** – our monthly key performance indicators have dipped in recent months leading to a backlog in outstanding faults repairs, letters answered and increase in complaints. This is primarily due to bedding in of the new operational structure, accommodation moves and new IT system implementation. The Alliance wide Executive management team has developed an action plan to get the service back on track and we have seen the elimination of the backlog in Community Operations and Drainage.
5. **New Contact Centre call logging system** – demand on the 08458 247 800 and kent.highwayservices@kent.gov.uk continues at over 15,000 calls/emails per month and the new system is helping us to identify, track and put in place specific improvements to deal with the back log in outstanding service requests that have been building up. We continue to encourage Members to recommend this point of entry to the public, Parish Councils and indeed themselves for all service requests so that they can be actively managed. There have been problems in recent weeks caused by a lack of agents to answer and handle calls but meetings have taken place with the contact centre management team and we are assured that service will improve by the end of October.
6. **EDF** – pursuit of a closer and more cohesive relationship between KHS and EDF is continuing. Contact is now at a weekly operational meeting together with regular meets at Senior Management level. Although the performance of EDF has shown some improvement, it is important that we continue to pursue both their own performance as well as the way that KHS and EDF are performing together. A standard needs to be achieved that County Members and the public

are satisfied with. There is no doubt that neighbouring authorities have been suffering in the same way that Kent has in the past and we are pursuing a joint approach with them for future working relationships with EDF.

7. **Tracker Survey 2008** – the 2008 resident, Member and Parish/Town Council tracker survey will take place in November. In 2007 only 23% of Members responded to the on-line survey and this year it is planned to undertake a telephone survey with each Member in order to increase the response rate. Parish/Town Council return rate was also low at 18% and more work will be done to ensure a more representative return rate is provided as with such a low response rate the validity of the results is often questioned.
8. **Competitive Tendering** – tenders have been prepared and work will commence early in the new year for the delivery of £1.5 million of road resurfacing and £750k of integrated transport schemes. This market testing process is designed to ensure that information about current market rates is available to ensure the competitiveness of the long term Alliance arrangements with Ringway. It is important for all of us to ensure that the Alliance contracts drive benefit both in terms of the wider customer care and contractor design input from our commercial partners but this must be backed up by competitive prices.
9. **Parish Council Seminars** – Kim Hills, Head of Community Operations has invited a representative from all Parish/Town Councils to seminars organised in Maidstone or Canterbury on 14th and 15th October. The events are designed to update them on the changes in KHS and provide them with a chance to meet their local liaison and engineering teams. The seminar will be a mix of providing information and listening to their views. On this occasion the meetings are targeted to Parish and Town Councils and will not involve local County or District Members.
10. **Awards** – KHS has recently been highly commended in the National Transport Authority of the Year award and has been short listed for the British Quality Foundation Achievement Awards under Partnership Development category, we will find out the result in October.

Conclusions

11. This Highways Advisory Board report is for information and Members are asked to note and comment on the progress being made and are asked to give their support to staff as the organisational changes bed in.

Contact Officers:

Geoff Mee 01622 694776