

Kent Highway Services – The Director’s Update

A report by the Director, Kent Highway Services, to the Highways Advisory Board on 8th January 2008.

Introduction

1. This formal Director’s Update report looks back on the last 12 months and highlights some of the achievements from Kent Highway Services’ hard working staff in Kent County Council, Ringway, Jacobs and TSUK. Staff from across the Alliance have been involved in organisational review for well over a year yet still delivered some significant, innovative improvements to service delivery and kept pace with the challenging performance targets that are now published monthly in the report to all Members.

Performance Indicators

2. The Alliance Board has developed a key set of indicators that reflect the broad range of services delivered by KHS and that help put focus and drive into the service. In the last 12 months staff have worked hard to come to grips with a stronger performance culture and whilst progress has been made I accept more needs to be done and the new organisation structure for KHS will help us to deliver further improvements. Some key successes to note are:
 - continued good number of compliments KHS receives, averaging at almost 50 per month
 - significant reduction in streetlight repair time from 17 days in April to 5 days in the most recent set of results. We are now fixing over 5,000 faults each month.
 - 98% achievement of response to emergency sites within 2 hours
 - significant improvement in 12 months of letters answered within 10 days. In September 2007 we achieved only 50% within target, we are now achieving over 80%. We receive nearly 1200 letters each month.
 - Regular achievement of over 85% of all waste material being recycled.
3. As the seven new teams become fully operational in April next year I plan to drive the performance and evidence based working within KHS and I recognise that there are some parts of the service that are not yet measured sufficiently to provide us with the information to understand how we can improve service delivery.

Tangible improvements and innovations

4. In order to help in the understanding of the accountabilities and responsibilities of the seven new service groups I have set out below some examples of service improvements or actions over the last year:

Community Operations (Kim Hills)

- We have placed the order with Commercial Services for over 60 new vans that can run on 30% bio-diesel fuel and raise the profile of our inspectors and enforcement officers across Kent.
- We are setting up a training programme for our highway inspectors to ensure they have a formal qualification and gain the recognition they deserve for the key role they play.
- We have trialled a new ‘quiet’ surfacing on the A26 in Tonbridge that has received rave reviews from local residents.

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Technical Services (Norman Bateman)

- We have replaced the streetlights on A229 Bluebell Hill with longer life, low maintenance lanterns that last longer and reduce maintenance costs.
- We have started the asset data collection for streetlights, safety barriers, signs, trees and drainage that will help us get a better understanding of the asset and improve our maintenance regime and improve efficiency.
- We have been instrumental in developing new national guidance for the management of bridges.
- LED Streetlight pilot.

Countywide Improvements (Behdad Haratbar – acting)

- We are on target to deliver over 500 maintenance and improvement schemes this year.
- We have achieved a prestigious national award for the ‘Fastrack’ scheme in Dartford.
- We have co-ordinated all Alliance partners to programme the resurfacing of the up lane of Blue Bell Hill in a weekend road closure early next year.

Transport & Development (David Hall)

- We were recently awarded ‘Transport Authority of the Year’ – a great achievement.
- We have successfully launched the travel pass for 11-16 year olds with a bigger roll out planned.
- We are leading the way with school travel plans and have over 300 in place.

Network Management (Caroline Bruce - acting)

- We are the first Authority to replace all traffic lights with LED’s
- We have opened the Traffic Management Centre and plan to roll the coverage out to Canterbury and Tonbridge/ Tunbridge Wells next year.
- We have launched the traffic and travel website with the plan to record all roadworks on an interactive mapping system.

Business, Performance and Communication (to be filled on secondment)

- We are the first authority to have a dedicated page in a local newspaper to get our message across.
- We have developed and published a monthly set of key performance indicators that reflect the full highway service.

Finance (Mike Palmer)

- We have appointed a Head of Finance onto the management team who has commercial, private sector experience.
- We have received an ‘extra’ £15 million of budget
- We are on track to exceed our income target of £2.55 million.

Conclusion

5. Despite all the changes and uncertainty for staff we have delivered a significant amount of innovative and nationally recognised good work so far this year. We are on track to re-shape the service by April 2008 and there will clearly be a period of bedding down. This Highways Advisory Board report is for information but Members are asked to note and comment on the positive progress being made to improve service delivery and are asked to give their support to staff through the period of significant change that still lies ahead.