

Kent Highway Services – The Director’s Update

A report by Geoff Harrison-Mee, Director, Kent Highway Services, to the Highways Advisory Board on 13th November 2007.

Introduction

1. This is my first formal Director’s Update report and I propose to provide one to each Highways Advisory Board from now on.

Governance and Decision making in Kent Highway Services

2. I am aware that whereas ultimate Governance decisions are made at Cabinet, Highways Advisory Board enables Board Members and officers to exchange views and formulate recommendations that pass to the portfolio holder via the minutes and the Board Chairman. The new Alliance structure of KHS enables a broad range of disciplines to be presented to HAB covering from consultation and planning to delivery. This Alliance team is also available to attend JTB meetings.

Joint Transportation Boards – KHS believe that Joint Transportation Boards enable local issues to be debated with officers at a local level and amongst others things to help identify, prioritise and endorse schemes that are either capital investment in changes/improvements to the network and validated by PIPKIN or maintenance of the existing asset as identified by our asset management model. There is more work to be done to shape the interaction with JTB’s as the changes to KHS and the wider E&R directorate take shape. A PIPKIN conference is being planned for the new year to discuss with Members and Parish/Town Councils their role in representing the community voice for any ideas to improve/change the road layout or transport provision for the county.

Alliance Board – when the new highway contracts were let to Ringway, Jacobs and TSUK all parties, including KCC, realised that for partnering to achieve its full potential a common culture had to be developed and driven to give a strategic direction to improve administrative efficiency and better value delivery. The Alliance Board is chaired by Keith Ferrin (Cabinet Member Environment, Highways and Waste) and includes Adam Wilkinson (Managing Director of Environment and Regeneration Directorate), Geoff Harrison-Mee (Director Kent Highway Services), Scott Wardrop (Managing Director Ringway Group), Mike Higgins (Group Vice President Jacobs) and Richard Bevins (UK Director TSUK). The Board issues delivery directives to the Alliance Executive. The terms of reference for the Alliance Board are attached as Appendix 1. The Board currently meet on a monthly basis, and this will probably move to every two months from April 2008.

Alliance Executive – made up of the senior managers from Ringway, Jacobs, TSUK and KCC this management team is chaired by Geoff Harrison-Mee and includes Roger Manning, lead Member for Highways. Their role is to drive the outcomes, performance and management of Kent Highway Services and their terms of reference is set out in Appendix 1. The Executive currently meet every two weeks, and this will probably move to monthly from April 2008.

The proposed new shape of Kent Highway Services

3. The Transformation process started a little over a year ago following my appointment and in response to some significant business challenges. These included the desire to maximise the value of work being done ‘on the ground’ and therefore the need to drive efficiency throughout the Alliance organisations, being able to respond to our customers more speedily and in a consistent way, and delivering high quality service.

Kent Highway Services – The Director’s Update

4. The proposed organisational structure was published for consultation with staff on 31 May 2007, with an interim report on 10 August, and formal consultation ended on 31 August. Since the end of the consultation period, the new Managing Director for Environment & Regeneration, Adam Wilkinson, has joined us and has, quite rightly, been reviewing the KHS structure to ensure that it will meet his aspirations for the Directorate.
5. The proposal for the new KHS structure will see staff working within one of seven service groups detailed below. Each service group will be led by a head of service, who will have full accountability and control for their area of business. Appointments have been made to four of the heads of service and these are detailed in bold below.
 - Community Operations – **Kim Hills**;
 - Technical Services - **Norman Bateman**
 - Network Management - TBA
 - Countywide Improvements - TBA
 - Transport and Development – **David Hall**;
 - Business, Performance and Communication – **Caroline Bruce**;
 - Finance - TBA
6. A description of the purpose of each of the seven service groups is detailed in the table below;

Community Operations	This service group will be the public face of KHS and will be structured by district boundaries. Staff in Community Operations will be responsible for inspecting and maintaining roads and pavement, but they will also be the focus for regular contact with parish councils and locally-accountable bodies such as the Joint Transportation Boards. The four community liaison teams will also ensure that the service provided to the public, Members, Boroughs, Parishes and other key stakeholders is consistent across the County and meets the high standards in customer care that we set ourselves.
Technical Services	This service group will manage the street light, drainage, structures, trees & soft landscaping and signs & lines assets. It will operate countywide in teams focusing on one asset type. In a radically new way of delivering the service, there will be a strong Alliance approach with Ringway managing drainage and Jacobs the trees and soft landscaping asset.
Network Management	This service group will be responsible for the safe movement of the public on our road networks, proactively managing congestion and improving journey-time reliability. This includes exploiting the benefits of innovative traffic systems and influencing the behaviour of the travelling public to improve Road Safety. The Traffic Management Act will provide new opportunities to manage congestion and the structure anticipates the initial resource requirements needed to support the Act which KCC will be piloting along with two other local authorities.
Countywide Improvements	This service group will provide a disciplined and programmed approach to schemes and major projects. Schemes will include major road maintenance enhancements i.e. strengthening and resurfacing as well as transport enhancement schemes such as traffic calming and junction improvements
Transport and Development	This service group brings together the development planning and transport functions into multi-disciplinary teams built around district boundaries. The group will work closely with District Councils to develop Local Development Frameworks and the transport implications arising from them. The group will also lead on sustainable transport options and work closely with bus operators.
Business, Performance and Communication	This service groups provide specialist business, performance and internal/external communications expertise and support to the whole of KHS
Finance	This service will provide and manage finance support to the whole of KHS

Kent Highway Services – The Director’s Update

7. The programme is for staff to be fully aligned to the new structure and budgets by 1st April 2008.

Managing service delivery

8. Whilst the organisational changes take place it is essential that KHS does not ‘drop the ball’ and continues to deliver services to the people of Kent. The Alliance Board, Executive and Members receive a monthly key performance indicator report that sets out the high level success measures for Kent Highway Services. These 30 indicators are designed to measure the wide range of services delivered by KHS and give an overall picture both in terms of ‘management indicators’ but also, equally important, indicators that see the service through the eyes of those receiving it.
9. The investment in new IT systems will enable KHS to efficiently produce a detailed view of the service at a level below the strategic indicators reported to the Board, so that staff who deliver the service can react to performance and make improvements to delivery.
10. In the meantime we are able to use existing systems to their best possible advantage and can now report on a regular basis information on the type and nature of the service requests we receive from the public, the number that have been closed and the number that still remain outstanding.
11. We have also developed a ‘safety net’ report that identifies all service requests that have not yet been closed after 28 days. There are currently almost 1500 service requests outstanding after 28 days and we are focussing effort to remove these. However with up to 20,000 calls to the contact centre each month about highways and over 6,000 service requests each month staff are working hard to keep pace with the increased awareness of the 08458 247 800 number and the calls that this generates. Our aim will be to reduce our ‘safety net’ report to 21 days and ultimately 14 days.
12. Some examples of the contact centre data we are using to drive service improvement is set out in the table below. It should be borne in mind that this is a record of the service requests made by the public and further faults are recorded through our regular inspections. The new IT system investment will enable us to report and monitor these in a consistent way across the County.

Type of fault	Number of service requests made in October	Number of service requests closed during October*	Total number of service requests outstanding and requiring action as at end of October
Blocked gullies	291	503	132
Streetlights	1962	2060	321
Trees	424	410	611
Pavements	543	643	229
Roads	645	783	286
Traffic lights (permanent)	117	131	47
Traffic Investigation Requests	143	150	115

* more service requests completed in a month than received means KHS is dealing with the backlog of old calls

Progress on Innovations in Kent Highway Services

13. I propose to update each Highways Advisory Board on the latest innovations in service delivery. Current examples are listed in the following table;

Innovation	Description and Commentary
Jet Patcher	Currently up to four specialist vehicles are being used to undertake a £1 million programme of repairs. The jet patcher machines use high pressure jets to clean potholes before filling them with asphalt but this is only suitable for rural roads. The vehicles can repair significantly more potholes and broken road edges than traditional methods. Whilst this process is used elsewhere in the UK we need to evaluate the outcomes before planning further investment in this technology
LED traffic signal replacement	Kent is the first local authority to change all of its 640 sets of traffic signals to low energy light emitting diodes (LED's). This initiative will save more than £2 million over the next six years. Work has started, with 38 completed out of a programme of 626 across the County and all are due to be completed by Spring next year.
LED streetlight pilot	Kent is piloting a site in Coxheath with LED streetlights. This is emerging technology that is likely to be at least 18 months away but KHS is keen to work with manufacturers to establish if this is an option to further reduce energy consumption and maintenance costs. A full business case will be developed before a decision is made to invest in this technology.
Kent Freedom Pass	The pilot scheme in Canterbury, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge has been a big hit with 11-16 year olds and we have recently past the 4,000 milestone. Once the pilot has been fully evaluated a decision will be made to expand the scheme further.
Kent on Sunday page	We continue to develop the content for this page as a way to raise the profile of KHS and inform the public of the good things that we are doing.

Extra money for highways

14. KHS has been allocated over £15.0 million of additional funding above the base budget for 2007/08. This is a combination of revenue, capital, grant support through the Local Transport Plan settlement and money to support T2010 footways initiative.
15. It is important that this extra budget is spent on activities that support the core business plan of KHS and responds to the changing needs of our customers. Appendix (2) shows the wide range of activities that this extra money has been allocated to, and the progress being made on these initiatives.

Kent Highway Services – The Director’s Update

Ashford Ring Road Update

16. The Ashford Ring Road project continues following the initial conversion to 2 way operation in July. Two contracts have recently been awarded to Jackson Civil Engineering - one for the public realm improvements of Bank Street and the other for the public realm improvements of the Elwick Road section of the ring road together with the conventional highway improvement of Beaver Road/Victoria Way junction.
17. The ring road works remain very challenging as we seek to fit the scheme to match the funding available. The need to manage the conversion to 2 way with minimum inconvenience and the iterative design process for this innovative shared space scheme have contributed to the need to reduce the extent of the public realm works at this time. There have also been land issues to be resolved with SEEDA and working with the Borough Council and ING to ensure the successful opening of County Square in March 2008.

Responding to the un-expected

18. In addition to responding to the normal day to day activity the Alliance has successfully handled a number of un-expected events this year. This includes the Folkestone earthquake and a large number of flash flooding and high event events across the County.

Road Closures for Remembrance Day

19. The Cabinet member for Environment, Highways and Waste has approved the principle that Kent Highways Services will contribute to the costs of arranging the traffic regulation orders for Remembrance Day. This will ensure that KHS does not ‘profit’ from the administrative costs necessary to set up and publicise the traffic regulation orders.

Conclusions

20. 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 staff through the period of significant change that lies ahead.

Contact Officers:

Geoff Harrison-Mee 01622 694776

Kent Highway Services – The Director’s Update

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference for the Alliance Board and Executive

Alliance Board Terms of Reference	Alliance Executive Terms of Reference
AB1 Develop the broad strategic aims for KHS and ensure they align to KCC priorities whilst considering the business needs of commercial partners.	AE1 Develop the Alliance Operating Plan and oversee/challenge the implementation of strategy, operational plans, policies, procedures and budgets.
AB2 Direct funding priorities to deliver KHS strategic objectives.	AE2 Lead the <i>operations</i> delivery of the service and to implement the decisions of the Board
AB3 Oversee a transparent system of prudent and effective governance, including strategic performance, financial and risk management and ensure that appropriate measures are in place for the health and safety and well-being of staff and the people of Kent	AE3 Monitor operating and financial performance, the allocation of resources and the control of business and health and safety risk whilst ensuring performance and delivery of all set targets.
AB4 Develop internal talent and bring in wider experience and broader perspectives from outside the Alliance.	AE4 Deliver innovation and best practice, drive programmed/planned to maximise efficiency and positively lead by example
AB5 Protect and enhance the Alliance’s reputation as an employer and service provider, aspiring to be an exemplar for Public Service provision	AE5 Take corrective action <i>for day to day activities</i> and produce exception reports to the Board with recommendations for action where service or targets have not or may not be met.

Kent Highway Services – The Director’s Update

Appendix 2 – Additional Funding to Kent Highway Services

Additional Capital Budget allocation

Description	Amount (millions)	Deliverables
Grant Funded Integrated Transport	£2.29	Congestion reduction measures in Maidstone and Canterbury
Capital Maintenance	£1.66	A programme of maintenance schemes across Kent
Integrated Transport	£1.75	A programme of improvement schemes across Kent
Streetlight Column replacement	£0.90	Column replacement programme
Illuminated bollards and lit signs	£0.45	Energy and maintenance saving works
Bridge Repairs and Maintenance	£0.85	Additional programme of improvement and maintenance schemes across Kent
Crash barrier and safety fences	£0.65	An additional programme of repairs
Resurfacing Strategic Roads	£0.50	Resurfacing the uphill lane of A229 Bluebell Hill after Christmas.
Total	£9.05 million	

Additional Revenue Budget allocation

Description	Amount (millions)	Deliverables
Pot hole, patching and edge repairs	£1.9	Additional repair programme including jetpatching, rural edge repairs, cycleway repairs and sunken ironwork.
Pavements in residential areas	£0.60	Additional programme of schemes
Improved response times	£0.69	Additional crews to deliver reactive repair service
Road Safety	£0.30	Increase in use of SIDS and further interactive road signs
Congestion reduction measures	£0.42	Monitoring systems for Canterbury as extension to Traffic Management Centre activities
Road signs and lines	£0.20	Additional replacement and freshening with a focus on urban areas
Tour de France	£0.40	Funding for KHS costs to support the event
Kent Freedom Pass pilots 11-16 year olds	£0.19	Funding to support excellent uptake of this pilot scheme
Total	£4.70 million	

Towards 2010 Budget allocation

Description	Amount (millions)	Deliverables
High use footway repairs	£2.0	First of two year programme to deliver repairs to 90 pavement sites throughout Kent.