

Chapter 13

Programme delivery and Performance Management

Chapter Overview

This chapter explains how the County Council will ensure that its transport investment programme is delivered in a cost-effective and timely manner and outlines the processes this authority is putting in place to monitor and manage its performance in meeting the objectives of this Local Transport Plan.

Programme delivery

The County Council's approach to delivering its transport investment programme is grounded in the following principles:

- > Maintaining a clear focus on LTP objectives and outcomes. The schemes in the Council's investment programme have been selected to contribute as much as possible to the objectives of this plan, but this planning will only be successful if this outcome focus is maintained through the design and construction stages of schemes;
- > Maximising value from resources - schemes should achieve or exceed their objectives at the lowest possible cost. Budgets should be realistic and estimates robust to avoid overspending on schemes, thereby reducing the likelihood of projects overrunning;
- > Timely delivery - robust timetables should be established for the delivery of projects to ensure work programmes for planning, design and implementation can be properly planned and resourced; and
- > Customer focus - stakeholders and members of the public should be at the centre of the process of scheme delivery.

The Council is implementing a major strategic change in the way it delivers its transport investment programme to translate these principles into action: the creation of Oxfordshire Highways.

Oxfordshire Highways

In the lead up to the start of this plan the County Council has established Oxfordshire Highways, a formal partnership organisation to further develop the existing contractual arrangements between the County Council and its term consultant and contractor for engineering design and for highway works. As such Oxfordshire Highways will be responsible for the delivery of a large part of the transport investment programme. Real and continuous service improvement in the delivery of both revenue and capital funded works is being realised by integrating the resources of the three organisations under a formal partnering agreement and removing internal barriers by creating the single identity of Oxfordshire Highways, by which all involved will be known. The mechanism for achieving change on this scale is through a programme of Business Process Re-engineering (BPR).

As part of this, a full BPR exercise has been carried out on the design and construction of capital transport schemes. The objectives of this exercise were to:

- > develop greater integration of the three partner organisations that make up Oxfordshire Highways;
- > develop more efficient ways of delivering the Capital Works Programme to meet project objectives, budgets and timescales;
- > agree and document new protocols and the procedure for delivering the Capital Works Programme.

Oxfordshire Highways has its own management team answerable to a Strategic Partnering Board that includes the Council's Cabinet Member for Transport and the Director for Environment & Economy. The Strategic Partnering Board will hold Oxfordshire Highways to account for its performance overall and the continuation of the individual contracts is related to the performance of the term contractors in contributing to this.

Oxfordshire Highways will be driven by a performance management regime that measures achievement on the following Strategic Priorities set by the Strategic Partnering Board:

- > to deliver the transport capital programme reliably and cost effectively;
- > to improve the condition of local roads and pavements;
- > to achieve demonstrable and sustainable efficiency savings;
- > to offer a more customer focused organisation to the public;
- > to create a more flexible staff resource;
- > to minimise the environmental impact of its operations.

The Oxfordshire Highways project is one of the Council's top seven change projects that are being overseen by a Change Management Board of Cabinet Members and the County Council Management Team. Performance on delivery of the Transport Capital Programme is therefore high on this authority's agenda.

Maintaining a clear focus on LTP objectives and outcomes

A new re-engineered process has been developed and is currently being implemented by the three partner organisations. This emphasises the primary role of the project client in defining the objectives of the project and in maintaining a continuing interest through all stages of the project. The project client will have a thorough understanding of the objectives of the Local Transport Plan and will know exactly what contribution each of the schemes for which they are responsible is expected to make to LTP outcomes. This will ensure the intended Local Transport Plan objectives remain a focus and are achieved. It will also enable better performance and clarity of roles for each of the partner organisations and enable Oxfordshire Highways to deliver against a number of its business objectives.

As part of the Oxfordshire Highways scheme delivery process, all schemes must pass through approval "gateways". These gateways correspond with key stages of the project, such as the end of feasibility assessment and the end of preliminary design. At each gateway schemes are assessed with reference to their original objectives to ensure they will still achieve what they were intended to achieve. If they do not, or if costs have increased to such a degree that the scheme no longer represents value for money, projects will not progress to the next stage. If this happens schemes may either be amended to reduce costs or increase outcomes or they may be cancelled and an alternative scheme which achieves equivalent outcomes progressed in their place.

Maximising value from resources

A master programme of all schemes for 2006/07 is in place. This is being managed by a Programme Board that allocates an appropriate resource to each project, drawn from the combined staffing and skills pool from across the three organisations, with the aim of streamlining the design and removing wasted effort.

The closer working arrangements resulting from Oxfordshire Highways will facilitate better communication and ensure the right expertise is available at all stages of a project. A good example of this in practice is early contractor involvement in scheme development and design, which has two major benefits. First, the contractor can provide useful input when estimating costs to ensure estimates are as realistic and robust as possible. Second, the contractor can influence the design and suggest better and more efficient ways of implementing certain elements.

Timely delivery

At the heart of the Oxfordshire Highways delivery process is effective project management. All three partners in Oxfordshire Highways will be involved in setting out project plans to ensure timescales are robust and realistic. A project manager will be assigned to every project to coordinate and facilitate tasks handled by all those involved in a project. The project manager will ensure the right resources are available at the right times in a project and, by advising the Programme Board of resource requirements, contribute to the timely delivery of the whole transport investment programme.

Customer focus

Oxfordshire Highways has been developed with a strong focus on the customer. The primary customers for Oxfordshire Highways' work are members of the public, so the organisation has been set up to make communications with the public as easy as possible. All three partners use a common identity and logo (on everything from letter heads to contractors' vehicles and clothing) so members of the public can see that the same organisation is responsible for all aspects of a project. A single telephone number and website have been set up to ensure enquiries are directed as quickly as possible to the right person.

Performance management

The County Council will monitor its progress towards meeting its transport objectives closely and use this information to adapt its investment programme as necessary to ensure targets are met. The Council is establishing a systematic approach to managing its performance against transport objectives. The processes outlined below will be coordinated by the Oxfordshire Highways Programme Board, with input from scheme clients and the Local Transport Plan Team.

Performance management processes

Process 1: dealing with aborted or delayed schemes

This process will enable the Council to manage its programme to ensure gaps left by schemes aborted for cost, feasibility or performance reasons are filled with schemes of equivalent predicted value for meeting targets.

1. All schemes will have a clearly defined and quantified set of outcomes at the earliest possible stage. For these outcomes to be realistic rather than aspirational, scheme development work will be needed to properly quantify outcomes - normally before preliminary design starts.
2. Gateway reviews (part of the Oxfordshire Highways delivery process - see above) will be used at key project stages to ensure schemes are still deliverable within the allocated budget and timescale, and are still expected to deliver their intended outcomes. Schemes failing to do this will either be redesigned or cancelled.

3. If a scheme fails to pass a gateway and is therefore delayed or cancelled, the Oxfordshire Highways Programme Board will identify other schemes that could replace the cancelled schemes which deliver equivalent outcomes. In some cases, a cancelled scheme may be replaced by a single equivalent scheme of similar cost; in other cases, a number of smaller schemes will be implemented whose cumulative benefit is equivalent to a single cancelled scheme.

Process 2: dealing with underperformance of schemes

This process will enable the Council to manage its programme to ensure progress towards targets is still maintained when schemes that have been implemented do not deliver the outcomes they were expected to deliver.

1. All schemes will have a clearly defined and quantified set of outcomes at the earliest possible stage. The performance of schemes will be evaluated against these desired outcomes and any underperformance (and possible reasons for it) identified.
2. Overall progress towards targets will be monitored continuously and examined in detail at least annually.
3. Where progress towards a particular target is poor, the performance of the completed schemes that were expected to contribute to that target will be reviewed.
4. Using this information, changes to the overall programme will be considered by the Oxfordshire Highways Programme Board. These changes will take one of the following forms:
 - > Reallocating funds from schemes designed to contribute to targets towards which progress is better than expected to allow more schemes to be introduced to meet those targets towards which progress is poor.
 - > Amending the balance of the programme by replacing schemes of a type that have performed less well with those that have performed better.

Using these processes the Council will ensure its programme is always optimised to ensure the biggest contribution to objectives and targets per pound spent.

