

Scrutiny ‘deep dive’ / working group Scoping document

Key Information

Scrutiny Committee	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Working Group Title	Highways Deep Dive
Date established	5 July 2018
Lead Scrutiny Member	Cllr Jenny Hannaby
Membership	Cllr Liam Walker, Cllr John Sanders
Supporting Officer	Katie Read, Senior Policy Officer
Operational Lead(s)	Paul Fermer, Assistant Director Community Operations Steve Smith, Service Manager Network Asset Management Rikke Hansen, Service Manager Highways, Transport and Waste

Working group rationale

The condition of Oxfordshire’s 2,785 miles of road has a significant impact on the quality of people’s lives and affects the local economy. Roads provide access to jobs, services, schools, the delivery of goods and enable people to make the most of their free time and leisure activities. A core priority of the County Council is to support thriving communities and a thriving local economy by improving transport links and the Council has a responsibility to maintain a safe and sustainable road network to ensure that Oxfordshire delivers the services residents need.

However, with a growing population and economy coupled with increasing pressure on housing and infrastructure, roads are likely to deteriorate more quickly, repair works will cause more disruption and there will be greater levels of congestion. The challenge therefore, is for the County Council to maintain the county’s extensive and high-demand road network within reduced public funds.

Recent customer satisfaction surveys and correspondence from residents have shown a high level of dissatisfaction with the condition of the county’s roads. This is in part also affecting how the public perceive the authority as a whole.

At the July meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee members agreed to establish a working group to investigate in detail how the County Council is maintaining and repairing Oxfordshire's roads and what plans there are for future investment in the county's highway infrastructure to address poor customer satisfaction rates.

Deep Dive objectives

To achieve this aim, the objectives of the working group will be to:

1. Develop a greater understanding of smarter traffic management approaches and the prevention of road deterioration.
2. Understand the impact of heavy goods vehicles and other large vehicles on the condition of roads.
3. Explore how the Council works with third parties, e.g. utility companies, to ensure roads are properly reinstated after works.
4. Clarify the ways in which councillors and residents can stay informed about work on the county's highways.
5. Explore the Council's relationship with Highways England, particularly the impact of diversions from main arterial routes on secondary roads that are the responsibility of the Council.

Councillors in the deep dive group will collect and review evidence between September and November, and aim to report their findings and recommendations to the Performance Scrutiny Committee in January 2019. If the recommendations are endorsed, the Committee will determine how best to monitor and measure the impact of these going forward.

Deep Dive scope

The focus of the working group will be on four key areas:

1. **The condition of Oxfordshire's roads**, including
 - The prevention, identification and repair of pot holes and other road defects,
 - How the 'Dragon patcher' is used and whether it delivers good value for money,
 - How the Council communicates with residents and councillors about its road infrastructure,
 - How the Council works with district councils and the city to maintain its road network,
 - Benchmarking local customer satisfaction rates nationally.
2. **Congestion**, including:
 - The county's strategic road networks,
 - How road diversions are managed on main arterial routes,
 - The Council's relationship with Highways England.
3. **Street works**, including:
 - How works on highways are prioritised and programmed,
 - The impact of third party work and significant events on the road network, and the Council's legal rights and duties.

4. **Highway maintenance contracts / agreements**, including:
 - The extent of maintenance work delegated to town and parish councils,
 - How successfully highways contracts are monitored and the specific responsibilities of contractors.

As far as possible, the deep dive will also take into account the impact of the Council's Fit for the Future Transformation Programme and examine how the new team structure within the Communities directorate is helping to deliver a better service for Oxfordshire's residents in terms of highways.

The deep dive will not focus on the impact of housing development on new or existing road infrastructure, as it is thought that this area of focus could warrant an entirely separate deep dive.

Evidence requirements

To meet the objectives of the deep dive and gather relevant intelligence and evidence to inform its recommendations the following activities are proposed. This list is not exhaustive and where further visits or discussions are needed to explore topics / issues in more detail, these will be facilitated.

1. **Review key policies and plans** to understand the overarching approach to highway maintenance and the strategic drivers guiding the Council's investment plans for the road network.
2. **Review key statistics** in relation Oxfordshire's highways to understand their current condition and the level of future investment required.
3. **Visit the Urban Traffic Management Team** to examine how the county's strategic road network and the impact of congestion is managed.
4. **Visit Drayton Depot** to gain an 'on-the-ground' view of how maintenance and repair work is planned and undertaken.

Indicative Project Plan

Task	August 2018	September 2018	October 2018	November 2018	December 2018	January 2019	February 2019
Scoping review	X						
Desk Research	X	X					
Evidence gathering activities		X	X	X			
Analysis				X	X		
Final report					X	X	
Cabinet response							X

Key:

	Pre-deep dive scoping and background research
	Internal briefings/desk research
	Evidence gathering activities e.g. site visits, meetings with officers etc.
	Analysis of evidence and interim draft report
	Recommendations workshop, final report to scrutiny and informing stakeholders
	Recommendations to Cabinet

Version 1.0

Updated: 10 August 2018