

**Members Questions to Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee – 5 December 2022****Catherine Powell to ask:**

Please can you advise why the highways emergency number goes to a general call service that requires you to listen to a number of other options prior to being able to select the path to Highways? Has the possibility of a dedicated number for highways emergencies for members been considered that links directly to the Ringway emergency team? If so, why was this not adopted?

Is it possible for Members to have access to the reporting map used by Ringway in the event of Storm events? If not, why not? If yes, can a link be shared when it becomes clear that there is a significant event occurring such as a storm so that member can easily check to see if issues in their division have been reported and if not they can report them, rather than having to phone up the emergency number using officer time to determine if an urgent issue, such as a tree blocking a road, has or hasn't been reported.

**Response:**

There is a single line used for enquires for Adults, Registration, Roads and Schools which reduces the number of different phone numbers needed for contacting the Council. For Roads enquiries the option is three and then one for Streetlight enquires or two for other Highway Enquires which will take you to the Highways Control Hub – you do not need to wait for all options to have been recited before pressing the option required.

If a dedicated number was provided for Members, this would mean that calls from the public would have a longer wait time as Member calls would be prioritised. An answerphone system is in place so that if there are high volumes of calls, for example during a severe weather event, the caller can leave a message that will be reviewed and actioned by the Highways Control Hub.

The map used by Ringway is only available to their staff and it is not possible to provide links to it outside of Ringway at this time. Surrey Highways are currently implementing a joint IT system that will be used by Surrey and Ringway from April 2023 which may enable the sharing of more data and information with members and the public.

Surrey Highways are running a number of “Depot Days” for Members during November. During the session there will be an opportunity to tour the site and visit the Highways Control Hub which will give members the chance to talk to the Control Hub staff and understand how they deal with emergency situations.

**Catherine Powell to ask:**

Please can you provide a summary of the process from getting agreement for S106 project with developers through to delivery, the dependencies and timescales for each step and the key teams involved within Surrey

**Response:**

The Transport Development Team, within the Planning Group, are responsible for negotiating and agreeing s106 highways and transport contributions with developers. This is concurrent with their consideration of the planning application. Once agreement is reached, a s106 legal agreement is executed between the respective parties (Developer, Local Planning Authority and Surrey County Council) before the planning permission is granted.

A copy of the agreement is then sent to Infrastructure Agreement Team (also within the Planning Group) who co-ordinate the necessary financial transactions once the triggers for payment have been reached. The teams responsible for the delivery of the project(s) are then informed that the s106 monies have been received. The timescale for this element of the process can be anything between 1 year to 20 years depending upon the size of the development, its phasing and the triggers that release the monies.

The Infrastructure Agreements Team holds the monies until the project(s) are underway/completed when the monies are then released to the individual project code. The legal agreement often contains deadlines for the spending of the monies which generally can be up to ten years or a longer period if the development is to be built out over many years. The teams responsible for the delivery of the project(s) are required to utilise the monies by the spend deadline and if they are not spent, there is a risk that monies will need to be returned to the developer.

It is important to note that the contributions from S106 may not be enough to fund a scheme in its entirety hence it may be used as a part contribution to supplement other county budgets, be they local highway improvement schemes or wider projects such as those which form part of the Surrey Infrastructure Plan. Officers maintain oversight of the contributions and work with colleagues in finance to ensure spending deadlines are known. A member seminar is planned for early 2023 to outline improvements the Service has made to this process.

**Fiona Davidson to ask:**

Since Ringway took over the Highways contract in April 2022 there have been noticeable delays in highways project delivery. While some teething problems were to be expected the delays appear to be getting worse, and given rising costs, delays mean that costs for some work will be even higher than if they had been delivered as originally planned. Delivery against councillors' capital allowance works also appear to be delayed.

- Can you please explain how Ringway delivery performance on capital projects is monitored?
- How has Ringway performed in respect of capital and maintenance project delivery since April 2022?
- If performance is not as expected, why is this?

- Are delays in receiving quotes for 2022/23 councillors' capital allowance priorities – submitted before the due date in September - down to Surrey County Council or Ringway?
- Are delays in delivering councillors' capital allowance works down to Surrey County Council or Ringway? What are the reasons for delays?
- What steps are being taken to improve communication and delivery?

**Response:**

The delivery of capital projects is a process involving council teams, Ringway and Supply Chain Partners. The process of managing these programmes is complex with a substantial interdependency across teams however all with a singular objective to deliver high quality work to time and budget. As well as the day-to-day operational meetings between Task Teams to monitor progress of the programme, the Senior Teams within the Council and Ringway continue to meet at least fortnightly (as the Transition Board) to review progress across all workstreams, provide assurance of the improvements and support development of interventions to overcome the challenges being faced by the teams. This has included increasing resources (although there are challenges in the recruitment market) but also reviews of the processes and changes to the way IT and systems are used, and reports generated to help identify pinch points. Performance in general is measured through a series of KPIs that are reviewed at Performance Boards and overseen by senior managers in a monthly Contract Review meeting.

As outlined in the question there has been delays in the delivery of highway projects compared to a “normal year”. There is no doubt that any transition between Contractors is challenging with employees transferring between organisations under TUPE, the introduction of new IT systems and new ways of working which require time for learning that would otherwise not be needed in a normal year. There was also a need to enter into formal agreements with subcontractors to deliver some of the work and this could only be commenced once the contract had been awarded and really only started a few months before the contract's start in April.

Ordinarily in a “normal” year, there would be significant emphasis on generating the expected programme for the following fiscal year by the September/October to allow for the various stages of pre-construction activity to take place over the Autumn and Winter including carrying out site surveys and “walkovers”, commissioning design where required and booking “outline” road space.

Preparation work for the 22/23 programme was still undertaken in the transition period but inevitably a large amount was then compressed into the summer when we would normally have a much greater focus on the delivery of the in-year programme. In addition to the implementation of a new contract, there were also changes to the allocation of member capital funding and an increase in the funding made available which created a further pressure of pre-construction activity that needed to take place.

In recent months this has settled down considerably with an increasing number of schemes being delivered month to month and the bulk of the 22/23 programme now planned – as always this will still be subject to weather conditions over the next few months but confidence in delivery has increased significantly. It should be noted that

there will still be some changes to individual schemes either due to network availability, weather, availability of materials, changes needed to design and so on however we hope these to be at a minimum.

Although there was disruption to the 2022/23 programme thanks to the hard work of the teams involved, we have moved that forward significantly during a much-compressed pre-construction phase and have very recently begun to work on the pre-construction activities for the 2023/24 programmes alongside delivering the remaining schemes for this year. This activity will include engaging with members on proposed schemes for 2023/24.

We recognise, and apologise, that there have been frustrations with the communication of programmes and delivery timescales, and we are continually looking to see how we can improve this for future programmes.