

Wednesday 7 February 2024

ETI PERFORMANCE REVIEW – Environment, Highways, Transport, Planning, and Infrastructure Services

Purpose of report:

The purpose of this report is to provide the CEH Select Committee with performance information on Environment, Highways, Transport, Planning & Infrastructure services within the Environment, Infrastructure and Growth (EIG) directorate, and respond to questions and feedback of the content therein.

Introduction:

1. At the time of our last report, performance was linked to the broader strategic aims of the Environment, Transport & Infrastructure (ETI) Directorate. Since this time, an organisational restructure has subsumed the former ETI Directorate into a new Environment, Infrastructure & Growth (EIG) Directorate. This report will focus on performance metrics falling under the following 8 areas:

1. Highway Management	2. Public Transport & Active Travel
3. Waste Management	4. Flood Risk Management & Drainage
5. Natural Environment	6. Planning & Place Making
7. Infrastructure	8. Customer Service

2. Climate Change has been excluded from the scope of this report, due to performance being separately reported to the committee annually.
3. Our next report will include metrics on Economy & Growth.
4. Following the last performance report, officers have developed metrics further to provide greater clarity on what is being measured categorising each metric into one of the following areas:

- Demand Metrics (DM) – Metrics that enable us to monitor resource requirements based on volumes, or demand being placed on the service. These metrics are not RAG'd as generally the volumes are not within the council's control.
 - Operational Efficiency Metrics (OE) – Metrics that measure how effectively the service is running. These metrics are inward facing and can provide insight into how well internal processes are performing.
 - Customer Outcome Metrics (CO) – Metrics that demonstrate the outcomes for our customers and have a direct impact on our residents. Often there will be additional influencing factors which are not all within our control, but these metrics indicate what we're trying to achieve for residents and how well we're performing against that.
5. Trend information has been provided in the form of graphs or written text to give a wider context of how performance has been 'tracking' against the targets.
 6. The general structure of the report has been expanded to ensure we are able to include commentary and analysis of performance results alongside what action is being taken to improve performance if needed; and sharing benchmarking data where it is available. Any feedback from the committee on the new layout is welcome.
 7. We will continue to review our performance metrics, ensuring they give assurance of service performance, track outcomes for customers and enable robust decision making.

Key Findings – Focus Areas

8. Detailed results and commentary are contained within the slides at **Annex 1**.
9. Key areas of focus for improvement arising from the results are:
 - **Streetlighting repairs** - The number of repairs completed within timescales has been tracking just below target for nearly a year. The issue lies with the DNO (distribution network operator), who own and operate cables and towers supplying electricity, not meeting their targets for repairs due to a lack of resource. Milestone monitor the situation, which is affecting all local authorities in the South-East regions, and we have been jointly applying pressure through ADEPT. Q3 has seen a slight dip in performance again, however despite this the number of streetlights in operation across the county remains over 99%.

- **Road Safety KSI (number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads)** – Analysis of the trend in the total annual numbers of fatal or serious road casualties on Surrey’s roads has shown that the longer-term reduction in the fatal casualties has stalled in recent years and the combined total of fatal and serious casualties has remained mainly static since 2020. The council’s response to this is the development of a new Surrey RoadSafe Partnership Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy, incorporating a new 20mph policy, based on best practice. The new strategy is currently out to consultation and will be brought back to the Committee for further scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet decision. The strategy proposes a target of 50% reduction in people killed or seriously injured (KSI) by 2035. Going forwards the RAG for this measure takes an average baseline from 2019-22 and calculates the reduction required each year to achieve the 50% by 2035.
- **Tree Defects** – There are currently around 1300 outstanding P4 tree defects (response required is 12 months from notification). This has risen significantly over the past year with a 500% increase in the average number of defects being reported from the early part of 22/23 to Q2 in 23/24. In part this was a result of more inspections taking place and there was also pause on tree felling when the new notification process was being implemented. This has created a backlog of P4 defects which are now overdue and becoming more critical due to their age. To minimise the risk, the plan is to continue with the strategy to clear the backlog, alongside managing the upcoming work to prevent the backlog increasing. Whilst this strategy helps to limit the risk of a tree-related incident occurring on the highway, it will take longer to have an impact on the quarterly performance results.
- **Lines programme** - There was a slow start to this year’s programme as the contractor was still completing work issued from the 2022/23 programme. This year has also been impacted by wet weather and sub-contractor resource availability which sometimes needs to be diverted to prioritise lining work following major maintenance schemes. We have made amendments to how we order works, and we now have a dedicated resource in place, alongside some additional resource to tackle the backlog. This has led to a marked improvement with 52.8% of the programme completed by the end of Q3. However, the Winter period is challenging for lining works as the lines cannot be laid on a wet road surface, or when temperatures fall below 4degC, or when there is grit on the carriageway from preventative salting. There is a risk the programme will need to carry on into Q1 24/25.

- **Bus Reliability** – Buses running on time continues to be a challenge for Surrey, and for many authorities with 85 out of 91 authorities failing to reach the 95% target set by Traffic Commissioners. Bus reliability continues to be impacted by the significant number of road works and road closures across the county, by high traffic volumes and resultant traffic congestion and unpredictable journey times. Driver shortages in the industry are also impacting the ability of bus operators to run scheduled journeys resulting in late notice journey cancellations. The team continue to work with bus operators to adjust service patterns to meet available resource and operators are reporting an improvement with recruitment and staff retention. Improvement plans are in place through our Capital programme for bus reliability measures which is being monitored via the Enhanced Partnership Board chaired by the Cabinet Member. This includes bus friendly traffic management, bus lanes and intelligent bus priority at traffic signals to assist with reducing journey time and improving reliability.
- **Planning applications** – Reg 3 (planning approvals for County Council development) applications have been tracking below target this year predominantly due to resource issues. Although performance in Q3 is slightly down on Q2, the numbers processed 15/23 in Q1 and 14/26 in Q2 are broadly consistent and indicates a positive increase from Q1 when performance had dipped to 25% (overlapping with the retirement of the incumbent Planning Development Manager). New appointments into key roles have provided focus on improvements in this area alongside a detailed improvement plan being delivered as part of the Transformation programme.
- **Customer, EPE and Councillor enquiries** – Performance around the management of enquiries is not where we want, or need, it to be. The early part of 2023 saw a significant increase in the volume of enquiries with some months receiving double or triple the normal volume of enquiries. This was mainly due to the increased pothole volumes and then subsequently the impact of bringing the grass cutting service back in house. We recognise the subsequent impact this has on the volume of complaints or enquiries received by members, and this was reflected in the recommendations made as part of the Task & Finish programme. There is a strong focus and commitment to improve the customer experience and we are doing a significant amount of work in the directorate to improve. This includes aligning and prioritising activities under the SWITCh Customer Transformation Programme such as Highways Online Reporting, Pinch Point projects looking at tree management & lining work and Customer Enquiry improvements.

10. Although not referenced in the attached performance report (as we are not currently in grass cutting season) we recognise that the verge maintenance is another key area of focus for performance improvement. The service faced significant challenges at the start of the contract including issues with data provided, insufficient contractor resource and the weather creating perfect growing conditions. As we prepare for this year our map data is much improved, routes have already been mapped and new contractors are in place; and additional resource is in place in the service to oversee the programme. We will also undertake a cut in March (that didn't occur last year at the point of handover) which will allow us to start the programme earlier.

Further development of KPIs

11. We continuously develop and refine metrics to ensure we have the right measures in place to monitor service delivery and support decision making. Some of the metrics shared in this report still need to be refined or have a RAG rating developed for them. We also have new metrics in development through recent procurement activity. These includes:

- The newly developed metrics to monitor the delivery of the Parking Lines programme delivered by Ringway and metrics included for the new Parking Enforcement contract with NSL.
- Passenger numbers for the Digital Demand Responsive Transport service including the 5 additional schemes started in September 23.
- Metrics being introduced as part of the new Waste Contract and further refinement of the indicators measuring the success of the Eco Park.
- Metrics being introduced with the new Countryside Framework which will include how we monitor verge maintenance.

12. In addition, work is still ongoing to develop the follow metrics which we highlighted in the previous performance report provided to the Committee:

- **Social Value** – SCC have implemented a framework to measure the social value delivered through contracted partners. A working group has been established across EIG to review how this can be applied, what the relevant targets should be, and how data can be reported.
- **Biodiversity** – new legislation established within the Environment Act 2021 will require SCC to implement a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) to reverse the ongoing decline of biodiversity. We expect the LNRS to provide key targets and metrics that will be monitored within EIG's new performance framework.

Conclusions:

13. The development of an EIG directorate wide performance framework is a continual and iterative process. Work to date has sought to provide greater depth and context on both the performance results and the action being taken in response. We will continue to develop our framework and work towards more assurance of service performance, a better understanding of the outcomes for customers and more evidence to support robust decision making.

Recommendations:

14. It is recommended that CEH Select Committee provide feedback on the performance framework and highlight any further metrics that could be developed to aid the Committees understanding of the directorate's performance.

Next steps:

15. Following the meeting of CEH Select Committee, officers will:

- Further refine the metrics identified within the report, improve data management processes and identify robust sources of benchmarking.
- Bring an annual performance report to Select Committee at the start of 2025.

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Sources/background papers