

Report of Director of City Development

Report to Scrutiny Board (Sustainable Economy and Culture)

Date: 22 March 2012

Subject: HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION SCHEME CONSULTATION
PROCESS UPDATE

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report updates the Scrutiny Board on changes to Highways and Transportation's consultation procedures for Transportation schemes, following issues arising from recent consultation exercises and discussions at the Board's previous meeting.
2. The report also outlines the impact the new procedures have had on two recent significant scheme consultations namely, the Roundhay Road Integrated Transport Scheme and the Leeds Core Cycle Network Garforth – Leeds City Centre (Route 9)

Recommendations

3. The Scrutiny Board (Sustainable Economy and Culture) is requested to note and comment on the report.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report updates the Scrutiny Board on the development of the Highways and Transportation service's consultation procedures, since these were previously discussed with the Board at their 20 October 2011 meeting.

2 Background information

- 2.1 As a result of issues arising from the consultation on Route 5 of the Leeds Core Cycle Network reported at the Board's 20 October meeting, Members were briefed on work to revise consultation procedures relating to schemes. This report provides the requested update.
- 2.2 A review process was initiated following the receipt of adverse comments and a small officer working group was established to re-examine and develop recommendations for improvements to consultation processes.
- 2.3 A draft consultation framework was established, and then shared with the Corporate Consultation and Corporate Communications managers who found the existing procedures to be already very comprehensive. It was considered that the new procedures could be used as a benchmark for other services within the Council.
- 2.4 Extensive input was provided from the Service's equalities advisor and from the Corporate Equalities Officer, to ensure that the new procedure met the Council's responsibilities under the Equality Act.
- 2.5 The revised process is now being used to develop new schemes for the 2012/13 capital programme.
- 2.6 The existing processes for consulting on highway maintenance schemes were also considered in the review. However, the processes for consulting on these schemes, which do not involve changes to the highway and are rather notification and information type exercises to inform the public of forthcoming maintenance works, were considered to be effective and fit for purpose.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 It was recognised by the working group that the exercise primarily captured what had in fact already been current practice, but this review enabled the process to be encapsulated in one place. The review also enabled the use of a number of new tools, including bespoke roadside information signs and better use of the internet to be incorporated into the Service's procedures.
- 3.2 The scheme consultation checklist, attached as Appendix A, addresses consultation in 4 stages:-
- Stage 1 – Internal Scheme Development Consultation List (Technical)

- Stage 2 – External Scheme Development Consultation List (Key Stakeholders)
- Stage 3 – Public Engagement Consultation List
- Stage 4 – Review Feedback, Report Back Findings & Recommendations

3.3 While the checklist is provided to assist officers, it is not intended to be definitive. Individual local circumstances will differ and therefore final results will always be sense checked against what might be expected before reaching firm conclusions and reporting outcomes.

3.4 Robust records should be kept of the process and these should be retained in accordance with retention policies after project completion.

3.5 It had been hoped that the whole process of consultation could now be digitised to ease the burden. However, while the use of Talking Point is required, the service is awaiting further developments corporately concerning a validated checklist of organisations who may have an interest in particular areas, and subject matters.

3.6 The revised consultation procedures will be monitored and will be further revised and developed following any feedback received; this is in line with the Highways and Transportation service's commitment to continuous improvement.

3.7 The revised procedures have been trialled on two significant schemes being Roundhay Road Integrated Transport Scheme; and the Leeds Core Cycle Network Garforth – Leeds City Centre (Route 9).

Roundhay Road Integrated Transport Scheme

3.8 The scheme proposal is for an outbound bus lane combined with a number of road safety measures in an area with competing demands from the frontages. The consultation on this scheme has run in parallel with the development of the consultation proposals detailed in this report.

3.9 Given the complicated and diverse demands on the highway and footway usage in this area, it was felt that all possible tools from the toolkit should be used for the consultation.

3.10 A specific web-site was established for the scheme, and all associated literature directed respondents to the website.

3.11 The distribution of 7,900 leaflets (Appendix B) included delivery to 2,540 to households within approximately 350 metres of the scheme, to ensure that pedestrians who were regular users of the road were consulted. For the first time leaflets were also distributed to transport users, (bus users, car drivers, and cyclists) who use the corridor as it was recognised that for such scheme it was important to reach those people who passed through the area.

3.12 Bespoke roadside information signs were used to direct users of Roundhay Road to the website (Appendix C).

- 3.13 The scheme web page received 750 hits which generated 142 responses through the consultation feedback form and was considered significantly more than would have been achieved through the former processes.
- 3.14 Overall the consultation received 377 responses or around 5%, which although a relatively small proportion of the leaflets distributed it is considered to be a significant response level for scheme of this type, especially when considered against those received for previous similar consultations.
- 3.15 The higher response rate was due to a higher response rate from the transport users group who had not been consulted previously on schemes of this type.
- 3.16 Of these responses over 60% were supportive of every aspect of the scheme, rising to 80% for certain important features of the proposals.
- 3.17 Details of the full consultation report will be provided to the Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation) when the proposals for the further development of the scheme are considered. There will be further consultation with Ward Members and frontages as the detailed design proposals are finalised.

The Leeds Core Cycle Network Garforth – Leeds City Centre (Route 12)

- 3.18 The Leeds Core Cycle Network Garforth – Leeds City Centre (Route 12), covers over eight miles, utilising existing on and off road facilities, providing additional facilities (filling in the gaps) to establish a continuous route.
- 3.19 This scheme utilised the new consultation methods, and the consultation leaflet (Appendix D) was sent to over 7,000 households along the route. In-house enumerators were used to deliver the consultation ensuring as far as possible accurate delivery.
- 3.20 Posters and consultation leaflets were sent to libraries, community centres and other community groups. A report was sent to all the Community Forums along the route alignment. Information was also posted on Talking Point.
- 3.21 Information was also posted on the “Colton On-line” website. All consultation and Leeds City Council responses have been analysed and collated and are available as a background paper.
- 3.22 Representatives of The National Federation of the Blind (Leeds Branch), Independent Disability Council, Leeds City Council Disability Hub and Access Committee for Leeds were all consulted directly. Previously schemes of this type had only consulted with Ward Members, frontages, identified community groups, and the Leeds Cycle Action Group.
- 3.23 Again this had led to a far higher level of engagement with the community than previously accomplished; the web-site has had over 800 hits. While the response rate was low in proportion to the volume of contact it was far higher than previous consultations on similar schemes, particularly as no part of the route alignment could be described as contentious. It was 10 times greater than that received on comparable consultations on previous cycle routes.

3.24 The comments concerned a range of issues varying from minor route alignment issues, which have been able to be accommodated, or respondents who did not understand the precise alignment to queries about the cost of the scheme.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 The checklist has been developed in an iterative fashion ensuring each of the sections within the service are fully briefed and engaged with the new arrangements.

4.1.2 The procedure has been shared with the Equalities Manager, the Corporate Consultation Manager, and the Corporate Communications Manager who have responded favourably to the revised consultation arrangements.

4.1.3 The Scrutiny Board were informed at their 20 October 2011 that the review was underway and this report responds to their request for further feedback.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration.

4.2.1 The process has been developed to be fully compliant with the requirements of the Equalities Act and the Council's best practice advice and guidance with input from the Service's equalities advisor.

4.2.2 A screening review has been completed and is available as a background paper for this Report. The screening acknowledged that all Highways and Transportation service schemes seek to maintain and where feasible improve conditions for pedestrians and road users, especially those with the mobility issues, carers (supporting wheelchairs and pushchair users) young and older people and disabled people. The detailed consultation outlined in the attached checklist is intended to be as comprehensive as possible.

4.2.3 The screening also identifies the difficulties in reaching certain hard to reach groups, and anticipates the development corporately within the Council of a comprehensive listing of all potentially interested groups in Leeds.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 By seeking to apply a thorough, comprehensive, and appropriate level of consultation to each scheme, the process reflects the Corporate Priorities expressed in the Council Business Plan:

- Providing clear, accountable civic leadership (...) to produce better outcomes for people in Leeds
- Commissioning and delivering quality and value for money public services; as well as:
- The Core Values of treating people fairly and spending money wisely

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.2 The report has no specific resources implications. The conduct of the revised consultation is being delivered within existing resources within a process aimed at ensuring engagement is conducted as efficiently and comprehensively as practical.

4.4.3 The processes described within this report emphasise the need for an appropriate level of consultation for each scheme in assisting the final design and definition of the proposals.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 The report has no specific legal implications. However on schemes involving Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) the Council is legally obliged to consult those affected, and if the pre-TRO consultation is comprehensive and inclusive, then it can make the TRO process more straightforward and robust.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 The process detailed within the report seeks to minimise risks arising from the consultation process by making them as comprehensive and inclusive as possible, proportionate to the scale and purpose of the proposals being developed.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The revised consultation processes are designed to address the issues encountered previously by the service by developing a comprehensive checklist approach and new more varied approaches to communications to assist scheme developers reach and engage with local people and road users likely to be affected by scheme proposals.

5.2 As a result of the consultation review a number of new consultation tools have been developed, which particularly for larger schemes, will enable better promotion and awareness of the proposals. A commonsense approach remains paramount for all scheme promoters to ensure consultations are fit for purpose. This aligned with a more rigorous approach is intended to improve the quality and feedback from the process.

5.3 The revised arrangements are now being tested as the examples in the report evidence. The early signs are that it is reaching more people. However, the level of individual and group responses will remain very much susceptible to the scheme concerned and the sensitivities and issues raised with local people. The process will be continue to be developed from experience and feedback.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The Scrutiny Board (Sustainable Economy and Culture) is requested to note and comment on the Report.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 Collated consultation feedback and responses on Leeds Core Cycle Network Garforth – Leeds City Centre (Route 12).
- 7.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration Screening Review on the H&T consultation process.

¹ ¹The background documents listed in this section are available for inspection on request for a period of four years following the date of the relevant meeting. Accordingly this list does not include documents containing exempt or confidential information, or any published works. Requests to inspect any background documents should be submitted to the report author.