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| | AGENDA ITEM 5 |
| | EDEH/08/13 |
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| Committee: | Economic Development, Environment and Highways Policy & Scrutiny Committee |
| Date: | 21 March 2013 |
| SCRUTINY REPORT ON THE RELATIONSHIP WITH STATUTORY UNDERTAKERS IN THE WAY WORKS ARE UNDERTAKEN IN THE HIGHWAY (Minute 7/February 2012) | |
| Enquiries to: | Christine Sharland, Governance Officer 01245 430450 Christine.sharland@essex.gov.uk |

In February 2012 (Minute 7) the Committee approved its scrutiny report on the relationship with Statutory Undertakers in the way works are undertaken in the highway.

At its meeting in August 2012 (Minute 12) the Committee was advised that Councillor Louis, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, had accepted all the recommendations. However, no detail was given at that time.

A more detailed response to the four recommendations set out in the scrutiny report has now been received from Councillor Louis, and is reproduced below:

Recommendation 1

That it be recommended to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation that an effective Communications Protocol be developed as soon as possible to address the information needs of the public, public transport operators and councillors on road works and NRSWA in Essex. A response to this recommendation is requested for the Committee's consideration in Summer 2012.

Cabinet Member's response 'Officers are working on a revised protocol to ensure that public transport operators and others are fully aware of and engaged in discussions around planned road works in order to mitigate the impact on the travelling public. This protocol will be finalised early in the New Year following the completion of the H&T restructure. In addition, an improved protocol has been established to ensure that members are aware of any planned road closures in their area in advance of formal public consultation/notification.'

Recommendation 2

That it be recommended to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation that improvements be made to the quality of public information published by Essex County Council on NRSWA and other road works in Essex, and that up to date information on road works be published on the website together with the ability for the public to report problems with those works. A response to this recommendation is requested for the Committee's consideration in Summer 2012.

Cabinet Member's response 'Essex County Council continues to subscribe to the national, public, DfT supported "Elgin" website for roadworks information. Recently a number of changes have been made to this site to improve the information available. This includes the ability for a member to set up an alert facility for their own area.

Under the new Highways contract with Ringway Jacobs, a "service information centre" (website) is being established which will provide improved information on all activity taking place in Essex.'

Recommendation 3

That the Leader of the Council be recommended to include NRSWA and the management of road works within Essex within the Member Induction Programme following County Council elections, and his response be reported to the Committee meeting in Summer 2012.

Cabinet Member's response 'This will be included in the induction pack for Members after the election. '

Recommendation 4

That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation be requested to provide an update on any proposed changes to be made to the way that NRSWA is currently operated in Essex no later than February 2013, and consider the adoption of a permit scheme in Essex.

Cabinet Member's response 'The Ringway Jacobs contract includes a proposal to look at the establishment of a Permit Scheme in Essex. The East of England permit scheme was launched on 5 November 2012. Currently, Essex is not participating in this scheme, but will be liaising with those participating authorities to understand the benefits the scheme is bringing and the business cases developed. Once the H&T restructure is completed, the NRSWA Manager has been tasked with undertaking the investigatory/feasibility work to look at the options, costs and efficiencies of adopting such a scheme in Essex. This initial work will be completed by 31 March 2013. If a scheme is viewed as a viable option for Essex, implementation would be likely to be in April 2014, allowing for the consultation and changes that would need to be put in place.

It is also understood that the Department for Transport is currently reviewing the regulations and protocols around permit schemes and that an update is expected in the spring. Officers are monitoring progress on this to ensure that any new guidance or changes can be incorporated into the feasibility work Essex will be undertaking.'

Action required by the Committee:

The Committee note the Cabinet Member response as now reported.

A copy of the full Scrutiny Report is available via CMIS
<http://78.136.39.196/essexcmis5/ScrutinyReports.aspx>
entitled 'Statutory Undertakers – Final Report'.