

## **Mid Area Forum 3rd March 2011**

### **Highways and Transportation Update**

Essex County Council's Highways and Transportation service is undergoing fundamental changes in the way it works to make sure that we continue to deliver a high level of customer service whilst addressing financial challenges.

Some of these changes are longer term, for example we have already identified a preferred option for the future delivery of services through a strategic alliance with a single integrated service provider. This new operating model is presently subject to procurement and will start on 1 April 2012.

There are also a number of changes that we are introducing in the short term. One of these changes has been to review our existing staffing structure. This review has enabled us to create greater capacity to focus on localism, customer excellence and business improvement.

By restructuring we have been able to establish a new Customer Liaison team of technically qualified and customer focused employees. By having a dedicated Customer Liaison Team within Highways & Transportation we will be able to ensure that all of our customers receive timely, appropriate and consistent responses to all enquiries across the Highways Service.

Team members are located in each of the current four Area Highways Offices to ensure a local focus is still at the heart of our customer interactions and they will provide ongoing support to the existing Highways Localism Panels.

Peter Rose is the Group Manager managing the new Customer Liaison team and it is now fully functional. This team will support ECC's corporate customer strategy by developing fit for purpose channels for customer contact, such as encouraging use of our website to report highway issues and interacting electronically rather than via the telephone, which helps ECC to deliver more effective front line services.

These changes will mean that you will interact with the Highways and Transportation services in a different way. All customer contact will be channelled through the Customer Liaison team via the contact points shown on the attached sheet.

By utilising the above telephone and e-mail contacts we pledge to provide quicker responses and the ability to capture events as they occur. Whilst we appreciate that historically you have probably dealt with a single officer at the relevant area office, we would seek your co-operation in using the above dedicated customer teams who will ensure that we maintain a resilient approach to dealing with issues in your parish as we move towards our wider aspirations for 2012.

We very much believe that the new arrangements will offer benefits to our customers:-

- Dedicated customer teams in each of the area offices
- Faster response times
- All calls, letters and contacts logged and recorded
- A team of dedicated Highway Technical Advisors (HTA's) in each area office dealing with technical enquiries
- A team of dedicated Highway Inspectors dealing with ad-hoc issues and defects on the highway network

## **H & T LOCALISM AND CUSTOMER SERVICES: CONTACT DETAILS**

East Area Highways Office (Colchester)

Telephone: 0845 603 7631

Email: H&TLocalism&Customereast@essex.gov.uk

Mid Area Highways Office (Chelmsford)

Telephone: 0845 603 7631

Email: H&TLocalism&Customermid@essex.gov.uk

South Area Office (Basildon)

Telephone: 0845 603 7631

Email: H&TLocalism&Customersouth@essex.gov.uk

West Area Office (Harlow)

Telephone: 0845 603 7631

Email: H&TLocalism&Customerwest@essex.gov.uk

All routine maintenance issues should continue to be self-reported system via the front page of the ECC website:

<http://www.essex.gov.uk/Travel-Highways/Report-a-highway-problem/Pages/Report-a-problem.aspx>

## **HOW WE DEAL WITH YOUR ENQUIRIES**

**Phone calls** to above telephone number: Calls are routed to Contact Essex (CE) – If CE unable to answer, call will be put through to relevant Customer Team at Area Office. Where call relates to a highway defect, this will be logged and recorded by CE.

**E-mail** to above contacts: e-mails constantly monitored by Customer Teams. Typically, non-urgent enquiries could be reported via this route, such as speed limit issues or other highway defects. An automated acknowledgement receipt is generated to inform the promoter of the enquiry that this has been received and will be assigned to an officer for action.

**Website** – where a defect or other issue is logged via the ECC website, this is automatically logged and sent directly to the relevant Customer Team for action. An automatic response is generated and sent together with a reference number relating to that enquiry. Non-dangerous defects, i.e. minor potholes or street light outages,

should be reported via this route wherever possible. This is the most effective way of tracking the status of your enquiry as the unique reference number enables us to ascertain the progress of the enquiry at any given time.

**Letters/correspondence** – All letters/correspondence sent to ECC Highways is scanned, logged and recorded by staff in the relevant Area Highways Office.

**Emergencies** – all calls relating to emergency defects or an incident on the highway network should go through to the above telephone number. Calls are taken by CE staff during office hours, the incident is logged and recorded and assigned an emergency status that alerts staff in the relevant Area Office. Depending on the nature of the enquiry, a Highways Inspector will normally be sent to deal with the emergency within 2 hour of it being reported, often straight away. For calls to CE outside of office hours, a recorded message gives information regarding an alternative number for our out-of-office Contractor who will attend to the incident/emergency. Typical emergencies could involve incidents of major flooding in a local area or road impassable etc.

**RESPONSE TIMES:** We aim to respond to all enquiries within 20 working days. Where the request is straight forward we will generally respond straight away. Where the response is more complex, requires investigation or advice from other colleagues (e.g. sometimes legal advice may be required) we may require longer and will endeavour to let people know when they can expect a response. For urgent enquiries, we aim to respond within 10 days, sooner wherever possible, such as emergencies as noted above.

Customer Service Team  
Mid Area Highway Office.