

Highways Communication Strategy

Amendment List

Issue / Revision	Issue / Revision Date	Remove		Insert	
		Page	Iss. / Rev.	Page	Iss. / Rev.
Version 1.0	Sept 2016	Original			
Version 2.0	Dec 2017			7	Post-scheme satisfaction survey added
Version 3.0	Dec 2018			7	Winter Service details added
				8	Stay Connected details added
				9	Internal Comms bullets amended
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1.0 Introduction

Bradford Council recognises that effective communication with its stakeholders and customers, at various stages in the asset management and highway maintenance process, is essential. The aim of this document is to advise and give guidance on the provision of highways services and how customers may access them. Engagement raises public awareness of the challenges and issues faced by Bradford Council, as highway authority, and explains the way services have to be prioritised in order to provide a service which meets our needs but also helps to manage customer expectations.

Highway stakeholders have been identified and a variety of communication options are used to inform them about services including:

- Annual Planned Maintenance Programme
- Scheme consultations
- Proposed high quality streetscape improvements
- Results of formal customer satisfaction surveys

Consultations help establish and prioritise an annual works programme based on the community's needs, taking into account the stakeholders' most important considerations.

This strategy aims to raise awareness and understanding of the Council's approach to highway maintenance. This includes the work that goes into maintaining and improving the district's roads, footways, structures, street lights and traffic signals, ensuring that all communications are timely, positive, informative and accessible.

It details how the Council's stakeholders are engaged with regard to the district's highways assets to ensure that they are aware of, and most importantly, satisfied with, the work taking place to maintain and improve the highway network.

Information is shared using various methods including online, printed media and through a range of digital solutions.

1.1 Highways Asset Management Guidance and Effective Communication

Managing highways is now a critical challenge to local councils, who have to manage an ageing network with high public expectations for safe, reliable and comfortable travel. At the same time, resources are reducing, with less funding available, increased and competing pressure for other local government services and skills shortages.

Highways are increasingly at risk of damage from wear and tear, ageing, increasing traffic and severe weather. This regularly results in visible defects like potholes, damaged road signs, defective street lights and in extreme cases, damage to bridges. These defects are seen and felt by all and can result in negative media coverage.

It is clear that action must be taken to make best use of funding and to communicate this process if our highways are going to continue to provide the service for which they were built, and ensure our customers are confident that money is being spent wisely.

Highways Asset Management Guidance has been developed under the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) and, in terms of communication, it recommends that the Council:

- Communicates its approach to highway infrastructure asset management.
- Undertakes customer satisfaction surveys to make sure this information is used to help drive service improvement
- Has a mechanism in place to gather and use customer feedback relating to its highway maintenance service
- Ensures that customers are kept informed about their highway maintenance service

1.2 Highways Asset Management

The Council is responsible for around 1,800km of adopted roads, 3,000 bridges and structures, over 97,000 gullies, over 59,000 street lights and around 370 traffic signal installations.

Council responsibility also includes the maintenance of grass verges and trees within the adopted highway. However, for the purpose of this Communication Strategy, the focus will be on our most significant highways assets. These include:

- Carriageways (roads)
- Footways and Cycle Routes
- Structures, including bridges
- Drainage
- Street lighting, including illuminated signs
- Traffic management, including traffic lights

Asset management provides a structured approach to road maintenance by ensuring that maintenance and improvements are carried out as part of a planned programme of works.

This allows us to make the best use of investment in our network to maintain it for the road users of today and of the future. Maintenance is prioritised to maximise the benefit of investment over many years.

1.3 Engagement

The condition of the highway network is often of significant interest to the public and the media and it is essential that stakeholders are engaged and suitably informed about how decisions are made in relation to the identification, assessment, prioritisation, programming, delivery and completion of asset management activities.

2.0 Aims of the Council

The Council's aims through communication are to:

- Raise awareness of the services provided by the Highways Service
- Raise awareness of its approach to highway asset management
- Understand the needs and expectations of stakeholders
- Help stakeholders understand how to become involved with or influence our work

- Ensure that stakeholders are kept informed about their highway maintenance service
- Increase stakeholder satisfaction with the services provided
- Gain commitment and support for effective and efficient highway asset management
- Improve the level of trust and confidence in the decisions made
- Support elected members in their role as community representatives

3.0 Objectives (required to achieve our aims)

- To inform stakeholders of the services the Council provides and the quality of service they can expect.
- Use all appropriate means of communication at our disposal in order to reach as many people as possible
- To inform stakeholders how the Council spends highway maintenance money wisely, using the most appropriate treatments.
- To engage and listen to people’s concerns about the network and feedback our progress on a regular and timely basis.
- To highlight the positive work being carried out to maintain and improve the district's highway network.

4.0 Stakeholders

The Council will seek to engage and inform as many people as possible from across the Bradford District, including but not restricted to:

4.1 Internal Stakeholders

- Elected members
- Community committees
- Bradford Council staff
- Customer Contact Centre
- Service providers
- West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA)

4.2 External Stakeholders

- Residents
- Local road users
- Local communities and community groups
- Schools/Colleges/University
- Local businesses
- Town and Parish councils
- Members of Parliament (MPs)
- Visitors and people travelling through the district
- Interest groups such as freight associations, pedestrian groups, cycling and motoring groups, disability and mobility groups, Public Service Operators
- Emergency services (Police, Fire, Ambulance and Health service)
- Utilities (gas, water, electricity, etc.)

- Department for Transport (DfT)
- Neighbouring authorities

5.0 What We Communicate

Effective asset management will deliver an efficient and effective approach to the management of highway infrastructure assets through longer term planning, ensuring that standards are defined and achievable for available budgets. Communicating this with stakeholders is essential in aiding greater understanding of the contribution highway infrastructure assets make to economic growth, improvements to health and wellbeing and the needs of local communities.

The following information will be communicated to all stakeholders;

- Assets managed by Bradford Council
- Condition of assets
- Backlog of highway maintenance work
- Level of available budgets
- Performance management framework

In addition to the above, strategic, operational and specific messages will be communicated as follows:

5.1 Strategic Messages

Clear and accurate information will be made available to ensure all stakeholders understand how the Council;

- **Will deliver its services in the future** – Our focus will be on achieving a safe, serviceable and sustainable network.
- **Defines Levels of Service** – To successfully manage the highway assets which balance user and stakeholder needs and expectations for each asset against the Council's financial resources.
- **Employs Lifecycle Planning** – To make the right investment at the right time to ensure that the asset delivers the required level of service over its full expected life at the minimum cost.
- **Produces Forward Works Programmes** – To ensure that maintenance and improvements are carried out in a planned and co-ordinated way
- **Controls and co-ordinates contractors** – To ensure that all works on the highway are co-ordinated and that utility companies and other contractors comply with the Council's permit scheme.

5.2 Operational Messages

Clear and accurate information about current activities and feedback;

- **Programme** – Local authority elected members play a fundamental part in the decision making process which includes opportunities for communication and stakeholder consultation regarding the forward works programme. The agreed

Annual Works Programme is published on the Internet and updated regularly.

- **Disruption** – Communication with statutory undertakers is also crucial to effectively managing the highway network. Works on the highway are coordinated through our Network Resilience and Management team in order to minimise disruption on the highway in line with network management requirements of the Traffic Management Act 2004. Details of all on-going work can be found at: <https://roadworks.org>
- **Winter Service** – The current version of the ‘Highway Maintenance Winter Service Operational Plan’ is published on the Council’s website. During the winter season, daily operations will be posted on the website and communicated via social media outlets. Daily operational action plans are communicated to elected members, the Council’s senior management team and Customer Contact Centre.
- **Customer feedback (post completion surveys)** – Residents affected by a scheme on the Annual Works Programme will be given the opportunity to comment in terms of the information they received, the standard of the work and the contractor’s performance. The Customer Satisfaction Survey can be found at: www.bradford.gov.uk/highwaysurvey
- **Customer feedback (external survey)** – An annual survey is carried out by the National Highways & Transport Network (NHT) for the Council to determine the public’s views on issues such as highway maintenance and satisfaction with maintenance activities. The results of the survey can be found at: <https://www.bradford.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/highways-asset-management/highways-asset-management/?Folder=NHT+Public+Satisfaction+Survey>

5.3 Specific Messages

Clear and accurate information about particular plans or where specific feedback is requested;

- Consultation on potential changes to the highway is an important part of communication with customers to ensure service users’ needs are reflected in changes made to the highway network. Consultation is undertaken with stakeholders affected by any proposed work where there is a significant change to the existing layout or a change in materials.
- Responses to queries, reports and bulletins to ward members and area committees.

6.0 How We Communicate



The advances made in information technology offer exciting new ways of communicating. At the same time, for many people, traditional methods – newspapers, telephone and leaflets – still play a fundamental role that must not be undervalued.

6.1 Local Media

Media plays a strong role in shaping perceptions of local government, so informed reporting is vital. People are more positive about their Council in areas where the it has a good relationship with the local media. The Council has corporate guidelines for communications with local media and these will be followed at all times.

6.2 Digital Media

The Council uses the latest technology to communicate more effectively with stakeholders. It currently uses;

- **Website** – This enables communication with stakeholders by providing an A to Z Guide of Council Services. For the Highways Service, this includes but is not limited to:
 - Access to appropriate documentation explaining asset management strategies and policies.
 - Details of the current highways annual works programme which is updated to ensure the information is accurate. A link is also included to **Roadworks.org** - an interactive map showing roadworks across the district, including works by statutory undertakers (Telecoms, Electric, Gas companies, etc).
 - Performance data (targets and actual).
 - Facility to report highway defects.
 - Winter and gritting
 - Specific information during adverse weather conditions.
- **Stay Connected** – external and internal stakeholders can sign up to e-mail alerts to receive information about what matters most to them. A wide range of topics is available including roadworks, extreme weather and events taking place around the district.
- **Social Networking** – is increasingly utilised by organisations, and individuals as a means of developing online communities for gathering and disseminating information that is of mutual interest. The Highways Service currently uses Twitter and Facebook and can be followed at  @bradfordmdc and  @bradfordmdc

6.3 Traditional Methods

Whilst the Council make greater use of web-based access to information and social media, traditional methods of communication will always have an important role to play. The Council will use the most appropriate communication method for the audience and the message it aims to convey. These include:

- **Members briefing sessions** – Keeping local members up to date is key to managing people’s expectations, especially about more disruptive schemes.
- **Customer Contact Centre** – is briefed to deal with and re-direct any calls regarding the condition of the highway network to the most appropriate officers.
- **Community Committees** – Briefing notes will be supplied to the area committees to inform people of works taking place, how they are progressing and when they will be completed. This allows for further engagement with people as the work is planned and progressed.
- **Meetings with external groups and organisations** – By building good relationships with external groups and organisations on particular schemes, and keeping them informed of developments or work within their area, expectations can be managed.
- **Media releases** – these convey important notices and events to local and national media.
- **Letter drops** – these are used to inform households directly affected by roadworks.
- **Signs** – these are used in advance of major works commencing, to allow users of the network in Bradford to change their travel plans, and for local residents and businesses to adjust their arrangements to accommodate the works, with minimum inconvenience and disruption.

6.4 Internal Communications

Staff are crucial in building the Council’s reputation, whether they are frontline staff or officers representing the Council externally. The way they behave and how they talk about the Council can have a huge impact. Good internal communications are therefore very important in helping the Council achieve its objectives.

Internal communication channels used include;

- Bradnet (internal Council web-based communication site)
- Council wide electronic newsletter – Pride@Work Express
- Managers’ Express Issue
- Senior Management and team meetings

7.0 Evaluation and Review

It is extremely important that the Council measures the success of this strategy and acts on the feedback received to amend or enhance it where necessary and communicate these changes.

What will be measured?

- Awareness of Highway Services and the services it provides
- Increased satisfaction with highways condition and highways maintenance works
- Satisfaction with any contact with Highway Services
- Participation and engagement with Council projects, initiatives and consultation processes

How will this be measured?

- National Highways & Transport Public Satisfaction Survey (NHT).
- Number of re-tweets, likes and comments on Social Networking sites.
- Amount and nature of media coverage.
- Comments, compliments and complaints received about highways.
- Number of visits to our website.
- Number of calls to the Customer Contact Centre and time taken to respond to requests.
- Consultation with directly affected residents – perception and satisfaction surveys
- Staff surveys

This document will be reviewed annually to ensure effective mechanisms to communicate service standards and outcomes are in place to manage customer expectations.