

# Highways asset management strategy communications strategy

## Appendix F - Lessons learned: Communications developments and achievements in the past 12 months – and in the coming year

We place great weight on not just communication and consulting, but on doing so regularly, consistently and effectively. We pride ourselves on the work that we do but acknowledge that there is always room for improvement and it's important that we recognise when things could have been done better.

**Example:** After concerns were raised by the owner of Abbey Foregate Post Office about the planned dates of pavement resurfacing work outside her premises, work was rescheduled for a Sunday, when the Post Office was closed and business wouldn't be affected. As a result she commented positively on social media.

In the year 2019/20 our communications have been – and will continue to be - enhanced and improved through the following developments.

1. **Shropshire Highways** - Before and since the start of the new highways maintenance contract, discussions have been held with Kier to consider if and how communications could be improved. As noted last year, following these discussions a number of developments were planned. The latest on each of these is outlined below, with any required actions.
  - **Customer Service Centre staff will be given access to information** about current and forthcoming works, so that they can answer customer questions direct. **Update:** review if and how the CSC are receiving this information.
  - **Public information packs** will be issued to residents and businesses, rather than letters. **Update:** letters and information are currently still being provided
  - **Feedback cards will be issued** to residents for completion and return on completion of work. **Update:** Shropshire Council/WSP to make a decision on which schemes we would want feedback cards issuing for.
  - **New reusable, lightweight roadside signs.** **Update:** A-frame style signs are still being used, as there is no printer to print such signs and our traffic management companies are putting the signs out
  - **Local councillor/s will be invited to the early contractor involvement' (ECI) meeting, ahead of work start.** **Update:** check if this is happening.
  - **Making greater use of the new Shropshire Highways twitter (@shropshireroads).** **Update:** consider if and how greater use could and should be made of this.
  
2. In the past year the highways and roads section of the Shropshire Council **website** has been thoroughly reviewed and revised to make the information more comprehensive and easier to find. Notable improvements as part of this work include:
  - Large scale project works are now searchable by date and area.
  - The number and range of online reporting forms has been expanded, from 3 to 11
  - New traffic management, and street care and cleaning sections
  - New pages have been added to highlight and promote the work and success of the network management (steetworks) team.
  
3. The continued use of the **Shropshire Highways logo/branding** since April 2018 ensures that road users know which schemes Shropshire Council and its contractors are responsible for.
  
4. The seven **blogs/videos** rolled out as a part of a mini campaign in early 2017 are now permanently hosted on Shropshire Council's online Newsroom. The blogs have also been

replicated on the council website to maximise their reach and accessibility. Each blog/video is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the information remains correct and accurate.

5. A logo has been designed for **Shrewsbury Highways Improvement Programme (SHIP)** and is now being used.
6. The **Shrewsbury Highways Improvement Programme (SHIP)** webpages have been reviewed and as part of the work to review the highways webpages, with out of date information removed.
7. In early 2019 we ran a successful campaign inviting Shropshire's schoolchildren to **name our two Roadmaster vehicles**. After a good response, the names Harry Pothole and Fill.I.Am were chosen, and given to the two vehicles – which then paid a visit to the school and the nursery that had suggested the winning names.
8. The communications and consultation **framework** referred to will continue to be used. **See appendix E**. Work will continue to raise awareness of the framework among key officers.
9. We will endeavour to add **online updates** about all major schemes at least once a fortnight, and will include photos and/or videos in these updates whenever possible. However, we need to determine if this is realistic and achievable.
- 10. Scrutiny / Task and finish group.** In July 2018 a Shropshire Council 'Task and Finish group' scrutinised how Shropshire Council manages roadworks and street works, to help ensure that council manages roadworks, street works and highways projects effectively.

The group also explored the opportunities available to Shropshire Council to further develop its communications regarding roadworks and street works. It presented a report, including a series of recommendations to the council's performance management scrutiny committee.

The group recommended that Shropshire Council develops proposals to:

- better inform people about roadworks and street works in their area through opportunities provided by the Digital Transformation Programme.
- use social media to tell residents and elected members about roadworks and street works, including major projects such as SITP.
- make better use of barriers erected during SITP works to inform people of the project and the benefit it is likely to bring and
- communicate successes more effectively.

In July 2019 an update report was presented to the committee to detail progress made against the recommendations.

#### 11. **Potholes**

A review of our communications around pothole repairs is planned to enhance and improve the information that we provide, and how we provide it. This includes a review of the web pages and consideration of more/better use of graphics, photos, and video. Other councils have been approached with a view to learning from what others have done, and replicating best practice where possible.

#### 12. **Winter maintenance.**

Ahead of this winter, a review of our winter maintenance communications is planned to enhance and improve the information that we provide, and how we provide it. This includes a review of the web pages and consideration of more/better use of graphics, photos, and video.

### **13. Highways infographics**

A series of infographics highlighting key performance statistics are being designed and will be rolled out on social media in the run up to Christmas 2019.

14. The **Cabinet member** for highways remains very supportive of and involved in highways communication activity.
15. **Media briefings** continue to be held as and when appropriate, with officers and the Cabinet member willing and able to attend as required.
16. **Shropshire Highways Customer and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (CSEP)** – this document (see appendix B) is currently being reviewed by WSP.