



<u>Committee and Date</u>
<b>Performance Management Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>4 September 2019</b>

<u>Item</u>
<b><u>Public</u></b>

## **Update of the roadworks and street works in Shrewsbury task and finish group**

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### **1.0 Summary**

1.1 This report provides an update on action taken by Shropshire Council and partners to put into place the recommendations of the Roadworks and Street Works in Shrewsbury Task and Finish Group. This group scrutinised how the council carries out both routine roadworks, and street works and major highways projects in Shrewsbury.

### **2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 Members consider this report, and make any appropriate recommendations.

### **3.0 Opportunities and risks**

3.1 This Task and Finish group believes that its work has provided assurance that the Council manages roadworks, street works and highways projects effectively.

3.2 It has also explored the opportunities available to Shropshire Council to further develop its communications regarding roadworks and street works. The group's recommendations could result in more timely and better-targeted information to people in Shropshire.

3.3 A failure to properly scrutinise how we manage roadworks and street works may miss opportunities to provide a more effective service.

### **4.0 Financial assessment**

4.1 The recommendation contained in this report has no financial impact on Shropshire Council or its partners.

### **5.0 Report**

5.1 In 2018, following concerns raised by a local councillor, the Performance

Management Scrutiny Committee agreed to set up a task and finish group in order to carry out a review of how Shropshire Council manages roadworks and street works projects. In particular the group wished to scrutinise how Shropshire Council:

- has carried out recent major roads work and street works in Shrewsbury
- plans work to deliver SITP and other major road works to minimise disruption
- publicises planned road works to residents and businesses
- co-ordinates scheduled street works with utility companies and private developers and
- mitigates against and compensates for disruption to local businesses.

5.2 The group carried out its work in a single day task and finish group meeting. As well as carrying out an inspection of ongoing and recently completed SITP works in Shrewsbury, the group heard from the following officers from Shropshire Council:

- strategic transport and contracts manager
- highways, transport and environment commissioning manager
- traffic manager
- network policy and development officer
- communications officer

5.3 In its report to the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee, the group was largely satisfied with how Shropshire Council manages roadworks and streetworks. It concluded that the council's contract management arrangements for major projects were sound, and that it had been effective in minimising disruption caused by more minor roadworks through the successful implementation of a permit scheme. The group however felt that the council and its partners could be more proactive in informing residents of works and delays to work, as well as communicating the benefits of successful projects.

The final report is attached as appendix 1.

5.4 The group therefore made a series of recommendations in order 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.

- 5.5 These recommendations were accepted by the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee in July 2018.

## 6 Progress made in delivering the recommendations

It's important to note that for all **planned roadworks** an agreed **consultation and communication framework** is followed. Activity carried out will depend on the anticipated level of disruption (based on type of road; location; work duration; nearby local influences).

In addition, for all **major schemes** a separate communications plan is prepared and followed.

Depending on the roadworks, activity will include some or all of the following...

- Communications/consultation with key council officers and councillors
- Communication/consultation with local councillors
- Communication with key stakeholders: parish/town councils; emergency services; bus companies
- Communications/consultation with residents and businesses (letters/meetings)
- Shropshire Council website/Newsroom
- Roadworks.org website
- Social media: twitter; Facebook; Youtube; Instagram
- Press releases
- Media briefings / interviews
- Roadside signage (including advance warning signs)

In all communication activity, the following key messages/information will generally be included:

- Location of works
- Duration of works
- Diversion routes
- Businesses open as usual
- Contact details for further information

### **Recommendation 1: Better inform people about roadworks and street works in their area through opportunities provided by the Digital Transformation Programme**

#### **(1) New road network management web pages.**

Following the task and finish group meeting last year, the road network management web pages have been thoroughly reviewed and redesigned. They now provide comprehensive information about streetworks and roadworks, have been designed to make it simpler and quicker to find information, and are being

regularly updated. Information found on the webpages includes:

- Information about the streetworks team and service
- Information about large-scale project works = now searchable by area.
- An interactive roadworks map
- Improved information about the Shrewsbury Highways Improvement Programme
- Information about applying for a highway licence

The webpages can be seen at: <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/roads-and-highways/road-network-management/>

- (2) The roadworks.org interactive roadworks map is now embedded into Shropshire Council's website (see above).
- (3) Emails are sent out from Elgin/roadworks.org to inform key stakeholders about forthcoming roadworks in their area.
- (4) All Shropshire Councillors have been automatically signed up to receive weekly notifications from Elgin based on their specific areas.
- (5) Each major scheme has its own dedicated webpage, to which regular progress updates are added.

### **Use social media to tell residents and elected members about roadworks and street works, including major projects such as SITP**

- (1) The council's social media channels – twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Youtube – are used alongside other communications tools to advise, inform and engage with people about roadworks and streetworks. This includes posting links to any appropriate press releases that have been posted on Newsroom.
- (2) The new Shropshire Highways twitter account (@shropshireroads) will be increasingly used in future.

### **Make better use of barriers erected during SITP works to inform people of the project and the benefit it is likely to bring**

- (1) Revisions to pre and during construction delivery of public site information for the remaining elements of the SITP programme (due for delivery Feb 2020) are being incorporated in the upcoming PQQ process for the contractor procurement process. This will encourage a high quality and innovative site presentation approach by the contractor.

### **Communicate successes more effectively.**

- (1) The new webpage referenced above have fairly comprehensive information on all aspects of the team's work and the remit it works under – including a section named "Good news stories" which gives real life evidence of successes in reducing disruption for road users, businesses and communities.

- (2) The streetworks team are happy to host any councillors who wish to know more about what the team does at their Longden Road depot.
- (3) Press releases and social media are extensively used to communicate such things as: completion of major schemes, external funding awards, new initiatives, awards successes; reduced disruption to road users etc.
- (4) The staff newsletter and councillors’ bulletin are used to communicate good news stories.

**Other planned improvements include:**

- Customer Service Centre staff will be given access to information about current and forthcoming works, so that they can answer customer questions direct.
- Public information packs will be issued to residents and businesses, rather than letters.
- Feedback cards will be issued to residents for completion and return on completion of work.
- New reusable, lightweight roadside signs.
- Local councillor/s will be invited to the early contractor involvement’ (ECI) meeting, ahead of work start.
- Produce and publish a short video at the start of all major schemes.
- Online updates about all major schemes will include photos and/or videos whenever possible.

<p><b>Background Papers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)</b></p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Highways</p>
<p><b>Local Member</b></p> <p>All</p>
<p><b>Appendices</b></p> <p>Appendix 1 – The report of the task and finish group</p>



## **Place Overview Committee**

### **Report of the roadworks and street works in Shrewsbury task and finish group**

July 2018

## **Acknowledgments**

The group would like to thank the officers that they spoke to during the course of this review. In particular the group would like to thank the council's strategic transport and contracts manager for taking the time to show the group members the recently completed and ongoing Shrewsbury Integrated Transport Package work in Shrewsbury town centre.

## **Members of the Task and Finish Group**

- Cllr Gwilym Butler (chair)
- Cllr Nat Green
- Cllr Paul Milner
- Cllr Alan Mosley
- Cllr Harry Taylor

## **Introduction**

Shropshire Council, Highways England, private developers and utility companies all carry out road works and street works on highways in Shropshire.

- Roadworks are any work carried out building or repairing roads, including footpaths and lighting
- Street works are works carried out to build or repair utilities that run alongside or underneath the road.

Although such works are commonplace across Shropshire, since 2017 a higher than normal number of scheduled and permitted road works and street works have happened in Shrewsbury. These have included:

- Shrewsbury Integrated Transport Package (SITP) of roundabout and junction improvements and improvements to footpaths, cycle paths and crossings around Shrewsbury, including the town centre
- additional town centre improvements, including junction improvements and footpath enhancements
- gas mains replacement at Pride Hill, Shrewsbury town centre
- private developments on Ellesmere Road, leading to resurfacing, gas main installation and BT cabling and
- general highways maintenance works, such as surface dressing.

Planned work to deliver SITP will continue across Shrewsbury until 2020. This work will take place at the same time as potential development arising from the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan and the annual programme of planned improvements and surface dressing.

Shropshire Council's Performance Management Scrutiny Committee has therefore agreed to set up a task and finish group to look at learning opportunities from the work completed so far around Shrewsbury, to inform the implementation and management of the next phase of the road works and street works.

## **Scope and focus of the work**

The group scrutinised how Shropshire Council:

- has carried out recent major roads work and street works in Shrewsbury
- plans work to deliver SITP and other major road works to minimise disruption
- publicises planned road works to residents and businesses
- co-ordinates scheduled street works with utility companies and private developers and
- mitigates against and compensates for disruption to local businesses.



## What has the task and finish group done?

The group carried out its work in a single day task and finish group meeting. As well as carrying out an inspection of ongoing and recently completed SITP works in Shrewsbury, the group heard from the following officers from Shropshire Council:

- strategic transport and contracts manager
- highways, transport and environment commissioning manager
- traffic manager
- network policy and development officer
- communications officer

## Findings

### *Shrewsbury Integrated Transport Package (SITP)*

SITP is a package of transport measures designed to improve the transport system in Shrewsbury, to help stimulate a new period of sustainable economic growth within the town and the surrounding area. The group heard that the agreed package includes:

- Key junction improvements at Reabrook roundabout, Meole Brace roundabout, English Bridge gyratory and Coleham Head roundabout. These upgraded the current highway infrastructure, including traffic signals to improve vehicle capacity and pedestrian and cycle facilities, with the aim of reducing congestion.
- Implementing further phases of the traffic signal network to optimise operation and manage traffic flows on main arterial routes. This includes new variable message signage which would direct town centre through-traffic onto the inner relief road or, alternatively, towards car parks and park and ride facilities.
- Enhancements to pedestrian and cycle links, to increase accessibility to the town centre and improve awareness of these links in Shrewsbury.
- Improved pedestrian wayfinding within and around the river loop to generate a highly accessible and connected town centre for pedestrians.
- Enhancements to the public realm, such as Pride Hill, Shrewsbury Square and Mardol to improve the public realm and highlight pedestrian facilities. This closely links to the traffic management measures.

Table 1 below shows the timetable of works. The group heard that there is an overall strategy to SITP, hence the order in which work has happened. The group heard that 60% of traffic through the town centre did not actually stop in town, so added to congestion and air pollution in the town centre without contributing to its economy. The first stage of work therefore sought to improve traffic flows around the edge of Shrewsbury and into the town centre. Rebuilding the roundabouts at Meole Brace, Reabrook, Coleham Head and English Bridge gyratory. This should encourage motorists to drive around the edge of town, rather than through the town centre. Once this was completed, SITP projects aim to make it safer and easier to walk and cycle into and around the town centre.

Location	Timescale
Meole Brace Roundabout	2016/2017
Reabrook Roundabout	2017
Coleham Head	2017/2018
English Bridge Gyratory	2017/2018
Traffic signal network	2016/2018
Pride Hill enhancements	2018
Pedestrian wayfinding	2016-19
Town centre packages	2018-19
Sustainable corridors: Pedestrian and cycle route enhancements	2019-20
Variable message signs	2020

Table 1: Timetable of SITP works

#### *SITP funding and contract management*

The group heard that the funding for SITP totals approximately £12.2 million. £6 million of this funding originates from the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Regional Growth Fund, which Shropshire Council won in 2016 following a round of competitive bidding. In addition the council has funded SITP with £4 million of developer contributions, made through the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 payments, and £2.2 million from its own funds.

**The group believes that Shropshire Council could do more to promote the funding it was awarded to complete SITP works. This might address the belief that some people held that Shropshire Council had funded SITP entirely.**

The group asked how the various components of the package had been chosen. The officers explained that Government appraised regional growth fund candidates by cost-benefit analysis, using established HM Treasury guidelines to determine the benefit likely to be generated by investment. Because of this, the council chose projects that were likely to maximise the overall project's benefit to cost ratio, in order to succeed in winning the funding. A member of the group noted that although this maximised the chances to secure LEP funding, SITP did not necessarily represent Shrewsbury's priorities to improve its highways.

**The group approve of this approach. Although it means that regional growth funding has not necessarily addressed all of the council's priorities in Shrewsbury, it has resulted in £6 million of funding for highways improvements that may not have otherwise happened.**

The group wanted to know more about the nature of the contract between the council and the companies that are carrying out SITP project work. In particular they sought to understand the reasons behind any delays to work, and how those delays were reconciled and compensated for.

Shropshire Council is not directly carrying out the SITP works. Instead it is directing the work through a series of contractors and subcontractors as follows:

- **Shropshire Council - project client** is the accountable body for SITP, ultimately responsible for project and financial risk. It manages the procurement of external contractors.
- **WSP – project manager** are Shropshire Council's contract engineers, commissioned for a six-year period to design scheme elements and manage contractor activity through construction phases under New Engineering Contract (NEC)<sup>1</sup> principles.
- **External contractors** are procured as required for each element of the SITP. The range of disciplines and specialisms required for each element, ranging from major civil works such as Meole Brace roundabout, to public realm enhancements such as the Pride Hill resurfacing, means that each element is procured separately as a stand-alone contract.

The procurement for SITP is determined by cost, timescale and quality:

- **Cost** – The Growth Deal funding prescribes a fixed budget for SITP. As any costs over this are the council's responsibility, any contracts and costs are carefully managed in order to meet budget requirements. Given the sequential nature of the SITP works packages, the council can manage the budget by adjusting the scope, engineering and design of later SITP phases.
- **Timescale** – The SITP has a fixed five-year delivery plan and the growth deal permits no overrun of the SITP is permitted. Failure to meet agreed spend profiles could result in clawback of the grant.
- **Quality** – The quality assessment of contractors and their previous track records of high quality delivery is a key factor in contract award. The council also takes into

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<sup>1</sup> The New Engineering Contract (NEC), or NEC Engineering and Construction Contract, is a formalised system created by the Institution of Civil Engineers that guides the drafting of documents on civil engineering and construction projects for the purpose of obtaining tenders, awarding and administering contracts. They legally define the responsibilities and duties of employers (who commission work) and contractors (who carry out work).

account the impact on the town during the various construction phases. It scrutinises the approach and track record of a contractor in working effectively with local highways network managers, and whether the contractor recognises the sensitivities around prolonged road closures.

The group heard that when tendering for the roundabout re-engineering works, the council included the expected timescale for the work in the contract. Those tendering for the work then included an expected timescale and cost within their tender. The council then chose a preferred contractor based on the submitted tenders, entering into a more detailed negotiation with them to agree a contract based on price and timescale.

Within any NEC contract is the capacity to renegotiate in the event of the contractor encountering something unexpected when construction begins, such as particularly hard or boggy ground. When this happens, the contractor is expected to inform the client, in this case Shropshire Council, immediately. This then allows the council and its contractor to agree a revised timescale and cost. Within every contract such as this, including SITP works, the council builds in contingency funding to cover unexpected problems.

**The council's contracting process, using NEC guidelines, provides a fair and effective way of working with contractors and managing unforeseen problems, minimising inevitable delays and providing value for money.**

**While the group recognises that the council has a duty to make the most effective use of funds, it believes that any disruption to businesses should be considered carefully against lengthening the duration of works to reduce costs.**

#### *SITP roundabout works*

The group wanted to know what delays had occurred during the remodelling of Meole Brace, Rea Brook and Coleham Head roundabouts and English Gyratory. It heard that due to unexpected ground conditions, works at Meole Brace roundabout were completed on 26 June 2017, just over five weeks later than a planned completion date of 19 May 2017. This caused a delay to works at Rea Brook of four weeks, with works completed on 31 July 2017. The council and its contractors were able to make up some time on the work by carrying out the Coleham Head roundabout and English Bridge gyratory works simultaneously. Overall these works overran by two months. Because the delays were due to unexpected ground conditions, the revised timescale was negotiated with the contractors and not subject to any penalty clauses.

**The group accepts that the delays in completing the works at Meole Brace, Rea Brook and Coleham Head roundabouts and English Gyratory were due to unforeseen problems with ground conditions.**

#### *SITP town centre improvements*

The group wanted to know more about the works that had already taken place in the town centre, and those that are currently underway.

During their visit of principal SITP projects, the group met with contractors carrying out the improvement works at Pride Hill. These works include resurfacing the pedestrianised area with stone paving, replacing existing street furniture with new furniture to a higher specification, and erecting new wayfinders. The group met with the contractor's project manager, who explained that part of her role was to act as a first point of contact for businesses and residents affected by the works. She told the group that while the work was unavoidably highly disruptive, the businesses on Pride Hill were supportive of the project. The contractor had noted considerable interest from the public about the works, so they had decided to not screen the works to allow everyone to see what was happening. As part of the work, the contractor was also mapping the current piping and cabling under the paving, in order to make future utility works more straightforward.

**The group are happy with the work taking place along Pride Hill. However it also believes that the council have missed an opportunity to use the works fencing to promote the works. The group saw no graphics of the proposed works, nor any publicity explaining the benefits that the work would bring.**

**The group were impressed with how the project manager personally dealt with the on-the-ground issues such as access to stores.**

Part of the SITP town centre improvements have involved resurfacing work along Wyle Cop. These works have had two objectives. The first is to provide road resurfacing to complement the earlier works at English Bridge gyratory. However, and perhaps more significantly, has been the objective of opening up the town centre beyond English Bridge. The works have:

- replaced old and often broken concrete paving between Wyle Cop and Abbey Foregate with yorkstone paving
- widened the pavement alongside the restaurants by Shrewsbury Abbey at Abbey Foregate and
- smoothed out pavement kerbs at the entrance to car park at the bottom of Wyle Cop and the residential development at Riverside Meadow.

The work at the bottom of Wyle Cop began in January 2018 and lasted approximately nine weeks. The resurfacing was carried out overnight for five nights in late February 2018.

During this work, Wyle Cop was closed to downhill traffic, resulting in a considerable diversion around the town centre. The group wanted to know why the diversion was in place for so long, and questioned why the closure necessitated such a lengthy diversion.

The group heard that any road closure has to balance time and cost in carrying out work. In seeking to maximise value for money, the work on Wyle Cop was carried out during normal working hours. This meant that the work took longer than if the schedule had

included working early, late, overnight or at weekends. The work was also delayed for a couple of weeks due to adverse weather. Although this delayed work, in this case the contractor absorbed the additional cost as part of their project risk.

Officers also told the group that although more direct diversions around Wyle Cop were possible, these would not have been appropriate for the vehicle movements involved in the works. In particular a proposal to route traffic along Castle Walk would have resulted in an unacceptably tight turning circle for some vehicles. Officers had also considered the option of traffic light controlled access through the roadwork, but had dismissed this as it would result in considerable additional congestion through the town centre.

**The group recognises the difficult choice that the council made in balancing speed and cost in carrying out the work on Wyle Cop, and the need for a significant diversion to avoid congestion and minimise the risk of accidents in the town centre. It accepts the decisions that the council made.**

#### *Co-ordinating roadworks and street works in Shropshire*

The group heard about how Shropshire Council manages roadworks and street works in Shropshire.

The New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 gave highway authorities such as Shropshire Council duties to coordinate roadworks and street works and hold utilities financially responsible for failings in their operations and poor reinstatements. These powers were strengthened by the Traffic Management Act 2004. Section 16 of the act places a duty on Shropshire Council, as the highways authority, to ensure the road network in its area operates efficiently. To assist in this duty, the Traffic Management Permit Scheme (England) Regulations 2007 allows the authority to set up a permit scheme for anyone seeking to carry out roadworks and street works on the local authority road network. Accordingly, Shropshire Council set up the West and Shires Permit Scheme in 2014. The principal objective of this scheme is to “to increase the efficient running of the highway network by minimising the disruption and inconvenience caused by road works and other highway events and activities through proactive management of activities on the highway.”

The permit scheme allows the council considerable discretion in managing roadworks and street works. It can:

- determine the time and method of works
- refuse permits for works that do not meet the required standard for minimising impact
- encourage collaborative working where possible and
- stipulate any conditions of working, including pre-consultation and communication.

The scheme is funded by charging a permit fee to those seeking to carry out works. Since the scheme began, five other local authorities had joined the permit scheme. Local

authorities working to a common permit framework offer standards and rules, which are of particular benefit to larger companies working across many local authority areas.

Overall, in the year to March 2018, the scheme had resulted in 4,519 fewer days of highway occupation throughout Shropshire, compared to the previous year. The group heard of some notable successes in using the permit scheme to co-ordinate work.

- Three statutory undertakers and the highway authority coordinated their works on a major programme of works on Shoplatch in Shrewsbury town centre. This resulted in a reduction in highway occupation from 116 days to 84 days. In addition, 23 days of initially planned road closures were reduced to eight days.
- Shropshire Homes closed Pulley Lane in Bayston Hill for 18 days to undertake new development works. At the same time the council's network officer co-ordinated works that Severn Trent Water, Fulcrum Gas and British Telecom needed to carry out. This saved 10 days of highway occupation under road closure.
- On Abbey Foregate in Shrewsbury the network officer worked with Severn Trent Water and Western Power Distribution to co-ordinate their street works with a disruptive material delivery to a housing development under the same traffic management order. This reduced the highway occupation from 20 days to 12 days.
- In Ludlow town centre, three utility companies worked together under the same closure to install their connections to a new development. They saved five days of road closure, significantly reducing disruption to a major town centre road.
- At the new Lidl store works in Oswestry, Scottish Power worked with the developer to alter and divert the main and supply service to the new store. This saved seven days of highway occupation on a main traffic route into the town.

In the Shrewsbury area in 2017-18 there were approximately 61 collaborative activities. These collaborative works saved 208 days of highway occupation in Shrewsbury. Using data from the original economic appraisal that was undertaken during the development of the permit scheme it is possible to quantify very roughly what all these savings in highway occupation mean. This economic modelling suggests that a reduction in works durations of 4500+ days will have saved the local economy approximately £1.2 million.

**The group was pleased to see Shropshire Council's using the powers available to it in introducing the permit scheme. It is also pleased that the scheme has been so successful in reducing the impact of works, in turn bringing considerable benefit to Shropshire people and businesses.**

The group heard that the council had recognised early the need to plan the roadworks and street works required to support SITP. It set up the Shrewsbury Highways Improvement Programme group comprising the council, contractors and utilities, which meets regularly to organise their planned work to coordinate with SITP projects. The most immediate example of this were the patches of temporary pavement surface on Pride Hill, which were

the result of Cadent Gas undertaking gas mains replacement works under their regulatory requirement to replace high risk mains nationally. This was coordinated to take place before the resurfacing works began.

The group wanted to know how the council managed delays with permitted roadworks and street works. It heard that Shropshire Council manages delays on contracted work on an ad-hoc basis, as there are often occasions where contractors encounter unexpected engineering difficulties once they have started working. This can also happen with statutory undertaker's works, but in these cases, the council can impose fines for works that it considers to have occupied the highway unnecessarily. In the year to April 2018, 395 section 74 charges were levied county wide to 13 different statutory undertakers, at a total value of £953,250. Legislation requires the council to use this income to "develop and implement safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services".

### *Communicating roadworks and street works*

The group wanted to scrutinise how Shropshire Council tell people about roadworks and street works, in particular the various SITP schemes.

Shropshire Council plans its communications using a common framework for all schemes. It grades schemes according to their size and duration, and then carries out a predetermined communications plan for a scheme of that grade. This ensures a proportionate yet comprehensive response to any planned work. For example, for planned work such as carrying out the annual surface dressing schedule, the council would meet with town and parish councils, write to all residents and erect some sign on local roads. Please see appendix 2 for the council's communications framework for roadworks and street works.

The group heard how the council had recently appointed Kier as contractor to deliver a wide range of highways maintenance and environmental maintenance services in Shropshire. As part of this contract, Kier had taken over many aspects of communicating roadworks and street works, branding its partnership with the council as 'Shropshire Highways', which is now used on vehicles, helmets, clothing and signs. Kier also managed a branded Twitter account, @shropshireroads. This not only informed people of forthcoming works, but also responded to people's questions about works. At present this is being used simultaneously with Shropshire Council's own Twitter account.

The council developed a specific communication plan for SITP. As well as an overarching plan for the entire project, there were specific plans for the component schemes. For example, to support the work the develop Meole Brace roundabout, the communications team:

- consulted with local residents, businesses and councillors
- set out advance warning signs on the roundabout and surrounding roads



- organised media briefings, press releases and radio interviews at the start of the work
- updated the SITP pages on the council's website and
- posted updates on social media.

The group discussed how the council told people about future works and the disruption they would cause. The council posted comprehensive information on its own website, including integrating roadworks.org, an online map of all roadworks and street works in the United Kingdom, into its roadworks information page.

**The group recognises the effort that Shropshire Council makes to provide timely and useful information on its website. It also notes the comprehensive information available at roadworks.org. However it is concerned that members of the public may not use these sites to find information about works that were taking place near them. None of the group had heard of roadworks.org, for example.**

The group wanted to know more about how the communications team used social media to talk to people about schemes, and how they responded to online complaints. The team posts stories about schemes such as the Meole Brace roundabout development, using the council's Facebook page and its Twitter newsfeed. The council staffs these pages with at least one named officer every day, helping people log requests for services like fixing potholes or cutting back foliage. They respond very quickly to people; typically within an hour. In replying publicly to people they are also seen to be responding quickly to concerns.

The group believe that there is more opportunity to use social media to provide more frequent updates to large scale roadworks. The visit to Pride Hill showed the group that many people were interested to know what was happening, and regular updates provide an opportunity to explain to people how a scheme was progressing. This could also help allay frustration when there appeared to be no explanation for a delay in completing a scheme. A recent series of tweets featuring photos of people from Shropshire spending time with the pothole repair crews was a good example of promoting the work that Shropshire Highways carry out.

**The group applauds the council's responsiveness to issues raised on the Shropshire Council Facebook page. It would like to see the council use the same proactive approach to seeking and replying to issues arising from major schemes such as SITP. It would also like to see the council explore ways to allow more front line staff to contribute to its news feeds.**

Shropshire Council is currently undertaking a significant transformation of its information technology. Part of this work will involve moving significant amounts of everyday interaction with the council online. The new technology will not only make it easier for people to report problems to us, it will transform how we communicate with them too. The

group was keen to understand how communications would transform to take advantage of these changes. It heard that by moving reporting online, it would be possible to provide updates to people who had reported them as they happen. It would also be possible to alert people by text or email to roadworks in their area, as well as other significant problems such as deep potholes or even congestion. This could allow the council to tailor highly relevant messages to very specific groups of people.

The council already carries out some proactive email communications, for example informing councillors of roadworks in their area. However the group felt that these communications were sent to too narrow a range of councillors.

**The group is excited to hear of some of the benefits that transformation can offer to keep people updated about roadworks and street works in Shropshire. The ability to send highly localised alerts to people near planned or unplanned work strikes the group as a particularly useful benefit. The group believes this to be a crucial part of the council's transformation agenda, and would like to see a future report from communications with more detailed proposals for this. These proposals should communication to both people in Shropshire, as well as town, parish and unitary council members.**

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Overall the group was happy with how the council has managed SITP. Although there have been some delays, these are typical for a project of this scale. The group is satisfied that the council has taken reasonable steps to minimise delay and disruption, and notes that SITP remains on schedule and within its budget.

The group recognises that in carrying out SITP, it had to balance speed of work and meeting the project's budget. Although this has meant disruption to road users, SITP will deliver smoother traffic in the longer-term.

Although SITP has proceeded successfully, it has met with some public disapproval. In particular, the delays in works at Meole Brace and Wyle Cop have generated some negative publicity. The group accepts that some delay is inevitable, and that not everyone will be willing to tolerate the disruption caused by roadworks and street works. However it believes that the council could mitigate some of this discontent with better targeted communication. Rather than reply on its own website, it should do more to engage with people using social media and its own communications technology. It looks forward to receiving proposals from the council to build on the successes of its existing communications.

The group therefore recommends 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.

## Appendix 2 Shropshire Council communications framework for roadworks and street works

Level of Disruption (see footnote)	Consultation/Communication				Communication			
	Members	Senior Management level (Leader of Council, Chief Executive, Portfolio Holder, Senior Managers)	Parish/Town Council and relevant business groups (BID/Chamber of Commerce)	Integrated Transport Unit & Emergency Services	Public	Site Communication	Customer Service Centre	Social Media / Website
<p><b>*Low to Moderate</b> (eg up to 1 week closure on minor road / 3 or 4 way temp signals as identified)</p>	Notification email sent via Elgin/works promoter when TTRO or temp signals approved as appropriate	Notification email sent via Elgin/works promoter when TTRO or temp signals approved as appropriate	Notification email sent via Elgin/works promoter when TTRO or temp signals approved as appropriate	Notification email sent via Elgin/works promoter when TTRO or temp signals approved as appropriate	Letter to affected residents/businesses with contact details (standard template) at least 2 weeks prior to start of works or as appropriate	Advance warning signs on site with contact details (standard template) at least 2 weeks prior to start of works	Notification email sent via Elgin/works promoter when TTRO or temp signals approved as appropriate	N/A
<p><b>*Major</b> (eg 1-2 week closure on A/B Road / 3 or 4 way temp signals as identified)</p>	As above plus consultation email minimum of 10 weeks prior to start date of job, giving a 2 week window to reply with comments	As above	As above plus attendance at Town/Parish Council meeting on request	As above plus consultation email as soon as scoping info received from contractor / three months before start date.	As above plus face to face discussion with key stakeholders (businesses /schools etc) on request	As above plus VMS signs on request	As above plus use of dedicated page on Shropshire website and use of roadworks.org. Contact details provided by works promoter to assist with customer enquiries	As above plus dedicated page on Shropshire website with weekly updates and including link to roadworks.org & simplified plan of works & diversion route. Regular updates on Twitter and Facebook.
<p><b>*Severe</b> (eg longer than 2 week closure on A/B Road)</p>	Consultation email minimum of 10 weeks prior to start date of job, giving a 2 week window to reply with comments, plus face to face meeting on request. Regular email updates	Initial email consultation to Senior Management prior to agreement and before consultation with other parties. Regular email updates.	Consultation email minimum of 10 weeks prior to start of job, giving a 2 week window to reply with comments, plus face to face meeting on request	Consultation email minimum of 10 weeks prior to start of job, giving a 2 week window to reply with comments, plus face to face meeting on request	As above plus public meetings, drop in sessions and appointment of dedicated Liaison Officer. Press release/advert with simplified plan.	As above plus on site drop in office and dedicated site officer	As above plus scripts and FAQs if requested. Dedicated web address. Key contact and regular updates on progress. Contact details provided by works promoter to assist with customer enquiries	As above plus videos/photos of works in progress included in weekly dedicated webpage updates. Regular updates on Twitter and Facebook.



### Appendix 3 SITP communications activity

Project or scheme	Communications activity
SITP (general)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated webpage created</li> <li>• Public consultation</li> <li>• Media briefing and press releases</li> </ul>
<b>Meole Brace roundabout</b> 10 February to 30 May 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with local residents, businesses and councillors</li> <li>• Advance warning signs</li> <li>• Media briefing, press release and radio interviews at start of work</li> <li>• Responding to media enquiries during work</li> <li>• Information added to SITP webpages</li> <li>• Publication of aerial before and after photos</li> <li>• Social media updates during work</li> </ul>
<b>Sutton Park roundabout</b> 10 April to 7 May 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with local residents, businesses and councillors</li> <li>• Advance warning signs</li> <li>• Press release at start of work</li> <li>• Responding to media enquiries during work</li> <li>• Information added to SITP webpages</li> <li>• Social media updates during work</li> </ul>
<b>Reabrook roundabout</b> 8 May to 28 July 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with local residents, businesses and councillors</li> <li>• Advance warning signs</li> <li>• Press release at start of work</li> <li>• Information added to SITP webpages</li> <li>• Regular progress updates added to webpage</li> <li>• Social media updates during work</li> <li>• Leaflet distributed to local residents/business via Abbey Foregate post office (see below)</li> </ul>
<b>Gyratory / Coleham Head</b> 31 July to end October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with local residents, businesses and councillors</li> <li>• Advance warning signs</li> <li>• Press release at start of work</li> <li>• On-site media briefing at start and at end of work</li> <li>• Short video produced to explain the work (viewed more than 3100 times)</li> <li>• Information added to SITP webpages</li> <li>• Regular progress updates added to webpage and to Newsroom</li> <li>• Social media updates during work</li> </ul>

<b>Wyle Cop / English Bridge</b> 8 January to end March 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consultation with local residents, businesses and councillors</li><li>• Advance warning signs</li><li>• Press release at start of work</li><li>• Information added to SITP webpages</li><li>• Regular progress updates added to webpage</li><li>• Social media updates during work</li></ul>
<b>Pride Hill</b> 30 April to November 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consultation with local residents, businesses and councillors</li><li>• Advance warning signs</li><li>• On-site media briefing at start of work</li><li>• Information added to SITP webpages</li><li>• Regular progress updates added to webpage</li></ul>