

Highways Asset Management
Communication Strategy

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Contents

1. Introduction & Background.....	2
2. Aims & Objectives	2
3. Customers & Stakeholder	3
3.1. Stakeholders Engagement.....	4
Table 1. Internal Stakeholders	4
Table 2. External Stakeholders.....	5
Table 3. Suppliers & Partners	6
4. Public Participation Framework.....	6
5. Communication Methods	7
6. Time Constraints	8
7. Budget.....	8
8. Key Contacts.....	9

1. Introduction & Background

Thurrock Council is committed to ensuring effective communication takes place throughout its service areas. Effective communication safeguards and improves the reputation of the service and ensures that Councillors and Officers present themselves well to customers and key stakeholders.

By engaging in communication with our customers and stakeholders, we will ensure that the thoughts, ideas, and concerns they generate are given due diligence when planning how our service operates and will influence the decisions that we take.

By adopting a communication strategy, the Transportation and Highway service area will be able to demonstrate and report to its customers and stakeholders how it:

- sets the Levels of Service;
- reports on performance and value for money; and
- allows interaction on key decisions that affect transport and infrastructure within the borough.

The purpose of this Highway Asset Management Communications Strategy is to set out how the Transportation and Highways Service will communicate and with whom.

In setting out this Strategy, particular emphasis has been placed on the requirements of the HMEP Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Guidance document, specifically Paragraph 3 on National and Local Transport Policy – 3.3 Stakeholder Expectations, and 3.4 Communications; and Paragraph 7 Setting and Measuring Performance.

In addition, Recommendation 2 “Relevant information associated with asset management should be communicated through engagement with relevant stakeholders in setting Levels of Service, making decisions and reporting performance”.

Changing and improving the way in which we engage and communicate will contribute towards the modernisation of the Transportation and Highways Service, of which effective communication and stakeholder engagement is key.

2. Aims & Objectives

To promote and undertake consultation with customers and key stakeholders on the following:

- Policies and actions that may affect stakeholders / public expectations
- Major funding decisions
- Milestones in key projects
- Major and Minor road safety, and environmental improvement schemes
- Public Transport / and network improvements and changes
- Incidents or street works that may affect the reliability of journeys.

- Any anticipated sustained disruption to the road network or the service.
- Roadworks and highway maintenance programmes.
- Satisfaction surveys such as the Councils Voice-Over Panel and National NHT Survey – use the opportunity to gauge public opinion that demonstrates the overall satisfaction with the service area, with the overall aim of improving services. To establish local views from the surveys undertaken.
- Use a variety of different ways to communicate with local communities, local businesses, and other key stakeholders e.g. social media, leaflets, advertisements, focus groups, Web Site surveys, and general media such as newspapers and television programmes to ensure a wide and broad-base coverage, and effective engagement.
- To ensure that customers and stakeholders are engaged at various stages in our processes to aid their understanding of the service area.
- To minimise the impact of localism, where customers and stakeholders maintenance priorities and preferences can differ from the best asset management approach.
- To ensure that the asset management approach is understood and communicated, explaining the balance between reactive repairs, preventative maintenance and structural repairs.
- To understand the needs and expectations of customers and key stakeholders.
- To understand the levels of satisfaction with the services provided and individual projects carried out.
- To provide clarity and transparency in how decisions are made.
- To provide good quality information on what can be expected from the service area.
- To ensure that customers can report service requests and complaints and that these are communicated effectively to a resolution that best serves the community and is within what the service area is capable of providing.
- We aim to promote the services that Transport and Infrastructure provide and also to consult with customers and stakeholders to help measure and monitor customer satisfaction.

3. Customers & Stakeholder

Thurrock Council recognises that our stakeholders span across a diverse representative group that invariably have different needs and priorities.

Engagement / consultation will be undertaken with selected stakeholders as appropriate and according to the nature and topic of the matter in hand. For example, policies, programmes and key decisions relating to the way in which the Service operates will go to a wider stakeholder audience whereas consultations relating to schemes within an agreed programme, for instance, will be kept to those stakeholders directly affected by that particular scheme. The key stakeholders and their engagement is outline in section 3.1, below.

3.1. Stakeholders Engagement

This communication strategy contains a description of the means and frequency of communication to parties both internal and external to the Service. It facilitates engagement with stakeholders through the establishment of a controlled and bi-directional flow of information.

The key stakeholders were identified and grouped in the tables below:

Table 1. Internal Stakeholders

Interested Parties / Thurrock	Who/what they influence or Responsibility	Means/ format of communication	Frequency	Information provider
Council / Cabinet Members	Ultimate decision making at the Council	Council / Cabinet meeting - Reports	Forward Plan	Head of Service
Leader	TGSE Minister & decision making	Meetings / Emails	When required	Director / Head of Service
Portfolio Holder	Responsible for portfolio – decision making	Meetings / Emails	When required	Director / Head of Service / Service Area Managers
Lyn Carpenter	Chief Exec – decision making	Meetings / Emails	When required	Director / Head of Service
Steve Cox	Director – decision making	Meetings / Emails	When required	Head of Service / Service Area Managers
Ann Osola	Head of Service – decision making	Meetings / Emails	When required	As required
Sean Clark (s151 Officer)	Financial decision making	Meetings / Emails	When required	Head of Service / Service Area Managers
Finance	Finance advice	Meetings / Emails	When required	As required
Legal	Legal advice	Meetings / Emails	When required	As required
Procurement	Procurement advice	Meetings / Emails	When required	As required
Diversity & Equality	D&E advice	Meetings / Emails	When required	As required
Planning & Growth team	Planning permissions	Meetings / Emails	When required	As required
HR	HR advice	Meetings / Emails	When required	As required
Management	Connection between corporate/service	Meetings/ Emails/ PDRs	When required	Director / Head of Service

	strategies and service delivery			
Staff members	Delivery of Service	Staff meetings/ Emails/ Training sessions/ PDR	When required	Director / Head of Service / Service Area Managers/ Line Managers

Table 2. External Stakeholders

Interested Parties / External	Who/what they influence or Responsibility	Means/ format of communication	Frequency	Information provider
TGSE Minister	Civil Servants Ministers / Decision makers	Meetings / Emails	TGSE schedule	Director / Head of Service
TGSE Partners	TGSE's priorities	Meetings / Emails	TGSE schedule	Director / Head of Service
SELEP Chair	LEP's priorities	Meetings / Emails	SELEP schedule	Director / Head of Service
SELEP Director	LEP's priorities	Meetings / Emails	SELEP schedule	Director / Head of Service
ITE	LEP's decision making	Meetings / Emails - Business Case	Gateway schedule	Director / Head of Service / Service Area Manager
DfT / ORR / H.England	Regulators / Decision makers	Meetings / Emails	When required	Director / Head of Service
Environment Agency	Regulators / Decision makers	Meetings / Emails	When required	Director / Head of Service
DPW	Prime Minister/ Decision makers	Meetings / Emails	Scheduled meetings	Director / Head of Service / Finance Officer
Great London Authority (Mayor)	Prime Minister/ Decision makers	Meeting	Scheduled meetings	Director / Head of Service
Thames Oil Park	Prime Minister/ Decision makers	Meetings / Emails	Scheduled meetings	Director / Head of Service / Finance Officer
British Airways	Prime Minister/ Decision makers	Meetings / Emails	Scheduled meetings	Director / Head of Service
Charles Maybe – Director of Port	Prime Minister/ Decision makers	Meetings / Emails	Scheduled meetings	Director / Head of Service / Finance Officer
Business Community	Decision makers	Meetings / Fora	Fora schedule	Director / Head of Service
Residents of Thurrock	Decision makers	Meetings/ Public Consultations /	When required	As required

		Focus Groups		
Community Forums	Decision makers	Meetings / Fora	Fora schedule	Director / Head of Service

Table 3. Suppliers & Partners

Interested Parties / Suppliers	Who/what they influence or Responsibility	Means/ format of communication	Frequency	Information provider
Symology	Asset Management system & valuation / WGA	Account meetings	Quarterly	Highways Infrastructure Manager
		Email/ phone calls	Weekly	As required
		Implementation meetings	When required	As required
Horizons	Decision making software	Emails / Meetings	When required	As required
Consultant	Professional / project / technical expertise	Emails / Meetings	When required	As required
Contractors	Ad-hoc/ planned / construction work	Emails / Meetings	When required	As required
Utility companies	Stats	Emails / Meetings	When required	As required
Emergency Services	Emergencies	Emails / Meetings	When required	Staff Members / Management
EHA (Eastern Highways Alliance)	Inter-authority collaboration	Emails / Meetings	Scheduled meetings	Head of Service / Management
Neighbouring Authorities	Inter-authority collaboration	Emails / Meetings	Scheduled meetings	Head of Service / Management
Network Rail / C2C	GRIP process	Meetings / Emails	Scheduled meetings	Director / Head of Service

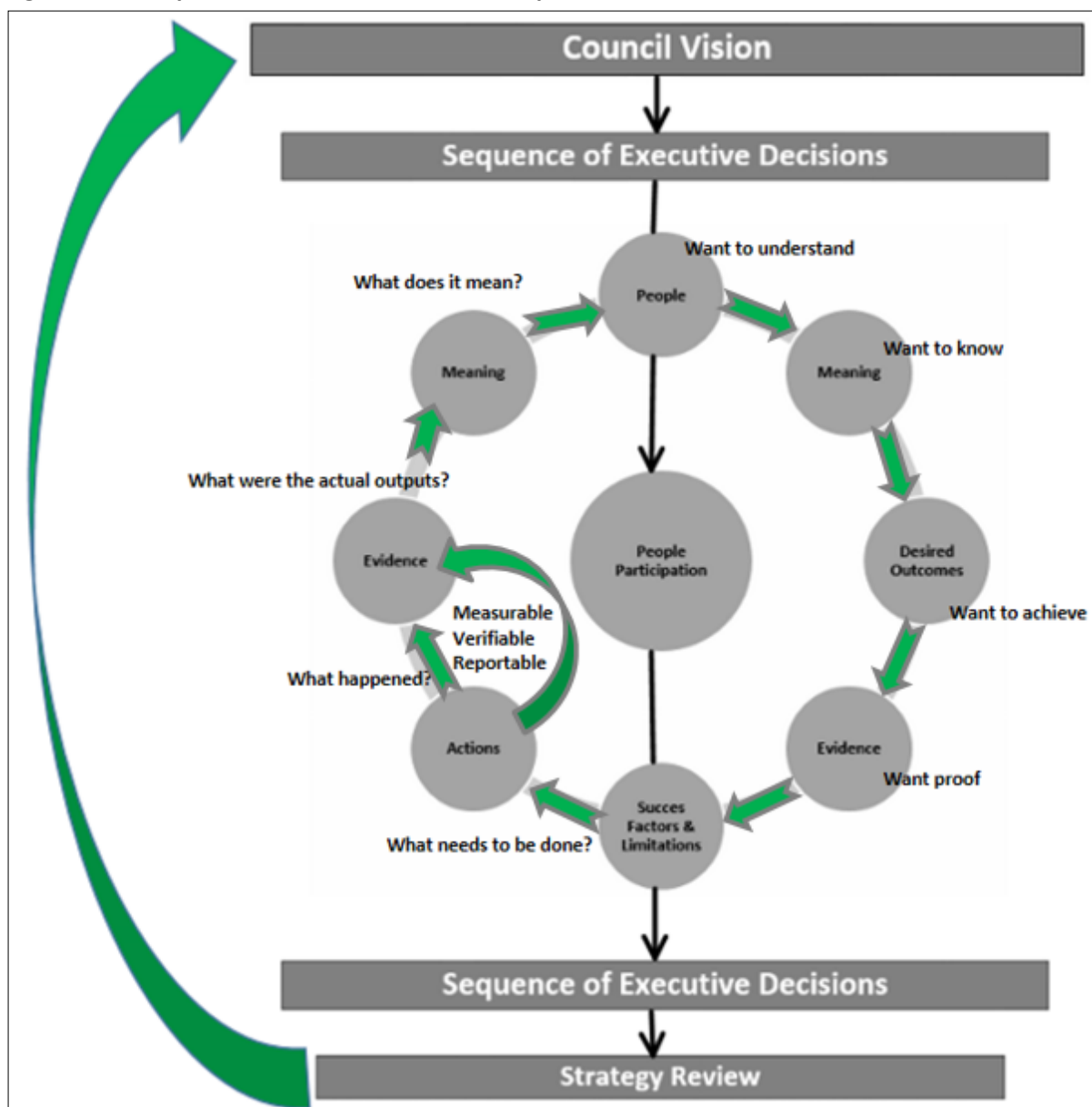
4. Public Participation Framework

The public consultation is a very important ingredient of Transportation and Highways service delivery which ensures the customer satisfaction and their participation in the decision making process.

Figure 1 below illustrates the holistic iterative policy / decision making process. The Council's vision initiates the course and runs through the sequence of the executive decisions which, in first instance, endorse a public engagement. The local residents' participation is a nested iterative decision making process which ensures the capturing of the public feedback in form of lessons learnt and their implementation in the continuous improvement process. In addition, the procedure aims at the development

of an evidence based and also a meaning based policies.

Figure 1. Participation Framework – continuous process



It is important to add that the consultation / participation excludes decisions which are already part of legislation, the Transportation and Highways is committed to fulfilling their statutory duties and adhering to the engineering design standards, which are also based on laws of physics/ nature, to ensure safety and security of the local people.

5. Communication Methods

All communications issued by the Council will conform to the Governments Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (made under the Local Government Act 2000). This code covers the content and style of publicity, dissemination,

advertising, and promotion.

Methods of communication will include: press notices; newspaper advertising; local and national surveys; community forums; business forums and focus groups; social media; newsletters, leaflets, brochures; direct written letters and telephone calls.

Below are our key principles:

- The Councils communications team will be the main / first point of contact between the media and the Council
- We will be proactive and encourage promotion of our services through media, and other facilities (where appropriate)
- Employees will be encouraged to take part in two-way communication with key stakeholders when forming decisions which affect them
- In-line with the Councils Media Protocol we will not publish materials that appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party. Press releases will be, where appropriate, attributed to the Mayor or relevant Executive Member, to emphasise the elected members' accountability to the electorate and the importance that the Council places on the issue
- Extreme care will be taken during the period of Purdah (particular restriction that applies to publicity issued by the council following the call for elections) to ensure that the restrictions and laws surrounding local government publicity are not breached
- Use of social media will be used where appropriate and in accordance with the Councils existing Social Media Policy. Incidents on the highway that affect journey routes and times will be informed via Twitter.
- We will ensure that the information we supply will be clear to users and the content will be identified as coming from and for the purposes of the Council.
- We will safeguard children, young people, and vulnerable adults, by ensuring appropriate permission has been obtained prior to using any photographs, video clips, or comments including children, young people, and vulnerable adults – to comply with the Councils safeguarding principles.
- Employees will be made aware that by uploading comments to social media sites; it is likely that they are agreeing to be bound by its terms. This can affect rights to material and make the Council liable to the site.

6. Time Constraints

This document will be reviewed and updated annually in order that it will remain appropriate to good service delivery and public / stakeholder expectation.

7. Budget

The Council has not allocated a specific budget for its communications however, communication activities will continue within current budget levels, and will be incorporated into schemes and processes as we are able.

8. Key Contacts

- Ann Osola – Head of Service of Transportation and Highways
- Les Burns - Chief Highways Engineer
- Julie Nelder – Highways Infrastructure Manager
- John Devono – Principal Projects Engineer
- Peter Wright – Principal Maintenance Engineer
- Barry Rainger – Network Manager
- Ayesha Basit – Principal Projects Engineer

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