

## **ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 9 NOVEMBER 2020**

### **IDENTIFICATION AND REVIEW OF DIVERSIONARY ROUTES**

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#### **Summary**

1. As part of its work programme, the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel has requested information on diversionary routes, including how they are identified and reviewed, and how the public are kept informed.
2. Senior Officers from the Economy and Infrastructure Directorate have been invited to attend, along with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways.
3. The Panel is keen to understand more about diversionary routes. Suggested lines of enquiry include the strategy of Worcestershire County Council (the Council) and Highways England to deal with traffic flow on local roads and pinch points arising from emergency closures of motorways from incidents and accidents. Other areas relate to routes affected by major roadworks, controlling traffic at pinch points, notification to residents on roads affected, use of social media and electronic signage.

#### **Background Information**

##### **Permanent Signed Motorway Diversions**

4. The Motorway and Trunk Road Network (the M5, M42, M50 and A46) is managed by Highways England. The motorways have permanent diversion routes which are used when the motorway is closed for emergencies (e.g. a fatality on the network) or for planned works (e.g. complicated works at night time).
5. Highways England has to obtain permission from the Council Streetworks team for the use of Worcestershire County Council roads as part of a diversion when there is a planned closure of the Highways England network.
6. The Motorway diversion routes are signed on permanent signs with symbols. Different symbols are used varying from junction to junction and the direction of travel (e.g. Northbound J7 to J6, Southbound J6 to J7). These diversion routes are strategically the most suitable routes for traffic to divert onto. These permanent diversion routes are reviewed by the Council and Highways England.

##### **Temporary Diversion Routes**

7. Temporary diversion routes are typically proposed by the Works or Event Promoter and checked and endorsed by the Council Streetworks team. Typically, a closure of an A Road will result in a diversion on to other A roads to satisfy the

classification of traffic using that part of the network. This can involve long diversions. Temporary diversion routes are marked with black on yellow signs and larger variable message signs (VMS).

## **Planned Road Closures**

8. The Council Streetworks team grants road space permission for planned works and events and emergencies on WCC roads. WCC grants such permits with a view to safety (in line with the 'Safety at Street Works and Road Works') as well as minimising disruption to the Worcestershire County Council network. Planned road closures can often be disruptive and emergency works can often be very disruptive.

9. Public events that require road closures are often processed via the Town Police Clauses Act which are administered by the District Councils. The Council Streetworks checks that the road space is available for such events before the legal order is sealed for such an event.

## **Public Notification of Planned Road Closures**

10. Public notices are provided for planned road closures and these are laminated and displayed on site. The road closure (if made by way of order) is also advertised in a local newspaper in advance of the road closure taking place. Closures can also take place by affixing a notice on site but this is limited to 5 days for works or 21 days where there is a danger to the public. In both cases the closure information is also cascaded digitally to the local County Councillor, emergency services and others by the Council's Legal Services.

11. Immediately affected local frontages also receive a letter from the Works / Event Promoter relating to the road closure and any access restrictions.

12. Advanced warning signs (black on yellow temporary signs) and are located on the road to be closed two weeks before the planned closure. On the largest schemes, supplementary digital Variable Message Signs (VMS) are also used.

13. Current and future road closure information can also be viewed on the One Network portal at <http://one.network>. This was previously known as [www.roadworks.org](http://www.roadworks.org) and is accessible to the general public through a one-off register/ log-in.

## **Emergency Closures of Roads**

14. The emergency closure of a road often creates the greatest levels of disruption, often more than that for planned road closures. Utility companies often need to close roads when it is the only safe way to restore a loss of service.

15. With emergency work, the Works Promoter (e.g. utility, Council maintenance) will often close the road and erect its intended diversion. For emergency works, the road space application must be received within two hours (or by 10am on a Monday morning if at the weekend) of the works commencing. There are occasions where the initial diversion that is set up by the Works Promoter on an emergency is not acceptable to the Council and this needs to be modified. Temporary diversion routes for planned and emergency works are reviewed and granted/ altered on a case by

case basis by the Council's Streetworks team using the above classification principles and local knowledge.

16. The police have separate powers for the closure of roads when responding to incidents.

17. Recent flood events forced numerous roads to be closed and as a result, numerous planned road works were either cancelled or rescheduled so as to maintain a viable network. There is often little forewarning of emergency road closures and the Council Streetworks often acts in a reactionary capacity to these.

18. When a road is closed in an emergency then the Council Streetworks review the network position using software that shows live queue lengths from Tom-Tom sat-nav data. The Streetworks team will consider both the removal of planned works whilst also inspecting the most disruptive locations to satisfy that this is in line with the 'Safety at Street Works and Road Works'.

### **Information to the Highway User**

19. The Council also plots the most disruptive incidents and accidents on to One Network so as to inform sat-nav users, radio, newspaper etc..

20. The Council Streetworks review routes affected by major roadworks, and check that the permit conditions that have been put on such works are being adhered to e.g. controlling traffic with manual control of temporary traffic signals.

21. The Council also uses social media (WCC Highways Twitter) and conditions Works Promoter's to use electronic Variable Message Sign (VMS) to highlight the most major and disruptive works to the highway user.

### **Purpose of the Meeting**

22. The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider the information provided on diversionary routes and:

- agree any further information or scrutiny work required
- agree any comments to submit to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways

### **Supporting Information**

Appendix 1 - Presentation Slides

### **Contact Points**

Specific Contact Points for this report

Emma James / Jo Weston, Overview and Scrutiny Officers, Tel: 01905 844964 / 844965  
Email: [scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk)

Sarah Gilmour, Highways Network Control Manager, Email:  
[SGilmour@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:SGilmour@worcestershire.gov.uk)

## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance), the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda and Minutes of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 January 2020 and 7 March 2018 – available on the website here:

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=388>