



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Report

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Title: Rights of Way Improvement Plan - Problem Management Matrix

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Recommendation The Forum is asked to consider this report and provide feedback on which areas of the matrix should be scaled back; or the forum may considered that no changes are advisable, in order to enable future performance to be 'benchmarked' against previous years.

Option C would be the preferred recommendation.

Resources Appraisal The County Council is required to find significant savings across most service areas, and this has resulted in a substantial reduction being made from the Rights of Way Operations budget which will impact on response targets outlined in the Problem Management Matrix. Budget reduction is £120,000.

The Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to appraise Members of the Forum on the likely impact on performance as a result of budgetary cuts to be made from this coming financial year (April 2014) and to seek a view from the group whether it is necessary or desirable to decrease the aspirational response times outlined in the Problem Management Matrix, which forms part of the Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan, which is a policy document. The decision made by the Local Access Forum will be used to assist the Cabinet Member for Transportation, in order for her to make a final decision on any necessary changes to the policy set by the Matrix within the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Supporting Information - Background

1. Approximately 9 years ago the County Council introduced a method of prioritising issues on paths according to the nature of the problem and its location, this was the Problem Management Matrix; in 2008 the Matrix was incorporated as policy within the Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
2. The Problem Management Matrix was developed, essentially as a public service agreement, which pledged to deliver maintenance to the entire network and to give the public a reasonable expectation of when works would be completed. The Matrix took into account maintenance related to public safety concerns and gave the more heavily used sections of the network top priority. See Matrix table Appendix 10
3. The Council set itself ambitious targets to deliver a high standard of maintenance countywide, but this was also at a point in time when the Rights of Way Group had a greater budget and staff levels. It continuously monitored its performance and gave feedback against the targets. The target times also recognised the level of public involvement in the process in terms of reporting problems and to show a commitment to their resolution.

Future Outcomes

4. The County's network experiences high levels of demand and there is a high public expectation for quality routes. However, the majority of available funds will need to concentrate on the Council's core duty of maintaining existing structures, bridges and signs. This will, therefore, reduce the time spent on repairs to stiles and gates, and this is likely to have a negative impact on the resolution times for the matrix categories for enforcement (B and C on Matrix table), although it is not possible, at this point in time, to predict the likely decrease in percentages outline in the Matrix.
5. Regardless of any decision to change the targets in the Matrix, the County Council's priority will still try to ensure that rights of way are safe to use. Reports of problems potentially affecting the safety of the public remain the paramount.

Recommendations

6. Due to the reduction in budget it may be necessary to change the times, targets and percentages outlined in the Matrix, to more realistically reflect the current financial constraints, with three options available.
 - A. Change the times outlined in the table – which vary from 5 days (severe/dangerous issue on a promoted path) to 12 months (minor issue on little used path). For example category B and C issues could be increased from current target times of 3 to 6 months to 5 months to 9 months.

- B. Change the percentage of times the targets are intended to be 'hit', (see Performance Measures in the appendix) for example category B and C issues are intended to be actioned within the time scale between 70 and 80% of the time, this could be reduced to 50 to 60% of the time.
- C. Leave the Problem Management Matrix targets as they were originally set, so that it is possible to more easily benchmark performance in future.