

Environment Scrutiny Committee - 23rd January 2012

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Network Management Strategy 2012 – 2015 and Compliance with the Traffic Management Act 2004

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the committee with an overview of the “Network Management Strategy”, including the legislative requirements imposed on local traffic authorities by the introduction of the Traffic Management Act 2004. It also shows how the Council will respond to this legislation to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on the road network and achieve compliance with the Act.
2. The Council’s “Speed Limit Strategy will form part of the Network Management Strategy.

Background

Government Legislation

3. It has been widely acknowledged that it is not practical to address the severity of traffic related problems by continually increasing the size of the road network, hence the government is committed to tackling congestion through other available options. The 2004 White Paper, *The Future of Transport* emphasised the importance of active and co-ordinated traffic management.
4. The associated introduction of The Traffic Management Act 2004 gives local traffic authorities new powers and imposes a duty on them to keep roads clear and traffic moving. It also requires that a Traffic Manager be appointed to perform the tasks that an authority considers necessary for meeting that duty.
5. The purpose of the Act is to ensure that local traffic authorities:
 - consider the needs of all road users, including utilities
 - proactively co-ordinate planned works, events and activities on the highway
 - establish contingency plans for dealing with incidents and accidents & emergencies promptly and effectively
 - identify current and future causes of congestion & disruption and plan accordingly

- manage demand by aiming to reduce car traffic and increase the attractiveness of cycling and public transport
 - monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of processes and procedures used in managing the network
6. In January 2011 an internal audit report was carried out on the network management plan, which confirmed that “There are effective processes in place to produce the Highway Network Management Strategy”.

Network Management Strategy

7. The Network Management Strategy sets out the challenges and objectives of the Council in relation to complying with the requirements of The Act and in the broader sense of delivering long term improvements for Dudley’s transport network.
8. To support this there are number of transport strategies in place, including the:
- Central Government Strategy for Transport
 - Black Country Sub-Regional Transport Strategy
 - West Midlands Local Transport Plan (WMLTP3)
9. Subsequent to these central and regional strategies are relevant locally developed strategies, which include the:
- Community Strategy
 - Dudley Transport Strategy
 - Dudley Council Plan
 - Street Care Asset Management Strategy
10. The network management strategy will incorporate relevant initiatives from the above and develop them to deliver a proactively managed network.
11. The network management plan has been designed around an agreed template for the West Midlands and defines both the regional context and shared initiatives and at a local level, details the authorities specific compliance with the duty against the intervention criteria.
12. The plan highlights the current position with regard to the duty and provides a platform for developing the service to ensure future compliance with the Act. It explains the network management hierarchy and the responsibilities & duties of the Traffic Manager and sets out the borough’s approach and strategic objectives in fulfilling the duty placed upon it.

The Network Management Plan (NMP)

13. The following is a section by section summarised breakdown of the content of the NMP showing the structure, key areas and how it will be used to manage and shape the service in the future:

Regional Context & Shared Initiatives

14. This section focuses on those developments in transport provision that have been undertaken by the West Midlands through the Local Transport Plan and the implementation of those transport schemes that will support the network management strategy. It also details the regional and local commitment to initiatives such as:

- Civil parking enforcement
- Matisse
- Development of Traffic Signal Control
- Demand Management
- Management of Bus Routes
- Freight Quality Partnerships

all of which will contribute to the improvement in network management.

Liaison with the Police

15. It is acknowledged that liaison with the police will be key to managing events, activities and emergencies on the highway. The West Midlands group are currently developing protocols, long term solutions and liaison mechanisms for enhanced working with the police.

Checklist for Compliance with the Requirements of the Network Management Duty

16. There are seven sub-sections, which represent the key aspects of the network management duty and they set out the borough's current processes, procedures and performance as well as showing how it is intended to strengthen our operations through review, consultation, intelligence, raising awareness and making changes in working practices. The sub-sections are as follows:

- Considering the needs of all road users
- Co-ordinating and planning works and known events
- Gathering and providing information needs
- Incident management and contingency planning
- Dealing with traffic growth
- Working with all stakeholders – internal and external
- Ensuring parity with others

17. These criteria will be used to assess the effectiveness of Dudley MBC network management capability as a local traffic authority, as sections 20 to 22 of the Act give the Department for Transport powers to intervene where it has reason to believe that a transport authority may not be performing adequately in its discharge of the duty.

Network Management Hierarchy

18. This section shows how the network has been defined to reflect the different levels of network management that will be applied. In developing the hierarchy priorities will be reviewed in respect of the duty, which may include; winter maintenance classifications; tourism routes; public transport routes; emergency services and others.

Speed Management Strategy

19. This Speed Management Strategy sets out Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council's approach to speed management and responds to the governments paper "The Future of Transport", it includes a commitment to:
- Highlight current policy and look to develop future strategy for reducing the number of road deaths and severity of casualties
 - Address and reduce excess and inappropriate speed

Traffic Manager

20. All local transport authorities are required to appoint a Traffic Manager as part of the arrangements for delivering the duty, where the Traffic Manager is the focal point within the Authority for drawing together all of the strands of activity that effect movement of traffic on the road network. The appointed Traffic Manager for Dudley MBC is Peter Van Geersdaele, Group Engineer of the Traffic & Road Safety Section based at Mary Stevens Park.
21. The responsibilities of the Traffic Manager as defined in this section are to identify and take actions in response to occurrences, which are, or have the potential to, cause road congestion or other disruption to the movement of traffic on the road network. The Traffic Manager will also ensure that the key criteria as previously listed are performed and applied impartially in the discharging of the network management duty.

Appendices

22. The appendices relate mainly to documented data and back up information in relation to achieving the requirements of the duty and include:
- Network Management Duty (LTP Appendix E)
 - Principal Supporting Documents
 - The Traffic Management Order 2006 (Guidance on Intervention Criteria)
 - Existing Network Hierarchies
 - Performance Indicators
 - Definitions and Abbreviations

Where Are We Now?

23. The Department for Urban Environment currently manage the transport and highways service and there is much evidence of good practice already being exercised in relation to network management.

24. In developing the plan further and by embedding network management principles into our strategic and operational areas, there are potential service improvements that have been highlighted and are contained within the plan.
25. Further work is in progress on; prioritising the improvement actions; implementing capital schemes that support network management and working with stakeholders to bring about improvements in joint working and improved communications.

Where We Want to Be:

26. The Traffic Manager aims to build on the work done to date and further embrace a network management approach to transport and highways service delivery, which will include managing traffic growth and network capacity.
27. To develop an integrated approach, which promotes cross boundary working, enhanced awareness on the need to tackle congestion and improved co-ordination relating to works, events and restrictions on the highway network.

What our Priorities Are:

28. Our strategic priorities for network management are to:
 - Secure the expeditious movement of traffic on the authorities road network
 - Increase the emphasis on promoting sustainable transport
 - Work closely with partners to develop bus and rail infrastructure and service enhancements
 - Manage demand for traffic effectively
 - Address the network management challenges highlighted in the Dudley Transport Strategy
29. The Network Management Plan will provide the opportunity to achieve this, by setting out a clear direction and highlighting responsibilities & duties in a format that is consistent across the seven authorities of the West Midlands.

What the Document Will Look Like

30. First and foremost the document will be a working guide containing day to day advice and information.
31. It will be a loose-leaf folder containing all the practical information that officers will need when on duty.

Finance

32. Funding for the development of the network management strategy will be funded through existing budgets and Capital funding already identified through the West Midlands LTP.
33. Additional funding areas may need to be identified in the future to ensure the continued achievement of the network management duty, although any such areas will be subject to review and further reports as necessary.

Law

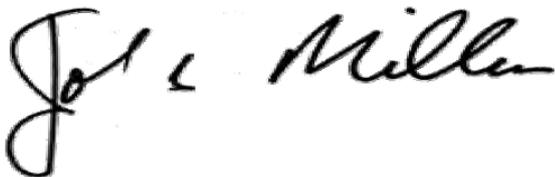
34. Achieving the network management duty and compliance with government criteria are essential to avoid the Department for Transport introducing measures to intervene in the provision of the traffic management duty.
35. The 2004 White Paper, *The Future of Transport* emphasised the importance of active and co-ordinated traffic management. The associated introduction of The Traffic Management Act 2004 gives local traffic authorities new powers and imposes a duty on them to keep roads clear and traffic moving. It also requires that a Traffic Manager be appointed to perform the tasks that an authority considers necessary for meeting that duty.

Equal Opportunities

36. This report takes into account and acknowledges the Council's policy in respect of Equality and Diversity in the delivery of the service and the ongoing management of the Councils Highway network.
37. The Transport Network Management Plan includes specific provision to benefit pedestrians and to encourage the use of alternative transport. Also to assist other vulnerable users of the highway; assist in social inclusion and the mobility of the less able, together with measures to improve access for persons within the borough.

Recommendations

38. It is recommended that:-
 - The Committee note the report and recommend the Cabinet Member for Transportation adopts the Network Management Strategy, through the formal decision making process, to comply with the requirement of the Traffic Management Act 2004.



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