

# Place Overview Committee

## Highways' diversions working group

### Terms of reference

#### Background

At the August 2021 meeting of the Place Overview Committee, committee members considered an overview of how the council manages highways' diversions in the event of roadworks and street works.

Officers attending the meeting listed the pressures that had resulted in a drop in quality of planned diversions, including:

- A significant degradation in the road network, due to chronic underfunding, resulting in an increase in closures to effect repairs.
- Short-term funding, which limits the ability of the service to plan work.
- Additional in-year funding from the Department of Transport of £12 million, which had to be used within a five-month period on top of existing planned work.
- Increased road closures due to a decision to prioritise permanent over (faster) temporary repairs.
- Long diversions, due to a legal requirement to divert traffic along similar roads, in a large local authority area with few such roads.

Members raised concerns about existing arrangements, including:

- Poor communication between the council and local communities, including town and parish councils, in advance of licensing works.
- Lack of detail on highway signs, and poor briefing of staff at road closure barriers.
- Poor communications between the council, its contractors, and the road traffic management companies that they employ.

The committee has therefore agreed to convene a working group to analyse the matter in more detail and to make recommendations for improvement to the service.

#### Objectives

The group aims to:

- understand how many diversions and closures happen in Shropshire local authority area each year, as well as the reason for their closure
- review current arrangements for managing diversions resulting from roadworks and street works
- learn about the West and Shire permit scheme for roadworks and street works and
- identify opportunities to improve the effectiveness of current operations, including:
  - using information technology to push notices to members of the public

- communications with local communities and
- more specific diversionary signage around repair sites.

### **Information required**

Members may wish to review the following documents and information:

- An overview of the West Midlands roadworks and street works licensing scheme.
- Highways repairs revenue budgets for 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21, to include an indication of when funding became available.
- Existing protocols for managing diversions.
- Current and proposed communications when diversions take place.
- Benchmarking of performance against other local authorities.

### **Membership and meetings**

The working group will consist of self-nominated members of Shropshire Council's Place Overview Committee. The group will be chaired by the chair of the committee, Cllr Joyce Barrow.

The working group will carry out its work at a single meeting on a date to be arranged.