

**REPORT TO:** Environment and Urban Renewal Policy  
and Performance Board

**DATE:** 12 June 2013

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director Policy and Resources

**SUBJECT:** National Highway and Transportation  
Survey - Proposals Report

**PORTFOLIO:** Transportation

**WARDS:** Boroughwide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To inform the Board of current interventions and proposals to address specific highways and transport issues, that were identified by the National Highway and Transportation (NHT) public satisfaction survey undertaken in the Borough in 2012.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- (1) The Board notes and welcomes the work being undertaken to address specific aspects of the Highways and Transportation service identified in the NHT survey and report, and raise the levels of public satisfaction in those areas.

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The results of the NHT Survey that was conducted across the Borough in 2012 were reported to the Board in November last year (Minute EUR27 refers). Whilst Halton's performance was generally very good, (with an overall 'satisfaction level of 58% and ranked 14<sup>th</sup> of 75 Highway Authorities) it was resolved that, following a more detailed investigation of the survey results, a further 'Proposals Report' would be prepared and presented to the Board.

3.2 Members will recall that the survey had highlighted a number of services across the six key transport themes that were examined in the public satisfaction survey and where:

- There was a significant 'gap' between how 'important' that aspect of the service was viewed and levels of satisfaction;
- The resulting score for Halton was below average or Halton's ranking was low in relation to other Authorities;

- There had been deterioration in the level of public satisfaction since 2009, when Halton had previously taken part in the NHT Survey.

3.3 The main issues highlighted within the earlier Board report are described below, together with a brief background analysis of the issues involved; details of what actions or interventions have already been implemented; and what further actions are planned to address the issues further.

### 3.4 Theme 1 –Highway Condition

#### 3.4.1 What the Survey said:

The survey results showed that in common with other highway authorities nationally, Halton residents place high levels of importance on ‘Highway Condition’, with both the condition of roads and of footpaths scoring particularly highly for ‘importance’. The table below details the three themes which scored highest in order of importance for Halton - column A, and nationally - column F. columns C and H in the table indicate public levels of satisfaction with the same three themes.

From these results, the ‘satisfaction gap’ i.e. the gap between expected and actual performance, can be measured, shown in column E. The survey showed that the condition of roads and the condition of pavements & footpaths have the biggest ‘satisfaction gaps’ of all key aspects of the Highway and Transport services covered in the survey.

Responses to a further question which asked “which three key aspects do you think are most in need of improvement in your local area?”, showed that these two aspects of the service were also perceived to be ‘most in need of improvement’ by the public, with ‘reducing traffic third important.

	Halton Results				Satis- faction Gap	National Results			
	Most Important ?		How Satisfied ?			Most Important ?		How Satisfied ?	
Column Ref.	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
<b>Safer Roads</b>	73	1 <sup>st</sup> (of 11)	65	3 <sup>rd</sup> (of 11)	8	72	1 <sup>st</sup> (of 11)	51	4 <sup>th</sup> (of 11)
<b>Roads being In Good Condition</b>	72	2 <sup>nd</sup>	46	11 <sup>th</sup>	<b>26</b>	71	2 <sup>nd</sup>	36	11 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Good Pavements &amp; Footpaths</b>	72	3 <sup>rd</sup>	59	6 <sup>th</sup>	13	70	3 <sup>rd</sup>	53	8 <sup>th</sup>

#### 3.4.2 Commentary:

The responses for Halton reflect closely the national results in this regard and there has been a general downward trend in the public’s

satisfaction with the condition of highways nationally over the last 4 years. The earlier Board report, mentioned the successive severe winters that have taken their toll on the highway infrastructure and which may be a key factor influencing the survey results.

Although this aspect of the service produced the greatest 'satisfaction gap', Halton actually scored very well compared to other Authorities in specific areas - such as the condition of road surfaces and the speed & quality of repairs to roads and pavements and Halton's scores are well above the national average for satisfaction with the condition of highways and highway maintenance.

	Halton Score	Average National Score
Condition of Road Surfaces (BI 01)	47.35	35.04
Speed of repairs to roads & footpaths (BI06)	37.30	28.59
Quality of repairs to roads & footpaths (BI 07)	44.54	35.29
Satisfaction with highway condition (KBI 23)	47.31	36.60
Satisfaction with highway maintenance (KBI 24)	52.55	48.99

### 3.4.3 What we've been doing to improve highway condition:

- In support of this report, a complementary report appears elsewhere on this agenda on the subject of Highway Maintenance in Halton . This describes how the Council's Highway Maintenance service is developing to continue to satisfy the demands of statutory function and public expectation in the face of increasing pressures to maximise efficiency and improve value for money. The Report outlines the various actions we have taken and measures we have put in place to maintain and improve the condition of Halton's roads and footpaths. However, for completeness the following brief summary sets out recent spending priorities.
- Major scheme funding for SJB maintenance has allowed the capital funding allocations (from the Transport Block Grant) to be biased towards Roads expenditure, enabling more carriageway and footway schemes to be carried out in recent years. Spending has been prioritised to preventative maintenance across the network, such as through the provision of surface dressing and carriageway treatments in order to stave off further carriageway deterioration. However, it should be noted that when the current major scheme funding for the SJB runs out in 2015/16, an appropriate proportion of the capital allocation will again be required for bridge maintenance expenditure

- Additional ad hoc grant funding was provided by DfT in 2011 and 2012 to allow Local Authorities to recognise the accelerated deterioration of the highway network following successive periods of exceptionally severe winter conditions. This additional funding was targeted strategically to address areas of the network which, although not necessarily at the point of intervention, had been identified as being prone to rapid deterioration. In these areas, pre-emptive action would maximise the effectiveness of financial resource. These were primarily in urban unclassified roads in most need of preventative maintenance treatments or “one-visit’ permanent reinstatements.

#### **3.4.4 What we plan to do in the future:**

- It was announced in the autumn statement that additional funding would be granted by DfT for highway structural maintenance. Halton’s additional allocations of £355K in 2013/14 and 187K in 14/15 will again be used for preventative treatment or permanent reinstatement of larger scale areas where intervention now rather than in future would maximise value for money.
- Halton’s new Term Contract with Lafarge Tarmac for a comprehensive range of highway services became operational on 1<sup>st</sup> June. The contract contains several new initiatives, designed to improve the delivery and performance of the highways service. Key to this will be the introduction of a comprehensive asset management package, known as HARP (Highway Asset Renewal Partnership). This complements the current suite of highway condition assessment surveys and utilises an innovative surveying technique to map and evaluate the true condition of the highway asset. Once the survey is complete, condition data is analysed and used to build the most cost effective programmes of work and help to secure the funding required to maintain the road network.
- A suite of key performance indicators are being developed to monitor contract performance in areas such as the completion of highway repairs to specified timeframes and quality. Customer satisfaction will also be monitored throughout the duration of the Contract using a range of survey techniques.
- ICT Services are developing a free ‘Report It’ web based App which will allow HBC residents to quickly and efficiently report defects or problems associated with a range of Council functions directly to the appropriate officers using their smart phone. This will include fields related to common sources of highways defects.
- HBC will continue to consider national Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) resources available to drive efficiency in service delivery.

- This will include consideration of any elements of service delivery which could be delivered more effectively or efficiently on a shared service basis with neighbouring authorities.

### **3.5 Theme 2 – Public Transport**

#### **3.5.1 What the Survey said:**

The survey results showed that levels of satisfaction with certain aspects of public transport services and provision fell below the national average, and Halton's ranking (both nationally and within Unitary peer group) was low:

Public Transport Aspect	Ranking (of 75 Nationally)	Ranking (of 40 Unitary Authorities)
The state of Bus Stops <i>(note: unfortunately 'state' was not defined)</i>	66	33
Bus Fares	62	29
Personal safety while waiting at bus stop	68	35
The accuracy of information	60	29
Ease of finding the right information	54	28
Information about accessible buses	53	26
Local Bus Services frequency & reliability (former BVPI 104)	Significant fall of 10% in satisfaction level from 2009	
Reliability of Electronic Display Information	'Score' of 49 with high 'scope for improvement'	

#### **3.5.2 Commentary:**

Whilst ranking for 'the state of bus stops' is low, this aspect actually showed a significant (5%) improvement over the 2009 survey. The provision of raised kerbs at bus stops also fared reasonably well – showing an improvement in satisfaction levels, probably due to the investment that has been made in making stops DDA compliant.

The level of bus fares are a commercial matter for the bus companies and the level of dissatisfaction probably results from a sharp rise in fares of between 5% and 8% by operators in April 2012. Also, Arriva buses increased child fares to 2/3rds of adult fares, generating complaints about school travel. Unfortunately, the effects of these fare increases were felt just before the survey was undertaken in June.

Issues relating to information are dealt with below, however, it should be noted that the 'electronic information displays, which the Council previously operated as part of MerseyTravel's network, was switched

off last year when Merseytravel relocated and a replacement system is currently being procured..

The theme of bus information generally scored poorly in the survey. To maximise the benefit from advertising & publicity resources, transport & travel information is generally targeted at existing transport users and prospective users at particular locations & destinations etc., such as Job Centres, colleges, community centres and Direct Link offices etc., rather than being more widely advertised (for example in the media). This may account for the apparent poor levels of public satisfaction generally.

Reductions in the frequency of some services, service withdrawals and the removal of bus subsidies, resulting from cuts to Operators Grants and Council revenue budgets, impacted on local bus services early in 2012, again just prior to the NHT survey.

### **3.5.3 What's being done to improve public transport:**

- Both of the main operators, Halton Transport and Arriva have made significant investment in their fleets, with Halton Transport adding new mini-buses to their services earlier this year and Arriva procuring state of the art, environmentally friendly 'EcoCity' buses, powered by compressed natural gas, which are operating on routes across the Borough.
- Although operating costs continue to rise due to fuel, maintenance and insurance costs, Halton Transport announced in March that there would be no fare increase for local journeys this year.
- Travel information and bespoke journey planning continues to be available from the Council's Neighbourhood Travel Team and via the Traveline service and current, up-to-date service information is available at every bus stop. Whilst there is clearly more to do, there was a marginal improvement in the public's satisfaction with the clarity & accuracy of transport information from the 2009 survey.

### **3.5.4 What we plan to do in the future:**

- Had it been successful, the Council's bid for Local Sustainable Transport Funding (LSTF) would have delivered a range of public transport improvements, including new bus services, access to 'real time information' (RTI) and the introduction of a 'Safer Travel' initiative. Unfortunately, these interventions cannot easily be delivered without a significant injection of capital funding, which due to the current budget constraints is unlikely. However, we will continue to actively pursue with our city-region transport partners, the expansion of Merseytravel RTI equipment into Halton.
- The Local Transport Plan (LTP3) contains details of both the Council's longer term strategies for bus transport services (which

will of course be shaped through our membership of the City Region’s Local Transport Board, and the four year implementation plan, which is in its third year of delivery. The programme of bus stop upgrades, including improvements to passenger waiting facilities and information, will continue in accordance with the strategy. This is intended to form the foundation for the wider-reaching proposals contained in the Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy (MGSTS), aimed at delivering further service enhancements on the core bus route network in Halton.

- In the future, the MGSTS proposes to deliver step-change improvements to the main Runcorn Busway loop, increasing service frequency and improving existing stops to offer enhanced waiting facilities for passengers, improved signage, information (including real time at all stops), CCTV, off-bus ticketing facilities and an emergency helpline facility.

### **3.6 Theme 3 – Walking and Cycling**

#### **3.6.1 What the Survey said:**

The survey showed that there had been a welcome general improvement in the levels of public satisfaction with walking and cycling (including very significant increases in the case of cycle route signage, information and training) however, the results also indicated that we are lagging behind other authorities in a few specific areas of satisfaction ranking:

Walking / Cycling Aspect	Ranking (of 75 Nationally)	Ranking (of 40 Unitary Authorities)
Cleanliness of Pavements	51	26
Pavements being kept clear of obstructions	47	26
Cycle Parking	53	32
Cycle Facilities at Place of Work	70	37
Information about Rights of Way Routes	56	31

Each of the above aspects received a score below 50%, some with a high (over 10%) ‘scope for improvement’ against the best performing authority.

#### **3.6.2 Commentary:**

The improvement in public satisfaction in relation to the walking and cycling themes since the 2009 survey is pleasing, and due no doubt, to the significant investments made in providing pedestrian facilities and enhancing & extending the cycleway network under the LTP programmes, aspects which scored reasonably well in the survey. The

aspects listed above are quite specific, and relate to particular questions asked in the NHT survey.

### **3.6.3 What we've been doing to improve these aspects of walking and cycling:**

- Pavements are inspected at regular three-monthly intervals and any physical obstructions that present a risk to highway safety are reported and acted upon, using powers that the Council holds under the Highways Act. It should be noted that the Police are responsible for enforcing obstruction due to pavement parking etc. Footway obstructions within the town centres are often a cause for complaint and here a balance has to be drawn between ensuring clear, un-restricted pedestrian routes and accepting shops & businesses' desires to display or advertise their goods etc. A draft 'A-board' policy was drafted, which proposed a licencing system, however this has not been formally approved or adopted due to concerns over the additional financial and administrative burdens it would impose. Public safety is the prime rule in gauging whether enforcement action is taken in all circumstances.
- A specific, Borough-wide cycle survey was undertaken at the start of 2013. There were 259 responses to the survey and many respondents provided 'open comments' on what would encourage them to cycle more often and provided views on the current cycleway network. These comments have highlighted a variety of local issues, which we have now started to address, for example: the signage of the 'Runcorn Loop' cycleway network is being improved under a 3 year programme following work with Sustrans to identify problems with existing routes; The creation of a Widnes cycle loop is also a 'work-in-progress', and addressing route signage deficiencies and gaps in the network where it is feasible and practicable to do so.
- 'Street-pod' cycle parking has been trialled at Runcorn baths. This system provides a more secure 'docking' point for bikes and it is intended to expand this system and provide cycle lockers at other popular cycle destinations and interchanges.
- The provision of cycle facilities at new and expanding retail and commercial developments already forms part of the planning process, with developers being required to provide 'Travel Plans' (or review and revise existing Plans) where appropriate, usually by conditions that are imposed on planning approvals. Most recently, our requirements have focussed on the provision of more secure, higher-quality provision, rather than the simple, economy driven multi-rack systems.
- Employers' adherence to their Travel Plans is monitored by the Council and every opportunity is taken to encourage firms to



implement their recommendations, including if necessary, a review of the proposals to keep them up-to-date.

- A 'Facebook' page has been set up and went live in December 2012. <https://www.facebook.com/haltonprow> . The site is a major step forward, providing an information exchange between local users of the routes in Halton and the highway officers responsible for the management and maintenance of the PROW network.

#### **3.6.4 What we plan to do in the future:**

- The LTP four-year implementation programme runs to March 2015 and within scheme designs, cycle parking provision will be considered at neighbour centres undergoing improvement and at other key destinations on the cycle and greenway routes being created or upgraded through the period.
- The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published guidance on how people can be encouraged to increase the amount they walk or cycle for travel or recreational purposes (PH41 Walking and Cycling). Transportation officers are working together with the Council's Public Health Department on a joint Action Plan to promote walking and cycling and implement physical measures that will help meet public health and transport goals.
- Halton's LSTF bid contained proposals for the provision of match-funded grants of up to £10,000 to encourage employers to invest in supporting sustainable transport modes – including provision of shower facilities and cycle parking at workplaces. Should LSTF funding be available to the Council in the future, this could secure a significant improvement in modal shift for journeys to work in the Borough.
- The series of leaflets providing information about walking routes in Halton (mainly in the Parishes) have been available for several years and supplies are regularly replenished in any establishment willing to stock them. However, the old format now needs to be revised and an up-to-date electronic version created, so that they can be downloaded and printed from the website making them more convenient and useable.
- Maintenance work required to rural rights of way is now carried out in-house by the Open Spaces Department. This work includes signage improvements and, where appropriate, the conversion of stiles to kissing gates, which further enhances the accessibility of the routes.

## **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no policy implications arising from the report. All measures and interventions that are mentioned as being underway or planned for the future are in line with existing transport policies contained within the LTP3.

## **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Resource Implications**

The costs of the various interventions described in the report are primarily funded from the Transport Capital Block Grant. Whilst the additional ad-hoc grant funding for Highway Maintenance is to be welcomed, Integrated Transport grant allocation has been reduced severely during the current comprehensive spending review period compared to previous levels of funding. This continues to restrict the extent of works and services that can be provided to Halton residents and the travelling public. As detailed in paragraphs 3.5.4 and 3.6.4, several projects and schemes have been put on hold due to the LSTF bid being unsuccessful. It is unlikely in the present economic climate that a further tranche of sustainable transport grant will be made available.

### **5.2 Sustainability**

The themes of public transport, walking and cycling covered in the report are all critical to the successful delivery of Council's local sustainable transport policies.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

There are no specific implications in relation to this report.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

The availability of affordable and reliable public transport and the provision of sufficient, quality infrastructure to support alternative, sustainable transport modes is a key factor in ensuring access to employment for local people. As described in paragraph 3.6.3, Employers are encouraged to develop travel plans for their workplace and, subject to the availability of funding in the future, the Council may provide further support to employers who promote smarter travel choices.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

The continuing promotion of sustainable transport modes, walking and cycling and the provision and improvement of highway infrastructure to support these travel choices, is aimed at encouraging healthier lifestyles and improved health. The NICE Public Health guidance PH41 referred

to in paragraph 3.6.4 introduces a welcome further facet to this important component of local transport strategy.

#### 6.4 A Safer Halton

The report describes how recent, targeted highway maintenance spending and the plans for further enhancements to the service, will contribute to improving the serviceability of the network and ensure that the highway asset remains in a safe condition for all users. Walking improvements, delivered through the LTP integrated transport programme delivers a range of footway schemes, new and improved crossing points etc. and targeted pedestrian safety improvements.

#### 6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The range of measures described in the report all contribute to the development and enhancement of the built environment and infrastructure, with the aim of creating a well-connected, accessible and sustainable Borough that will support and encourage economic growth and employment.

### 7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

There are no risks associated with this report

### 8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no equality and diversity issues in relation to this report.

### 9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
NHT Survey Results 2012	<a href="http://nhtsurvey.econtrack.co.uk/">http://nhtsurvey.econtrack.co.uk/</a>	
NHT Survey KBI & BI Analysis	Transportation, Rutland House, Runcorn	Dave Cunliffe
HBC Cycle Survey	Transportation, Rutland House, Runcorn	Jonathan Farmer
LSTF Bid 2012	Planning and Transport Policy Division Municipal Building, Widnes	Alasdair Cross
NICE Guidance PH41 Walking and Cycling	<a href="http://www.nice.org.uk/PH41">http://www.nice.org.uk/PH41</a>	