

Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) Case Study:

How the HMEP Strategic Review enabled Blackpool Council to test their current practices and identify more transformational changes within a specific area of capital spending to achieve greater value from levels of investment.

Background

- We all want roads that are fit for the future but as budgets for highway services become tighter the need to deliver better roads, more affordably, will not go away.
- HMEP's vision for the highways sector:

“Deliver 15% savings by 2015, and 30% or more by 2020, transforming delivery so that roads and services are improved”

- Incremental changes will certainly help to improve effectiveness and balance budgets; but may also lead to service reductions in the longer term, if savings targets cannot be met.
- If we, the highways sector (clients, providers, the supply chain, professional bodies, academics and policy makers), can move as quickly as we can to radically improve efficiency and effectiveness, transforming the way in which we commission and deliver our services, HMEP believes this will bring the increased efficiencies needed to improve roads and services in every area.
- HMEP knows the approach works. Leading practitioners have already transformed the delivery of highways services by identifying and delivering significant and substantial efficiencies.

How Blackpool Council responded:

Blackpool Council, based in the North West of England used the HMEP Strategic Review offering to test current practices and identify more transformational changes within a specific area of capital spending to achieve greater value from levels of investment. They also used the review to place highways maintenance firmly on the corporate agenda making sure that it was seen as a matter of strategic importance for Corporate Leadership team and the Members of the Executive.

The review itself focused on Blackpool's approaches to the planning and delivery of a large capital investment project known as Project 30. Blackpool were recognised for innovation and forward thinking

when addressing some of the problems they faced and this recognition of good practice by fellow professionals proved highly motivational for the staff

involved. The review also highlighted areas where opportunities had been missed to make plans more corporate and to communicate them effectively to local people. Blackpool were challenged to improve mechanisms to involve residents and to position their plans within the corporate agenda.

Carmel Mckeogh, Deputy Chief Executive at Blackpool Council said:

“The HMEP Strategic Review gave us a chance to take a focused look at our approach to highways maintenance and efficiency in the round. It really brought this very important issue to life for the Corporate Leadership Team and the Members of our Councils Executive.”

Blackpool Council worked with HMEP using their Strategic Review. This provided Blackpool Council with a process to make highways maintenance a cross council issue and place it firmly on the corporate agenda igniting enthusiasm and interest from members and senior officers. The Strategic Review delivered this through the action planning day held 4 weeks after the onsite visit, which involved a cross departmental team of officers as well as the peer team working on the plan to implement recommendations from the review and then presenting it to an audience of members and other officers.

Andrew Warrington, Service Director Highways, Nottinghamshire County Council, said:

“The peer review team was able to encourage several areas of good practice, identified a few areas for improvement and supported that with sign posting to HMEP products and good practice in other authorities. As a peer reviewer I was pleased to find some work in my own authority regarded as good practice and also took back to my own authority several improvement proposals”

The action plan has helped Blackpool Council to improve existing processes especially when it came to ensuring residents were fully informed and engaged during the decision making process. However, more importantly the review worked in a developmental way to provide recognition and praise where it was deserved and challenge and advice in other areas where improvements could be achieved. Significantly, the Strategic Review provided Blackpool the opportunity and confidence to place highways on the

corporate agenda and therefore enhance the process of transforming its highways delivery and realise longer term savings. Savings will be identified, tracked and verified over the next five-year period, with independent scrutiny through Constructing Excellence.

Carmel said:

“Since the review we are clear that we all work together to ensure we make the best use of our highways network and that very much includes ensuring that we bring our residents with us from the start of the decision making processes through to delivery on the ground.”

Carmel McKeogh is Deputy Chief Executive at Blackpool Council

HMEP: improving highways efficiency

- HMEP is here to support the sector on its journey to transform highway services.
- It does this by working collaboratively, for the sector by the sector, enabling leaders and managers to understand and implement transformational change to achieve greater efficiencies so the money can go even further to plan and deliver improved roads and services.
- To do this well requires the support of clients and providers across the highways sector - sharing, collaborating and working together to help make England's roads fit for the future. Everyone in the sector has their part to play - we need to work better, together.

The HMEP Strategic Peer Review

The HMEP Strategic Peer Review plays a key part to help authorities on their journey to greater efficiencies alongside improved roads, helping to transform future highways services.

The process offers a really powerful way of improving understanding and achieving transformational change in highways services helping to identify and deliver significant improvements.

Benefits of the Strategic Peer Review:

- Helps place highways services on the corporate agenda and enhance the process of improving highways delivery to realise transformational efficiencies and change
- Allows an authority to understand potential improvements set within the wider strategic context of council operations

- Informs decision-making and provides (re)assurance from fellow professionals or 'peers'
- Encourages engagement, collaboration and commitment to action across the council and service provider
- Promotes the sharing of good practice through peer-to-peer engagement as well as empowering individuals to collaborate across authorities

Get involved with, and contact HMEP:

- **For more information and to get involved with HMEP:** www.highwaysefficiency.org.uk
- **To download a copy of the HMEP Annual Plan for 2014/15:** www.highwaysefficiency.org.uk/our-plan
- Sign up for HMEP email updates. Send an email to highwaysefficiency@dft.gsi.gov.uk