



SCRUTINY FORUM

Report of the

HIGHWAYS SCRUTINY PANEL

into

**THE ROLE OF PERFORMANCE
INDICATORS WITHIN KIRKLEES
HIGHWAYS SERVICES**

March 2000

HIGHWAYS SCRUTINY PANEL

MEMBERS:	Councillor Ken Smith (Chair) Councillor Lawrence Conlon Councillor Martyn Bolt Councillor Robert Iredale
LEAD OFFICER:	Mr Adam Wilkinson (Head of Estates, Property and Markets Services)
COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATOR:	Julie McDowell/Penny Bunker (Tel. 01484 221708)

The Panel held meetings on 4 and 31 January 2000 and 28 February 2000.

The Panel received documentary submissions from Kirklees Highways Service. At all meetings it benefited from the presence of the Head of Highways Services, **Richard Otter** and Officers of Highways Services as required by the Panel. In addition, the Chair of the Highways and Transportation Service Management Board, **Councillor Peter Sykes**, attended two meetings.

This report was prepared as part of the standing work programme of the Panel. The Terms of Reference were:

"To scrutinise the comparators used to measure the service provided by the Highways Service (including Performance Indicators)."

1. **BACKGROUND**

1.1 The Scrutiny Panel started work in the Autumn of 1999, with a Councillor Membership which had little recent direct experience of the Highways and Transportation Committee or Service Management Board. At the first meeting of the Panel, Members considered work programme ideas and noted the outcomes of the Telephone Customer Care Survey undertaken in February 1999. The Survey highlighted the top 20 most important issues for customers and there were several Highways related issues within the top 20. The Panel determined to look at Highways Service performance using existing Performance Indicators and Comparators with a view to assessing if the concerns and preconceptions of the general public, particularly in relation to the state of roads and paths, could be substantiated by objective facts. The outcomes of the research could then be linked directly to the Highways Service Public Relations Strategy, an area which the Panel had previously scrutinised and made recommendations to the Scrutiny Forum.

1.2 **How the Task was Undertaken**

Initially, the Panel wished to receive information on how Kirklees Highways Service compared with other Local Authorities and highways service providers. However, it became apparent that because of the prevalent CCT culture, there were few areas where external benchmarking could be undertaken to provide meaningful comparison. This was not a local feature but a national one. The Panel was

surprised to see a dearth of Performance Indicators which would be used by Local Authorities to compare with others. It became obvious that the Panel was not alone in this thinking, as its considerations coincided with a national movement from several directions, to develop objective PIs which would allow comparisons between different Authorities. While interesting that this development was going on at the same time as the Panel's considerations, the national picture was at too early a stage to give us useful comparative data as yet, we noted it has already impacted on our service in that the Service's management was involved in designing systems to capture the new data.

Therefore, the Panel considered the large amounts of local and national PIs and the limited number of comparators that the Highways Service had currently at hand.

- 1.3 At the meeting of the Scrutiny Panel on 31 January 2000, the Head of Highways Service provided details of all Performance Indicators and Comparators that currently applied. The Performance Indicators had been identified through consultation as part of Best Value, Forums or national advice. Only the Audit Commission Indicators had national comparators (7) but the national Best Value Indicators (20) would have comparators in Autumn 2001. The National Performance Network (ADLO) and National Dawning Indicators (CIPFA) would also come on stream in March/April 2000 with a comprehensive set of comparators. In addition, the Local Transport Plan (2000/2006) would include Indicators that would allow national comparison of strategic targets.
- 1.4 In considering the information put forward by the Head of Highways Service, the Panel concluded that although there were a significant number of Performance Indicators, there was very little comparator information available. Highways Service was currently working hard to establish and implement the new Performance Indicator systems. The Highways Service would be part of the pilot Highways Team for the National Performance Network and it was expected that comparative information would be available by May 2000.
- 1.5 The Panel noted that at the present time, monitoring was undertaken by the Highways Management Team and Service Management Board. The Chief Officer is already considering ways to help the Service Management Board prioritise considerations of the PIs already at hand. In future, the Audit Commission would monitor the Local Performance Plan and a procedure was being set up, in conjunction with Internal Audit, to monitor Performance Indicators. The Best Value process would result in the creation of better Performance Indicators particularly regarding road safety.

2 **CONCLUSIONS**

- 2.1 The Panel noted that the Highways Service was currently involved in considerable work to implement systems to monitor new Performance Indicator requirements as well as maintaining existing arrangements. In recognition of this, the Scrutiny Panel considered it appropriate to defer any in-depth scrutiny of Performance Indicators until Autumn 2000 when a wider range of information, including Comparators would be available.

2.2 However, the Panel considered it appropriate that the Highways and Transportation Service Management Board give consideration to a strategy concerning the use of Performance Indicators/Comparators. The Panel recommended that the Service Management Board should consider the following:

- How Performance Indicators are handled.
- How Performance Indicators are prioritised - through customer research identifying a number of Performance Indicators which are of direct relevance to the general public and its perceptions.
- Developing a monitoring system for Performance Indicators.
- Environmental/equalities matters as part of prioritising Performance Indicators.
- Resource implications for Highways Service in establishing systems to gather and record information and set up monitoring and reporting programmes for new and on-going Performance Indicators.
- How performance indicators could be grouped into packages relevant to different interest groups, i.e. mobility issues, cycling issues, etc.
- To consider linkages to the Highways Service Public Relations Strategy with regards to publicising appropriate information to address public concerns/perceptions.

3. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 That the Scrutiny Panel reconsider the Performance Indicators/Comparators used to measure the services provided by the Highways Service in Autumn 2000 when a wider range of Comparator information would be available.

3.2 That the Highways and Transportation Service Management Board give consideration to the development of a strategy concerning the use of Performance Indicators/Comparators as outlined in paragraph 2.2 of the report.

4. **IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER AREAS**

4.1 The Panel felt that there may be resource implications for the Highways Service, particularly in establishing effective systems to gather and record information on new Performance Indicators. Resource implications should be considered by the Highways and Transportation Service Management Board as part of the development of a Performance Indicator Strategy.

5. **BEST VALUE, EQUALITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

5.1 The Panel recommended that, as part of the development of a Performance Indicators Strategy, consideration should be given to prioritising Performance Indicators and as part of that process, equalities and environment factors should also be looked at. The Panel felt that Best Value considerations were already a fundamental part of the Performance Indicator process.

