

WORCESTERSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM - SERVICE DELIVERY SUB-GROUP

10 am on 20th April 2023 – Meeting via MS Teams

Attendees: Bobbie Matulja = BM (LAF Chairman), Rowena Hayward = RH (WCC), Tony Kerbey = AK (LAF Secretary), Anthony Lovell = AL, Linda Robinson = LR, Sandra Starkey = SS, Gordon Bunker = GB.

Agenda Item 1 - Introduction

TK – Asked for permission to auto-transcribe the meeting – no dissenters.

BM – Explained the aims of the Sub-Group meeting (Analysis of, and questions regarding, PRoW Key Performance Indicators and statistics for 2022/23).

LR – Indicated that she may have to leave sometime during the meeting.

Agenda Item 2 - Public Rights of Way Core data and Performance Indicators 2022/23

RH - Started her report by explaining that the total length of Public Rights of Way in Worcestershire has risen from 4605 Km to 4611 Km. The change is caused by an unusually high number of orders completed this year. Questions were taken after each stage of the report.

10:05 – AL joined the meeting.

RH – answered **BM's** question about 'other routes.' The 'A' routes are high use PRoWs, often in urban areas with a sealed surface and maintained by the Highways Department. This is balanced by UUCRs (Unclassified Unsurfaced County Roads) which are not technically PRoW but are maintained by the PRoW team. **RH** also expanded on promoted 'short' walks such as the 'Persnore Circular'.

RH – Clarified a point regarding staffed posts and full-time equivalency, explaining that staffing levels were broadly the same as last year when ongoing recruiting is considered. **AL** asked a question about the number and quality of applicants. **RH** explained that the current, competitive job market and specialist nature of the roles is making recruitment more challenging.

RH – Explained the difference between the Capital Budget and the Revenue Budget. In broad terms capital expenditure is used for new items (bridges, gates Surfacing etc.) whilst revenue pays for the maintenance of existing assets.

BM – Asked about the relevance of the statistic showing Km of PRoW/members of staff. Might it be more useful to show, revenue budget/Km of PRoW. After a short discussion, it was agreed to retain the first figure as a benchmark against data collected in previous years.

BM – Asked about the high percentage of low priority defects that have been on the list for a long time. **RH** explained the prioritisation system and the high urgency afforded to safety related reports. Also, low priority reports that are easily fixable are often addressed immediately. Another strategy is to bundle low priority work together as a package such as last year's signposting project.

GB – Asked how easy it would be to present time-related defect and obstruction information.

Action - **RH** agreed to investigate.

BM – Offered the LAF’s congratulations to the PRoW team regarding the volume of volunteer work party activity.

RH – Clarified how PPOs are managed and why some are prioritised (school safety, railway safety and diversions associated with county matters planning applications) whilst most are processed on a first come; first served basis.

BM – Thanked **RH** for her report and asked for the LAF’s appreciation to be passed on to the whole PRoW team.

Agenda Item 3 – Deregulation Act News

BM – Provided a short history of the Deregulation Act and the delayed implementation of those sections related to PRoW. The cut-off date of 2026, for the submission of new DMMOs, based solely on historical evidence, had been pushed back to 2031. Some uncertainty exists regarding the status of new application by the time of the cut-off i.e. submitted or completed. **RH** stated that authorities were still waiting to see what the new legislation would mean in terms of process and policy. Whilst there will be extensive changes, it was difficult to assess the impact at present.

Agenda Item 4 – AOB

Worcester Bromyard Leominster Greenway Update – **BM** was able to pass on that Worcestershire County Council have fully funded the WBL Greenway project feasibility study for the Worcestershire section of the route. With the Herefordshire feasibility study complete, this represents a major step forward.

West Midland Walking Trail – **BM** said that no comments had been received regarding the Chair’s provisional response to the Stakeholder Survey so she will submit as is.

Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Strategy - **BM** covered the LAF’s response to the Green Infrastructure consultation and subsequent clarification sought by the project staff. **AL** and **BH** discussed the balance between farming and low carbon transport options, some of which is facilitated by PRoW. **Action** - **BM** agreed to distribute a form of words for LAF approval.

Tony Kerbey

Secretary

3 May 2023