



Staffordshire Highways

Improving the way we work
with Local Communities

A guide for community leaders

Working with local communities

Roads are really important to local communities. More local action is what everyone wants.

Staffordshire County Council's highways team have a high reputation nationally for delivering value for money. But it's a continual challenge. Staffordshire is a big county, right at the heart of the UK economy. The network of over 3,600 miles of roads takes a pounding.

Staffordshire's Conservative Administration has pumped in more resources to support this vital operation:

- An additional £30m in highway maintenance over a three year period
- The phased introduction of part-time 20mph limits outside schools on A and B routes
- The establishment of Neighbourhood Highway Teams.

But it's not just about money. Local communities want to be more involved in setting priorities that meet their needs. Traditionally Staffordshire Highways has been very effective on strictly prioritising programmes to meet key "statutory" actions such as improving road safety. This has helped to make Staffordshire's roads one of the safest of any County Council in the UK.

But this has, to some extent, been achieved at the expense of local priorities. People have felt excluded from the decision making process.

That's now changed.

This guide for community leaders outlines how we have changed our service to make it more accountable and community focused.



Communicating

We are committed to delivering better and more consistent communications with the community. Many complaints come from people who just don't know what is going on. We are working hard to improve this.

Getting the balance right is vital. Cleaning out a drain in your street won't get the same level of communication as a town centre regeneration project lasting months and costing £millions. But we will work to ensure you get the information you need.

Our web based highways information service gives people an up-to-date and detailed picture of what we are doing and why. All our programmes of activity are published in full and are easy to access.

As more complex schemes progress we are providing communities with updates on how things are going through their local Councillors and the media. After schemes have been completed we ask communities what has gone well and how we could improve our service.



Recognising local priorities

We have already set up a network of local Community Highway Managers, who are busy co-ordinating local Member's "Divisional Highway Programmes."

The approach is putting democratically elected community representatives at the heart of the planning process – ensuring that the local highways action programme is democratically accountable.

The development of each Divisional Highway Programme is led by the local County Councillor and focused on their Division. Working with the Community Highway Manager, they liaise closely with parish council and other local bodies, to ensure local concerns are identified and actions prioritised. This transfers power and responsibility closer to the community.

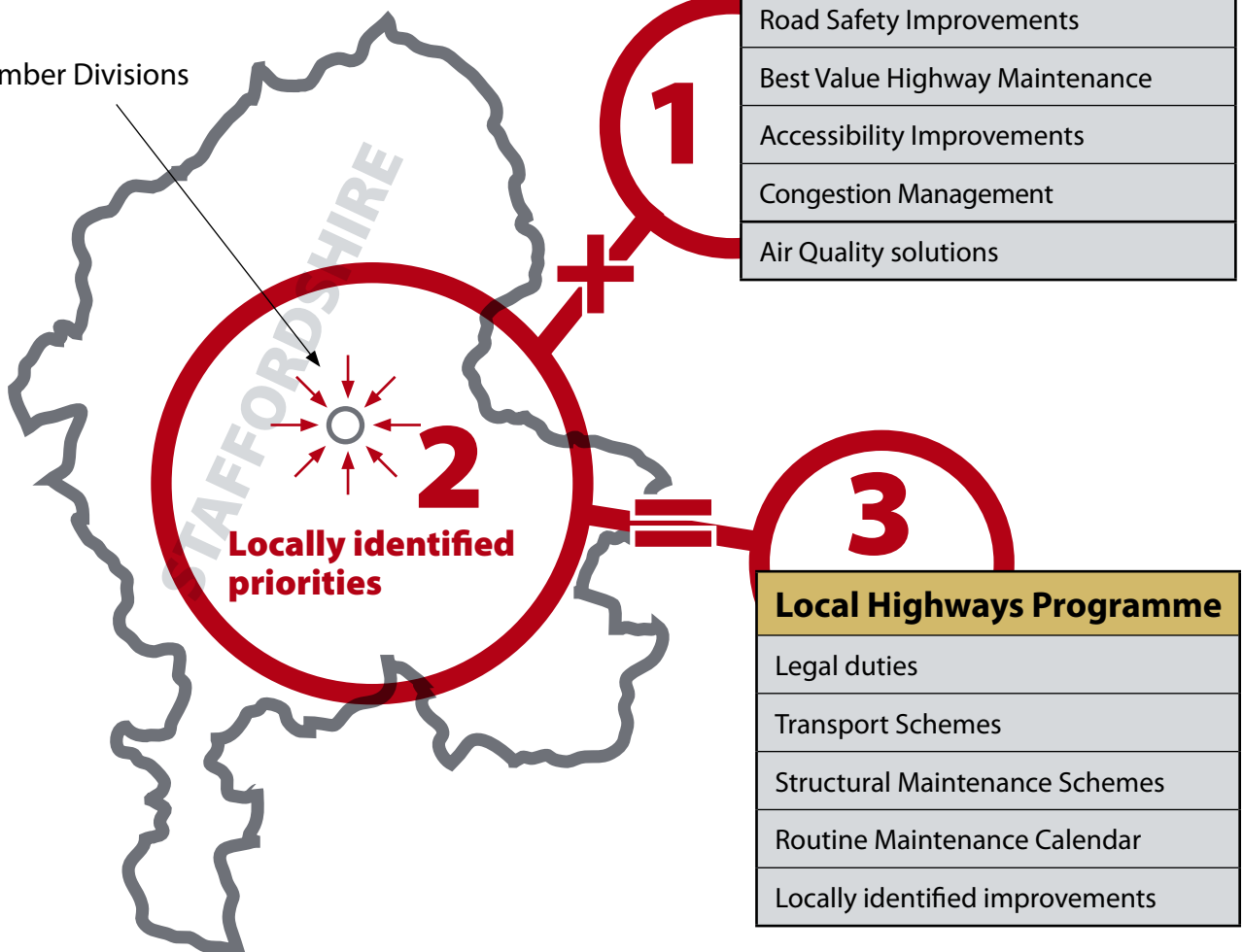
The agreed priorities are included in a clear, transparent and carefully co-ordinated work programme. Everyone knows what to expect.

This means that the highways team are able to focus their actions on delivering established priorities at greater pace.

Twice a year the local county councillor leads a review of progress and priorities – keeping the programme in balance, responding to local needs and financial realities. They also have £10,000 available from their Local Community Fund to allocate for Highway improvements.

By working ever more closely together and regularly reviewing and discussing priorities and programmes, there are real opportunities to share information and align actions with other community partners – such as the Police. This provides further efficiencies through joint working, meaning extra value for money for the tax payer.

59 Member Divisions



Devolved decision making

Neighbourhood Highway Teams – delivering on those really small scale jobs that make all the difference for local communities.

Ten Neighbourhood Highway Teams are working at tackling those small scale issues that may not be a top priority but are, nevertheless, important to local communities.

All 179 parishes and 41 urban wards get regular scheduled visits from their Neighbourhood Highway Team.

The Team deliver a service that has been designed in advance through the local discussions headed up by the local county councillor, or parish clerk.



Neighbourhood Highway Teams deal with an extended list of smaller non safety related highway problems that are important to the appearance and environment of local communities:

- Weeds and grass trimming
- Environmental improvement schemes
- Hedges and fencing
- Painting
- Ditching
- Cleaning of street furniture

On average each parish gets a visit every 15-20 weeks – with highway network length and population determining detailed programme schedules. although this is subject to seasonal constraints.

A detailed forward programme of visits is published on the county council's website, within parish council boundaries. For more information visit www.staffordshire.gov.uk/yourroads

Help us deliver for your community

These changes bring decision making much closer to local communities.

It doesn't mean we can forget the bigger picture. There are things we have to deliver by law –our Statutory Duties.

The broad principles and focus which determine Government funding for transport improvements are based on the Local Transport Plan. This is shaped by a comprehensive county wide public consultation and then fed into the local annual highways work programme.

It's still vital everyone gets involved in this.

But it's at a local level where local community leaders can really have an impact in helping us set out local priorities.

How you contribute really matters. There are three clear steps for action:

1. Safety Defects, such as potholes, ice, flooding and broken street lights should be reported directly to the Highways Hotline Freephone 0300 111 8000.
2. Other highway defects, such as overgrown footways, weeds and old road signs, are prioritised by local councillors for repair during future visits by the Neighbourhood Highway Teams.

For more information on the Neighbourhood Highway Team programme in your area go to:
www.staffordshire.gov.uk/yourroads

3. Local Highway and Transport matters are reviewed twice each year under the leadership of the local County Councillor. The resulting Member's "Divisional Highway Programmes" will be available via the county council's website.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Maryon', written over a horizontal line.

Cllr. Mike Maryon

If you would like this document in another language or format, e.g. large text, please contact us on 0300 111 8000.