

M6 Closure - 4th February 2016

Follow-up hearing – Request for Information by Police and Crimes Commissioner

Submission by Birmingham City Council (BCC)

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This briefing note informs the Inquiry of the outcomes of the review of Birmingham City Council processes and protocols since the 4th February incident and responds to the recommendations of the Inquiry Hearing held on 18th March 2016.
- 1.2. BCC has worked with Highways England and other partners in the intervening period to develop a joint response to the Inquiry Recommendations. Whilst that joint response has yet to be approved by BCC, we are encouraged by the collaborative efforts being made by all parties to improve communication and joint-working. BCC support this approach and will continue to work with those key partners to ensure this work is progressed.

2. Requested Information

- 2.1. In an email of 5th December the PCC's office requested information in advance of the 20th December follow up hearing aligned to the following 4 key questions

2.2. *What is different from 4th February 2016 to now?*

- 2.3. With regard to the relevant Inquiry recommendations for issues that have been moved forward since the incident are as follows.
 - Recommendation 3 - Agree a programme of exercises to develop "Major Incident Plan for the Motorway Box" - In October both BCC and Amey Highways officers took part in a multi-agency desk top exercise organised by Highways England. In addition in August 2016 Amey established a co-ordination meeting with Highways England to increase the familiarity of people, processes and programmes between our Highways PFI Service Provider and the HE. This forum will meet regularly and include Incident Response Planning as a substantive item for discussion.
 - Recommendation 4 - Review Protocols for declaring Major Incident - All of BCC/Amey's relevant process, protocols and plans have been reviewed and found to be adequate. However as part of the co-ordination forum referred to above and those protocols will remain under constant review.
 - Recommendation 5 – Creation of graded incident scale for Motorway incidents - The proposed grading of incidents relating to the Motorway network outlined the HE report is supported by BCC. This framework should be integrated into other suggested HE framework and Protocols referred to in the report including JESIP and HE's Crisis Management Manual in order that there is a clear understanding of how the terms and levels of intervention and escalation correlate.
 - Recommendation 6 – Review activation of Traffic Management protocols – As with recommendation 4 BCC's Traffic Management response protocols have been reviewed and found to be appropriate, contact details have been updated and the protocol will continue to be reviewed periodically through Co-ordination forum referred to above. We have also ensured that M6 Strategic Diversion Routes are included in the Birmingham Street Works Register in order to enable a rapid check of diversion road-space in the event of an emergency.
 - Recommendation 7 – Develop and implement collaboration agreements – This work has been the subject of recent discussion through the West Midlands Traffic Managers Group. Key to taking forward a comprehensive partnership agreement is the expansion of the current scope of the intended partnership agreements to include the aspects of

incident management beyond message protocols for Variable Message Signs and also other important aspects of HE interfaces including reciprocal maintenance arrangements and development control issues. Amey and Kier as the two key service providers have met and exchanged emergency plans, contact details and resource availability information.

2.4. How do we continue to build on this progress and improve our response to major incidents?

2.5. Regular liaison is required through structured forums if we are to build on the progress that has been made. BCC believes the focus for this liaison should be led by the HE and that a dedicated Local Authority Liaison Officer (or team if required) should be established for the West Midlands area to ensure a continued collaborative approach between the HE and Local Authorities on all aspects of Highway Network Management, not just incident management. A test exercise for the Birmingham Highway Emergency Plan has been set for 14th February 2017 to include scenarios impacting both HE and local road networks.

2.6. Do you perceive any impediments to progress on collaboration?

2.7. The recognition that those impacted by this type of event goes far beyond those drivers on the Motorway Network will be key to progressing and maintaining a collaborative approach. It is the public as whole, not just those in vehicles on the HE's roads, that are inconvenienced when such problems occur.

2.8. Traffic impact and congestion does not respect administrative boundaries and collaborative working has to recognise that when such problems occur (either with incidents or planned works) mitigating the impact and resultant congestion is an issue that the HE also has to address, in conjunction with Local Highway Authority, on the local road network.

2.9. Mechanisms for predicting the duration of an incident for the purpose of triggering escalations remains a concern.

2.10. Do you have a view as to where responsibility for traffic management during responses should lie in the future?

2.11. As referred to 2.8 above, BCC believe that there is a joint responsibility between both the HE and the Local Highway Authorities for ensuring traffic is managed in the most effective way when these types of incidents occur. Some commitment around issue (such as cost) has to be taken by both parties early in an incident response to enable empowered managers to take contingency actions and put resources in place that might not be utilised ultimately.

2.12. The HE should that diverting traffic from the motorway network (either positively or as a consequence of drivers seeking alternative routes due to the motorway network becoming congested) has a detrimental impact on the local road network. Whilst for short term incidents (i.e. a few hours) the Local Authority will manage the impact on the local road network through such tools as Urban Traffic Control systems (traffic signals), in prolonged incidents such as the event on 4th February further Traffic Management support (e.g. additional static temporary signage on the local road network) may be required and should be offered and provided by HE.

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14th December 2016