

Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 4 June 2024

Safety of Council Heavy Operated Vehicles

Executive/routine
Wards

Routine
All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Considers the contents of this report; and
 - 1.1.2 Refers the report to Policy and Sustainability Committee for noting.

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Safety of Council Heavy Operated Vehicles

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides a response to the motion approved on 21 March 2024 on the safety of Council Operate Heavy Vehicles.
- 2.2 The report provides an update on the operation of internal Council fleet assets, recognising the dangers associated with operating Heavy Goods Vehicles and the measures taken to manage risk associated with service delivery.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 21 March 2024, the City of Edinburgh Council approved an [adjusted motion](#) by Councillor Lang on the Safety of Council Operated Heavy Vehicles.
- 3.2 The motion noted the recent tragic events in Scotland where children have died following collisions involving Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs).
- 3.3 These tragic events have resulted in a renewed focus on the dangers that are associated with the operation of HGVs particularly in urban built-up areas where there is greater risk associated with a number of vulnerable road users including children, pedestrians and cyclists.
- 3.4 This report sets out the measures that the Council is taking to maintain best practice in order to minimise the risk for potential serious incidents involving the Council's HGV fleet.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The City of Edinburgh Council operates a large and diverse fleet of vehicles (including trucks, welfare buses, cars, vans and a number of items of plant machinery). In total, the Council operates approximately 1,300 fleet assets, of which 210 are classed as HGVs which can be simply referred to as anything with a gross vehicle weight of 4,500kg or above.

- 4.2 In addition to this group of vehicles, there are approximately 90 welfare buses which are responsible for transporting children and adults with disabilities to school and daycare centres on a daily basis.
- 4.3 Technology in trucks and vehicles in general is something that continues to evolve. A number of safety features are provided as standard on production trucks in 2024 which was not available just one decade ago.

Advanced Emergency Braking System

- 4.4 One example of this technology is an Advanced Emergency Braking System (AEBS). It can also be referred to as autonomous or automatic braking. AEBS is a system which makes use of radar detection mounted to the front of the vehicle activating the braking system when a potential collision is detected and is highly effective at stopping the vehicle or minimising the severity of a collision where the driver has failed to react.
- 4.5 AEBS has generally been fitted as standard to all truck mounted vehicles from 2015 onwards. It is a crucial safety system and awareness should rightfully be raised of the lifesaving benefits it can bring but it does have limitations. The system is only capable of being active up to certain speeds, in some cases just 15mph. The system is also designed to avoid collisions with the vehicle directly in front of it. That means that items partially blocking the trucks path – for example a parked car will not be detected by the system, so the technology is not a substitute for due care and attention of the driver of the vehicle.
- 4.6 Of the 210 group of vehicles the Council currently operates, 115 are equipped with AEBS technology. This reflects the current age profile of the truck assets. Any purchases post 2015 are fitted with this technology, but a significant number remain without. Retrofitting is both cost prohibitive and, in many instances, not possible given the complexity of how a vehicle body and chassis are married together during production.
- 4.7 The fleet replacement programme, which was approved by Finance and Resources Committee in November 2023, captured all of the truck assets which required replacement. This included a number of refuse collection vehicles which are not fitted with AEBS (all of which will be replaced by the end of 2024 meaning that all our refuse fleet will have the technology fitted).

Other Technology

- 4.8 Whilst AEBS is generally fitted as standard, there are other systems which the Council seeks to fit as additional technology to aid drivers. This includes radar detection for cyclists. This technology will detect cyclists approaching the nearside (passenger side) of the vehicle and warn the driver. There is also an audible and visual warning for the cyclist when the vehicle is intending to turn left. This type of system has been specified on all procured truck mounted vehicles since 2016 and, as a result of the fleet replacement programme, all trucks will be fitted with this technology (it is anticipated) by the end of 2025.

- 4.9 In addition to this, while the welfare bus fleet has better all-round vision for drivers in their design, due to the inherent nature of the times of day and locations that these vehicles require to operate in they are inevitably sharing road space with other vulnerable road users. As a result, cycle detection radar equipment will be fitted to this vehicle group as standard, with 27 new vehicles arriving into the fleet this year.
- 4.10 Including this technology on all of the truck fleet will ensure that they all meet the Direct Vision Standards (these are not applicable to any Scottish region but are used to determine a permit scheme for trucks to operate within London). Officers consider this to be best practice and still a standard which the Council should strive to achieve if possible.

Driving Standards

- 4.11 Educating and investing in professional driving staff is something that the Council takes very seriously.
- 4.12 All professional drivers are required to undergo a Certificate of Professional Competence Training which requires a minimum of seven hours training to be undertaken annually.
- 4.13 This is fully funded for professional drivers and the Council's Learning and Development team have aligned the training courses specifically to focus on subjects relevant to the health and safety hazards associated with driver roles.
- 4.14 This year every professional driver will be undertaking a training module which focuses on vulnerable road users. In addition to this, other material and standalone courses for vulnerable road users is being explored alongside sharing and engaging best practice with other fleet organisations based within Edinburgh.
- 4.15 The waste collection fleet is equipped with an onboard telematics system which produces a variety of data which can be utilised to effectively manage the operation. This includes onboard diagnostics remotely sending fault related information regarding vehicle health (including live data on the condition of the braking system including brake pad percentage wear and any active faults).
- 4.16 Whilst bin collections from schools themselves could be routed to avoid specific times, a large proportion of schools are located within residential areas and therefore to completely avoid a school would also mean not carrying out residential collections within a certain vicinity. This presents practical challenges for the waste collection services.
- 4.17 Waste collection colleagues are advised not to operate within the area of schools during peak times of the day (associated with drop off and collection). In addition to this, where possible, drivers and crew are kept on the same routes for familiarisation and knowledge of the area. This not only aids with managing the risk associated with school operations but enables further familiarisation on locations that are hotspots for pedestrians and tourists as well as times and days of the week

when sporting events occur which will attract large crowds on foot increasing the risk.

- 4.18 The service is also looking at technology which may allow a ring-fenced area (e.g. a primary school) to provide an audible warning to the driver if the area is entered at certain times. This is linked to a wider replacement of in-cab systems.
- 4.19 In addition, officers are reviewing the arrangements for waste collection from schools to consider if alternative collection times could be facilitated. This may be challenging due to the times when schools are operational (e.g. for evening and weekend lets).
- 4.20 Analysis of data associated with vehicle operations from onboard telematics can provide further information to validate that vehicles are avoiding high risk areas during busy periods of the day. In addition, the Council is exploring software to further improve the information captured within the telematics system to provide audible warnings to the driver should they enter a built-up area near schools during a peak time of the day.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Officers will continue to work in collaboration, exploring how telematics technology can be used to assist with supporting operational teams to manage the risks associated.
- 5.2 The training module rollout which covers vulnerable road users will continue to be delivered over the remainder of the year, with anticipated completion by October 2024.
- 5.3 The vehicle replacement programme will continue for refuse collection fleet, with all refuse vehicles on 26 and 18 tonne platforms expected to be replaced by the end of 2024. These vehicles will be equipped with a five-star rated Direct Vision Standard (which is the highest safety rating that can be awarded).
- 5.4 In addition to this, the cycle radar system will be installed on all new welfare bus fleet with vehicles. These will start to arrive in June and should be fully delivered by October 2024.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The [fleet replacement programme](#) was approved at Finance and Resource Committee in November 2023 and captured the intended replacement of all truck mounted vehicles operating within the fleet including the refuse collection vehicles. As such the associated capital budget was developed with significant input from finance colleagues and signed off by them for approval.
- 6.2 The telematics system for refuse collection vehicles is provided as part of the vehicle package for the first three years of operation.

- 6.3 The additional cost of the cycle radar system for the welfare bus fleet is expected to incur an additional capital spend of approximately £57,000. This has been agreed by the fleet replacement board to progress and will be met from the capital funds associated with the fleet replacement programme.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 There are no specific equality and poverty impacts arising from the contents of this report.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 As a public body, the Council has statutory duties relating to climate emissions and biodiversity. The Council

“must, in exercising its functions, act in the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of emissions reduction targets”

(Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019), and

“in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”

(Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004)

- 8.2 The City of Edinburgh Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and committed to work towards a target of net zero emissions by 2030 for both city and corporate emissions and embedded this as a core priority of the Council Business Plan 2023-27. The Council also declared a Nature Emergency in 2023.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 With an operation, such as waste collection or indeed any heavy truck operation, particularly in urban environments there will always be a degree of risk. The Council is taking steps to upgrade the truck fleet with a significant investment to replace all these assets and to ensure they are equipped with the highest regarded safety standards and technology.
- 9.2 Whilst driver aids such as AEBS or radar cycle detection along with additional CCTV cameras provide support, they are not a substitute and it is imperative that the Council continues to invest in technology and inform and train professional drivers to ensure they fully understand the risks of the operation. This should be role specific and form part of continued professional development.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 Fleet News (2021). *Driving for Better Business*. [Online]. Fleetnews.coc.uk. Last Updated: 10 September 2021. Available [here](#) [Accessed 15 May 2024].

11. Appendices

- 11.1 None.