



TO: Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

FROM: Head of Highways, PLACE

DATE: 4th March 2024

PORTFOLIOS AFFECTED: All

WARDS AFFECTED: All

TITLE OF REPORT: Highways Infrastructure

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide responses to the actions minuted in the previous meeting of the scrutiny committee held on 13th November 2023 and to consider other matters raised by Councillors.

2. BACKGROUND

At the last meeting the Committee received a report and presentation on the Borough's Highway Infrastructure, with Officers and the Executive Member, highlighting:

- The Road Network
- Surveys and Current Condition
- Funding and Maintenance Works
- Solutions
- Trends
- The Future
- Pot Hole Issues – including Criteria, Inspections, Defects Raised
- Traffic Signals
- Developer Funding for Highway Improvements

Members discussed the report and presentation and various matters were raised during the discussion. These matters are considered below.

3. RESPONSE TO MATTERS RAISED

The narrative below considers the matters raised in the form of actions and responses:-

ACTION: Officers to contact Yunex re their procurement strategy given the issues that were raised around stock levels and rising costs.

RESPONSE: Officers have regular meetings with Yunex and concerns have been shared with them. We are working with them to develop a standardised equipment list for BwD so that issues with replacement parts will be less of an issue moving forward.

ACTION: Officers to contact Yunex re the issue of lights remaining on red at night, which had implications for fuel consumption and pollution.

RESPONSE: Officers have contacted Yunex about this. Traffic signals along a length of road, during quiet periods of the night will rest on red, this enables them to change to green when demand is detected. If this demand is travelling within the speed limit then they will change to green as the vehicle approaches, however, if the vehicle is travelling in excess of the speed limit then the lights will remain on red.

ACTION: That the Highways Department seek to improve response times to Councillor enquiries. It takes very little time to send an update. Current timescales are not acceptable and result in poor service to residents.

RESPONSE: The Highway Teams always endeavour to respond to Councillor and MP enquiries within the 10 day response time. However, there has been significant staff resource issues within Network Management Team with no traffic engineers or technicians since May 2023. This has had an impact on the Team's ability to investigate and respond to enquiries. A recruitment drive has recently taken place and The Team has managed to secure a traffic technician however there is still a vacant engineers post and technicians post which will be advertised again.

ACTION: That the Council adopt 20mm as a depth for actioning footpath defects.

RESPONSE: The Highway Reactive Repair budget is already under significant pressure. The Service is currently looking for savings and is not in a position to increase service levels without additional investment. The Council is currently with the majority of authorities operating at 25mm in footways.

ACTION: That the Council adopt a new pothole policy to protect residential amenity, to sit alongside and complement its existing pothole policy which is based upon safety. The existing policy of only actioning defects over 40mm deep means some residential side-streets need never be repaired, as the asphalt layer is not 40mm deep.

RESPONSE: The Highway Safety Inspection Procedure already compliments the larger Asset Management Strategy. This balances available budgets with network condition, including residential streets. To tackle more residential streets would require additional funding to be channelled into the Asset Management Plan and in the context of funding challenge faced by the Council, this is not possible.

ACTION: The Council should seek to ensure that Highways improvements required as the result of development are put in place at the initial stage of development. Improvements are required at the outset due to all the increased construction traffic that happens from the outset of development. Leaving improvements until the end of development is not sufficient to protect the amenity of existing residents in the area.

RESPONSE: The Highways Authority does seek to protect the interests of the Borough, if there are works that are deemed essential for safety reasons, then they would be carried out at the outset. However, there is also a balance to be struck on carrying out works whilst there is construction traffic moving to and from the site. This inevitably results in wear and tear, and it is prudent and more cost effective to carry out the remainder of the works once construction has advanced considerably and vehicles

movements are reduced. Thus supporting the longevity of the works carried out on the highway.

4. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee:-

- a) note the matters set out above and the responses provided;
- b) determine what, if any, recommendations should be made to the Policy and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Report Version: 1.0

Report Authors: Carmel Foster-Devine

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