

Regeneration, Vibrancy & Climate Change Scrutiny Review Board

Minute Extract 27 June 2023

06/23 Asset Management Overview: Highways Maintenance

The Board received a report and presentation from the Director of Planning and Transport and the Head of Service Regeneration Projects which was presented by the Head of Highways Asset Management, Grounds Maintenance and Arboriculture.

The report and presentation informed the Board of work in relation to Derby City Council's asset management approach to highways maintenance. The presentation included an explanation of the prioritisation process for how schemes are included in the annual and longer-term programmes.

The definition of Asset Management was given, it was a systematic process of developing, operating, and maintaining, upgrading, and disposing of assets in the most cost-effective manner.

The Department for Transport (DFT) had published a new code of practice around Highway Maintenance in 2016 with full Local Authority implementation by 2018. DCCs approach was to consider the right intervention at the right time in the right place, to consider the whole life of the asset, which includes a mix of planned and preventative treatment to extend the life of an asset.

To understand the condition of the network of footways and carriageways in Derby an Annual Engineers Inspection was undertaken. A forecast of deterioration rates could be made by repeating the inspection. The Board were informed that £51.6m for maintenance was needed to get all roads to an acceptable condition, with a £7.5m, annual depreciation. Footways needed £26.3m for maintenance with £1.5m annual depreciation. The current funding was just under £4.8m, 7% of the funding needed. DCC was managing a deteriorating asset and there was insufficient funding but the money available was being spent effectively. The use of in-house workers was increased, and processes and performance were reviewed regularly to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

The Asset Management approach used a risk-based way to manage roads and footways and allowed needs to be met within budget. It aided a quick reaction to increases and decreases in budget. Data on the condition of roads and footways was obtained and analysed to understand how the network performed and deteriorated. 26 maintenance hierarchies were developed from the A52 down to public rights of way.

The Code of practice recommended developing a resilient network of key routes that need high levels of attention. It included roads with hospitals, emergency services, medical centres and key shopping areas, also local stakeholders. This enabled

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production of a transparent long-term programme that could be revised in accordance with budgets or other external influences

Scheme identification and prioritisation enabled schemes to be chosen from the engineering inspection which were prioritised according to their condition and location. A forward plan of 3 to 5 years was produced which could be adjusted annually in line with the budget and the differing rates of deterioration across the network.

Scheme priorities were based on levels of funding level for the year. Conflicts and collaboration were considered like junction improvement work and utility companies maintenance work. In year treatment strategies were planned such as spend on resurfacing or preventative treatments.

The officer highlighted the outputs and outcomes including increased productivity from 13000m² to 60000m² per year, there was more pro-active preventative work. The Board were informed that DFT refer to Derby as a lead authority for asset management practice on footways and carriageways.

The next steps were outlined and included bringing all highway assets like drainage, public transport, and structures to a similar level. Continuing to develop and improve the asset management approach and developing a better understanding of carbon assets.

The current position on decarbonisation was explained. DCC are establishing a baseline for emissions by working with several local authorities as part of a Future Highways Research Group. A toolkit was being created to obtain accurate data on carbon outputs from activities. It was hoped to establish targets and indicators for the overall climate change action plan and develop a better understanding of carbon impacts from this work.

The Board discussed the presentation and noted that the funding for roads and footways in 2023-24 was £4.48m, but there was a maintenance need of £51.6m and £23.6m respectively. The funding of £4.48m would bring roads to an acceptable level. A councillor asked how much funding was needed to bring roads to a good standard, the officer suggested an approximate figure of 50% on top was needed. The Board acknowledged that roads were a declining asset and were concerned that some roads may become unusable.

A councillor asked how long surface dressing extended the life of a road? It was stated that depending on the road and usage, building a new road today, with a life of 25 to 30 years would incur surface dressing interventions at years 7 and 14, at year 21 a thin surface and at year 25 a complete resurface would be needed.

The Board discussed new technology in road surfacing such as using hard core coated in recycled plastic to increase the life of the surface. They asked what new technologies were used by DCC. It was explained that, as part of climate change initiatives, more mixed asphalt was being used so there was less carbon impact, but this did not increase the longevity of roads. New resurfacing schemes go through

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AGM design colleagues to consider options of extending the life of a road, like putting in a GM Grid.

An officer highlighted that new technologies were national initiatives and products currently used in roads are proven as they have undergone years of testing and research. Mixed asphalt was still being tested, but there was no knowledge of how long the product would last until it had been put down for 25 years. It was noted that Derby was part of a research group for new technologies.

A councillor suggested that if a large amount of funding was available now to bring the roads up to a standard it would take too long a time to undertake the work needed. It would be better to add smaller amounts of funding over two years, the difference would be seen in the number of roads resurfaced. Previously £9m had been provided in this way, this funding had been spent and the councillor asked if a map or outcomes of this work could be provided. The officer explained that before the £9m funding was available the annual inspection showed that 3.8% of the Highway Network was now classed “as new”. This year’s survey showed that 6% was classed “as new”.

A councillor asked if the amount of money spent over the past 2 years included the winter maintenance grant. It was confirmed that this of grant £1.6m over 2 years was included in £4.4m. The Board acknowledged there was a backlog in funding available, but felt the answer was not to provide a large sum of funding but to provide a little more each year to maintain and catch up on the programme of work, a large amount would probably take more years to spend.

A councillor suggested there was not enough money in the budget to undertake improvements and the service was firefighting. He asked how much money would be needed each year to maintain roads at standard and make improvements? The officer explained that, over five years, £15m would be needed for just the roads, it would then drop down to £10m ongoing. All areas in the city had seen improvements made as part of the previous £9m investment.

A councillor asked if survey information could be made available to Neighbourhood Boards for transparency purposes; it would give a ward-by-ward insight into the state of the roads and pavements. Also, could information about the prioritisation of roads for maintenance be made available to the Neighbourhood Boards to give reassurance that a proper prioritisation system for road repairs was in place.

A councillor felt that decarbonisation should not dilute the work programme, it should not result in less being done in road improvements with the money available. New products could be more environmentally friendly but were likely to be more expensive. Residents expect as many roads and pavements as possible to be improved with the funding available. The officer highlighted that the Department for Transport had introduced a new code of practice around climate change banding and these standards need to be met to obtain funding.

The Board discussed making a recommendation, they were concerned that the current budget does facilitate road improvements and the current administration should look at more funding for highways. A councillor highlighted that given the

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council's financial position lobbying for external funding should be included in the recommendation. However, the Board felt that the recommendation should be about prioritising highways maintenance.

The Board recommended that Council Cabinet prioritise funding for Highways Maintenance and add enough funding each year to make improvements year on year to the roads to reduce deterioration.