

Response to the Planning and Transportation Commission's review on Highways and Footways

SUMMARY

- 1.1 During the first half of 2008 the Planning and Transportation Commission conducted a review on Highways and Footways Maintenance in Derby. At the Commission's meeting on 28 July the resultant report, which makes three recommendations, was finalised and referred to Council Cabinet. At the Cabinet meeting on 2nd September 2008 the three recommendations were adopted. The three recommendations are enclosed in Appendix 2.
- 1.2 This report sets out the work that has been ongoing on highways and footways maintenance over the last year and also sets out further actions.
- 1.3 Two new major contracts commenced in mid 2007; the Street Lighting PFI contract and the Highways Term Maintenance Contract. In the period following September 2008 staff in the Highways Section have had little opportunity to pursue the recommendations, from the Commission review, due to the need to deal with more urgent issues arising out of implementing these new contracts.
- 1.4 However the Council has since joined a national survey, which gathers information on resident's views on a wide range of highways and transport issues. It is hoped that the resulting information will give a more robust and comprehensive method of obtaining residents views, on an annual basis, as well as identifying learning from other authorities which are providing services with higher levels of satisfaction.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the responses to the review recommendations and to approve the ongoing work to maintain the safety and integrity of the highway network.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Introduction

- 3.1 The Planning and Transportation Commission review of Highways and Footways maintenance was reported to Cabinet on 2 September 2008. It was agreed that a report would be presented back to Cabinet responding in more detail to the recommendations that came out of the review.

- 3.2 As this report was being approved in September 2008 staff resources in the Highways section were concentrated on developing and working with contractors to deliver two major new contracts which commenced in mid 2007; the Street Lighting PFI contract and the Highways Term Maintenance Contract. These were new types of contract and brought with them a number of challenging situations, many of which Members are well aware of.
- 3.3 Therefore in the period following September 2008 staff in the Highways Section have had little opportunity to specifically pursue the recommendations arising from the Commission review, however work obviously continues to ensure that we maintain the safety and integrity of our highway network for its users.
- 3.4 This report aims to set out under each of the recommendations the current situation and where we believe further resources should be targeted.

Responses to the review recommendations

- 3.5 The Commission's report drew on the responses to a survey of five other comparable local authorities, which provided data about the;
- i) total kilometres of highway and footway
 - ii) funding and spend in each council area.
- 3.6 The second evidence strand was a questionnaire returned by Pointer Panel members who provided evidence of the public's perception of Derby's highway and footway maintenance. As well as including the city-wide analysis, the responses for each of the 17 wards were included.
- 3.7 The generally favourable outcome of the two surveys led to six conclusions being drawn by the Commission and three recommendations to Council Cabinet. The recommendations and the reasons for the recommendations are set out in full in Appendix 2. Set out below is the current situation with regard to each recommendation.

Recommendation 1

- 3.8 **That the Department and the Planning and Transportation Commission should explore the reasons for the better performance by some local authorities against the highway and footway BVPIs listed in Table 4.**
- 3.9 The review considered performance of the four BVPIs that related to highway maintenance at that time. These are listed in Appendix 3. Since that time only two of these are now national BVPIs. The appendix shows Derby's current performance on these as having improved considerably.

- 3.10 It has not been possible to seek information from the other five authorities involved to establish reasons for better performance but is now considered that there is now little point in doing so for the following reasons.
- Half the indicators are no longer BVPIs
 - Our performance has, on the face of it, improved considerably to levels similar to the best for the two national indicators which are still collected.
 - There is concern, across highway authorities, that the information now collected for the two remaining indicators is not comparable anyway. The base information is now collected by “Scanner Surveys”; these are vehicle mounted cameras, to a national specification, but there is concern that they do not all collect information consistently. They have only been in service for a relatively short time and consistency is likely to improve with use and experience.
- 3.11 The key area of work that is progressing at present to better understand the highway assets, condition and likely future investment levels is the development of a Highways Asset Management Plan, HAMP. The Department for Transport require HAMPs to be completed over the next couple of years in order to assist the DfT and authorities themselves to better prioritise the investment into highway maintenance. Reports will be presented to Members as appropriate during the development of the Council’s HAMP.

Recommendation 2

- 3.12 **That the reasons for the ward by ward variations in perception identified through the Pointer Panel survey should be explored and if justified, and it is not already being done, that the variations should be used to direct and prioritise the highway/footway maintenance programme in areas where the conditions can be shown to merit the elevated level of complaint.**
- 3.13 The variations of perception across wards, which were evident from Pointer Panel responses, could be due several reasons. Prioritisation of highways maintenance works and programmes is currently based on an objective consideration of the structural condition of our roads and footways and the first priority is keeping road surfaces as safe as possible for users. This work is carried out by highways inspectors consistently across the authority’s highway network, irrespective of ward.
- 3.14 The views of residents are certain to be affected by road structure but could also be linked to other factors such as visual impact of highway surfaces, ride quality etc. The level of funding for maintenance at present means that these more subjective factors can only be given limited consideration when prioritising work. As a result, a large number of roads in the city are safe for use but may look very unattractive due to a mass of patches and reinstatements.
- 3.15 At present the city’s highways are being completely re-inspected as part of a coordinated plan to reduce the amount of outstanding repairs on the network. This re-inspection will give us an up to date measure of the relative condition of each road in the wards, which can then be compared to the variations of perception in the Pointer Survey results. The degree of correlation will give some idea of how much Pointer Panel members based their judgements on structural conditions or other factors.

Recommendation 3

- 3.16 **That if it is not already done, consideration should be given to according highway and footway maintenance a higher priority than other non-essential highway and footway works such as wayfinding and other 'cosmetic' improvements and that the available funding be allocated accordingly.**
- 3.17 The Council budget for 2009/10 to 2011/12 was approved at Full Council in March 2009. As part of the setting of this budget significant consideration was given to the planned and reactive highways and footways maintenance budgets, along with all of the other priorities of the Council.
- 3.18 The budget review process for 2010/11 to 2012/13 is underway and information will be presented to Members around the pressures related to highway maintenance to be considered alongside other priorities.

Recent developments

- 3.19 The main evidence within the Commission's review was a comparison of performance and expenditure at Derby City with other similar highway authorities, in addition to obtaining resident's views on the service.
- 3.20 In recognition of the national need for better comparative information, between highway authorities, an annual national public satisfaction survey is now carried out which Derby has taken part in for the first time this year. Background Information about the survey and the way in which it is carried out is included in Appendix 4.
- 3.21 The results of this annual survey, which are to be published in September, should give us more opportunity to compare ourselves with other councils who demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction and performance across a number of highways and transport areas. In addition they will give us continuous information on our own residents' views. Subject to resources, we may then be able to identify different approaches and practices, from other authorities, that will enable us to improve our services. (Note - we expect to include a summary of the results of this survey in the 27 October Cabinet report)

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Background papers:	Background papers - None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Planning and Transportation Commission: Highways and Footways Review Recommendations Appendix 3 - Consideration of BVPI's covering Highways Maintenance Appendix 4 – Overview of National Highways and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1.1 None

Legal

2.1 None.

Personnel

3.1 None.

Equalities Impact

4.1 Uneven surfaces and potholes pose particular problems for sight and mobility impaired residents and visitors.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

5.1 This report promotes the priorities of **'giving you excellent services and value for money', 'making us proud of our neighbourhoods' and 'creating a 21 Century city centre'**.

Planning and Transportation Commission: Highways and Footways Review Recommendations

Given the generally favourable outcome of the two surveys there are only a few immediately obvious recommendations arising from the review. These are listed below:

Recommendation 1

That the Department and the Planning and Transportation Commission should explore the reasons for the better performance by some local authorities against the highway and footway BVPIs listed in Table 4.

Reasons 1

To see whether there are practices or procedures that could be adopted by the Council which would result in improvements against the BVPI standards.

Recommendation 2

That the reasons for the ward by ward variations in perception identified through the Pointer Panel survey should be explored and if justified, and it is not already being done, that the variations should be used to direct and prioritise the highway/footway maintenance programme in areas where the conditions can be shown to merit the elevated level of complaint.

Reasons 2

To direct and prioritise the highway/footway maintenance programme

Recommendation 3

That if it is not already done, consideration should be given to according highway and footway maintenance a higher priority than other non-essential highway and footway works such as wayfinding and other 'cosmetic' improvements and that the available funding be allocated accordingly.

Reasons 3

To address the views expressed by the respondents

Consideration of BVPI's covering Highways Maintenance

At the time of the Commission's review there were four BVPI's relating to highways maintenance:

BV187 % of category class 1 and 2 footways where structural maintenance should be considered

BV 223 % of principal roads where structural maintenance should be considered

BV 224a % of non principal classified roads where structural maintenance should be considered

BV 224b % of unclassified roads where structural maintenance should be considered

BVPI Scores for the Derby City and the other five local authorities who responded to the review were as follows. For all indicators a low percentage score demonstrates a strong performance. The results are for the year 2006/07

	BV187	BV223	BV224a	BV224b
Derby	17%	13%	14%	11%
Halton / Runcorn	25%	2%	6%	8%
Leicester	47%	11%	11%	10%
Peterborough	19%	5%	10%	21%
South Gloucester	18%	5%	9%	12%
Warrington	23%	7%	12%	9%

For the year 2008/09 the results of the two remaining national indicators for Derby are:

	BV187	BV223	BV224a	BV224b
Derby	No longer a National PI	4%	4%	No longer a National PI

Overview of National Highways and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey

The NHT Survey is a postal survey, carried out by Ipsos MORI, appointed by the NHT Network following a competition.

In 2008, the survey's first year, 33 local councils across England took part. 76 English authorities took part in 2009. The standard sample size is 4500. However participants may determine their own sample sizes and many authorities took the opportunity to increase their sample size in 2009. The recipient list is drawn up for each one by Ipsos MORI. In 2009 over 69300 responses were received, an average response rate of 18.7%.

Survey forms are printed individually for each participating authority, to include their logo and a letter signed by a council representative. The survey, which runs to 12 pages, starts with questions asking how important, if at all, members of the public regard different aspects of Roads and Transport Services and how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with each one. It then goes on to ask detailed questions on: Pavements and Pedestrian Facilities, Cycling, Rights of Way, Buses, Public Transport Information, Taxis, Minicabs and Community Transport, Road Safety, Road works, Traffic Management, Causes of Congestion (Traffic Queues) and Condition of Roads and Pavements. It also includes questions on: 'your use of transport', 'using your car' and an 'about you' section.

The results of the survey are all stored in a NHT Network performance database with standard reporting and analysis accessible via this website (Survey Results). The reporting of survey results includes an on-line mapping tool, which will present responses spatially on a map. The development of the mapping capability was funded by a grant from the SW Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (SW RIEP).

In addition to these standard reports members of the Network have full access to the survey data and can devise and run their own reports, graphs and maps as and when required.

How are the responses analysed ?

Individual questions in the survey are summarised into Benchmark Indicators (BIs) and Key Benchmark Indicators (KBIs). The KBIs correspond to local transport plan (LTP) themes.

