

**COUNCIL SEMINAR
24th March, 2016**

Present:- Councillor Sims (in the Chair); Councillors Atkin, Cutts, Elliot, Jones, Khan, Mallinder, McNeely, Pickering, Reeder, Sansome, Julie Turner, Whelbourn and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence were received from The Mayor (Councillor M.Clark), Councillors Beaumont, Buckley, Currie, Ellis, Fleming, Godfrey, Hoddinott, Jepson, Read, Roche and Watson.

HIGHWAY WORKS INVESTMENT 2015/2016 UPDATE AND 2016 WORKS PROGRAMME.

Councillor K. Sims, Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety, introduced Colin Knight, Network Manager, Neil Ayrton, Senior Network Maintenance Officer, Richard Jackson, Principal Network Management Officer and Karen Hanson, Community Safety and Streetscene, to the seminar. The officers had prepared a presentation about the background issues relating to highway works, and an update in relation to the 2015/2016 works programme in particular.

Colin Knight provided some background detail about network management issues: -

- The road network constituted the Council's biggest asset;
- Main roads were assessed monthly. Estate roads were assessed six-monthly;
- There was a management asset plan in place for the road network, in addition the asset condition plan;
- In the 2015/2016 year, £3m was available for Highway Network maintenance for estate-type roads: -
 - This represented 80 schemes and 25km/15m of roads improved;
 - All roads were RAG rated and the roads that had been rated as amber would be prioritised for works;
 - Elected Member and customers were able to suggest roads for consideration.
- Network Management co-ordinated with utility companies to ensure that works undertaken by the Council did not take place when they were due to be utility works that would disrupt the road surface;
- It was anticipated that there would be an annual Members' seminar to appraise Members on the network plan, consider community engagement works and receive suggestions for future works;
- The Council's multi-hog would be in each area once every 3/4 months;
- Colin urged Elected Members to meet their local Ward Highway Inspectors;
- The risks of not addressing potholes were considered, and included the higher costs of 'reactive maintenance';

- Elected Members and members of the public were able to email their suggestions to streetprideAssessmentDesign@rotherham.gov.uk or complete the online form for non-hazardous issues available via the Council's website http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/info/200083/roads_highways_and_pavements/937/report_a_pothole or be telephoning (01709) 336003 for hazardous/emergency issues.

Councillors raised the following questions: -

Councillor Whelbourn thought that the subject must form part of the Member induction programme following the 2016 local Borough elections. He asked whether there was a plan following the anticipated loss of the Business Rate Support Grant?

Colin explained that it was still early days and he was awaiting further information. A plan for footways was required as they were a developing concern. Estate roads remained a priority at the present time.

Councillor Atkin commended the system in a previous year. Both of his suggestions were taken on, repaired well and his constituents were happy. He had a great relationship with his Ward's local inspector and there had only been one example of a job not being completed when it was due to be. The delay was down to a reasonable reason – but Ward Members should have been kept in the loop.

Councillor Atkin asked about roads that had been surface dressed in the past and now really required attention. Was there a better system now available?

Colin confirmed that the method had not been used for many years due to quality and procurement costs. The product available now had vastly improved and had been trialled over a year and continually assessed. The Borough had two really good examples of improved road conditions completed to a high standard using the new method. The method formed part of the ongoing maintenance plans for estate roads.

Councillor Julie Turner asked about how surface water deteriorated road surfaces. Some drains in the Whiston area were blocked with leaves, soil and growing weeds. She asked whether it would be useful for her to identify further examples?

Colin agreed that it would be as it would aid the monitoring and recording system used by operatives in their regular inspections and help to achieve better value for money.

Councillor Elliot felt that road condition breakdowns often happened where previous utility work had taken place and that it was more cost effective to concentrate on these small areas.

REPORT FOR INFORMATION - 24/03/16

Colin explained that the Council must statutorily receive notification of utility works – sometimes utility companies were digging up where no notification had been received. He asked that if Members saw them working but had not received notification to get in touch with his team. Utility companies could work immediately if there was an emergency, but had to retrospectively notify the Council.

Councillor Mallinder had had really positive contacts with Colin's team and thanked them for this. She had a persistent road issue in Dinnington relating to road condition, signage, and staffing changes.

Colin agreed to pass this feedback on to the Teams involved and committed to inform Members of staffing establishment changes.

Councillor McNeely's Boston Castle Ward incorporated the Town Centre and there was a risk that this could be at the detriment to the Ward's residential areas.

Councillor Yasseen felt that Boston Castle's residential area was neglected due to Town Centre works/spend. The Town Centre belonged to all people and areas of the Borough, not just the Boston Castle Ward.

Councillor Reeder agreed that Gerard and Godstone Roads were in dire need of attention.

Colin confirmed that in-cab technology was in place to identify potholes and log them as jobs. Teams on the street were empowered to address a pothole without a Highway Inspector's authorisation.

Councillor Reeder reported an issue on Herringthorpe Valley Road that was very serious.

Colin explained the balance that needed to be struck between half-width and full-width repairs. The benefit of Members going out with Highway Inspectors would be to point these issues out. The Council would need £80-90m to address all red and amber roads. It was therefore considering any new innovations to address potholes.

Councillor Pickering, as fellow Ward councillor, agreed that the road required attention.

Councillor Reeder asked whether the multi-hog was being used to capacity?

Colin explained that the multi-hog was currently out of repair. It worked well on smaller areas but was less efficient for larger spaces.

Councillor Sansome commended his local Highway Inspector. He asked about work carried out by contractors and asked who picked up the cost when their work was not up to standard?

Colin explained that third party work carried out must be guaranteed for two or three years. Contractors were monitored on their performance and fined if appropriate.

Councillor Khan raised service roads in his Ward and referred to investment into Eastwood to improve the environmental scene. Some resurfacing works had never been completed although there were white circles around road condition issues. On Fitzwilliam Road a good number of potholes had been reported. Most had been addressed, but there was a lot of cracking still. It did not give the right impression of the Borough.

Colin committed to look at any suggestions made and he had looked at requests for Eastwood and was very happy to meet with the community.

Councillor Pickering asked about utility company repairs that were not always consistent. Some works started and came to a stop. When would they re-start?

Richard Jackson reported a meeting about the area, including access requirements for the crematorium and cemetery that would need to be done out-of-hours so as not to inconvenience the groups using the area. Richard would feedback to local Ward Members about a completion date.

Councillor Whelbourn asked that staff names and designations be put into the Council Year Book.

Colin agreed that there was a communications plan for the wider Directorate and organisation to improve customer experience.

Karen Hanson explained that the Service had absorbed vacant posts that were not backfilled and that the time was right to provide clarity on posts and functions to stakeholders. She thanked Members for their positive feedback on quality and would make sure it was fed back to staff.

Councillor Reeder referred to a previous communication that informed Members where the multi-hog was going to be operating at any given time. This was useful, could it be reinstated?

Colin agreed that this would be possible.

Suggestions of roads to be considered were made and the RAG system was demonstrated. It was suggested that this could be used as a surgery tool when constituents raised issues of concern.

Councillor Sansome asked what the timescale for consideration was?

A communication would be sent out in June about the roads that would be addressed.

REPORT FOR INFORMATION - 24/03/16

Councillors in attendance raised 24 estate roads across the Borough for consideration for maintenance work.

Councillor Sims thanked the Officers in attendance for their informative presentation, responses to the questions raised and for demonstrating the database.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) That detailed information about where/when the multi-hog would be working be circulated on a continuing basis.

(3) That contact details of the Highway Inspector for each area and where/when Members could join them on an inspection be circulated.

(4) That the staffing establishment changes be shared with Elected Members in due course.