

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL - REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Improving Places Select Commission
2.	Date:	25 th July 2012
3.	Title:	Highway Maintenance - potholes
4.	Directorate:	EDS

5. Summary

The report provides members with a position paper on the arrangements for managing highways safety defects (potholes) and provides background information on budgets/costs and the number of defects dealt with over the last 5 years.

6. Recommendations

- It is recommended that Members note the contents of the report

7. Proposals and details

The 2012/13 highway maintenance budget is made up of several parts:

Capital LTP	£2,048,000
Rotherham Prudential Borrowing	£1,000,000
Revenue Schemes	£160,004
Revenue Surface Treatments	£282,928
Revenue Basic Maintenance	£984,000
	£4,474,932

Safety defect repairs (potholes) are funded from the Revenue Basic Maintenance allocation which for 2012/13 is projected at around £450,000 (about 45%). This type of repair is classified as reactive and we are actively perusing methods to reduce the number of these and increase planned non-reactive repairs.

Over the last 5 years the expenditure on potholes has increased significantly (see below), rising from about £¼m in 2007/8 to almost £½m this year. In 2010/11 and 2011/12 additional funding was provided by the Department for Transport to deal with the impact of the severe winter and this is reflected in the significant increase in the number of repairs made. While the 2011/12 winter was much milder, the previous two years has significantly undermined the general condition of the highways and we are now starting to see the result of years of under-investment in the infrastructure

Year	No. potholes	Cost	Additional DfT funding	Total expenditure
2007/8	10,138	£240,163		£240,163
2008/9	12,062	£242,872		£242,872
2009/10	20,245	£403,149	£300,000	£703,149
2010/11	28,229	£418,291	£691,000	£1,109,291
2011/12	18,347	£427,204		£427,204

The council is responsible for a highway network of 1189 km, and 1680 km of footway and its primary objective is to ensure that they are maintained to the nationally recognised safety standards as contained in the **Code of Practice for Highway Inspections**, potholes are identified by carrying out safety inspections on a cyclic basis to determine the priorities for maintenance and repair and from reports made by the public, members etc through the **Streetpride Connect** 'golden number'.

Defects are categorised as either 'immediately dangerous' which are made safe within 4hrs or 'actionable', which are made safe within 24hours. These very short response times are instrumental in reducing the council's liabilities for claims caused by highways defects; the council has one of the best success rates in defending such claims and a recent audit by our insurers has given us a very good rating in our approach.

The 'industry standard' method (contained in the code of practice) for dealing with safety defects is to sweep out the defect, place in the appropriate material, usually 3mm Fine Cold Asphalt or preparatory mixed material and compact (by hand). As many roads are 'traffic sensitive' it is essential that the defect repairs are completed quickly on site to reduce the health & safety risk to operatives, otherwise (partial) road closures may be required; it is for this reason that hand compaction is used as a temporary measure until a more permanent repair is completed.

Consideration is being given to taking a different approach to dealing with defects by 'planing' out the potholes and immediate surrounds to eliminate the immediate danger and returning several days later to complete a permanent repair.

As part of the longer term maintenance plan we carry out condition surveys on all Rotherham roads/footways, which give us a condition and a suggested treatment. We then use this information to produce a maintenance programme. Every road has a highway category, which identifies the frequency of the safety inspections, for example a road in category 1 is inspected every month, where as one in category 6 is inspected every six months.

The condition of the network in 2011/12 was as follows:

Category	% in need of repair
'A' roads	4%
'B'/'C' roads	10%
Unclassified	16%

The condition of the council's network has, for some years, been in the upper quartile, it is expected that it will fall into the 2nd quartile in the 2012 survey.

The intervention levels (types of work) for safety defects can be found in our Code of Practice for Highway Inspections and Assessment, but the maintenance programme is also influenced by the budget, which is broken down to fund treatment type and road classification.

Each year in October, we use the condition information, customer reports, Ward suggestions, Parish/Town Council suggestions, Statutory Undertakers programmes and other internal works programmes to set out our proposed programme of works for the following financial year based on an anticipated budget.

Work is 'bundled up' work in an area, which may include pre-patching for surface treatments, small patching works and larger type schemes. This allows the Delivery Teams to "set up camp" in that area to maximise efficiency. We also liaise with other Teams to carry out works at the same time. Treatment types (other than potholes detailed above) are broken down in to the following:

No works required

This may be the outcome of the initial works preparation due to others carrying out their works, for example Statutory Undertakers.

Patching

This can be overlay, one course or multiple courses patching in small areas. This type of work is normally funded from the Basic Maintenance budget. We are using a purpose built piece of equipment called a “Multihog” to excavate this type of patching works. This is a self propelled, small milling machine, ideal for small patching works.

Super Patching

These are patches at least 50m in length and at least half width of carriageway or full width of footway/footpaths. These can be overlay, one course or multiple course patching. Usually a large milling machine is employed to excavate these types of patches.

Surface Treatment

This can be accompanied by pre-patching. Pre-patching works are normally funded from the Basic Maintenance budget and the surface treatment from the schemes budget. There are several types of surface treatments, footway/footpath Microasphalt, carriageway Microasphalt, carriageway thin surfacing (6mm) and carriageway thin surfacing (10mm).

Overlay

Usually just the surface course, but can be accompanied by patching.

Resurfacing

Excavate existing surface to accept single or multiple courses, does not include Sub-Base.

Reconstruction

Excavate existing construction and replace with new, includes Sub-Base.

Quality is monitored by the Highway Delivery Teams, the works preparation team and other stakeholders (such as local residents who can report directly to the works preparation team or through Connect.

In order to monitor progress we have set milestones and targets as follows:

- Proposed works programme is agreed by Cabinet Member and released in December prior to the following financial year.
- Works instructions for 90% of the budget is issued by the end of November for that financial year.
- All surface treatment pre-patching to be completed by the end of May in that financial year.
- 90% of all surface treatments to be completed by the end of August in that financial year.
- 90% of all works to be completed by the end of February in that financial year.

We place our proposed works programme and a weekly updated in-year programme on the Council's website. Our standards are published in the Streetpride Service pamphlet. We correspond with effected residents on larger type schemes and send out questionnaires on those schemes on completion.

Our Code of Practice for Highway Inspection and Assessment; and our Highway Asset Management Plan can be found on the Council's website under Road Maintenance.

8. Finance

Financial implications are considered within the body of the report.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

These are covered by the Code of Practice for Highway Inspection and Assessment.

Consideration of making changes to the arrangements for dealing with safety defects (potholes) must be done alongside a risk assessment on the potential impact onto the level of claims for damages, and would need to take into account the views of the council's insurers.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Code of Practice for Highway Inspection and Assessment.

12. Contact

**Stephen Finley, Highway Asset Management Principal Engineer, Streetpride
Ext 22937 email: Stephen.finley@rotherham.gov.uk**