

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

12 MARCH 2015

**REPORT OF REGENERATION
AND TRANSPORT SELECT
COMMITTEE**

CABINET DECISION

REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Smith

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ROAD AND FOOTPATH INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

1. Summary

Surveys indicate that footway and highway maintenance remains high on Stockton Borough residents' agenda, both in terms of what single one area the Council need to improve upon (42% - Residents Survey 2012) and what is the most important factor in determining whether a location is a good place to live (22% - Residents Survey 2012).

The Regeneration and Transport Select Committee was asked by Cabinet to consider the priorities for additional funding allocated for roads and footpaths with the aim of determining:

- Where the investment should be targeted.
- What additional resource can potentially achieve.
- The level of investment required in future years.
- What else could be achieved?

2. Recommendations

The Committee recommend:

1. that officers develop a business case to determine the viability and value of purchasing a vehicle to deliver a velocity patching service in-house or in collaboration with other Tees Valley local authorities.
2. the consideration of a high profile marketing campaign to highlight the work of the Council in its repair of footpaths and highways as well as to improve the reporting of potholes.
3. the Council publishes an article in Stockton News to inform residents of the alternative repair techniques being used and the levels of savings being achieved as an authority.
4. that a 6-year highway maintenance programme is formulated to reflect the new funding period.
5. that officers liaise with other local highway authorities to identify areas of best practice that may develop further efficiency opportunities.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

1. Highways are our most valuable asset and are vital to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the borough. Surfaces are generally deteriorating faster than authorities can make repairs and increasing spells of extreme weather, from cold snaps to flooding are only making the situation worse. A variety of innovative techniques are now being used or piloted by officers to ensure that value for money is maximised. Efficiency savings are or can be made thus enabling more to be delivered across the borough ensuring as far as is practicable a highway network that is in the best possible condition given the resource constraints.

Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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SUMMARY

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommend:

1. that officers develop a business case to determine the viability and value of purchasing a vehicle to deliver a velocity patching service in-house or in collaboration with other Tees Valley local authorities.
2. the consideration of a high profile marketing campaign to highlight the work of the Council in its repair of footpaths and highways as well as to improve the reporting of potholes.
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DETAIL

1. Highway and footway condition is generally rated between 1 and 5, with 1 being brand new and 5 being the worst thus meaning they require some form of remedial treatment. At the time of this review there were 457 highway and footways rated as 5 following inspections from the Council's Highway Inspectors and independent external condition surveys. Approximately 65km of carriageway within the Borough require surfacing works either in the near future or investigation for possible maintenance schemes.

2. The funding from government grants and additional Council revenue provides an investment programme of £9m over the next three years. The additional funds whilst allowing an increase in the number of resurfacing/structural patching schemes with the Borough has also enabled other highway maintenance treatments to be increased / introduced / trialled.
3. The Committee has worked with the Head of Technical Services, Highways Network Manager, and Built and Natural Environment Manager to learn of the alternative and innovatory methods that are becoming increasingly available to address road and footpath failures.
4. With the cost of a traditional pothole repair (as per Department of Transport Guidelines) is approximately £50 per square meter the methods that have been investigated are:
 - Texture Blast - steel shot blasted at velocity on the carriageway to restore skid resistance properties by re-profiling and abrading the aggregate whilst removing debris and dust from the road surface to provide a period of between 2 – 3 years before resurfacing is required.
 - Ulti-Fastpath - A single layer Tarmac product reducing the resources and cost associated with a traditional two stage approach including a base course and surface course.
 - Velocity Patching - a fast, first time, permanent fix approach, meaning reduced need for repeat visits usually undertaken in approximately two minutes, meaning less traffic management implications, improved public perception and significantly more pothole repairs can be undertaken in just one day.
 - Poly-modified Binder - changing the characteristics of normal bitumen with the addition of a polymer, the bitumen allows the mixture to be more cohesive, with much more strength and significant higher resistance to parameters like fatigue and permanent deformations for road pavements.
 - Joint / Crack Sealant - a pro-active maintenance measure used mainly on concrete carriageways which seals surface joints and cracks to prevent the ingress of water in to the substructure.
 - Flexi Pave - uses recycled car tyres as a core material bonded with polyurethane that is constantly able to flex. Its high porosity combined with the flexible properties makes it useable for footpaths, tree surrounds, and trail paths.
5. The following table was provided to the Committee to highlight, where known, the notional level of cost savings or additional repair coverage that can be achieved with the new techniques set against the cost of a traditional pothole repair. Velocity savings are modelled on what could have been saved in 2013/14 if this was used to repair all potholes.

Technique	Savings	Additional area (sqm)	Additional Linear (metres)	Additional Pothole Repairs
Texture Blast	£37,098	12,800	1,969	
Ulti-Fastpath	£91,686	4,500	2,500	
Velocity	£32,352	-	-	1,800
PMB	£14,988	2,264	411	
Total	£176,124	19,564	4,880	1,800

6. The Committee support the use of each alternative method and recognise they are used to treat a variety of issues as there is no single repair method available. They each provide a level of savings welcomed by the Committee who advocate their use.

7. With an average Velocity Patching repair costing £18 per square meter Members considered that this could provide a good invest to save opportunity if such services could be brought in-house or purchased with other Tees Valley authorities. Evidence provided to the Committee was of East Cheshire Council experimenting with Velocity Patching to repair a large amount of road resulting in positive feedback. East Cheshire had worked in collaboration with other LAs. It therefore seemed feasible that one LA could purchase the equipment and hire it to neighbouring LAs to ensure it was fully utilised.
8. In Resident / Viewpoint surveys potholes and road and footpath conditions are high on people's agendas. In the 2012 Resident's Survey there was 31% dissatisfaction (Eastern Area) which rose to 46% in the Viewpoint Survey 2013.
9. The Committee discussed the 'find and fix' advertising that had previously been used to inform residents/motorists about repairs being undertaken. A lot of work is undertaken without the recognition that might be expected. Find and Fix was a simple series of A-Boards which identified the Council was carrying out work which raised awareness and could increase public satisfaction levels. Members identified it could also have a negative perspective if footpaths took a long time between the start and completion of works due to delays in getting the required equipment on site.
10. The Committee also learned of suggested changes to highways maintenance funding that could be distributed to local highway authorities in England from April 2015 to March 2021. The Department for Transport want local highway authorities to have a 6 year programme to align with funding but SBC currently has a 2 year programme.
11. It is proposed that the majority of funding would continue to be provided on a 'needs basis' and receive funding on the basis of the formula comprising information on key highway assets types. An element of funding would then be distributed on an 'incentive basis' with each local highway authority categorised based on where they are on an efficiency curve locating them within three bands. Band 3 authorities would receive the maximum level of funding available, whilst authorities in Band 1 in 2020/21 would receive no incentive funding at all.
12. The Committee was obviously interested to ascertain where Stockton Council would be located in the banding. It was the officers' opinion that due to the on-going work during this review it would be hoped that the organisation would expect to be in Band 2 as it was keen to explore and utilise efficiency measures. The aspiration is to achieve Band 3 and therefore ensure the full level of incentive funding.
13. Members were subsequently keen to ensure that SBC wasn't working in isolation and that the Council could develop and possibly learn from other local authorities. As SBC officers are part of a Tees Valley Highway engineers group, the North East Highway Alliance, and work closely with Durham County Council a high level of cooperation and shared learning already exists.
14. Whilst there are clear business cases for some of the various methods others will require both financial and technical appraisals before reaching a conclusion. Adequate resources are needed in order to achieve robust solutions which in turn deliver value for money and tackle the ever increasing maintenance issues, with short term investments only ever achieving a short term solution. What is to be avoided is the zero-sum game where any level of grant loss is equal to the amount that can be saved from utilising innovative methods so the net change is zero.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

15. The resources identified in the report for road and footpath maintenance are currently funded within Council's agreed Medium Term Financial Plan or have been secured through government grant. The community infrastructure budgets for 2 years will be funded from the £5,590,000 earmarked for infrastructure as part of the 2014/15 budget report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

16. The utilisation of resources of road, footpath and environmental projects will comply with existing statutory legal procedures.

RISK ASSESSMENT

17. Highway infrastructure investment is categorised as low risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Regeneration and Transport

18. Investment in the borough's road and footpath network is critical to ensure all modes of transport continue to function and are accessible to all parts of the community.

Safer Communities

19. Well maintained roads and footpaths ensure the risk of injuries are minimised.

Environment and Housing

20. The Community Participation Budget has been very successful in improving minor environmental issues on a local ward basis and further investment in the programme will ensure those improvements continue to make the contribution.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

21. This report is not subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment because the activities relate to existing systems and programmes that are currently in execution.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

22. None

Name of Contact Officer: Graham Birtle
Post Title: Scrutiny Officer
Telephone No. 01642 526187
Email Address: graham.birtle@stockton.gov.uk

Education related? No

Background Papers None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: N/A

Property N/A