

# **Regeneration and Transport Select Committee**

## **Scrutiny Review of Road and Footpath Investment Opportunities**



**12 March 2015**



Stockton-on-Tees  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Big plans, bright future

Regeneration and Transport Select Committee  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  
Municipal Buildings  
Church Road  
Stockton-on-Tees  
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### **Select Committee – Membership**

Councillor Perry (Chair)  
Councillor N. Wilburn (Vice Chair)  
Councillor M. Clark  
Councillor Dalgarno  
Councillor Dennis  
Councillor Faulks  
Councillor Kirton  
Councillor Rigg  
Councillor N. Stephenson O.B.E.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## Foreword

It is with pleasure that I am able to present the final report of the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee. The Committee has taken its time to investigate the conditions of roads and footpaths in the borough, specifically how they are repaired when needs arise. This has been examined from the points of view of cost and length of inconvenience for repairs to be made.

This is a national concern which has been looked at for a local response. Members were therefore interested to learn of the variety of measures already available to the Council. With such information the Committee was able to ascertain the projected savings from new technology and how this can equate to an increase in area that can be repaired for the same level of spend.

Working with new repair methods should also (at least in the beginning) provide an improved opinion of the Council as the conditions of roads and footpaths have a correlation to the overall satisfaction levels of the Council. As it has an impact on the majority of people either resident or visiting the borough whatever improvements that can be made are recommended to be done.

I want, on behalf of the Committee, to publicly state thanks to everyone involved in the scrutiny review, especially the lead and scrutiny officers, managers and Heads of Service who attended meetings, provided invaluable information and supported the Committee throughout to its final endeavour.

## Cllr Perry - Chair

	<p><b>Councillor Perry</b> <b>Chair – Regeneration</b> <b>and Transport Select</b> <b>Committee</b></p>		<p><b>Councillor</b>    <b>Norma</b> <b>Wilburn</b>        <b>–</b> <b>Vice-Chair</b>    <b>Regeneration</b> <b>and</b>                <b>and</b> <b>Transport</b>       <b>Transport</b> <b>Committee</b>      <b>Select</b></p>
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## Original Brief

### What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

There are approximately 836km (520 miles) of adopted highway within the Borough of Stockton. Technical Services have a budget of approximately £1.5m (Council resources and Government grants) above Local Transport Plan funding to deal with potholes and pavements.

Following the EIT Task and Finish Review of Highways it was recommended that a business case for 'invest to save' opportunities for highway revenue was explored as part of the Council's Value for Money programme. This has led to a number of proactive works and measures to be examined and trialled including:

- The use of more innovative materials.
- Retexturing carriageways and roundabouts rather than traditional resurfacing.
- A joint sealing programme for footpath and carriageways.

The aim of the Committee will be to consider:

- Where to target investment.
- What the additional resources can achieve.
- The level of investment required in future years.
- What else could be achieved?

### The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

To examine the maintenance arrangements for the borough's footways and carriageways with reference to:

- **Funding** – the relationship between funding and performance
- **Management** – the process for identifying, prioritising and tackling maintenance work
- **Costs** – the long term implications of current policy in terms of future public sector costs due to remedial works, insurance claims and any other costs.
- **Options** – alternatives to existing arrangements.

### Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:

Provide an evidence base for future investment opportunities.

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 With approximately 836km (520 miles) of adopted highway within the Borough of Stockton footway and highway maintenance is high on Stockton Borough residents' agenda.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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 (as per Department for Transport Guidelines) which is approximately £50 per square metre. 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

- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 With an average Velocity Patching repair costing £18 per square metre 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.
- R1 The Committee recommend 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.**

- 1.7 The Committee discussed the ‘find and fix’ advertising that had previously been used to inform residents/motorists about repairs being undertaken as a lot of work is undertaken without the recognition that might be expected.
- R2 The Committee recommend 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.**
- R3 The Committee recommend that 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.**
- 1.8 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.
- R4 The Committee recommend that a 6-year highway maintenance programme is formulated to reflect the new funding period.**
- 1.9 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.
- 1.10 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.
- 1.11 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.
- R5 The Committee recommend that officers liaise with other local highway authorities to identify areas of best practice that may develop further efficiency opportunities.**