

Appendix 1 Highways Review – Outcomes

As agreed at 17 November 2021 Transport and Environment Committee

Vision, Strategy and Policy

We will:

- Develop a new Highways Strategy which will set out the highways service the Council wants and the quality/outcomes we require, within the context of the new Council Plan for 2021-31. The strategy will also set out clearly the scope of the Council's client/contractor relationship with Via.
- Refresh and update the current Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan and Policy, and the Network Management Plan, to reflect the latest national policy, the changed way in which people are living their lives (such as undertaking more active travel and prioritising actions to address the climate emergency), and key contemporary issues such as highways flooding and drainage. This update should incorporate a clear highway maintenance funding allocation model, which will be based upon highway condition criteria. The model should also recognise the need to prioritise the unclassified network, and the differing maintenance needs within the unclassified network (across urban roads, for example).
- Embed a “right repair, right first time” approach in our Asset Management Plan and Policy, and Network Management Plan.

Capital Maintenance Programme

We will:

- Introduce a three-year rolling capital programme to support long term planning, scheduling and delivery.
- We will continue the annual member request process.
- Develop and implement a formal “cross asset” prioritisation process to improve targeting of investment and maintenance treatments for all highways assets including drainage. Within this, we will incorporate the prioritisation of footways and the prioritisation of the unclassified network (with weighting to reflect both highway hierarchy and condition).
- Optimise the application of in-situ recycling on capital maintenance works, adopting new and best practice as methods become proven in the market
- Work with Via to improve the management oversight and quality assurance of sub-contractors.

Revenue Maintenance Programme

We will:

- Move to a right repair, right first-time approach, and deliver permanent repairs whenever possible, to reflect the policy position set out above. Within this context, we will:
 - continue to meet national timescales for Category 1 highway defects and acknowledge that this will require the continuing use of cold lay treatments similar to Viafix in order to protect the safety of road users, whilst seeking permanent repair where possible.
 - adopt a right repair, right first-time approach whilst remaining within standard response times for Category 2 and 3 highway defects.
- Ensure appropriate investment in early intervention/prevention treatments to extend the sustainable and effective life of the highway.

- Refresh the core specification for highways defect repairs to reflect the Asset Management/Network Management plans and policies, to ensure optimal treatment selection.
- Ensure that the refreshed specifications are set by the Council and are based around required outcomes rather than outputs.
- Ensure that the selection of highways plant by Via is based on these required outcomes, and the requirements of the move to longer term highway maintenance programming.
- Ensure that the revenue highways maintenance programme is better driven by data and evidence, including:
 - Use of insurance claim data;
 - Artificial intelligence and use of new video survey techniques;
 - real time highway survey data.

Operational Improvements – Via

To support the revised approach to capital and revenue funded highways maintenance programming set out above, Via will make the following operational improvements: -

- Introduction of an Operational Hub to better co-ordinate daily maintenance works and improve efficiency and productivity, and develop a “whole street” approach to highway maintenance.
- Revise its staff training programmes to strengthen focus on customer care, work quality and performance, and better use of IT, and strengthen training for highways operatives on patching techniques.
- Use of technology – Roll out mobile devices to patching teams to improve co-ordination and productivity.
- Invest in mechanised patching plant and equipment that will best deliver the Council’s required outcomes set out above. This will include continuing to seek out, test and trial new plant and techniques.

Drainage

In addition to core highways maintenance matters, the review panel explored current practice and opportunities for improvement in respect of highways drainage management and works. The panel’s recommendations are set out below.

We will:

- Increase the financial provision for drainage maintenance activity and works within the current overall highways funding provision.
- Establish through Via a comprehensive register of grip locations and deliver a planned periodic maintenance programme.
- Through Via, further develop the existing register of highway ditch locations and deliver a planned periodic maintenance programme.
- Through Via, establish a register of sensitive carrier drains and deliver a programme of planned inspections and cleaning
- Through Via further develop the current register of other highway drainage assets (culverts, manholes, catchpits & SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems)) and deliver a planned periodic maintenance programme.
- Through Via establish a planned priority programme of soakaway replacements.
- Utilise a proportion of income from the Permit Scheme income to undertake enhanced inspections of utilities works that take place in the vicinity of drainage assets, strengthening our approach to third party damage recovery and prevention
- Update the MyNotts app to allow easier drainage issue reporting for residents.

- Strengthen our engagement with riparian owners to support better drainage maintenance by the relevant watercourse owners.
- Develop community-based approaches – with local community groups and Town/Parish Councils – to support local drainage maintenance activity that complements the work of the Council/Via.

Neighbourhood (Streetscene) Maintenance

In addition to core highways maintenance matters, the review panel explored current practice and opportunities for improvement in respect of neighbourhood/streetscene maintenance. The panel's recommendations are set out below.

We will:

- Undertake trials of reactive weed spraying in identified rural/urban locations where there is community support/interest.
- Collaborate further with District/Borough Councils to establish whether street sweeping regimes could be established to better manage highways weed growth and coordinate litter collection.
- Further investigate the use of alternative weed spraying treatments and regimes (with the proviso that there is currently little evidence of the long-term viability of current alternative treatments).
- Revise and re-establish a parish engagement/lengthsman scheme, ensuring that where it is implemented it is cost effective.
- Develop a community partnership plan for neighbourhood maintenance that will incorporate:-
 - Opportunities and resources to encourage communities to engage in streetscene maintenance (for example, managing verges to promote wildlife or manually removing weeds in urban areas).
 - Opportunities for communities to participate in reduced weed spraying and grass cutting trials to test public appetite for different/reduced maintenance regimes
 - Reassess how budgets are deployed to increase the provision for streetscene maintenance (eg for tree planting, collecting grass cuttings or for the further roll out of weed removal works).

Street works and Utility Permit Schemes

In addition to core highways maintenance matters, the review panel explored current practice and opportunities for improvement in respect of street works and utility permit schemes. The panel's recommendations are set out below.

We will:

- Continue to implement and strengthen the street work management and permit scheme:
- Continue to analyse the most congested streets and peak travel times to inform and strengthen our permitting arrangements
- Continue to coordinate permits with different street works undertakers in locations and for schemes where there is public benefit
- Explore the potential for increased use of “service strips” in new developments, in partnership with local planning authorities.
- Monitor the approach to lane rental in other County Councils and commission a feasibility study for the introduction of a Nottinghamshire scheme once the permit scheme is fully embedded (2023/24)
- Continue the development of Street Manager software to support timely and efficient permitting.

Communications

We will:

- Move to a communications model that is led and directed by the Council to better support communication and engagement with residents – strategic, operational and campaigns.
- Consider whether this move will require the redirection of resources within the Council and Via.
- Develop and deliver a refreshed comms and engagement plan to support the new model, including the development of a single revised Nottinghamshire Highways brand for all highways related activity. The plan will incorporate:-
 - Greater use of the MyNotts app and digital tools such as push notification
 - Better information for Members' related to highways activity in their wards.
 - The wider use of video explainers – with greater involvement of Members and operatives to better explain highways works
 - Improved correspondence (including web based automatically generated responses) approaches to reflect a more, personalised, and plain-English approach for residents with queries/concerns.
 - Closer links with community influencers such as Parish Councils, to ensure that communities are better informed about local works.
 - Updating and refreshing scheme information/signage to better promote the benefits of highways works.

Performance Management

We will:

- Move to a more outcomes based contractual model with Via – away from outputs towards measuring the things that matter and that contribute to resident-focused outcomes.
- Strengthen the Council's commissioning arrangements to support greater operational engagement with, and monitoring of, Via. Within this, consideration will be given to the potential need for additional resources.
- Unify and better co-ordinate the Council's commissioning arrangements with Via – Highways, Flood Risk, Property, Strategic infrastructure.
- Strengthen external contractor performance and quality control (by Via) through better procurement models and contract mechanisms for performance management
- Improve benchmarking arrangements to help drive performance and provide proof of value for money with visibility for Members and the public

Functional Split and Leadership

We will:

- Undertake a detailed review of the division of responsibility between the Council and Via in key areas, including : -
 - policy and strategy,
 - core asset management and works/scheme/treatment prioritisation
 - major capital programme management
 - the interface with members and residents, including District Managers
- Ensure leadership arrangements in both the Council and Via reflect the outcomes of the Review and the revised roles of both organisations