

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	16 th JULY 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	SEVERE WEATHER POTHOLE FUNDING AWARD - ADDITIONAL ALLOCATION 2014-2015		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR A PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	TRANSPORTATION & STREETCARE	WARDS:	BOROUGH WIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	SAM SHEAN	TEL:	0118 937 2669/72669
JOB TITLE:	ASSISTANT HIGHWAYS MANAGER	E-MAIL:	sam.shean@reading.gov.uk

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To inform Councillors of the statutory duties in respect of highway maintenance and the procedures in place to repair defects.
- 1.2 To seek approval to extend the additional Pothole Repair Plan beyond July 2014 (as previously agreed) so that it can now include unclassified roads within Reading with completion due by March 2015.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee approves the additional pothole repair plan proposal outlined in Section 4.5.
- 2.2 That an update on progress is reported to future meetings of the Traffic Management Sub Committee.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.
- 3.2 To make travel more secure, safe and comfortable for all users of the public highway.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Statutory Duty of a Highway Authority

4.1.1 The Council in its capacity as the Highway Authority has a statutory duty to maintain the public highway.

4.1.2 There are a number of specific pieces of legislation which provide the basic powers and duties relating to highway maintenance as follows:

- The Highways Act 1980 sets out the main duties of highway authorities in England and Wales and in particular Section 41 imposes a mandatory duty to maintain all highways classified as maintainable at public expense. In addition, whilst much of the highway maintenance activity is based in statute and precedents, in the absence of specific powers, authorities also have a general duty of care to maintain the highway in a condition fit for purpose. There is no definition in the Act as to the level of maintenance required although national codes have been produced to give clear guidance.
- The New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 sets out the duties of the street authorities to co-ordinate and regulate works carried out in the highway. It gives effect to a series of Regulations and Codes of Practice, relating to reinstatement of openings, diversionary works, road safety at road works and street works, co-ordination, inspections and record keeping.

4.2 Inspection and repair of potholes

Inspection Regime

4.2.1 All public roads in the Borough have a routine safety inspection to ensure that defects which present a hazard to users of the public highway are identified and dealt with in order that the Highway Authority fulfils its statutory obligations in relation to highway safety.

4.2.2 The frequency of safety inspections depends on the category of road and follows national guidance as outlined below for Reading:

- The principal road network e.g. A class roads are inspected monthly.
- The secondary road network e.g. B and C class roads are inspected every 3 months.

- Unclassified roads are inspected annually.

4.2.4 The Highway Inspectors visit every road and carry out a walked inspection and will identify any defects that meet the Council's investigatory level at the time of the inspection.

4.3 Intervention Levels

4.3.1 There is no statutory figure for the depth of a pothole but many Highway Authorities (HAs) have determined this to be 50mm in fact almost all HAs in the 1990s had 50mm as their investigatory level. In more recent years some HAs have reduced this to 40mm.

4.3.2 The Pothole Improvement Plan deviates from the standard 50 mm investigatory level and includes defects up to a depth of 30 mm.

4.4 Reports received between scheduled inspections

4.4.1 Pothole reports are also received from various sources as outlined below:

- Councillors
- Member of Parliament
- Members of the public through letters, e-mails, web enquiries and by telephone
- Council Officers

4.4.2 All these reports are inspected by the Highway Inspectors and if any meet the investigatory level orders for repairs will be placed. Where they don't meet the investigatory level the person raising the enquiry is advised.

4.5 Additional Pothole Repair Plan (June 2014 DfT Award)

4.5.1 The principle of this plan is to continue to deploy the available resources (2 maintenance gangs) for a fixed period of 8 months (to the end of March 2015) to carry out pothole repairs on the unclassified road network on a road by road basis (roads not included within the current Pothole Repair Plan 2013/14) regardless of whether they meet current policy investigatory levels. Only classified and priority routes were included in the original Pothole Improvement plan 2013/14.

- 4.5.2 As the award was only made available 4 months into the current financial year it will not be possible to cover the entire unclassified road network. It is proposed to align the new Pothole Repair Plan 2014/15 with the existing highway maintenance unclassified roads inspection regime commencing in August 2014.
- 4.5.3 Any ad-hoc reported potholes received on the unclassified roads where the inspections in the first 4 months of the financial year have already been completed will be inspected and included within the plan should they meet the revised investigatory level.
- 4.5.4 This would continue with a step change in repairs by significantly improving roads and reducing repairs in future years. This would generate fewer complaints generally and improve our position by reducing the number of insurance claims submitted to the Council.
- 4.5.5 In order to achieve this, the proposal will be to increase the size of the Highways Team from a 7 gang operation (including the current 1 existing Pothole Repair Plan 2013/14 gang), to an 8 gang operation.
- 4.5.6 The estimates suggest that growing the team to include a further maintenance gang would be adequate to meet both the pothole and income requirements.
- 4.5.7 Once the existing Pothole Improvement Repair Plan 2013/14 is completed at the end of July 2014, the additional gangs can concentrate on tackling the new Pothole Repair Plan 2014/15 to deliver an additional 1500 pothole repairs that Reading is expected to deliver.
- 4.5.8 In order to make best use of the funding available within existing time constraints it is also proposed to use half the Pothole Repair Plan 2014/15 award on additional road resurfacing schemes, which will enable some of the reserves schemes (currently unfunded) approved for Major & Minor Roads resurfacing to be tackled this financial year. This preventative measure will also help improve the resilience of the road network and reduce the number of potholes that would have developed following another winter.
- 4.5.9 It is recommended that progress on the additional Pothole Repair Plan 2014/15 is reported to the Traffic Management Sub Committee meetings.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 Schemes are identified through assessment process however members of the public also request sites and these are considered as part of the assessment process.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Under the 1980s Highways Act the Borough Council is required to carry out highway maintenance and maintain highway structures.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Pothole Repair Plan 2014/15 Grant award is for £ 163,833.
- 8.2 Financial split - Potholes vs Resurfacing: It is proposed to split the Grant award 50/50 between pothole repairs and road resurfacing
- 8.2 The net expenditure by the end of the 2014/15 financial year will be neutral by utilising the expanded resources to generate further income to offset the additional costs.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 LTP document.
- 9.2 Correspondence from the Department for Transport.
- 9.3 Traffic Management Advisory Panel reports June 2013, September 2013, November 2013, January 2014, March 2014 and June 2014
- 9.4 Policy Committee Pothole Repair Plan report of 10th June 2013
- 9.5 The list of A, B and C class roads