

QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor Duveen to ask the Chair:

Road Maintenance Programme

The council has a programme for maintaining roads and manages to re-surface a number of roads each year. However, the programmed only seems to include whole roads rather than smaller parts of our road network that need replacing.

For instance, the patch of Combe Road near the junction with The Meadway in Tilehurst has had innumerable potholes fixed over the past few years, and more keep opening or re-opening with every rainfall. It seems to be an enormous waste of money to keep patching this section of Combe Road (see attached photos), not to mention the annoyance to drivers of having to go over pothole after pothole, when this 20 metre section of road could be re-surfaced without waiting years for the whole of Combe Road to be due for re-surfacing.

There are other sections of road that desperately need re-surfacing outside of the current programme. Walnut Way between the junction with Tyle Road and the entrance to the car park is in a similar state and I am sure that other councillors will know of similar sections of roadway that need re-surfacing in their wards.

Could the council consider re-surfacing sections of roadway that need it rather than waiting for whole roads to be considered for action?

REPLY by the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by Councillor Page, Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport:

I thank Cllr Duveen for his question.

Due to severe nationally imposed budget constraints the Council has had to resurface roads on a priority basis and spend the very limited Government funding in the most cost-effective way. In order to do this the Council has aimed to resurface large sections of road, or full road lengths in the case of most residential roads.

Since 2010 the majority of the reduced annual Government capital road maintenance funding awarded to Reading had to be directed to the strategic road network, which carries the highest volumes of traffic and are our highest risk roads, resulting in a steady decline to our residential road network.

As was set out in the attached Council press release of 17th December 2019, the Council is proposing to make a substantial and unique investment of £ 9m over the

next 3 financial years, which will deliver a comprehensive Boroughwide road and footway resurfacing programme.

This extensive resurfacing programme will include full road lengths with sections of badly deteriorated roads, like Combe Road and Walnut Way raised in your question, being structurally repaired in advance of the final surfacing layer over the whole length of road.

After many years of central government underfunding this investment in Reading's roads will reverse the decline in the condition of our local residential road network.

The Council is committed to improving local residential roads and footpaths by substantially reducing the number of potholes on the public highway. This will in turn improve customer satisfaction and allow our residents to take greater pride in Reading.

This investment will be spread Boroughwide and colleagues will be provided with a list of prioritised roads in their wards derived from the road assessment process. This will enable councillors to contribute towards ensuring that the right roads are being addressed on a priority basis.

The Council will be tendering a substantial contract for the road resurfacing in order to achieve the best value and to ensure that as many roads as possible can be included within the programme.

Our in-house Highway Works Teams will be assisting with the delivery of this ambitious programme by carrying out the structural repairs of the road in advance of the surfacing contractor, as well as delivering the footway resurfacing programme.

I would like to re-assure colleagues that, with regard to on-going pothole repairs, the Council has always complied with our highway obligations and ensured that the public highway is inspected and all defects meeting our stated intervention level policy are repaired within the appropriate timescales.

RBC PRESS RELEASE 17TH DECEMBER 2019

[Reading Council News] £9 Million Proposed for Reading's Biggest Ever Road Investment Programme

Reading Council will embark on the Borough's biggest ever road repair programme as part of a new £9 million investment package being proposed.

Over the next three years, every resident and road user in Reading will benefit from newly laid local road surfaces, newly laid pavements and footpaths and a purge on potholes, which is being proposed as part of the Council's new budget for 2020 -2023.

While the Council carries out a main road resurfacing programme every year, an estimated 80% of the current maintenance backlog in Reading relates to residential roads and pavements. Most of the complaints received by the Council and local Councillors are about the condition of residential roads.

As a result, around £2.5 million – the bulk of the proposed new capital funding – would be invested next year on new road surfaces and repairs for residential streets and housing estates, with more than £500,000 spent on new pavements surfaces. The Council will continue to

invest up to £900,000 of the annual Local Transport Plan capital award, received from central Government, on main roads.

Roads will be selected using the Council's existing road priority selection criteria, where they are repaired in order of condition. It is envisaged that Councillors will be provided with the prioritised road list for their ward and will then be able to feed their local knowledge into the process, as they are often the first lobbied by residents about priorities in their areas. The rolling list of roads would be reviewed annually to ensure the money is being spent where it will make the most impact.

Councillor Tony Page, Reading Borough Council's Lead Member for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, said:

“This is the most substantial investment on improving road surfaces that Reading has ever seen. Hundreds of residential roads will be resurfaced or repaired over the next three-year period, with the bulk of the Council's investment on residential roads or local housing estates, where the largest maintenance backlog exists.

“At the same time we intend to invest in new pavements and footpath surfaces, whilst continuing to invest in repairs and resurfacing of main roads across Reading.

“In the last year more than 5,000 potholes have been filled across Reading. This additional investment, and continued efficiencies within the highways department, is also giving the Council the opportunity to review the current investigatory criteria for repairs, which will further improve the condition of road surfaces across Reading.”

The proposed £9 million investment programme includes the appointment of a project engineer to manage the 3 year project. If proposals are agreed, a contractor would be appointed in early spring with the work beginning early new financial year and running through to late autumn every year.

The Council's planned £9 million investment forms part of the Council's new Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which was approved for public consultation at a meeting of the Council's Policy Committee last night (Dec 16th). The draft MTFS and spending plans for the three years 2020/21 to 2022/23 can be found

at: <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s9629/Budget%20and%20MTFS%20Report.pdf>

Reading Borough Council's final budget for 2020 to 2023 will be agreed in February.

QUESTION NO. 2

Councillor Whitham to ask the Chair:

School Streets Update

Congestion outside of some Reading schools such as Redlands primary school in my ward is a real problem. All children deserve a safe route to school. Can I please get an update on plans to trial school streets in Reading?

REPLY by the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by Councillor Page, Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport:

I thank Councillor Whitham for his question.

I would draw the attention of colleagues to the pioneering work done by the London Borough of Hackney in introducing School Streets (with seven now in operation) and in very recently circulating to all local authorities a very helpful 'Toolkit for Professionals'.

This document rightly highlights the fact that School Streets can only be introduced in partnership with the local school and the active engagement and support of teachers, parents and local residents.

Reading Council is open to expressions of interest from schools wishing to consider trialling this initiative and is already in discussion with a number of schools.

It is worth noting that School Streets will be operated and managed by the schools and local community, with the local authority administering the necessary legal processes.

Implementation, even on a trial basis, will be subject to local support and there will likely be conditions about the types of street that could be eligible (for example, avoiding closures on key emergency service routes or public transport routes).

Officers are developing appropriate processes and seeking to identify funding sources to enable any trials of school streets in the Borough.