

SCRUTINY PANEL A
INQUIRY INTO THE HIGHWAYS APPROACH TO ASSET MANAGEMENT
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3RD JUNE 2010

Present:

Councillors Ball (Chair), Mrs Damani, Harris, Kolker, Morrell, Parnell and Turner

1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED that Councillor Kolker be appointed Vice-Chair of the Panel for the 2010/11 Municipal Year.

2. APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN PANEL MEMBERSHIP

Apologies had been received from Councillor Dean, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport and Councillor Odgers. The Panel noted that in accordance with the provisions of Procedure Rules 4.3 and 4.4, Councillor Harris replaced Councillor Odgers, for the purposes of this meeting.

3. INTRODUCTION TO THE INQUIRY – HIGHWAYS APPROACH TO ASSET MANAGEMENT

The Panel considered the report of the Head of Policy and Improvement detailing the terms of reference and draft inquiry plan as approved by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 20th May 2011 and requesting that the Panel considers the background information provided. (Copy of the report circulated with the agenda and appended to the signed minutes).

The Panel received a presentation from the Public Realm Manager and the Asset Manager to enable Members to understand how the council assessed the state of the roads and pavement repairs, with a focus on how these repairs were prioritised. The presentation consisted of a broad overview of the local and national perspective with regard to highways repair, how the Transport Asset Plan developed and was delivered and the prioritisation matrix.

The Panel noted that:-

- Southampton's Highway Assets were its largest asset with a gross replacement cost of £985 million with the approximate breakdown of the replacement cost as follows:
 - * roads/carriageways and footways – 65-70%
 - * structures and bridges - 30%
 - * street lighting and safety road constraints – the balance.
- there was a funding backlog of £85 million and it would take approximately 12 years to clear the backlog by spending a total of £12-£15 million per year;
- Southampton was one of the first authorities to have a **Transport Management Asset Plan (TAMP)**, approved in June 2008, which was a strategic asset management approach to best meet the needs of current and future residents and users by prioritising work. It was

a statutory requirement for local Authorities to report on how their assets (highways) were managed in respect of the condition, performance and treatment/ preventative maintenance; The TAMP had been supported by all political parties and there was no political intervention;

- **roads** in Shire counties which were more rural were maintained at a different standard to urban roads and that in terms of mileage and community, Southampton could be benchmarked with similar authorities in Plymouth and Bristol;
- that the basic construction of a large number of unclassified roads built in the 1940's was either inadequate or no longer appropriate for today's levels of traffic; At some point most lorries will travel on an unclassified road.
- Government had stopped national indicators for unclassified roads, with a greater focus of recent spending on principal and classified roads;
- maintenance and repairs on unclassified roads was done in smaller structural patches followed by a thin overlay;
- the life expectancy of principal main roads was 10 to 12 years and unclassified road was 4 to 8 years. However, it was noted that then a principal road fails it has a more significant impact on the community and a higher cost of repair as these are gateways to the city and often have major safety issues;

- Southampton's roads had the following **performance indicators**:

Roads	Performance Indicator (poor/ needing repairs)
Principal A	8% (good and improving)
Principal B + C	7%
Unclassified roads – 450 km	21% defective and the construction not robust enough to counteract bad weather, traffic and weight levels.

- **utility companies** under the Road and Street Works Act 1991, had the right to open highways – these powers were strengthened by the Traffic Management Act 2004; repair work had to be completed within 2 years from implementation; this was monitored by the council who could lay fixed penalty fines and sample repairs; monitoring this is no mean feat as the number of utility companies had now grown to around 200;
- repair/construction work done by **outside contractors** had a 12 month guarantee which was an industry standard as any major defect would materialise within the first 12 months;
- **surveys** of all the condition of city roads were done at least every 6 months to ascertain any reactive repairs to reduce rapid deterioration and ensure safety for the travelling public;
- annual surveys were done with a scanner which could detect 42 road defects; this is used as a national indicator reported to government;
- surveys of footways had commenced this year so future information would be improved upon and similar to that on carriageways;

- quite often preventative maintenance was done to areas that were rated amber to prevent them from reaching red condition where more expensive maintenance work would be required;
- due to access issues surveys on drainage were not systematically carried out but recorded alongside the works programme.
- with the new legislation in the Flood and Water Management Bill, local authorities were required to take the lead on the management and co-ordination of drainage issues and Southampton had commissioned a Surface Water Management Plan which was funded by Defra; this would identify risks and options for alleviating flooding in future;
- the M27 network to Dock Gate 20 was now recognised as a route of national importance and discussions were being held with Government, although there was no obligation on ABP to contribute to repairs to public roads ;
- there were very few corporate complaints from the public about our roads but rather requests for services for example road resurfacing and potholes, which were received via Action Line;
- Section 278 agreements were more appropriate than 106 agreements as they forced developers to carry out necessary works on highways at their risk and expense;
- Southampton was in the process of securing a **highways service partnership** with Balfour Beatty. The contract seeks to maximise the use of existing resources to better manage and reduce the decline of the city's highways assets;
- when the contract is signed, all the services (excluding ROMANSE which manages traffic signals and the control centre) would be outsourced to Balfour Beatty (including staff) who would carry out surveys and produce future works programmes. These will be discussed and agreed with the relevant Cabinet Member and approved through the normal council channels;
- appropriate intelligent repair systems were being used to maintain carriageways from a complete resurface (which can last between 10-20 years), through to a thin overlay or structural re-patching;
- the messages about what we are providing needed to be delivered effectively to residents, businesses and the community effectively;

RESOLVED

- (i) that as public perception and the expectation gap was important there should be better communication with the public on how the authority was dealing with Highway issues such as priorities and the cost effectiveness of the processes utilised; and
- (ii) that the report of the Head of Policy and Improvement and the comments and presentation received from the Public Realm Manager and Asset Manager, along with the ideas and suggestions contributed by Members of the Panel , be placed in the register of evidence of the Inquiry into the Highways Approach to Asset Management.