

Minutes

PROPERTY, HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE

18 October 2022



Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Keith Burrows (Chairman) Alan Chapman (Vice Chairman) Adam Bennett Elizabeth Garelick Ekta Gohil Kamal Preet Kaur Peter Money (Opposition Lead)</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Poonam Pathak, Head of Highways Steve Clarke, Democratic Services Officer</p>
19.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana with Councillor Ekta Gohil substituting.</p>
20.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
21.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 20 September be approved as a correct record.</p>
22.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items were marked Part 1 and would therefore be considered in public.</p>
23.	<p>HIGHWAYS NETWORK PRIORITISATION AND MAINTENANCE (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Poonam Pathak, the Council's Head of Highways, was present for this item and introduced the report for the Committee giving an overview of how Hillingdon prioritises its selection of Highways that are designated for repair and resurfacing. It was highlighted that Hillingdon regularly commissioned condition surveys of the entire Highways network that the Council was responsible for in the Borough, Members were</p>

informed that these surveys adhered to the UKPMS (United Kingdom Pavement Management System). Recent changes in the Council's procedures meant that prioritisation for works had not only been relying on the condition surveys but included a combination of factors such as engineering implications, bus routes, footfall, road users, proximity to schools, accident claim data and enquiries from the public and Members. Once the data had been combined, each section of Highway in the Borough received a prioritisation score which fed into the scheduling of works under the Highways forward planning programme.

Officers went on to inform Members of the innovative Highways repair and resurfacing techniques that the Council was currently trialling, this included Warm Mix Asphalt (WMA) which offered a low emissions approach by manufacturing and laying asphalt at lower temperatures, without compromising performance. It was noted that this technique had been trialled in both the north and south of the Borough and was soon to be trialled along Brickwall Lane in Ruislip. By way of clarification, officers highlighted the difference in the natural structure underneath the roads in the north and south of the Borough; where the south of the Borough had strong and solid sub soil, the north side of Hillingdon had a softer London clay base. This structural issue had recently manifested itself when works were being carried out on Northwood Way in Northwood, where the road had collapsed due to the soft sub soil level. This was highlighted as the reason why structural works more commonly took place north of the A40.

It was noted that the Council was soon to be trialling a new recycled sub-base material, known as 'Aggrebind' which would reduce the import of quarried aggregate by primarily utilising excavated soil. The Committee commented that the use of innovative and less carbon intensive resurfacing methods would be an incredibly important step with regard to the Council's green agenda.

Members sought clarification on the frequency and procedure of the Highways conditions surveys. It was confirmed that the condition surveys were carried out on the Council's entire Highways network every two years by an independent contractor; the survey project was time consuming and lasted for approximately one year, following this there was a further project to assess the survey data which lasted for a further year; the process then repeated. It was also noted that there was a separate in-house process for carrying out Highways inspections. Members also noted that the prioritisation score and data given to each stretch of highway required specialist knowledge to interpret.

The Committee asked as to how Members' Enquiries from elected councillors and petitions received from members of the public fed into the prioritisation of repair and resurfacing works. Members were informed that in recent years, information received from ward councillors and members of the public had been given more weight in putting together the work programme; it was also noted that only a small number of petitions had been received requesting resurfacing works in recent years. If a petition were to be received, then it would prompt further condition analysis of the stretch of highway it pertained to.

Members highlighted the importance of facilitating communication between the Council and residents regarding any scheduled works in their area. Whilst it was understood that emergency works were often necessary, particularly from utility companies, and these short notice works would allow minimal ability to inform residents; the Committee suggested that it would be useful if a summary, in layman's terms, of the work that goes into prioritising, scheduling and carrying out resurfacing works, could be put into

an article in the Hillingdon People magazine.

The Committee sought clarification on what inspection work was done following any highways repair or resurfacing to ensure the work was carried out to an appropriate standard. It was noted that, with limited resources, the Council was unable to inspect 100% of the work carried out by contractors, however, randomised checks were carried out regularly.

The Committee thanked officers for their report and praised the standard of the resurfacing works carried out in the Borough.

RESOLVED: That the Property, Highways & Transport Select Committee noted the content of the report and provided feedback to officers as appropriate.

24. **SELECT COMMITTEE REVIEW: OBTAINING BEST VALUE AND PRACTICE FOR THE COUNCIL'S HIGHWAYS RESURFACING PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 6*)

The Chairman introduced the item as the first witness session of the Committee's review into the Council's highways resurfacing procedures. It was noted that a research report had been prepared by officers as a starting point for the review and to assist the Committee's discourse. A brief overview of the report was delivered highlighting Hillingdon's Highway network, the Council's maintenance procedures and the highways safety inspection procedures. Poonam Pathak, the Council's Head of Highways and a key officer in the implementation and strategic development of the Council's Highways maintenance programme, was present as a witness for the review.

Members initially sought to understand, with regard to footways resurfacing, the criteria which dictated why different materials and resurfacing types were used on different footways in the Borough. It was noted that, previously, the Council had operated on a 'like for like' basis by which if a slabbed footway required resurfacing, it would be repaved with slabs similar to that of the original condition, however, the Council had recently moved away from this approach, to a more cost effective method of repaving footways using tarmac regardless of the original type of surfacing on the footway. The Committee were informed that resurfacing with paving slabs was approximately 60% more expensive than tarmac resurfacing. Further to this it was noted that the life cycle of paving slabs was often inferior to tarmac as slabs tended to break where vehicles had mounted the pavement. Although it was noted that a 'like for like' method was preferred by residents, the priority for the Council had to be the safety of the footways and by adopting a more cost effective approach, the Council could maintain the safety of a higher quantity of footways to an appropriate safety standard. There were occasions where further analysis and discussion needed to take place before agreeing the appropriate resurfacing techniques, this was most commonly within conservation areas where conservation officers were consulted with.

The Committee were informed that roughly half of the highways maintenance works were carried out in-house, with the other half carried out by external contractors. It was noted that the in-house work mostly consisted of the highways repairs and patchwork, making regular use of the Council's two Rhino-Patch machines, where the external contractors would be used for more extensive resurfacing and more intensive repair works. The Committee were informed that the Council's resurfacing contract was reviewed every five years and would be up for review in 2023, the procurement process for which would be starting in the coming months.

Members sought clarification with regard to any potential works that may be undertaken by the Council on some of the major highways in the Borough where maintenance of which did not fall under the Council's responsibilities. It was noted that Borough Principal Roads, including the Uxbridge Road and Hillingdon Hill, traditionally were funded for resurfacing by Transport for London (TfL); however, due to the financial issues experienced by TfL in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, the funding for this resurfacing work had stopped leading to rapid deterioration of these high traffic flow routes, used constantly as primary bus routes by TfL. Members noted that, as TfL emerges from the financial issues brought on by the pandemic, it was hoped that TfL funding would recommence, the Council continued to bid for TfL funding for these roads.

The Committee heard how Highways Authorities outside of London would traditionally apply for funding from central government, the equivalent funding for London Boroughs would come through TfL. The financial pressures seen by TfL in recent years had led to more budget pressures which was having a real impact on the quantity of work that could be carried out by the Council's Highways team. Members heard how all London Boroughs were lobbying central government for alternative funding streams through the 'State of the City' report, Hillingdon contributed its condition survey data to the report.

Members noted the relatively poor condition of some major arterial routes in the Borough, notably the Bath Road, and queried what could be done to communicate to the authorities responsible for the maintenance of those roads that they are in need of repair. It was highlighted that requests had been made for TfL to address the deterioration of the Bath Road although it was noted that TfL would have their own prioritisation criteria and the Council did not have any powers to force repair works from TfL, any defect reports were communicated with TfL however, unfortunately the Council was unable to spend its own Highways budget on the TfL road network. Should an accident claim be made due to the defective nature of the footway or roadway, TfL would be the responsible authority.

Members noted that the Highways Safety Inspection Policy & Procedure document, provided with the agenda papers, showed that the last revision had taken place in February 2020; Members queried whether the document should be reviewed on a more regular basis. Officers confirmed that the policy was reviewed annually, however, reviews were only noted on the policy document when revisions were made as a result of the review. The Committee felt that the policy should state when the last review took place, regardless of whether any changes were made as a result; this would show anyone inspecting the policy that the document was regularly reviewed. Officers confirmed that this could be achieved fairly easily as there was an internal log of each annual review of the policy.

Following on from a point made on the previous item regarding innovative resurfacing technologies such as Warm Mix Asphalt (WMA), it was stated that, despite the environmental positives brought by the use of WMA, it was currently more expensive than traditional asphalt as it was only made in small batches due to a smaller demand; it was expected that in the future, as more Boroughs and clients request the use of WMA, the cost would come down through the economies of scale. The Committee were supportive of the use of WMA and placed an importance on exploring less energy intensive methods of resurfacing.

The Committee thanked the Head of Highways for attending the meeting as a witness for the review and helping the Committee set the groundwork for their highways

	<p>resurfacing review.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Property, Highways & Transport Select Committee noted the contents of the report and used the first witness session of the review to enquire as to the Council’s existing approach to footways and carriageways resurfacing.</p>
25.	<p>CABINET FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman introduced the item. It was highlighted that the Cabinet Forward Plan for October had not yet been published and therefore Members had in front of them the September Forward Plan which they had already seen at the previous meeting.</p> <p>The Committee sought to follow up on a point raised on the Cabinet Forward Plan at their previous meeting with regard to the Battle of Britain Bunker Phase 2 – Water Ingress item; Members had originally sought assurance that the drainage mitigation measures were not associated with the relatively new visitors centre built on the site. It was noted that officers had confirmed that the water ingress issues were relate to the World War Two bunker itself and not the newly built visitors centre.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Property, Highways and Transport Select Committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.</p>
26.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>The Committee noted the work programme and it was confirmed that November’s meeting would take place on Wednesday 16 November. It was also noted that the Committee’s January 2023 meeting had originally been scheduled for Tuesday 03 January, however, due to a clash with group meetings taking place that evening, the date of the Committee’s January meeting was subject to change, it was agreed that a new date would be confirmed with Members outside of the meeting.</p> <p>The Chairman discussed the possibility of inviting the Cabinet Member for Property, Highways & Transport to attend a future witness session for the Select Committee’s Highways Resurfacing Review. It was confirmed that an invite would be sent to the Cabinet Member and the meeting that they would attend would be confirmed in due course.</p> <p>With regard to the interim report following up on the Public Safety & Transport Select Committee’s review into electric vehicle infrastructure, it was confirmed that delays in the procurement of a Council supplier for electric vehicle charge points meant that the interim report would no longer come to Committee; instead, the complete 12-month follow up report would be scheduled for April 2023. As a potential alternative for the Select Committee, and with the permission of the Cabinet Member for Property, Highways & Transport, the Committee would receive a draft version of the Council’s overarching electric vehicles strategy, which was being developed by officers.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Property, Highways and Transport Select Committee noted the Committee’s work programme.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 7.50 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Steve Clarke on 01895 250693. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.