

Extracts from other Overview and Scrutiny reports

Other Local Authorities have previously investigated issues surrounding Highways and from these other reports we have put together information considered relevant to Chorley.

The reports can be accessed in full using this link:

<http://democracy.chorley.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=12874&path=324,12873>

Lancashire County Council - Overview and Scrutiny Highways, trees and verges

Grass cutting

The current standard for urban grass verge amounts to around 5 cuts per annum. The standard for rural verges is broken down into zones. The 1m safety strip next to the carriageway must be cut 2 or 3 times per annum. The next metre width is cut once each year in the summer and this allows many wild flowers to thrive. And the outer zone is left untouched and undisturbed, apart from occasional winter thinning and coppicing.

District councils have corporate commitments to the protection and promotion of their “green” environment and infrastructure, whether for wildlife protection, visual amenity or landscape character preservation. This means that they often have standards for grass cutting in their district public space which are higher than those of the County Council, but which reflect their own local conditions. Some Parish Councils have also set their own grass cutting standards.

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There are some districts that disagree in principle with the current arrangements. They would prefer to see urban grass cutting standards set locally, but delivered out of County Council budgets. The problem with this is that it does not offer opportunity for enhanced level of service and is, therefore, likely to be a less efficient use of public money.

Under the banner of a recent policy initiative called Team Lancashire, a pilot project with South Ribble Borough council is underway to enhance public service delivery of streetscene related functions, including grass cutting. The funding for Team Lancashire comes from the Lancashire Sub- Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and the aim of it is to create an environment within Lancashire whereby joined up local government working is seen to be the way to do business. The arrangements for grass cutting under this pilot project is for the district council to carry out all grass cutting in the area for the same money but providing a higher standard of service than previously.

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Highways Trees

There is scope for more cooperation between the county and district councils in making responsible decisions about highways trees.

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Conclusions

Conclusions

The County Council does a good job in ensuring that our highways are kept safe for those who use them. However, the green element to the highways performs a number of valuable functions that are not being accorded the importance they deserve. Our commitments and obligations to achieve "safe travel" and a "high quality environment" are to some degree in conflict, with the balance lying too heavily towards the former.

As a result, the aspirations of "Ambition Lancashire" and the County Council's corporate commitments are not being met as well as they might. This is because of budgetary and organisational limitations of the current arrangements. It is also possible that Lancashire will not

meet the requirement of the Regional Spatial Strategy in ensuring "No Net Loss" of our landscape assets. And the Lancashire public is concerned that loss of tree coverage in particular will have a serious and permanent impact on our natural environment for our future generations.

There is some good environmental management work going on, including by district councils, and some new funding coming on stream through both "Team Lancashire" and the LAA. However, there is scope for doing things substantially better than simply managing the highways green asset at minimal cost. There should be more decision-making input into the management of it by ecologist, arboricultural and landscape planning expertise and with more effective cooperation with district partners.

There should be a more planned approach to management. As far as possible, the asset should be quantified and analysed, and budgets separated as much as possible from maintenance of the highways hard asset. In addition, the County Council must develop a mechanism to secure long term revenue funding for the responsible and proper maintenance of the existing asset and for future planting schemes that are part of new road or urban developments carried out under capital expenditure or private financing.

Current standards and arrangements with district partners for grass cutting are acceptable and represent efficiency. The "Team Lancashire" pilot project being undertaken with South Ribble offers a useful lead for others in how current levels of service could be enhanced and efficiencies made. And there is scope for more attention to be paid to our biodiversity duty in this regard. When it comes to highways trees, the County Council is yet to recognise properly their full and unique value, and indeed the Council's duties and aspirations in this regard. The current policy regarding tree planting is understandable given the budgetary arrangements and pressures, but it is not acceptable in the long term. Better facility must be made for planting new trees in the highway in a responsible way. Currently, there is an effective stand-off, which in the long term will result in a significant loss of coverage. Highways trees are one of Lancashire's most important woodland assets and one of its key landscaping features.

Furthermore, they offer excellent opportunity to promote and enhance the county's green infrastructure and its biodiversity. As such, they should be more fully integrated into our Woodland Vision and should be an important element in any future tree strategies that might be developed.

Recommendations

1. The County Council's Environment Directorate should make changes that allow it to follow more closely the DfT's Code of Practice for maintaining the highways in an environmentally responsible way. In particular, it should allow for greater input from and sharing of information with the ecological, arboricultural and landscaping expertise that exists in Lancashire. And it should seek to adopt more sympathetic maintenance techniques within resource constraints.
2. The County Council should continue with its current arrangements for grass cutting, but should look to the Team Lancashire initiative in South Ribble for how future service enhancements and efficiencies can be made.
3. The County Council should reverse its current policies of (1) not replacing or planting trees in the highway except if required to do so for new schemes or refurbishments; (2) discouraging private developers from landscaping on new roads that will become adopted by the County Council in the future. This reversal must happen only with an accompanying change in current funding and budgetary arrangements and must not result in an effective budget cut for other highways maintenance works.
4. The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development should submit a request to the Cabinet of the County Council for the reinstatement of the landscape maintenance budget that was cut in 2004.

5. The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development should develop a reliable mechanism in the budget process to ensure that sufficient revenue funding is made available for the proper and responsible maintenance of the existing highways natural asset, in order to ensure that his responsibilities for "safe travel" and a "high quality environment" can both be met.

6. The County Council should rule that any new schemes involving highways landscaping – funded through capital expenditure or private financing – must have long term maintenance costs factored into the revenue budget.

7. Working together with its district partners and other agencies, the County Council should:

- undertake a survey, analysis and assessment of highways verges to provide an evidence base for the development of strategies for planting, management and enhancing biodiversity

- develop an authoritative Guide for responsible and appropriate tree planting

- develop a county-wide tree strategy that includes highways trees as an important element to it and allows for greater consideration to be made for possible alternatives for highways trees, such as schemes to encourage private residents to plant trees in their front gardens.

- Improve access for those that need it to arboricultural expertise and advice

8. The County Council should seek additional funding for planting highways trees from the "Woodland from Waste" initiative which is part of the new Waste Management Strategy. In addition, the County Council should consider the possibility of securing capital funding for the removal of dangerous trees and planting replacements.

9. The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development should lobby the Forestry Commission to include the surveillance of highways trees in their regular national inventory and make this data available to the County Council.

South Ribble Borough Council - Making Inroads: The Way Ahead - A Scrutiny Review into the Condition of Roads & Pavements

Executive Summary

The problem of ongoing maintenance of roads and pavements is not one we expected to solve; however, if this report clarifies communications, raises awareness and provides a lead on policy direction we will have added some value to the process.

We quickly identified that there needs to be closer working relationships between county and district councils, and utility companies. The new Traffic Management Act 2004 aims to improve communication and co-ordination between all stakeholders and ultimately to tackle congestion and reduce traffic delays by introducing a new permit scheme where works of a significant scale must apply for a permit prior to starting work. The introduction of this scheme will allow for improved scheduling of works, for example Lancashire County Council could ensure that road works are not undertaken on a main road and the main diversion route at the same time. The introduction of quarterly meetings between the county and district portfolio holders should also enhance two tier working.

Work undertaken by utility companies not only causes problems with congestion but also with the quality and appearance of the roads. Utility companies are required to provide carriageway reinstatements after carrying out work underground. These repairs are guaranteed for two years and during this time, should a problem arise; the utility company must repair the road. In theory if reinstatements are carried out to government specifications the repair should last the lifetime of the road but in reality this is not the case. Improved supervision of utility companies' works could raise the standard of reinstatements. We also felt that it would be beneficial to reintroduce the process where utility companies provide temporary reinstatements and make a financial contribution to County Council to allow them to provide a full reinstatement at a later date, thus allowing County Council to let this money accumulate and provide complete road resurfacing at timely intervals. This view was endorsed by Lancashire County Council's Area Manager South.

Public perception and communication to the public was also a key issue for consideration. We felt that councillors and the public should be better informed of road works in their areas and we agreed that the use of Lancashire Local and Area Committees could be further developed to encourage more involvement from the public and an effective means of consultation in line with the recent review undertaken by South Ribble Borough Council into Community Engagement.

South Ribble Borough Council is currently involved in a pilot joint working scheme with Lancashire County Council Environment Directorates to encourage a better and closer working relationship between borough and county councils. South Ribble Borough Council is concentrating specifically on highways issues. One of the key objectives of the pilot is to improve the maintenance standard of grass verges in the rural areas. At present South Ribble Borough Council maintain the Urban Core and have a set of standards and frequencies which they work to and Lancashire County Council maintain the rural areas and have a differing set of standards and frequencies which they work to. We feel that there should be a uniformed standard across the borough and we fully support the pilot scheme.

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Current responsibilities

Lancashire County Council's Highways are responsible for the maintenance of street lighting, filling pot holes, salting roads, repairing worn out road surfaces and dealing with overgrown vegetation on the highway in the rural areas area.

Gully Cleaning

Gully pots are emptied once a year unless there is a history of flooding in the area in which case they are emptied more often. Blockages in the pipes are the responsibility of Lancashire County Council but the sewerage systems are the responsibility of United Utilities.

Road Maintenance

Road maintenance and repair is prioritised according to safety and structural condition of the roads. Under the pavement management system (which covers carriageways and footways) all A, B, and C roads, and 25% of unclassified roads, are subject to a Coarse Visual Inspections and Detailed Visual Inspections. These inspections provide a condition index of the roads which is then used to identify priorities. All roads are inspected on a routine basis by corporate safety inspectors. Main roads are inspected three times a year and all other roads are inspected at least once a year in order to put together 2 year and 5 year maintenance programmes.

The design life of new roads is typically 20 to 40 years depending on the purpose of the road. Each time a trench is dug into the road it reduces the lifespan of that road by approximately one third dependant on the quality of the repair. The Highways Authority will provide repairs and restoration measures to extend the useful life of a road beyond this period, Surface dressing and micro-asphalt sealing is a short term solution to ensure skid resistance and water tightness; these are substantially cheaper and as such occur as and when necessary. It is possible to allow a road to deteriorate instead of providing patch repairs in order to justify a complete restoration at an earlier date than would otherwise have been possible. This provides the headline statement, seen in the press, that roads are only reconstructed every 200 years under the current regime.

A dangerous defect in the highway will be made safe within 2 hours, 24 hours, 1 week or 1 month depending on the scale of the risk it presents to the road-using public, in accordance with the County Council's Code of Practice. 'Making safe' includes a range of operations including barriering off a portion of the road, filling a pothole, removing hazardous debris or unblocking a gully.

Street Lights

Street lights that are not working will be mended within 5 working days if the problem is a replacement bulb or a fuse. If the problem relates to the electrical supply the matter may take longer especially if the failure is underground and has to be located, or if the matter has to be referred to United Utilities. Problems arise when the member of the public who has reported the fault notices that the street light has still not been repaired some weeks later. Usually, this problem arises due to the fault being referred to United Utilities; however, the customer will only discover this if they make a second call to the Hub. In the meantime the customer is likely to believe their call has not been dealt with.

Footways

Footways are inspected on a similar basis to roads and prioritised according to usage. Every carriageway/footway complaint is inspected and prioritised according to safety issues. Potholes will be filled or barriered off within 2 hours of being reported if necessary to ensure safety. If the works are required but not urgently they may be programmed in for a future date when they will be dealt with as part of a collection of similar work.

Maintenance of Grass Verges

Lancashire County Council is currently responsible for the maintenance of the grass verges in the rural areas. South Ribble Borough Councillors have received comments from members of the public with regard to the differing standards of verges between the Urban and Rural areas.

Lancashire County Council Code of Practice allows for a maximum of two cuts to the verges per year in the rural areas.

Customer Contacts

Problems are reported through the Lancashire Highways Customer Services Centre 'The Hub', the website or occasionally by letter or personal visit. All problems raised are recorded on the Public Enquiry Manager system (PEMs).

'Gateway' the contact centre at South Ribble Borough Council also receives Highways calls which are all redirected to the Red Rose Hub. Gateway keeps a record of all calls it receives as follows:

February 2007 to January 2008

Service	Description	Total Dealt With	Passedon
Drainage	45	29	16
Drainage Emails	1	0	1
Grass Cutting	75	72	3
Grass Cutting Misc	22	5	17
High Hedges	37	37	0
Highways	510	375	135
Highways Emails	23	5	18
Lancs CC General	1372	1021	351
Lancs CC General Emails	79	9	70
Weed Control	72	66	6
TOTALS	2236	1619	617

South Ribble Borough Council aims to resolve customer queries at first point of contact wherever possible. A number of Gateway officers spent three months working at the Hub which has assisted Gateway in dealing with 1021 calls relating to Lancashire County Council queries out of a possible 1372 calls.

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Task Group Visit to the Hub

We felt that it would be helpful to visit the Hub in order to see for ourselves how highways calls are dealt with in Lancashire. We were each invited to shadow a customer service officer and listen to the various calls received at the Hub. The staff were very knowledgeable and polite, providing an efficient and effective service. The technology was very impressive, allowing the use of GPS mapping, online diary systems and online procedures and information.

We were also shown the new Telly Talk system. Telly Talk is cutting edge technology that enables citizens to talk Face to Face with officers in the LCC Customer Service Centre via a television-type link. It also has the ability to up and download documents to and from the citizen/officer, take photographs and take signatures. It is very easy to use as it has a simple touch button approach and the citizen can not only hear but can also see the officer based at the Customer Service Centre, providing a personal touch that has not been previously possible.

Telly Talk has proved very popular with everyone who has used it, in particular the elderly. It is hoped that this will be rolled out across the county soon. Our overall impression from the visit was that the Hub is not merely a call centre but a help and advice centre where the emphasis is on helping the customer not answering the highest amount of calls per hour. This was substantiated by the excellent results from the Hub's recent survey. The Hub covers two floors and employs over 100 customer service officers.

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Utility Companies

It is widely recognised that street works reduce the life span of a road by up to 30%. There are now 200 utility companies who have authority to carry out excavations. The Asphalt Industry Alliance (AIA) claims that road openings by utilities increased by nearly 20% in the last year from just over 2 million in 2007 to nearly 2.5 million in 2008. 8.2 It is estimated that there are approximately 40,000 utility excavations per year in Lancashire. Lancashire County Council try to co-ordinate the work of utility companies with a view to minimising the impact on the local road network, however they are unable to prevent them from carrying out work and they have encountered problems with co-ordination as utility companies often contract their work out to companies who are paid for 'piece work' and as such are in a rush to complete a job.

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Conclusions

Communication

1. We are concerned that the increase in calls/contacts may mean that there is increased deterioration in the condition of the roads and pavements.
2. We welcome the positive results of Lancashire County Council's The Hub Customer Satisfaction Survey in January 2008, particularly in relation to highways calls, and the success of Gateway including the number of county council calls they can deal with at first point of contact.
3. Although there are insufficient funds available to repair all roads and pavements in Lancashire, safety remains paramount. We believe that LCC should improve communication with the public to highlight that they are doing everything in their power to ensure that roads and pavements are safe.
4. The introduction of quarterly meetings between the county and district portfolio holders is encouraging and should improve communication and two tier working.
5. Lancashire County Council is not seen to be providing an efficient and effective customer service when street light faults have to be referred to United Utilities causing a delay in repairing the fault.
6. Lancashire Local and Area Committees could provide valuable forums but often do not receive high levels of public attendance.

Current Arrangements

Lancashire County Council has published a Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance which sets out standards to which it works; however, this document is complicated and difficult to understand.

There appear to be insufficient maintenance plans for the replacement of roads. Regular inspections are carried out and roads are patched as required but this seems to be a palliative treatment, not a cure for the problem which needs the intervention of Central Government in terms of more funding.

It has been questioned whether gully pots are always emptied as prescribed and there is currently no way of providing evidence that work has been undertaken. This is a concern due to the recent flash flooding and reports on climate change.

The aim of the Locality Plan and Environment Directorate Pilot is to encourage a better, and closer working relationship between the Borough and County Council. This is welcomed by the Task Group.

There is an element of confusion for the public with regard to who is responsible for the various services relating to roads and pavements. We feel that work should be done to clarify roles and responsibilities.

Utility Companies

Research has indicated that deep trench excavation can reduce road life by 30% or more. Reinstatements generally only last for the duration of the two year guarantee of the work not the life of the remaining road.

How to police the quality of reinstatements carried out by utility companies is a problem. The new Traffic Management Act provides better controls for planned work but does not cover emergency work.

Maintenance Standards of Grass verges in Urban Core and Rural areas

Grass cuts in the rural areas are currently not carried out to the same standard as grass cuts undertaken by South Ribble Borough Council in the Urban Core. Lancashire County Council has a policy of only cutting grass on wide verges closest to the road. This provides a more unkempt appearance to rural areas. The appearance of grass verges in the rural areas and Urban Core should be the same and grass cuts should be carried out to the same standard and frequency throughout the Borough.

The Urban Core is currently seen to be receiving a better service than the rural areas yet all residents pay the same council tax.

Funding

There is reportedly massive underfunding for the maintenance of roads and pavements by Central Government.

Comparison of Service received by South Ribble Borough Council to Another Authority

It was not possible for us to accurately compare the service received by South Ribble residents to that of another authority as it is difficult to specify what should be included in the monies spent. It appears that different authorities include different topics in their gross expenditure, for example, public rights of way are highways, and may be included in highway maintenance budgets in some but not all authorities. In some authorities street lighting might be viewed as expenditure on highways and not in others.

The Benchmarking Club (representatives from various highways authorities who meet periodically to discuss highways related issues, progress, best practice etc) has never compared money spent per kilometre of highway.

There is no standard for gross expenditure across authorities.

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Recommendations

Communication

1. That the telephony system for logging highway calls should be amalgamated with the PEMS system which Highways use to record faults. At present the contact centre have to log calls twice, once onto each system, in addition to reducing the number of telephone calls to more senior staff in Highways.
2. That all South Ribble Councillors and members of the public should be encouraged to use the Hub to register Highways faults in order to allow statistics to be gathered which will ultimately highlight problem areas and provide an indication of funding required.
3. That an article be placed in Forward advising members of the public which services are provided by South Ribble Borough Council and which are provided by Lancashire County Council with appropriate telephone numbers.
4. That the level of feedback provided to the customer after an initial query has been raised is improved by ascertaining whether the customer would like a follow up call updating them on progress.
5. That the Highways Act 1980 S42 and the Traffic Management Act 2004 be supported, in particular the improvement of communication between County Council, the public, utility companies and local authorities by the use of regular meetings, written communication etc; and that South Ribble Borough Council complies with the rules around network management by giving notice of works, applying for permits etc.
6. That communication with residents be strengthened (e.g. progress on outstanding works) by placing a sign/sticker on lamp columns indicating that the reported fault is under

investigation with United Utilities. The sign can then be removed by United Utilities when they resolve the problem.

7. That public awareness of Lancashire Local is improved to encourage more members of the public to utilise this forum.
8. That the role of Area Committees be developed with a view of utilising them as a means of consultation in line with the recent review into Community Engagement through better use of councillor surgeries.
9. That the Highways Service provides detailed information relating to street works on the web and possibly via emails to local councillors.
10. That there should be checks in place to ensure that companies provide contact details in the vicinity of street works informing the public of the company undertaking the work and their contact details in the event of problems arising. The public should be made aware that companies are required to do this.
11. That council business cards have useful contact numbers printed on the reverse side, e.g. Gateway and The Hub and the key services each provide. This could reduce calls being made to the incorrect number and improve customer service.
12. That Lancashire County Council produces leaflets detailing the services they provide and adds useful telephone numbers to bin schedules.
13. That information for South Ribble recorded on the PEM system by Lancashire County Council should periodically be made available to South Ribble Cabinet Member for Street Scene to allow him to use this to inform decisions, strategies, etc.

Current Arrangements

14. That, generally, there is a better awareness of the implications of the Traffic Management Act (Network Duty Management) and how this impacts in South Ribble Borough Council through planned training, seminars and written updates.
15. That South Ribble Borough Council ensures that services such as refuse collection, road sweeping, gully cleaning and grass cutting are organised so that the impact on the highway network is minimised as implied by the new Act and that we consider all our arrangements in view of the new Act.
16. That closer working relationships are developed with key stakeholders to improve communication and minimise disruption on the road network.
17. That the current arrangement of services should be communicated to the public in order to provide clarity and improve customer service (possibly through Forward/Vision).
18. For Lancashire County Council to lobby central government to extend the time a utility company is responsible for a reinstatement to 5 years.
19. That South Ribble Borough Council supports the new proposed staffing structure of a borough based team within Lancashire County Council Highways. We feel that this would better service the needs of the borough.
20. That consideration is given to introducing GPS system to gully cleaning equipment to monitor that the system is being used properly.
21. That South Ribble Councillors are provided with a schedule of when gully pots are to be cleaned and emptied to allow councillors to check that work has been carried out.
22. That Lancashire County Council undertake a review of how successful the new arrangement for the maintenance of roads and pavements has been to date. (i.e. the abolishment of the agency agreement)

Pendle Borough Council - Scrutiny Review of Value For Money of the Residual Highways Agreement With Lancashire County Council

What we found out

1. We add to the funding that the County Council provides for maintaining roadside verges as we believe that it is insufficient to keep them looking tidy. Some Town and Parish Councils also do their own grass cutting. Despite this public satisfaction levels aren't very high.
2. Weedkilling is limited to the chemicals that we can use for health and safety reasons.
3. The budget for maintaining roadside trees and hedges means that we can only provide a service on demand rather than in a planned way.
4. Leaf clearance seems to be carried out to an acceptable standard
5. The upkeep and improvement of public footpaths in the countryside is largely acknowledged as a good quality service. However, we contribute more than one and a half times more than the County Council does in order to get the level of service we think is necessary.
6. The number of people who continue to contact us about County Council services such as street lighting, traffic management etc. remains high. There appears to be considerable confusion as to who does what. The County Council has paid us for helping to redirect people under the present Agreement but does not intend to carry on under the new Agreement from next year.
7. Residents' Parking schemes are a low priority for the County Council so we take responsibility for them to make sure that standards are maintained. We believe that the County Council intends to introduce a standard fee across Lancashire for Residents' Parking permits.
8. Making up unadopted streets is another low priority for the County Council but one which we believe to be important.

Where we go from here

1. We believe that the Agreement overall offers fair value for money but there are various areas where improvements could be made.
2. We're therefore asking the Executive to agree to ask the County Council to increase the budget for grass cutting. We believe that we should not have to subsidise the County Council for this service. If adequate funding is not provided then we're asking the Executive to decide whether we should continue to carry out grass cutting on the County Council's behalf.
3. Because of the large numbers of people still contacting us about County Council matters we believe we should continue to receive payment for redirecting people.
4. If the County Council introduces a standard fee across Lancashire for Residents' Parking permits we want that to be limited to £25.
5. We also want the County Council to provide funding so that we can continue a programme of making up the many unadopted streets in Pendle.
6. Then we'll take another look in May next year to see what progress has been made.

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Grass Cutting

When challenged on the evidence that Lancashire Districts believe that LCC provision should be enhanced, County Councillor Hanson indicated that this could be reconsidered if all districts were of the same view.

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Further comments from the public survey relate to litter exposed by grass cutting which is not removed.

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Trees and Hedges

Under the Lancashire Highways Partnership, we had the authority to cut low hanging branches on private land or serve a notice, instructing the owner to carry out the work. This authority now rests with LCC.

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Removal of unauthorised signs etc.

Three other Councils in our survey indicated that they undertook this work.

This is a priority in Pendle as it links to our Cleaner, Greener, Safer agenda.

The work is carried out by Operational Services.

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Conclusions - Performance

The lack of performance indicators in respect of most of the functions within the Agreement makes an assessment of performance difficult.

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Recommendations

1. That the Executive endorses the conclusions of this review and adopts the following recommendations in respect of the renegotiation of the Residual Highways Agreement with effect from 1st July, 2009 -
2. That Lancashire County Council be requested to review and increase the budget for grass cutting to an acceptable level and the support of other Lancashire Districts to this request be sought.
3. That in the event that the County Council does not agree to increase the budget for grass cutting as set out in 5.2 above, the Executive should consider whether
 - (a) to continue to provide the current level of service and subsidy;
 - (b) to carry out grass cutting only to LCC standards within the allocation; or
 - (c) to remove grass cutting from the Agreement so that responsibility reverts to the County Council with effect from 1st July, 2009.
4. That the County Council be asked to provide funding to maintain urban ginnels which are included in the Definitive Rights of Way Map as well as interim funding for other urban ginnels pending their inclusion in the Definitive Map.
5. That continued funding for "Communications" at the original Year 1 level be negotiated with the County Council.
6. That the County Council be asked to consider how it might better clarify, for members of the public, the areas for which it is responsible and that the help of Lancashire Locals be enlisted.
7. That the Engineering and Special Projects Manager be requested to monitor the level of contact on LCC functions for future comparison purposes.
8. That all the "permissive tasks" be retained within the Agreement.
9. That, in the event that the County Council decides to introduce a standard permit fee for Residents' Parking Schemes, it be requested to limit this to £25.
10. That, in view of the large amount of unadopted highway across the county, the County Council be requested to allocate funding to enable its gradual making up and adoption.
11. That a policy for dealing with unadopted streets, as suggested by the Democratic and Legal Services Manager, be adopted.
12. That progress against these recommendations be monitored by the Scrutiny Management Team after six months.

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Hyndburn Borough Council - The Issues that have arisen following the termination of the Lancashire Highways Partnership.

Performance in commenting on planning applications

This has been a longstanding area of concern by a number of districts in Lancashire. The County Council have now recognised that this is a problem and have produced a Draft Code of Practice for responding to consultations on planning applications. This represents an important step forward and Hyndburn have welcomed the Code of Practice that should mean consultation responses are returned more promptly.

Liaison on regeneration initiatives

Communication problems have arisen between Lancashire County Council and Hyndburn in relation to highways issues on regeneration initiatives within the Borough. These have primarily related to problems around highway maintenance, adoption and design and have also been experienced in other east Lancashire districts. The Chief Planning Officer for Lancashire County Council has taken steps to try and address some of these problems by working with district councils and Elevate on design issues.

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Devolution through Lancashire Locals – Democratic Process

The Lancashire Highways Partnership was terminated at the same time the County Council was seeking to become more locally accountable through the Lancashire Locals.

The aim of the Lancashire Locals (joint Committees, comprising all the County Councillors having electoral divisions in the particular District and an equal number of Borough/District/City Councillors appointed by the District Council) is to strengthen local democratic accountability through empowering locally elected councillors to take certain decisions and shape/influence the delivery of local government services within the District. The success of the Lancashire Locals was therefore fundamental to the success of the new highways working arrangements.

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Rossendale Borough Council – Highways

Recommendations

1. That the County Council be requested to consult with the East Lancs Physical Disability Partnership on highways schemes to ensure that their needs are taken into consideration when undertaking highway improvements.
2. In relation to dropped- kerbs, could the County Council ensure that existing and new dropped- kerbs are marked with access protection markings ie 'H' mark, or at junctions with a single or double yellow line around them.
3. That the County Council considers a review of their current procedures in respect of the New Roads and Street Works Act to enhance their ability to co-ordinate more effectively works undertaken by the utility companies. We would also ask the County Council to investigate with Utility Companies the possibility of leafleting households and businesses affected with details of the work and how long they are scheduled to take and a telephone hotline number to call if problems arise.
4. That the County Council introduces a system of consulting with Borough Council Ward Members as well as County Councillors on proposed schemes to be undertaken and whether the work has been completed satisfactorily in order to obtain feedback on the visual quality of repair to further enhance partnership working.
5. That the highway inspection priority results be forwarded to each Elected Member to provide Ward Councillors with an overview of the condition on each street in their Ward.
6. Pleased to learn that 90% of highways in Rossendale have been inspected and we recommend that the remainder be undertaken as soon as possible so that all the highway network has been surveyed and prioritised.