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## CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

**Committee** ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date and Time of Meeting** THURSDAY, 11 MAY 2023, 4.30 PM

Please find below correspondence send by the Committee Chair following the meeting, together with any responses received.

For any further details, please contact [scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk)

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Ref: SharePoint/Scrutiny/Env/Correspondance11.05.2023

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023

**Andrew Gregory**  
**Director – Planning, Transport & Environment**



By email

Annwyl Andrew / Dear Andrew

## **HIGHWAYS ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN & PASSENGER TRANSPORT PROCUREMENT**

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023, I would like to thank you and officers for attending Committee to facilitate our consideration of the **Highways Asset Management Plan [HAMP3]** and the Dynamic Procurement System [DPS] used to facilitate **passenger transport procurement**. Members agreed that I pass on the following observations, and you will find our requests listed at the end of the letter.

### **HIGHWAYS ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Members noted the gap in the timeframes between the previously approved HAMP 2012 – 2015 and the proposed HAMP 2023 – 2026. Officers stated that there had planned to be a HAMP in 2020, however it was postponed due to Covid and then subsequent to this reviewing costs had caused further delays.

The committee asked for clarification about the current level of funding, officers confirmed that the current level of investment supports a 'managed decline' of the assets and that further investment is needed to reach a 'steady state' i.e., getting the assets to an acceptable level and maintaining that state.

A member inquired if some of the increased costs were temporary. Officers explained that it is difficult to say, although a lot of work has been done with contractors to ensure a new pricing structure that aligns with the new framework.

Officers were asked if any consideration had been given to the increasing numbers of heavier electric vehicles on the highways or the impact of Road User Charges. Members were informed that in general cars have very little impact on roads and that most 'damage' is done by HGV's. In relation to Road User Charges, it was noted that it was unlikely that anything would be introduced in the next 5 years and that the HAMP was a 3-year plan, but any policy change would be reviewed and included as necessary in future plans.

The Committee asked about the reporting mechanism for potholes and pothole failures, and was this the responsibility of residents and councillors? Officers responded that depending on the use of the road, inspections take place monthly or annually according to an agreed **inspection policy**.

Members raised concerns about the standard of pothole repairs and officers explained that two types of repairs are undertaken. One is by an internal team that respond quickly in all weathers and carry out patching work i.e., filling in the hole, which is relatively cheap, as they are carried out by paid Council employees. The second is more expensive and carried out by contractors who plan works and material is cut out and repairs are sealed, which is paid per m<sup>2</sup>. The type of repair carried out will depend on a number of factors include the type of road the defect is on and safety requirements. The committee would welcome further information about the **quality assurance of pothole repairs**.

It was also noted that road works are also undertaken by utility companies or their contractors.

The committee asked if there are specifications for building new roads. Officers confirmed that there is a recognised Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and that design parameters, which also include street lighting, are agreed with developers under s278 or s38 agreements and engineers sign off the designs. Members then asked if we could improve the quality of the roads being built to increase their longevity, officers explained that within the developer's financial envelope there was a balance needed to support and develop the community being built.

Members requested for further information about the carbon neutral roads/resurfacing and how this differs from work normally undertaken. Officers explained that in relation to the resurfacing works on the A470, instead of using 'virgin' aggregate that has been quarried from a distance away a by-product of the steelworks was used that was stored locally. The excavated material was 'recycled' by the contractor and plant stayed close to site to minimise travel. White lining was also undertaken using cold material and applied by hand rather than hot material using a machine and involving flames. Asked whether the Council would be investing further in carbon neutral roadworks it was noted that cost can be prohibitive.

The Committee raised concerns about the condition and cleanliness of cycle paths and officers responded that they try to look at the public realm holistically and consider multi modal routes.

A member of the Committee asked about the use of hygiene products and nappies used to create asphalt in West Wales. Officers stated that they were unaware of this specific trial, but the contractors are constantly challenged to come up with alternative solutions, however these need to be proven, however they are happy to be considered for trials.

The Committee queried whether construction traffic at development sites is charged to use roads. Officers responded that road network has been developed to accommodate all types of vehicles, however they do work with contractors on appropriate routes to minimise disruption where possible. They also noted that on completion of a new site that a Community Maintenance Sum is received on the handover of the roads.

Members asked how the pressures notes in the report compare to the pressures before 2010. Officers commented that the Council was different now, the workforce has reduced, but technology has improved, nevertheless the impact of Covid and the cost of living has put additional pressures on services. However, the Administration support the work being undertaken to maintain a steady state and do more where possible.

A committee member asked about the level of investment in pavements compared to roads and officers confirmed that yes roads do get more investment , but that this was linked to deterioration over time and that the cost of repairing pavement slabs can be up to 3 times more than tarmac so that there was a balance between condition/deterioration and safety concerns.

Officers were asked about the cost benefit analysis of proactive 'vs' reactive drain and gully clearing given the recent incidences of 'flash flooding'. It was noted that extreme rainfall is becoming more frequent and that the drains in the city were built a long time ago and the increase in Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) will take time to improve. It was also noted that there is an **exercise** currently being undertaken to determine what is needed to **manage the 90 – 100k gullies** in the city.

Finally, a question in relation to increasing insurance claims was asked and vehicle /cyclists. It was confirmed that the majority of claims are for vehicle damage but that any personal injury claims are more costly, and the importance of accurate record keeping was also noted.

### **PASSENGER TRANSPORT PROCUREMENT & DPS**

The Committee raised concerns about the age and condition of some school transport and their impact on the environment and air quality. Officers confirmed that they are working with contractors and providers moving towards Euro 6 standards, however it was noted that there is currently demand is outstripping supply. Officers also confirmed that vehicle condition is one of the issues scored in the tendering process. However, where public buses are providing transport to schools , the Council has no control over the buses being used.

Officers were asked if they were confident that there were sufficient providers to provide statutory services going forward. The Committee were informed that the situation is very challenging across Wales, and the impact of the withdrawal of BES is unknown but also costs may increase if all Local Authorities need to tender for services, with a reduced number of drivers available, and that current contracts and vehicles are at capacity. Officers

also confirmed that they were exploring the feasibility of setting up an in-house service, however this would take time.

The Committee also asked if going forward that schools could be built on established bust route. Officers confirmed that they do work with planners and education to support the establishment of schools on sustainable and active travel routes.

Members queried the fact the providers are able to 'hand back' contracts, and asked if the pressures noted may reduce if fuel prices decrease. The Committee were informed that annual inflationary increases were available on application, but that there was a balance for the supplier to be able to invest in vehicles and staff training and ensuring continuity of service. They also stated that the contracts with taxis require a months' notice and it is longer for mini buses and coaches to ensure the Council is not tied into contracts that are not needed. The contracts are very dynamic and linked to pupil numbers.

To confirm a response to the letter which responds to the following points is requested:

- Further details about the road **inspection policy**.
- Further information about the **quality assurance of pothole repairs**.
- Sight of the outcome of the exercise in relation to **gully maintenance**.

Once again thank you once more for attending Committee and for considering our comments and observations.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely / Yn gywir



**Councillor Owen Jones**  
**Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee**

Cc: *Members of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee*

*Cllr Dan De'Ath, Cabinet Member Transport & Strategic Planning*  
*Matt Wakelam, Assistant Director Street Scene - Highways*  
*Gary Brown, Head of Highways, Infrastructure & Operations*  
*Steve Gerrard, Network Operations Team Leader*  
*Jason Dixon, Transport Development & Network Manager*

*Cllr Adrian Robson, Group Leader, Conservatives*  
*Cllr Andrea Gibson, Group Leader, Common Ground*  
*Cllr Rodney Berman, Group Leader, Liberal Democrats*

*Chris Pyke, OM Governance & Audit*  
*Tim Gordon, Head of Communications & External Relations*  
*Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Business Manager*



Cllr Owen Jones  
Chairperson, Environmental Scrutiny Committee  
Via Email

1<sup>st</sup> June 2023

Dear Cllr Jones,

Thank you for your correspondence dated 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023. Please find responses to the points raised in your letter below.

**Q1: Further details about the road inspection policy.**

Highway safety inspections are undertaken on the entire carriageway and footway network to identify defects that are likely to cause danger or inconvenience to users. The inspection process follows a well-established format, based on the UK highway code of practice "Well Managed Highway Infrastructure" and the County Surveyors Society Wales Risk Based Approach to highway safety inspections.

This also forms the basis of the Council's defence against third-party highway insurance claims, which has proved to be very robust when the Council is challenged in court by those seeking compensation for personal injury or property claims, and forms a key aspect of the Council's management of liability and risk. This approach is set out in the approved Highway Maintenance Policy Document Part C:001 - Highway Safety Inspection Policy.

These cyclic safety inspection frequencies are based on the network hierarchy of the street and the defect repair response times, dependent on the severity of the defect. Both criteria are defined by the Highway Maintenance Safety Inspections Policy mentioned above. Response times for undertaking repairs range in duration from the next working day to the next available work programme. These priorities relate directly to the severity of the defect and its location, i.e., the more severe the defect and busy the location, the sooner it will be programmed for repair. Defects that pose the lowest risk may be placed in the next programme of works category that will be prioritised based on availability of budget and/or efficiency of delivery. Councillor and customer requests for service and complaints relating to localised highway improvements will also be inspected and prioritised using this process.

**Q2: Further information about the quality assurance of pothole repairs.**

The quality assurance of pothole repairs undertaken by the Council's internal Highway Operations Team comprises of several measures at all stages of the process. Only material produced and manufactured to the appropriate recognised standards and specification is used in the repair of potholes. The operatives within the team are suitably experienced and qualified to be competent in carrying out the repair activities.



The quality of the repairs carried out is routinely assessed by the Highway Operations Team Supervisor through sample site inspections. Should sub-standard workmanship or failures be identified or reported to us, the repairs will be inspected, assessed, and actions taken where necessary to address such issues and the likelihood of them occurring in the future.

It should be noted that high volumes of such repairs are carried out on all highways throughout the city. As with any surfacing, there are factors beyond our control that will impact and influence the durability of a temporary repair. These include the prevailing weather conditions at the time of the repair and thereafter, along with the traffic volumes and profile on the road itself. The repairs are a cost-effective way of quickly and effectively addressing safety hazards, but it is recognised that they may not be as aesthetically pleasing as other repair processes.

In addition to the aforementioned temporary repairs and inspections, highway defect repairs and improvements are also undertaken by external contractors. These works are overseen by the Council's Highways Engineers or Supervisors and any repairs found to be inadequate are revisited by the contractor.

The Highway Asset Team are in the process of implementing a formal quality assurance process for their external contractor utilising the AMX asset management system. The system will generate a 10% random sample of repaired tarmac, paving, and street furniture defects that will be inspected by Highway Safety Inspectors and the results recorded on the AMX system. Any repairs not meeting the required quality will be raised with the contractor for relevant improvement or replacement.

The overall output of the quality inspections will be used to manage and oversee contractor performance. This process is still in the final stages of development, but ongoing trials are proving encouraging, and implementation is expected over the summer period.

**Q3: Sight of the outcome of the exercise in relation to **gully maintenance**.**

Cardiff Council, as the Highways Authority, is responsible for approximately 100,000 highway gullies across the adopted highway network. To assess the future needs of the service, Routesmart Ltd were appointed by Cardiff Council to undertake Phase 1 of the gully scheduling project, investigating whether all highway drainage assets could be cleansed once a year utilising the current available resource.

Modelling outputs from Phase 1 determined that the gully schedule would entail 669 routes, with the frequency of stops (cleansing of a gully) along these routes ranging from between 98 to 109 cleansing locations. Consultations with both internal teams and external contractors have confirmed that this is an unachievable figure, and each route should have a more realistic target of 40 stops.

This has confirmed that with current resources, it is not possible to undertake the cleansing of every highway drainage asset every calendar year.

Therefore, the gully scheduling project has now entered Phase 2, which involves extensive consultation with highway teams, external suppliers, and internal departments such as cleansing and waste management, to develop a holistic schedule. This will involve further investigations into resource requirements, costs, and opportunities, but also prioritising highway assets and developing routes with differing cleansing timescales for attendance depending on location, identified flood risk, traffic, and numerous other factors that will influence gully cleansing frequencies.

Best Wishes



**Andrew Gregory**  
**Cyfarwyddwr / Director**  
**Cynllunio, Trafnidiaeth a'r Amgylchedd / Planning, Transport and Environment**

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