

Summary of recommendations to the executive and executive responses [Highway Maintenance – pothole repairs]

On 6 March 2019, the general scrutiny committee approved a task and finish group report on highway maintenance – pothole repairs				
The following recommendations were approved:				
Recommendation 1	The council should continue to take a risk-based approach to prioritising repairs as part of a proactive asset management strategy.			
Executive Response	Agreed – The risk-based approach will be reaffirmed as part of our pro-active asset management strategy in the next iteration of the Council’s Highway Maintenance Plan.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Highway Maintenance Plan Approval	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	December 2019	Highway Maintenance Plan 2019 approved	Review of existing (published 2016) plan concluded. Cabinet member approval initiated.

Recommendation 2	The council should always aim to ‘fix right first time’ making a sound repair; when this is not possible, residents should be told why, and told when a permanent repair will be made.			
Executive Response	Agreed – The right first time ethos underpins the approach taken in the Highway Maintenance Plan and the 2019 plan will include requirements in regard to how repairs that are made on a temporary basis will be marked.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Highway Maintenance Plan Approval	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	December 2019	Highway Maintenance Plan 2019 approved	Review of existing (published 2016) plan concluded. Cabinet member approval initiated.

Recommendation No. 3	BBLP should reinforce, emphasise and implement a ‘cluster-based’ strategy to fixing potholes i.e. to fix all defects within an appropriate length of road at the same time, unless essential emergency work needs to be done elsewhere.			
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Executive Response	Agreed – BBLP have been instructed to work to this method, unless there is good reason why it is not possible to do so. This method of working is embedded in the Annual Plan and this will be emphasised further in the development of the next Annual Plan.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
BBLP to further reinforce, emphasise and implement a 'cluster-based' strategy to fixing potholes through management instruction and Annual plan development	BBLP Contract Director	January 2020	Cluster based strategy confirmed in draft 2020/21 Annual Plan	Annual Planning process for 2020/21 is about to commence.

Recommendation No. 4	The service should explore whether there was a point at which a complete replacement of a strip of highway containing a cluster of potholes would represent a more cost effective long term repair.			
Executive Response	Agreed – the next iteration of the Highway maintenance Plan will promote this repair option and this will be supported in the development of the Annual Plan by the inclusion of patching resources as part of that plan.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Highway Maintenance Plan Approval	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	August 2019	Highway Maintenance Plan 2019 approved	Review of existing (published 2016) plan concluded. Cabinet member approval initiated.
BBLP to include patching resources in the Annual Plan	BBLP Contract Director	January 2020	Patching resources confirmed in draft 2020/21 Annual Plan	Annual Planning process for 2020/21 is about to commence.

Recommendation 5	The service should consult with Parish Councils about the proposed Rural Routes Maintenance Hierarchy, and involve them in any decisions about which roads to prioritise.
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Executive Response	Agreed – the requirement to consult with Parish Councils about the inclusion of any part of the highway network in the maintenance hierarchy as a Rural Route will feature as part of the next iteration of the Highway Maintenance Plan.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Highway Maintenance Plan Approval	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	December 2019	Highway Maintenance Plan 2019 approved	Review of existing (published 2016) plan concluded. Cabinet member approval initiated.

Recommendation No. 6	The council should consult on and set a threshold for shifting resources to a more reactive approach when the number of defects reaches a certain point, involving undertaking rapid ‘make safe’ repairs, following up with ‘permanent’ repairs in time and making arrangements for this change in approach to be communicated so that the public are aware of this temporary change.			
Executive Response	<p>Partially agreed, the council should set a threshold for shifting resources to a more reactive approach when the number of defects reaches a certain point. This principle will be established in the next iteration of the Highway Maintenance Plan with the actual threshold being set, and as a consequence reviewed on an annual basis, in each year’s Annual Plan. This will include for making arrangements for the communication of such changes in approach, as and when such a change is required. Such communication will also include for the communication of the change back to a more pro-active approach as the impact of circumstance that has given rise to the need to react subsides.</p> <p>The council may consult on the principle of and method by which a threshold could be set, but cannot be expected to do so in regard to the level that the threshold itself is set. This as the consequences of the level at which threshold are set manifest as a risk that is for the council (and its provider) to manage. This having taken proper account of the circumstance that is driving the change, the law, codes of best practice and the resources that are truly available.</p>			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Highway Maintenance Plan Approval	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	December 2019	Highway Maintenance Plan 2019 approved	Review of existing (published 2016) plan concluded. Cabinet member approval initiated.

Undertake analysis and adjust the Annual Plan to include thresholds set on the basis of data long with explanation of the communication processes that will be triggered when the threshold is met/need subsidies.	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	August 2019	Annual Plan adjusted.	Initial analysis has been undertaken based on the experience following the 2017/18 winter. The Annual Plan has been adjusted.
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Recommendation No. 7	The important contribution that the lengthsman can make should be recognised and parish councils encouraged to support lengthsman schemes, exploring scope for co-operation between parishes in doing so, and the council should review whether reinstating a financial contribution to the scheme would be prudent, for example, via match funding.			
Executive Response	Agreed – The locality working model of delivery is a fundamental component of the council’s asset management strategy. A review of locality funding will be undertaken to inform the 2020/21 budget setting process.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Locality Funding Review	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	April 2020	Review completed	£250K of revenue funding has been allocated for this purpose, as one-off funding in the 2019/20 budget. A review has yet to commence.

Recommendation No. 8	The council should develop criteria to assist parish councils in how to manage their contracts with lengthsman to ensure value for money and supply opportunities for further training.			
Executive Response	Partially agreed that close working arrangements between the council and parish councils are key to the success of locality working, and as part of that relationship the council can impart knowledge and experience to parish councils (and this is a two way street) that will assist in this regard. As such, it is proposed that these opportunities form as part of an ongoing relationship reinforced through ‘parish summits’ which may lead on to the provision of some formal training. Essential criteria for the delivery of service should be further developed through the lengthsman contract and/or the mechanisms that may develop as part of the Locality Funding Review (see recommendation 7).			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress

Parish Summits in place	Cabinet Member Infrastructure and Transport	December 2019	A programme of Parish Summits (or equivalent) is in place	Two parish summits have been held prior to May 2019. Views in regard to the funding for the lengthman and P3 scheme have been expressed by parishes at both events.
Locality Funding Review	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	April 2020	Review completed	A review has yet to commence.

Recommendation No. 9	The council should invest further in independent inspection of repair quality, including inspection of 'making-good' work done by utilities companies.			
Executive Response	Agreed, however, the challenge here is to ensure that the investment made is value adding with all further independent inspection not simply adding a layer of management cost. The opportunity to do this may exist in a move from the current approach to streetworks management through a noticing system to the management of streetworks through a permitting system. Further, the extension of locality working to this area of work through the deployment of parish based streetworks inspection may provide an income stream that can provide for this investment in quality assurance and potentially a means of funding further local highway work. Such opportunities will need to be explored through the review of the Council's Network Management Plan.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Consideration of options to move to a permitting system will be explored in the review of the Network management Plan.	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	April 2020	Approved Network Management Plan in place	The review of the Network management Plan has commenced, with the first draft having been the subject of internal consultation.
Development of options for the extension of locality working to parish based streetworks inspection.	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	April 2020	Pilot for parish based streetworks inspection in place	Yet to commence.

Recommendation No. 10	The council should adopt a policy of making a different type of repair in certain locations where evidence shows a standard approach would not be effective in achieving the 'fix right first time approach', and adopt a performance measure of the effectiveness of this approach in reducing occasions where more than one visit is required to fix a defect.			
Executive Response	Agreed – the next iteration of the Highway Maintenance Plan will promote the right first time approach, as policy and this will be supported in the development of the Annual Plan and in the operational performance measures in place for the service.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Highway Maintenance Plan Approval	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	December 2019	Highway Maintenance Plan 2019 approved	Review of existing (published 2016) plan concluded. Cabinet member approval initiated.

Recommendation No. 11	Parish Councils should have a designated person to scrutinise highways work in the parish.			
Executive Response	This recommendation is not one the executive can implement or require. However the principle is sound and would represent best practice. The council can promote this proposal to parish council's as part of a package of advice on best practice, but it will be a matter for each parish council to decide on whether they wish to take this approach. The proposal to develop a parish based streetworks inspection (as in the response to Recommendation 9 above) is aligned to this recommendation.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
As Recommendation 9, Development of options for the extension of locality working to parish based streetworks inspection will require this.	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	April 2020	Pilot for parish based streetworks inspection in place	Yet to commence.

Recommendation No. 12	BBLP should be asked to facilitate increased liaison between the locality stewards and parish councils including exploring arrangements for locality stewards to attend PC evening meetings if an issue of particular concern has been raised, inspection tours as appropriate and engagement with lengthsman.				
Executive Response	Agreed – This will be explored as part of how the relationships between parishes and the council (and its representatives) develops in support of locality working. The role of the local member as the elected representatives will need to be considered in this also, as will the implications on the availability of resource in the form of Locality Stewards to supporting such arrangements given the number of parish council meetings that do take place across all localities. This subject will be explored at a next Parish Summit and given the possible resource implications this will be considered as part of the Locality Funding Review.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
A next Parish Summit considers how this might be achieved.	Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Transport	December 2019	Matter considered at next Parish Summit (or equivalent)	The next Parish Summit has yet to be arranged.	
Locality Funding Review	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	April 2020	Review completed	A review has yet to commence.	

Recommendation No. 13	Parish Council clerks should publish on their websites the Locality Steward’s weekly list of repairs done in the area.				
Executive Response	This recommendation is not one the executive can implement or require. However the principle is sound and would represent best practice. The council can promote this proposal to parish council’s as part of a package of advice on best practice, but it will be a matter for each parish council to decide on whether they wish to take this approach.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	

BBLP – Locality Stewards to promote through their briefings	BBLP Contract Director	December 2019	Promotion in place	TBA
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Recommendation No. 14	BBLP should improve signage at worksites, including notification of: gang identification number; gang working hours; what the work is for; and a contact number in case of any problems with the site.			
Executive Response	Partially agreed, it is suggested that the methods through which a greater understanding of who is doing what, when and what work is for, are communicated to the public might differ from signage at worksites. Such signage may be part of the solution, however it is important to ensure that additional signage at worksites does not distract from the safety messages and essential information that is conveyed to drivers and other highway users through that signage. Social media and other channels may provide a better platform for message that convey this understanding to our customers and stakeholders.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
The communications cluster group will review the approach to the communication of messages that are designed to enhance the understanding of who is doing what, when and why.	BBLP Contract Director	October 2019	Review completed and recommendations are taken up as part of the communications strategy for public realm services	The communications cluster group has produced a revised communications strategy in draft.

Recommendation No. 15	BBLP should mark temporary repairs in a simple fashion e.g. by spraying with a white T, and should communicate to residents why the repair is only temporary, and when a permanent repair will be made.			
Executive Response	Agreed – the next iteration of the Highway maintenance Plan will make this (or equivalent) a policy requirement.			

Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Highway Maintenance Plan Approval	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	December 2019	Highway Maintenance Plan 2019 approved	Review of existing (published 2016) plan concluded. Cabinet member approval initiated.

Recommendation No. 16	BBLP should consult with Parish Councils on the timing of planned works, especially any that will involve significant disruption.			
Executive Response	Agreed, BBLP should liaise with parish council's and other stakeholders in regard to the timing of planned works, especially any that will involve significant disruption. The take up by Parish Councils of the best practice encouraged by Recommendation 11 will assist in this regard. Further, if the options for the extension of locality working to parish based streetworks inspection can be successfully developed through a pilot and deployed wider, then that may also provide a platform for improved streetworks consultation on all planned works, be they works undertaken for the council by BBLP or the works planned by the statutory undertakers or others.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
As Recommendation 9, Development of options for the extension of locality working to parish based streetworks inspection.	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	April 2020	Pilot for parish based streetworks inspection in place	Yet to commence.

Recommendation No. 17	BBLP should improve the reporting system so that when a resident reports a road defect they are told through an automated system when it has been inspected, what priority it has been given, and the deadline for repair.			
Executive Response	Agreed, action has been taken to improve systems. These systems are subject to regular review and continuous improvement.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress

Ongoing regular review and development of reporting tools.	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	Ongoing	Regular review and development happens	Ongoing
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Recommendation No. 18	BBLP should improve the system for those reporting potholes by telephone to make it much more user friendly.			
Executive Response	Agreed, the communications cluster group (a joint council officer/BBLP working group, who focus on continuous improvement in service communications) has considered this recommendation and improvements have been made, the length of the greeting that callers receive has been reduced, recognising the need to convey necessary information to callers.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Ongoing regular review and development of reporting tools.	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	Ongoing	Regular review and development happens	Ongoing

Recommendation No. 19	The council should improve communication with landowners regarding their responsibility on drainage; including the need for ditches to be more regularly and effectively maintained.			
Executive Response	Agreed a leaflet has been produced that sets out these drainage responsibilities and is being communicated to landowners using various channels.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Leaflet produced and being communicated.	Assistant Director	July 2019	Materials Produced and effectively	Materials produced, communication ongoing

	(Highways and Transport)		communicated to landowners. An uptake in landowners taking responsibility for maintaining their drainage assets.	
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Recommendation No. 20	The council should develop a brief frequently asked question sheet on the approach to pothole repairs for publication on the website.			
Executive Response	Agreed, FAQs will be produced for publication alongside the publication of the next highway maintenance plan on its approval.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Pothole FAQ sheet on website alongside the highway Maintenance Plan	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	December 2019	FAQs on website	Review of existing Highway Maintenance Plan (published 2016) plan concluded. Cabinet member approval initiated. FAQs will be produced on approval of this plan.

Recommendation No. 21	Funding: the Council should a) pursue all available 'invest to save' opportunities, b) consider prudential borrowing for such investments, and c) lobby for much more consistent and less ad hoc central government funding for highways.			
Executive Response	Agreed, such opportunities are being considered as part of a review of the capital programme. The Department for Transport published guidance for both the Local Highways Maintenance Challenge Fund and Local Pinch Point Fund on 24 July 2019 and bids will be made to these funds. Meetings have been arranged with the DfT highway maintenance lead, this to explore how we might assist in establishing more consistent and less ad hoc central government funding for highways.			

Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Pursuit and development of funding opportunities.	Cabinet Member Infrastructure and Transport and Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	Ongoing	Sustained additional funding	Ongoing activity as described in the response.
Recommendation No. 22	Innovation: BBLP should be encouraged to continuously appraise new techniques, processes and materials that can deliver repairs more efficiently.			
Executive Response	Agreed, the continuous improvements mechanisms established through the governance of the Public Realm Services Contract encourage this. Further, participation in various best practice improvement groups assists the identification of best practice in other local authorities and helps enable best practice to be deployed in Herefordshire.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Innovation continues to be encouraged	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport) And BBLP Contract Director	Ongoing	The services continues to employ recognisable best practice	Ongoing

Recommendation No. 23	The council highways strategy should continue to consider climate change,
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Executive Response	<p>Agreed, The approach to the consideration of climate change will be reaffirmed, in line with Council resolutions in the next iteration of the Council’s Highway Maintenance Plan.</p> <p>It should be noted that highway maintenance is by its very nature a carbon intensive activity. The very materials that make up the construction of our roads are quarried and transported and/or consist of oil based products such as bitumen. The carbon footprint of these products can be reduced and the council has adopted low carbon approaches to the bulk of its surfacing materials. We use what are known as low temperature asphalts as the default for works (unless there is a very good reason why they cannot meet the required performance in use). Such materials are not heated to the same level as the traditional equivalent in their production; as a consequence the carbon footprint of the product is reduced.</p> <p>Given the carbon intensive nature of highway maintenance, our primary focus should continue to be on reducing the need for unplanned and/or planned carbon intensive maintenance activities. This will be best achieved by investing in our pro-active asset management strategy. The timely investment in penetrative maintenance activities reduces the whole life cost of maintaining the highway asset, this when measured in £ or carbon.</p>
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Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Sustaining investment in pro-active asset management to minimise the whole life (£ and Carbon) cost of maintaining the highway asset in Herefordshire.	Cabinet Member Infrastructure and Transport and Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	Ongoing	The carbon footprint associated with Highway maintenance is minimised and mitigated, this with a view to achieving a carbon neutral position by 2030	Asset management is well established. Carbon measurement is include as one of the strategic measures of the Public Realm Services Contract. Review of existing (published 2016) plan concluded. Cabinet member approval initiated.

Recommendation No. 24	BBLP should continue to give safety a high priority, both in terms of a) worker and public safety during repair operations, including worker health and safety, and b) continuing risk-based approach to prioritising works.
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Executive Response	<p>Agreed – Both BBLP and the council take the safety of those working for them, and all who use the highway very seriously and shall continue to give safety a high priority, both in terms of a) worker and public safety during repair operations, including worker health and safety, and b) continuing risk-based approach to prioritising works.</p> <p>The next iteration of the Highway Maintenance Plan will continue to embrace the risk based approach and put safety to the fore.</p> <p>Road worker safety will continue to be promoted as part of our communications.</p>			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Highway Maintenance Plan Approval	Assistant Director (Highways and Transport)	December 2019	Highway Maintenance Plan 2019 approved	Review of existing (published 2016) plan concluded. Cabinet member approval initiated.
Continued promotion of road worker safety	BBLP Contract Director	Ongoing	Zero Harm	Promotion in place and ongoing.