

Lancashire County Council

Internal Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 12th November, 2021 at 10.00 am in Committee Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor David O'Toole (Chair)

County Councillors

A Fewings	E Lewis
J Fillis	P Rigby
S Hind	J Shedwick
A Hindle	S Smith
T Hurn	

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 September 2021

Resolved: The minutes from the meeting held on 10 September 2021 be confirmed as an accurate record.

4. Update from Highways Service

The Chair welcomed to the meeting County Councillor Charlie Edwards, Cabinet Member for Highways; Phil Durnell, Director of Highways of Transport; John Davies, Head of Service Highways; Ridwan Musa, Highways Service Manager (Operations); Michael White, Highways Regulation Manager; Kirstie Williams, Highways Manager – Operations; and Laura Makeating, Principal Flood Risk Manager.

The Joint Work Planning Session for Internal and External Scrutiny earlier this year highlighted several topics in relation to the Highways Service that members wished to be considered as part of the Work Programme. Presentations from the Highways Service were provided to members of the Internal Scrutiny Committee to consider the following three topics:

- Drainage Issues– Requests had been received to look at general drainage issues in Lancashire and in particular to look at the policies around drains.

- Annual Winter Maintenance update.
- Quality of Highway Repairs – To review the standard of highway repairs carried out by external organisations and contractors.

Regarding Drainage Issues, comments and questions raised were as follows:

- Drainage systems included a range of assets including highway ditches, grips, trash screens, culverted watercourses, gullies, manholes and slotted channels and associated highway drainage systems.
- One of the key objectives was ensuring water was removed from carriageways, footways and cycleways to prevent flooding that could cause a danger to the public.
- Another key objective was prevention by enforcement of any illegal placement of water on to the highway network by third parties.
- The committee enquired if vegetation removal was a priority or did the public have to report the issue. Vegetation removal was critical. Leaves on the ground was a problem. The county council worked with the districts and boroughs regarding sweeping. The county council could only cut back the vegetation that it owned, and this was an ongoing challenge.
- The interaction between the Highways Team and planning authorities around flooding issues was a concern. There were two Flood Risk Management Authorities within the county council. One was the Highways Authority which looked at planning applications in relation to highway flood risk and drainage. The second one was the Lead Local Flood Authority which managed surface water. It also had a statutory function to comment on all major developments regarding surface water drainage.
- Flooding of unadopted roads and who deals with the issue was raised as a concern.
- Drainage issue priorities were reviewed annually. Members enquired how they got input into these priorities and had there been any effort to localise these priorities by working with district councils.
- There was concern about the flooding of highway's gullies in rural areas. Many of them leaked into water courses. There had to be more intervention with riparian owners. It was established that many did not know they were riparian owners of water courses when they bought their property. Members enquired if the Environment Agency (EA) could help out more regarding this and advised that the EA's responsibilities were dealing with main rivers and coastal flood risk.
- The problem of cement getting into gullies from new housing developments and renovations was raised. It was confirmed that if these issues were reported, the county council would investigate. Work was being done with the Development Support team in making sure that when highways became adopted as part of a development, they were immaculate and ready for adoption.
- Regarding the maintenance of roads that were routinely flooded, the committee enquired about what the authority was doing in terms of exploring different construction methods. The Highways Team was looking

at innovations around plastic and rubber and was also looking at good practice from other authorities.

- Members were informed that developers were all encouraged to use Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.
- Members enquired about how capital drainage works were prioritised. It was confirmed that prioritisation was very much officer led in terms of local flooding and if it was a regular event.
- It was important that the Flood Risk Management Team interacted with communities. There was a training programme in place for new Flood Risk Officers and a Joint Flood Risk Strategy for Lancashire had been agreed by Cabinet.
- It was highlighted that there had been a greater response from Lancashire County Council in terms of planning applications and the quality of flooding responses.

Regarding the update on Winter Maintenance, comments and questions raised were as follows:

- The Highways Team had a Winter Service Plan with many objectives including improving the safety of Lancashire's streets for vulnerable residents and improve people's quality of life and wellbeing. The Winter Service Plan was available to view on the Highways Team website.
- Members were informed that it was not possible to grit all of Lancashire's roads due to cost and resources. The Highways Team had identified the priority road network that helped keep Lancashire moving. The team had also identified secondary routes which would be treated during periods of continuous ice and snow, but only during daylight hours and after the higher priority roads had been cleared.
- The county council worked closely with district councils regarding the gritting of secondary routes and supplied them with salt.
- Members enquired about how resilient the current winter service was in relation to the current supply chain. The Highways Team worked closely with winter product advisors. The team also worked very closely with its salt suppliers to ensure sufficient stores.
- The subject of how gritter drivers were employed was raised. It was confirmed that considerable time had been invested in training drivers and there were a number of in-house trained drivers.
- Regarding pavements and footways, the Highways Team knew where the priority pavements and footways were on the priority network. However, it was noted that the county council's arrangements with district councils varied with regards to the gritting of footways.
- The committee stated that was important for approaches to schools to be gritted. It was felt that more schools should be on priority gritting routes.
- It was pointed out that the county council did not receive a lot of requests for new grit bins. It would assess the street criteria before delivering a new grit bin. The Highways Team was working with the Asset Management Team about this. It was noted that there were around 2600 grit bins or salt piles in Lancashire.

- The committee was informed that there was a new online mapping system for councillors to access and assess their areas.

Regarding Defect Repairs, comments and questions raised were as follows:

- There were a variety of factors which determined what type of repair was needed, including traffic volume, quantity and clustering of defects, how traffic could be managed to carry out the repair, and urgency.
- In terms of permanent repairs and getting it right first time, there was a vast training programme for the Highways crews.
- There were many challenges facing repair work, including severe weather, complex access and urgency.
- It was pointed out that utility works accounted for many of the excavations in Lancashire's highway network. Utility companies were legally responsible for any work they did and reinstating the area excavated. After two to three years that responsibility passed back to Lancashire County Council.
- Members enquired about Lancashire County Council's inspections of utility companies and applications for permits. When utility companies bought permits and there was a period of time when no work was going on, then the county council would be made aware of this and investigate.
- The topic of potholes was raised. It was confirmed that there was a robust decision making process around the clustering and repairs of potholes.
- The question on the strategy around maintaining grass verges was raised. It was highlighted that grass verges were part of the highways network and that generally the county council did not convert grass verges for parking.
- Regarding heritage style paving and cobbled streets, the authority would always try and replace like for like in a conservation area. The Highways Team would always try and repair the paving and streets to exactly what they were like if the materials were available. However it was highlighted that some of these materials were costly.
- It was reported that overbanding had not been a standard style of repair for Lancashire County Council. However, the authority was now in the process of rolling it out.
- Regarding low carbon emissions, the Highways Team was looking at various materials it could use for repairs and their impact. Low carbon emissions were part of the Highways agenda.

Resolved: That the;

- i. Updates provided by the Highways Service for each of the three topics discussed be noted.
- ii. Presentations be circulated to all county councillors.

5. Work Programme 2021/22

The Committee received a report which provided information on the draft work programme for the Internal Scrutiny Committee.

The topics included in the work programme were identified at the joint work planning workshop for Internal and External Scrutiny held on 9 July 2021 and included topics that were still relevant and needed reviewing from last year's work programme.

Resolved: That the Work Programme presented be noted.

6. Urgent Business

There was no Urgent Business.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Internal Scrutiny Committee would take place on Friday 21 January 2022 at 10.00am at County Hall, Preston.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston