

**Lancashire County Council**

**Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 30th January, 2025 at 10.30 am in  
Committee Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston**

**Present:**

County Councillor Rob Bailey (Chair)

**County Councillors**

S Rigby	J Purcell
A Cheetham	A Schofield
J Gibson	J R Singleton JP
M Iqbal MBE	K Snape
J Oakes	

**1. Apologies**

None.

**2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

A non-pecuniary interest was declared by County Councillor Rob Bailey as the benchmarking figures presented in the report of Item 4 were provided by his employer.

**3. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 4 December 2024**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2024 be confirmed as an accurate record.

**4. Highways Reactive Maintenance Performance**

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Rupert Swarbrick, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Ridwan Musa, Head of Highways Operations and Design and Kirstie Williams, Highways Group Manager – Countywide Maintenance to the meeting.

A report was provided on reactive maintenance performance regarding structural defects including potholes. It was noted that the key national standing was Local Authorities in England had experienced real time cuts in the construction industry,

45% of authorities had reported a cut or freeze in the budget and the additional amount needed to maintain networks was £1.22b, with an average shortfall was £7.2m per authority. Regarding Lancashire, it was noted that there was a 33% overall improvement of ABC road networks and an estimated shortfall per annum of £20-25m. It was further noted that 109,000 highways reports had been received since April 2024 and the top enquires remained the general road condition and potholes.

In response to questions from the committee, the following information was clarified:

- Regarding the unclassified road network at end of life, the committee raised concern that the backlog would not be addressed by March 2025 and queried if this would be addressed after Phase 2. It was highlighted that there was a significant backlog of work and a severe shortfall in funding and so it was unlikely officers would be able to address the backlog in the near future. A future timeline for this could be brought back to the committee at a later date. Further to this, the committee was informed that the cost to bring the whole network to a satisfactory condition was £160m. It was noted that funds could not be focussed on one type of road at a time, as the rest of the network would be neglected.
- It was clarified to members that blacktop repairs referred to tarmac repair (edge of carriageways, potholes) in the footway and road whereas masonry repairs referred to block and stone paving and kerbing (grey materials).
- Information on the number of defects between footways and carriageways was requested.
- Regarding the extra highways funding announced by central government, members were informed that the funds would be received in the 2024/25 financial year and that it equalled approximately £12m. A report on how the funding would be allocated was due to be presented to Cabinet in March 2025.
- It was explained that 5% of all works completed from both contractors and county council staff were inspected. Further to this, it was highlighted that there were processes in place to review the contracts and terminate them with contractors who did not complete works to the expected standards. The Cabinet Member agreed to provide further information on the standard of reinstatements by utility companies.
- Members were informed that contractors were required to complete a pothole repair free of charge, should their original repair be unsatisfactory. However, it was highlighted that pothole repairs were not a permanent solution and did not compare to resurfacing a road.
- It was highlighted that a review of the gully system in Lancashire would be undertaken over the next 2 years to establish a routine for their maintenance.
- Regarding the disparity with the allocation of funding for each district, it was explained that a ratio was used to determine allocations based on network



length and defect reports. It was also highlighted that funding could be diverted in year if sudden defects arose.

- Members raised concern regarding the cost of repairing potholes being halved and queried if this indicated an issue with lower quality materials being used. The committee was informed that good quality materials were being used, but that repairs had gotten smaller over time meaning that maximising repairs up to 5m<sup>2</sup> was no longer happening and this was the reason for the saving.
- In regard to the condition of the network, it was explained that the council's area teams were on patrol and attended every report made by the public and two inspector teams were active across the county. GAIST survey reports were also utilised to gauge the network's condition. It was noted that highways staff logged defect reports.
- The committee raised concern that the benchmarking information provided had evidenced that Lancashire's performance was not improving and further queried how the county council could learn from those well performing authorities. It was highlighted that there were several factors affecting performance including Lancashire's diverse topography, and differences in funding and resources. However, it was felt that with the resources available, the council was in a good position.
- The committee was informed that approximately 50% of reported faults resulted in repairs and whilst officers welcomed the public identifying defects, the challenges around this was that mass reporting of the same fault used a substantial amount of manager time to ensure all reporters were linked and received the same updates.
- On general condition reports, the committee queried which avenue of reporting these were most often received through. Members were informed that these inquiries often came from people writing to the county council and were not always focussed on a defect but rather queries about whether work such as resurfacing would be undertaken.
- The committee raised concern in regard to the recruitment and retention within Highways Operations, particularly management posts. It was suggested that the Cabinet Member gives consideration to reviewing the recruitment and retention offer to determine if it needs to change or improve.

Members put on record their appreciation for the operations staff who were responding to recent storm events (Storm Éowyn) in the county.

**Resolved:** That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport gives consideration to reviewing the recruitment and retention offer for Highways Operations to determine if it needs to change or improve.

## 5. Love Clean Streets App Review



The Chair welcomed County Councillor Rupert Swarbrick, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Ridwan Musa, Head of Highways Operations and Design, Sarah Scott, Highways Operational Support and Liaison Manager and Ned Dave, Senior ICT Architect to the meeting.

A report was provided on changes implemented to the Love Clean Streets app since December 2023. It was highlighted to the committee that the most reported category remained potholes with a similar number of reports as the previous year (around 14,000). It was noted that the Customer Access call centre had received 40,000 calls between January and December 2024 and 12,900 of these were subsequently logged with the Highways Asset Management System. Furthermore, it was noted that a plan was in place to address faults within the app.

In response to questions from the committee, the following information was clarified:

- The committee raised concern that the 'description' box when reporting a fault was mandatory, and that users couldn't progress their report to the council without completing it. It was felt certain defects did not require a description to be included when using the app and it was suggested that the mandatory requirement be turned off on a trial basis. It was confirmed that this field currently was mandatory however this could be removed.
- It was felt the mapping for gullies and grids was incomplete following recent attempts to report defects with such assets.
- In regard to inputting fault reports into the app, it was queried if duplicate reports were given individual references. It was clarified to the committee that when a report was received, if it met the initial criteria for review, back office staff completed an assessment so an officer could determine the response time. It was highlighted to members that this did not mean a higher reported fault would be repaired quicker. Every report had to go through the triage system.
- The committee expressed their support for the rebranding of the Love Clean Streets App, specifically for the app to be more Lancashire focussed.
- One member reported that people had been instructed by the Customer Access Centre to use the app. It was explained to the committee that whilst the most efficient way to report a fault was via the app, the Customer Access call centre was staffed, and reports could be submitted over the phone. It was acknowledged that the call centre automated message encouraged people to use the app. However, members were advised that if someone preferred to make a call rather than use the app to stay on the call until they reach a person.
- The committee queried if when submitting a report in an area with no phone signal, whether the report would send once the phone received a signal. It was explained to the committee that the supplier of the Love Clean Streets



App could provide this information and that officers would look to explore this issue with the supplier to determine if this needed further development.

- On working with parish councils to report defects via the app, one member reported that a number of grit bins did not appear on the map. It was highlighted that if grit bins did not appear on the app, it was more than likely because they did not belong to the county council.
- In regard to anonymous reporting, it was explained that this feature had been requested by members and residents from feedback received who simply wanted to carry out their civic duty and report issues rather than having to setup an account and register their details. It was highlighted that whilst this intended development would streamline the process of reporting for the public, if the fault was progressed, no updates or feedback would be provided to the reporter. It was acknowledged that this would need to be made clear to anonymous reporters using the app.
- Members were informed that the digital services' improvement timescales for the Love Clean Streets App included the message reporting errors being resolved in the first three months of 2025, then moving to the app's rebrand in June 2025. Further information on the timescales for each of the developments listed in the report would be circulated to the committee in due course.
- Regarding footway defect reporting, it was confirmed that figures on this would be circulated to the committee at a later date.
- It was confirmed that the procurement phase for the Highways Asset Management System (HAMS) had ended and would move to implementation around 1 April 2025. The current HAMS system would be retired in March 2026 when the contract expired. It was confirmed that integration with the app was listed as a mandatory requirement.
- Members reiterated the need to resolve reports being closed before the work had been completed and for the update messages to provide more detail.

**Resolved:** That;

- (i) The Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee supports the potential rebrand of the Love Clean Streets App to be more Lancashire focussed.
- (ii) That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport gives consideration to:
  - a. Removing the mandatory description in the Love Clean Streets App for a trial period.
  - b. Reviewing out of signal reporting incidents.
  - c. Updating the Asset maps on the App to reflect what is stored at the County Council with particular reference to grit bins and gullies.



## **6. Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee Work Programme, Actions and Assurances Update**

The committee considered the work programme for the 2024/25 municipal year, and an update on actions and assurances.

It was noted that the Public Realm Agreement Budget allocations for 2024/25 and projected budget allocations for 2025/26 along with an updated list of Parish and Town Council allocations was awaited.

**Resolved:** That the;

- (i) Work programme for 2024/25 at Appendix 'A' be noted.
- (ii) Formal written response from County Councillor Shaun Turner, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change to the Committee's recommendations on Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Infrastructure at Appendix 'B' be noted.
- (iii) Formal written response from County Councillor Jayne Rear, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to the Committee's recommendations on Skills, Interventions and Initiatives led by the Skills and Employment Hub at Appendix 'C' be noted.
- (iv) Actions and assurances at Appendix 'D' be noted.

## **7. Urgent Business**

There were no items of Urgent Business.

## **8. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Environment, Economic Growth, and Transport Scrutiny Committee will be held on Monday 17 March 2025 at 10:30am in Committee Room B – The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston.

H MacAndrew  
Director of Law and Governance

County Hall  
Preston

