

**Report title: Neighbourhood Partnerships devolved budgets for highways maintenance**

**Wards affected:** Citywide

**Strategic Director:** Barra Mac Ruairi, Strategic Director, Place

**Report Author:** Peter Mann, Service Director, Transport

**RECOMMENDATION for the Mayor's approval:**

To return the final decision-making responsibility for the annual carriageway surface dressing budget and the annual footway resurfacing budget to Highways with effect from 2015-16 onwards.

**Key background / detail:**

a. Purpose of report:

To explain why decision-making for highways maintenance work programmes (carriageway surface dressing and the footway resurfacing) needs to return from Neighbourhood Partnerships to the BCC Highways Team in order to provide more cost effective use of diminishing maintenance funding and take full advantage of the new asset management system being introduced, whilst still taking into account local people's priorities and aspirations.

b. Key details:

1. The annual work programmes for the carriageway surface dressing and footway resurfacing budgets are currently determined by the Neighbourhood Partnerships.
2. The purpose of the Council's highway maintenance budgets is to prolong the life of the asset and/or to replace the asset at the end of its useful life. To achieve this, these budgets need to be allocated on a citywide basis to permit strategic data-led decisions to be made. They also need to be spent in the most efficient way possible to provide best value for money.
3. The way that funding for highways maintenance is determined by central government is changing with a greater emphasis being given to the condition of local authority assets coupled with an expectation that local authorities will follow national guidance and good practice. In addition to this, the level of capital funding for 2015-16 is significantly less than in previous years.
4. The new asset management approach set out in the report will be proactive in seeking suggestions from the Neighbourhood Partnerships at the most appropriate time and will mean that more and better information is provided to the Partnerships once the maintenance work programmes have been set. Overall, the level of meaningful involvement that each community has is expected to increase whilst Highways are given the flexibility that they need to set the budgets and ultimately decide how they are spent.

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL  
CABINET  
3 March 2015**

**REPORT TITLE: Neighbourhood Partnerships devolved budgets for Highways maintenance**

**Ward(s) affected by this report: Citywide**

**Strategic Director: Barra Mac Ruairi, Strategic Director, Place**

**Report author: Peter Mann, Service Director, Transport**

**Contact telephone no. (0117) 922 2947  
& e-mail address: peter.mann@bristol.gov.uk**

**Purpose of the report:**

To explain why decision-making for highways maintenance work programmes (carriageway surface dressing and the footway resurfacing) needs to return from Neighbourhood Partnerships to the BCC Highways Team in order to provide more cost effective use of diminishing maintenance funding and take full advantage of the new asset management system being introduced, whilst still taking into account local people's priorities and aspirations.

**RECOMMENDATION for the Mayor's approval:**

**To return the final decision-making responsibility for the annual carriageway surface dressing budget and the annual footway resurfacing budget to Highways with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015.**

**Background**

1. The highway network is the largest and most visible of our physical assets. It is used daily by the majority of the travelling public for commuting, business, social and leisure activities. It is fundamental to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of local communities and to the prosperity of the city as a whole.
2. At a regional level our economic prosperity relies on reliable movement of goods and people around the highway network. At a local level the highway network helps to shape the character and quality of the environment and makes an important contribution to wider local authority priorities, including regeneration, social inclusion, community safety, education and health.
3. Like any physical asset, carriageways and footways require maintenance to counter deterioration. Poorly maintained infrastructure creates problems including increased risk of accidents, congestion and disruption due to the need for emergency works. It is vital

that footways are maintained properly to enable people to move around safely and easily.

## **Management of highways assets**

4. In 2011, the Department for Transport launched The Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) and an associated review into potholes. The initiative aimed to investigate the subject not just from a technical engineering perspective but to consider the wider issues, including the impact of long-term maintenance strategies, decision-making arrangements and the processes of reporting, prioritising and repairing, all of which are relevant to this report.

5. The Review was published in 2012 and focused on three themes, as follows:

- Prevention is better than cure – intervening at the right time will reduce the amount of potholes forming and prevent bigger problems later.
- Right first time – do it once and get it right, rather than face continuous bills. Guidance, knowledge and workmanship are the enablers to do this.
- Clarity for the public – local highway authorities need to communicate to the public what is being done and how.

6. A highway asset management plan identifies the current assets and develops a framework for asset management to enhance existing good practices and improve the management of the network. The 1200km highway network in Bristol comprises a number of diverse assets and all of these need managing.

7. The Council is working towards the introduction of a Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP) which will be implemented before the 2015-16 financial year. This will involve the collection and assessment of survey data relating to the assets that we have and their condition. The new asset management system, which will also be in place by April 2015, will use this data to produce information concerning the residual life of each asset and will inform the decision-making process regarding what repairs need to be undertaken and when this work needs to be done. It is vital that the Council ensures that this information is put to best use.

8. The way that funding for highways maintenance is determined by central government is changing, with a greater emphasis being given to the condition of local authority assets coupled with an expectation that local authorities will follow national guidance and good practice. In addition to this, the level of capital funding for 2015-16 is around 30% less than in previous years. This means that if the TAMP is not properly used, funding for Bristol may decrease further in future years.

## **Devolution of highways budgets**

9. Since 2010-11, Neighbourhood Partnerships have been responsible for making the final decisions needed to set the work programme for these budgets. With regard to the carriageway surface dressing budget, Highways have produced a citywide work programme for each Partnership to approve the works in their area. The footway resurfacing budget is divided by the number of wards in the city and allocated to each Partnership on a pro rata basis. Highways then provide a list of suggested streets for each Partnership to approve.

10. However, this has meant that Highways have been unable to ensure that the most urgently needed maintenance works can be carried out without having to divert funds from elsewhere. This has been a particular issue in relation to the footway resurfacing budget

because some schemes cost more to carry out than the total budget held by individual Neighbourhood Partnerships. As a result of this, some significant footway resurfacing works have had to be funded from other capital maintenance budgets.

## **Proposal**

11. It is proposed that decision making for highways maintenance budgets (carriageway surface dressing and footways maintenance) is returned to BCC Highways in order to allow officers to still maintain the quality of the highway infrastructure to their best ability with a reducing overall maintenance budget, using the traffic asset management plan and to comply with national guidance and safeguard as best as possible future budgets for asset management.

12. However, involving local residents and councillors in the work of the Highways service is crucial to the success of the programme and this proposal commits to retaining a working relationship with NPs so that NPs can influence the list of roads being considered for work across the whole highways maintenance work programme. Information about budgets, schedules and delivery will also openly be shared with NPs. Engagement between highways and NPs will continue at the right time of year to influence the work programme.

## **Community involvement proposal**

13. Initial consultation with each Neighbourhood Partnership took place in early 2014. This indicated that whilst they were supportive of changing our approach in relation to the carriageway surface dressing budget, there were mixed views about the footway resurfacing budget. Whilst three Partnerships supported the proposal to return the decision-making responsibility to Highways, others were keen to retain involvement in the process.

14. As a result of the initial feedback received, we have developed a detailed proposal for improving the opportunities for the Neighbourhood Partnerships to influence the decision-making process. This will provide them with the ability to input into the process at an early stage and for their views to be considered as part of the new system, whilst enabling Highways to make the final decision and set the work programme.

15. The new process to be introduced in 2015-16 will involve a footway network survey being undertaken every other year. The findings from this survey will be fed into the new system alongside reported defects, ward members' views and feedback from Neighbourhood Partnerships. Highways will ensure that ward members and the Partnerships are asked to provide feedback at an appropriate time to ensure that it is included.

16. Once this has taken place, each Neighbourhood Partnership will be provided with clear information that explains whether their suggestions are included in the final citywide work programme and if not, the reason for this. Each Partnership will be provided with citywide condition information and a report showing how their local area is performing. This will enable people from the local community to gain a greater understanding of how maintenance decisions are made and will reassure them that their suggestions have been listened to and considered.

17. This proposal will enable members of the public to have considerably more involvement in the process than is recommended in the 2012 HMEP report. Under the

theme of 'Clarity for the public', the HMEP report found that local highway authorities should have "an effective public communications process that provides clarity and transparency in their approach" which should include "a published policy and details of its implementation". It also recommended that public satisfaction with road footway and cycleway condition is monitored annually.

18. The new asset management approach set out in this report will be proactive in seeking suggestions from the Neighbourhood Partnerships at the most appropriate time and will mean that more and better information is provided to the Partnerships once the maintenance work programmes have been set. Overall, the level of meaningful involvement that each community has is expected to increase whilst Highways are given the flexibility that they need to set the budgets and ultimately decide how they are spent.

**Consultation and scrutiny input:**

a. **Internal consultation:**  
Neighbourhoods

b. **External consultation:**  
Consultation was carried out with the Neighbourhood Partnerships in early 2014. This took place prior to the drawing up of a firm proposal for improving opportunities to participate in the process before the final decisions are made.

**Other options considered:**

**Option 1:** Do Nothing – If no change is made for the coming financial year, the benefits resulting from the introduction of the new asset maintenance system will not be realised and additional costs will result from the need to undertake response works to keep the highway safe. Maintaining the status quo would also mean that other maintenance budgets would be distorted in order to preserve the devolved spend.

**Option 2:** Make carriageway surface dressing work programme decisions centrally but retain footway resurfacing decisions as devolved – This may be more acceptable to some Neighbourhood Partnerships, but it would not address the financial and efficiency problems which the devolution of any highways maintenance budgets presents. The footway resurfacing budget is also the larger of the two budgets currently devolved and would be affected more by the need to carry out response works if non-strategic decisions are made.

**Risk management / assessment:**

<b>FIGURE 1</b>							
<b>The risks associated with the implementation of the (subject) decision :</b>							
No.	RISK  Threat to achievement of the key objectives of the report	INHERENT RISK  (Before controls)		RISK CONTROL MEASURES  Mitigation (ie controls) and Evaluation (ie effectiveness of mitigation).	CURRENT RISK  (After controls)		RISK OWNER
		Impact	Probability		Impact	Probability	
1	Some Neighbourhood Partnerships may be disappointed that they no longer have the final decision on maintenance work programmes	low	medium	New community involvement process will be introduced to ensure that local concerns are considered and feedback given on requested work programme entries	low	low	Highways

**FIGURE 2****The risks associated with not implementing the (subject) decision:**

No.	RISK  Threat to achievement of the key objectives of the report	INHERENT RISK		RISK CONTROL MEASURES  Mitigation (ie controls) and Evaluation (ie effectiveness of mitigation).	CURRENT RISK		RISK OWNER
		(Before controls)			(After controls)		
		Impact	Probability		Impact	Probability	
1	Non-strategic decisions on maintenance work programmes would mean that best use of reducing funds was not made and that additional costs were incurred in order to keep the highway safe	high	high	Implement recommendation	low	low	Highways
2	Funding would need to be found from other maintenance budgets to maintain previous levels of devolved spend	high	high	Implement recommendation	low	low	Highways

**Public sector equality duties:**

Before making a decision, section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:

- i) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
- ii) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
  - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic.
  - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
  - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- iii) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

The aim of the proposal is to improve maintenance of the highway asset so that it is managed more efficiently, which will in turn improve the condition of our carriageways and footways for all users of the highway network. This should provide a positive impact.

**Eco impact assessment**

There are no direct environmental impacts arising from this proposal, which considers decision-making responsibility rather than the maintenance programmes themselves. Indirectly, there may be benefits through improved maintenance, such as better provision for cycling and walking, and more efficient use of materials, but the extent of any benefit is unknown and may not be significant.

## **Resource and legal implications:**

### **a. Financial (revenue) implications:**

There are no specific revenue implications to the proposal which aims to centralise budgets for a more coordinated spend of available funds rather than spend more or less money.

**Advice given by** Mike Allen, Finance Business Partner  
**Date** 6<sup>th</sup> November 2014

### **b. Financial (capital) implications:**

There are no capital implications.

**Advice given by** Mike Allen, Finance Business Partner  
**Date** 6<sup>th</sup> November 2014

### **c. Legal implications:**

If this recommendation is accepted then the Mayor's scheme of delegation will need to be amended to reflect the changes outlined in the report.

Officers will need to ensure that decisions are properly recorded in line with the officer executive decision recording process.

**Advice given by** Shahzia Daya, Service Manager, Legal  
**Date** 7<sup>th</sup> November 2014

### **d. Human resources implications:**

There are no Human Resources implications arising from the report.

**Advice given by** Mark Williams, People Business Partner  
**Date** 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015

## **Appendices:**

None

## **Access to information (background papers):**

None