

County Council – 18 October 2019

Item 10(f) – Notice of Motion by Mr Jones

Highways Maintenance – Briefing Note

In October 2016 the UK Roads Liaison Group published a new National code of practice 'Well-managed highway infrastructure'. It set local highway authorities a target of two years to adopt the approach set out in the new code. Delivery of a safe and well maintained highway network relies on good evidence and sound engineering judgement. The intention of the new Code is that authorities develop their own levels of service and the Code therefore provides guidance for authorities to consider when developing their approach in accordance with local needs, priorities and affordability.

Changing from reliance on specific guidance and recommendations in the previous Codes to a risk-based approach as advocated in the new Code involved appropriate analysis and development of service levels and gaining approval through the executive process. The new Code is a document that the authority relies on as the basis for defending claims and as such we need to be seen to be compliant and acting in accordance with it.

The County Council's own document 'Highway Maintenance Infrastructure Levels 2019/20' was produced in response to the publication of the new code and sets out for the first time in one place details of how different assets are safety maintained across the network. This sets out very clearly what the County Council will and will not do and so allows others to understand where there may be scope for them to provide additional service level.

This document was subject to scrutiny at the Environment, Communities and Fire Select Committee in June of this year where members had an opportunity to comment on the contents. A proposed recommendation that the proposals in the document were not supported by the committee.

The County Council continues to prioritise safety on the network and all safety defects will be addressed. The areas where we see the highest levels of customer enquiries - road and pavement surface defects (potholes) have had no change in the service level relating to repair and we continue to provide a high level of service in relation to these issues.

We are not asking local councils to do activities that are essential to safety on the network but we are giving local councils the opportunity to undertake activities on the highway that will improve the aesthetics of local areas. Our initial feedback from town and parish councils has been positive to this initiative and proffers opportunities for local communities to take action that will enhance their own local areas as well as bring together community groups in local activities.

The County is currently in the process of procuring new contracts for delivery of many of these services. It would be premature to review budgets until the pricing of these new contracts is understood.

Matt Davey

Director of Highways, Transport and Planning