
Motion on Highways Maintenance

- 1** The Chairman of the County Council referred the notice of motion on Highways Maintenance submitted to the County Council on 18 October 2019, to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure, for consideration.
- 2** The motion called on the Cabinet Member to reverse the cut to the highways maintenance budget, at least until such time as adequate alternative arrangements for others to cover the reduction in service levels are in place county-wide. The funding for this service to be taken during this transition period from the budget management reserve.
- 3** The Cabinet Member notes the highways maintenance briefing note circulated with the 18 October 2019 County Council agenda.
- 4** The Cabinet Member met Mr Michael Jones on 19 November 2019 to discuss the motion with the Director for Highways, Transport and Planning and the Head of Local Highway Operations in attendance.
- 5** Mr Jones' restated his disagreement with the decision to reduce service levels for highways maintenance across the county as set out in the Cabinet Member decision in July 2019.
- 6** The Cabinet Member explained that a risk-based approach had been taken to the actions endorsed by the decision and that these were in line with actions taken by other local authorities country-wide. The Director of Highways, Transport and Planning confirmed that the actions adhered to the UK Roads Liaison Group's National Code of Practice set out in its document 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure'.
- 7** Mr Jones noted that the service had overspent in this area over the past two years and had had to revise service levels in the light of reducing budgets. The Director of Highways, Transport and Planning confirmed that the budget shortfall was circa £1m. He further explained that that contracts for service provision would shortly be agreed with contractors with discussions on the details of service provision following in mid-December/January. The Cabinet Member confirmed that a clearer overview of service levels could be given to Mr Jones at that time.
- 8** Mr Jones questioned what work was being done in liaison with partner councils to pick up on additional maintenance. The Director of Highways, Transport and Planning explained that despite liaison work by the County Council's Communities Team there had been limited take-up across the county.
- 9** Mr Jones raised concern on bus service requirements for gritted roads. The Head of Local Highway Operations explained that a routine engagement meeting was to be held with bus companies in early December and that no concerns had been raised by the bus companies at this point.
- 10** Mr Jones questioned the impact of the decision on the visitor economy. It was explained that this was hard to quantify and that the priority for the service was to maintain a safe highway network.

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- 11** In relation to safety, Mr Jones asked what provision was in place to ensure good line of sight for drivers across verges and safety for pedestrians travelling along the highway. The Head of Local Highway Operations explained that there was the ability to vary schedules to increase attention to verge maintenance where required.
- 12** Mr Jones questioned the opportunity to use the County Council's reserves to fund a reverse in the budget cut. The Cabinet Member explained that this was possible in theory but could only be done once and would not support the revenue requirement of an on-going service. He assured Mr Jones that once all tenders were in and discussions on service levels were complete he would provide the best service possible within the budget available.
- 13** Mr Jones requested information on the numbers of vehicle damage claims made to the County Council and numbers receiving compensation. The Head of Local Highway Operations undertook to send Mr Jones the link to the information on the County Council's website.
- 14** Mr Jones explained that he remained dissatisfied with the decision to reduce the budget for highways maintenance and confirmed he still wished his motion to be debated at the Council meeting on 17 December 2019.
- 15** Subsequent to the meeting with Mr Jones, at Cabinet on 3 December 2019, the Cabinet Member confirmed that pre-emptive county-wide weed spraying will be undertaken in 2020. The cost will be contained within the overall highways budget.
- 16** The Cabinet Member is unable to support the motion, so will recommend that members do not support it at the County Council meeting on 17 December 2019. The Cabinet Member's decision on this matter was published via the Executive Decision Database 4 December 2019.

Roger Elkins

Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

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Background papers

None