

County Road Highway Maintenance Revenue Budget and On-street Parking Account 2015/16

Report of the Head of Highways, Capital Development and Waste

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendations: That:

- (a) the budget allocations for highway maintenance for 2015/16 be approved as detailed in Appendix I;**
- (b) authority to amend the allocations between different work types to maintain overall the budget within the total allocation and to maximise the impact of the maintenance programme be delegated to the Head of Highways, Capital Development and Waste;**
- (c) revised Highway Maintenance Policy for some work functions set out in Appendix II be approved;**
- (d) the programme funded from the On-street Parking Account for 2015/16 as set out in Appendix III be approved.**

1. Background

Revenue funding for highway maintenance provides for the funding of reactive repairs and routine maintenance.

This report recommends the allocation of revenue highway maintenance funding for 2015/16 by maintenance function.

The demand for reactive revenue funded highway maintenance is affected by the amount of capital investment in the highway asset. The need for structural repair of the network has been assessed using an asset management, data led approach. This shows that the level of Capital Funding currently available is not enough to prevent part of the network, particularly lower category rural roads and estate roads from continuing to deteriorate. The result of this is that expenditure on reactive and safety related maintenance can be volatile in the event of severe weather events and will rise. Approval of the Capital funded Highway Structural Maintenance and Bridge Assessment and Strengthening Programme for 2015/16 is dealt with in a separate report. (Ref: HCW/15/26)

To enable the revenue budget to be managed within the available funding, and for the demand for unavoidable volatile work functions, like safety defects repair, emergency work and winter maintenance, it is recommended that authority to change revenue funding allocations between individual work functions within the overall highway revenue budget envelope is delegated to the Head of Highways Capital Development and Waste.

This report recommends for approval a programme of work permitted in accordance with the provisions of Traffic Management Act 2004, to be to be funded from the On-street Parking Account.

2. Introduction

As the local highway authority, Devon has the duty to maintain a road network of 12,850 kilometres comprising:

970km principal (A) roads
660km non-principal (B) roads
4,510km non-principal (C) roads
6,710km unclassified roads.

There are basically three types of maintenance works undertaken:

- (a) Reactive repairs such as pot-hole filling, dealing with flooding, replacing road signs and markings, clearing overhanging vegetation and the like, which, if neglected, would pose a potential danger to road users. Additionally during the winter period precautionary salting and snow clearance are carried out as needed.
- (b) Routine maintenance such as gully emptying, grass cutting, cleaning and clearing of drainage pipes, ducts and channels and the like, mostly carried out to a defined frequency.
- (c) Planned, programmed or structural maintenance such as resurfacing, reconstruction, surface treatments, which is aimed at keeping roads structurally sound and reducing long term maintenance costs. This work is largely funded from the Capital budget.

This report deals with the funding of reactive repairs and routine maintenance.

Within the County Council target revenue budget for 2015/16 the highway maintenance base budget has been set at £28,255,000, which is made up as follows:

Road Maintenance	£16,789,000
Street Lighting	£5,594,000
Winter Maintenance & Depots	£5,872,000
Total Revenue Budget	£28,255,000

The service is under extreme pressure to deal with the impacts of historic Capital underfunding of highway structural maintenance and severe winter weather, like prolonged cold periods and flooding events, in recent years. Progress towards providing resilience across the whole of the network is proving to be very challenging, as evidenced by high numbers of potholes and recurring flooding related issues. This will remain a significant issue for the service in the foreseeable future.

3. Strategy and Analysis

The strategy of Devon Highways is to:

- drive efficiency in the planning, preparation and execution of works programmes,
- Enable Devon communities to help themselves thus allowing them to carry out some highway work where it is safe to do so,
- manage expectation and demand for highway services,
- keep the highway network as safe as possible,
- deliver a programme of preventative maintenance based on sound asset management principles to hold the condition of as much of the network as possible,
- deliver a focussed programme on a local resilience network,
- agree with communities roads for planned decline (the lowest category roads),
- identify options for stopping-up of some roads.

The above strategy has been used in deciding highway revenue budget savings for 2015/16.

Some savings have been made through efficiency gains. Other savings are based on reducing levels of service. The mitigation for some reductions in service is that communities could choose to deliver or "top up" delivery where they decide that is important for their community.

The National Highways and Transport public satisfaction survey results rate Devon as second overall when compared with other Counties. However the results continue to show low levels of public satisfaction and are unlikely to improve unless the gap between the needs of the network and the available funding can be closed. Work continues to provide clear communications on the funding pressure the service is under, the Devon Highways Strategy and the necessity of reducing service levels from those that have been affordable in the past.

4. Detailed Allocations

Detailed allocations by work function are given at Appendix I. These are based on Devon's asset management principles, experience of maintaining the network and Tough Choices consultation feedback.

The overall reduction proposed for 2015/16 compared to 2014/15 is £852,000 net. This follows previous year revenue reductions leading to a compounding of the effect on the highway network and does not account for unavoidable inflationary cost increases. Inflation has had to be added to some essential functions such as winter maintenance to sustain the level of service provided for in current policy and this will affect delivery capability on some of the other work functions.

Specific revenue budget reductions are as follows:

Siding and Watertabling/Parish Lengthsman - £430,000: the cleaning of drainage features such as grips and easements, and the hand cleaning of gullies will be the lengthsman's only duty. This will leave no scope for locally determined highway drainage and cleaning activities.

*Grass cutting - £700,000: this work function is being reduced substantially. Visibility areas including junctions and the inside of bends will be the only grass cut in both urban and rural areas.

*Weed treatment - £250,000: stop weed spraying and the treatment of noxious/injurious weeds. Use Community Payback Volunteers to hand pull weeds in heavily infested areas.

Gritting and snow clearing fleet - £50,000: reduction in the number of vehicles in the secondary fleet which will reduce the ability to respond on connections to communities off the main road network during prolonged periods of severe weather.

Picnic sites - £133,000: closing of the four picnic sites and associated facilities on the A361 and A39 at Moortown Barton, Sidemoor, Lydacott and Rooksbridge, unless alternative funding mechanisms through third party leasing arrangements can be agreed.

Functions marked thus * require an alteration to the Council's policy. The proposed Policy changes, which are needed to align policy with the budget saving proposals, are set out in Appendix II and approval is sought for the changes.

5. On-Street Parking Account

The expenditure of on-street parking income is restricted by legislation.

The costs of operating the on-street parking service is the first call on the income held in the On-Street Parking Account.

Any remaining funds/surplus must then be used in accordance with the eligibility criteria set out in legislation.

The proposed programme includes;

- maintenance of road markings and signing of existing parking management schemes,
- the delivery of new parking and traffic management schemes,
- support to outdoor recreational facilities such as Stover Country Park and Grand Western Canal,
- contributing toward public transport and other accessibility schemes
- Traffic Management and Parking Plans being developed in Exeter and the County's market and coastal towns.

The proposed On-Street Parking Account programme for 2015/16 is shown in Appendix III.

6. Options/Alternatives

The revenue funded programme for 2015/16 optimises the use of the available funding to provide for reactive and clear up activities, winter maintenance, safety defect repairs and routine and cyclic maintenance activity.

The distribution of funding is based on experience of managing the network, data on asset management and consultation feedback. It strikes a balance between the competing needs of the network and the needs of the travelling public.

Whilst alternative funding of work functions is a possibility, the arguments for this were rehearsed as part of the budget consultation process and the feedback from the consultation has been taken into account in drafting the detailed budget proposals.

There is a need for in year flexibility in the funding of work functions to enable the service to respond to unforeseen and extreme events.

7. Consultations

The results of the 2014 National Highways and Transport (NHT) Public Satisfaction Survey reflect public perception of performance, importance and desire for various activities to be funded. Analysis shows that the condition of the highway network and the speed and quality of repairs are important to the public.

The complete survey can be seen at <http://nhtsurvey.econtrack.co.uk/>

The National survey shows that levels of satisfaction for road condition across the Country are generally very low.

Consultation on the highway budget proposals were included in the Tough Choices consultation which can be found at <http://toughchoices.co.uk>

8. Financial Considerations

The cost of this work will be met from the County Council's Revenue Budget.

9. Sustainability Considerations

The ability to efficiently transport people and goods around the County underpins Devon's economy and has a direct impact on the quality of the environment.

When maintenance work is undertaken it is managed to ensure that the effect on the surrounding environment is kept to a minimum. On carriageways, surface treatment and reconstruction work is tightly controlled to achieve long term durability. Recycled materials and secondary aggregates are used whenever possible. When cleaning and other cyclic work is undertaken soil and other material is returned to roadside verges if appropriate.

10. Carbon Impact Considerations

The carbon impact of this highway maintenance programme through the manufacture and laying of the materials is likely to be offset by reduced emissions from highway users utilising a better maintained network, and using suitable alternatives such as walking and cycling.

The continued implementation of part – night street lighting contributes to reducing carbon emissions.

11. Equality Considerations

Where relevant to the decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Taking account of age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status in coming to a decision, a decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

This may be achieved, for example, through completing a full Equality Impact Needs Assessment/Impact Assessment or other form of options/project management appraisal that achieves the same objective.

An Impact Assessment has been carried out for the savings to the Highways Revenue budget compared to 2014/15, a copy of which has been circulated to Cabinet Members, and is available on the Council's website at:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/highwaysbudget/background/impact-assessment>

12. Legal Considerations

The lawful consequences of the recommendations have been considered in the preparation of this report. The reduction in the revenue allocation will put more pressure on the amount and type of work that will be completed in the capital budget. This will lead to an overall reduction in maintenance and potentially road closures, particularly on the minor part of the network. This may be legally challenged by local residents and road users.

There is also likely to be an increase in user dissatisfaction and complaints which could lead to challenges to the Authority under Section 56 of the Highways Act.

Following extreme events, the service may not be able to keep pace with safety defect repair policy timescales.

The termination of noxious or injurious weed treatment, including non-native invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed, risks the possibility of legal challenge and potential enforcement under current and impending legislation. The weed problems and the associated risks and liabilities will, inevitably, increase over time in the absence of active weed treatment. Local self-help schemes may reduce the impact of reduced levels of weed treatment.

13. Risk Management Considerations

The proposals contained in this report have been assessed and all reasonable actions are taken to safeguard the Council's position.

The reduction in this budget has significant implications. Inability to undertake enough planned and general preventative maintenance work will result in an increased depreciation of the highways asset. This will lead to increased deterioration and defects as a consequence.

Where risks have been identified such as the public liability risk associated with compliance with Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 (the duty to maintain the highway and the duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow and ice) the implications have been taken into account in preparing this report.

14. Public Health Impact

The cumulative reduction in budgets could also have an impact on public health with reduced maintenance having an effect on sustainable travel alternatives and potentially more injuries resulting from crashes, trips and falls.

15. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion

Highway and Traffic services ensure the availability and preservation of a safe and functional highway network which support the economy of the County and region. A key strategic element for the Service, in the current financial climate, is to slow down the rate at which the asset will deteriorate by focusing on the review of service levels, specifications, system and processes to 'sweat the asset'. Nevertheless, reductions and insufficient budgets, either capital or revenue, will impinge on the standards of maintenance across the network and are almost certain to increase the rate of deterioration.

David Whitton
Head of Highways, Capital Development and Waste

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Highway Management and Flood Prevention: Councillor Stuart Hughes

Strategic Director, Place: Heather Barnes

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: David Whitton

Room No: AB1, Lucombe House, County Hall, Exeter

Tel No: (01392) 383379

Background Paper	Date	File Ref.
None		

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**Appendix I
To HCW/15/27**

County Roads Highway Maintenance Budget Allocations 2015-16

Function Code	Function Narrative	Total £
05	Patching of carriageways	942,732
08	Cycle route licences	40,000
14	Maintenance of existing Drainage systems	467,111
16	Maintenance of Road Restraint Systems/Fencing	145,402
19	Asset Condition Surveys	12,000
21	Highway Structures cyclic maintenance	895,269
38	Safety Defect repair	6,576,000
28	Weed Clearance	93,916
29	Grass Cutting	279,302
31	Road Cleaning/Ditching	1,551,624
32	Hedge and Tree Maintenance	300,000
36	Highway Incident Reaction/Clearance of Debris	576,744
40	Gully Emptying	1,400,000
43	Traffic Sign Maintenance	175,000
48	Road Markings/Road Studs Maintenance	800,000
50	Traffic Signals/Signs Energy	240,000
51	Traffic Signals Maintenance	645,000
70	Winter Service Operations	2,248,000
71	Winter Service Plant Costs	2,153,000
72	Highway Operations Control Centre systems	240,000
79	Emergency Works	891,900
83	Highway Information Management System	97,000
84	Depot Charges	1,281,000
91	Maintenance of Public Rights of Way	610,000
100	Street Lighting & Illuminated Signs energy & maintenance	5,594,000
TOTAL		28,255,000

Changes to Highway Maintenance Policy

1. Background/Introduction

In the light of pressures on Revenue Budgets for 2015/16 and beyond savings need to be made in Highway Maintenance expenditure.

A range of possible savings were published in the Autumn under the 'Tough Choices' public consultation, and all except one (the refilling of grit bins) received general support.

2. Policy Proposals

The proposed changes relate to:

Grass Cutting - reduced coverage

Weed killing – reduced coverage and the termination of noxious/injurious weed treatment.

The objective of each activity and policy changes is described in separate sections below.

Grass Cutting

1.0 Scope

Approved policy and procedures for cutting roadside grass.

2.0 Statement of Objectives:

The control of growth on the highway is necessary for the following safety reasons:

- to maintain visibility areas/splays for highway users;
- to provide forward visibility to signs.

Additionally:

- community self-help to address local issues over and above the level of service will be enabled and encouraged.

3.0 Policy to Achieve Objectives

- 3.1 Urban roads are generally defined as those within a 20, 30, or 40mph speed-restricted area with a number of surrounding residential or commercial properties or within built up areas of villages and hamlets. However, there are a number of roadside verges within 40mph speed limits, which continue to be considered of a rural nature and are therefore cut accordingly.

The Priority Network consists of winter service priority one salting routes.

3.2 The policy to achieve the County Council's objectives is given below:

Cutting on visibility areas (junctions, laybys and the inside of bends) is undertaken on an 'as needed' basis and the frequency below has proved adequate:

Rural Priority Network - twice or occasionally three times per annum

Rural other roads (excluding maintenance category 12 roads) - once per annum

Urban roads (excluding maintenance category 12 roads) - four times per annum.

The Neighbourhood Office is authorised to determine the timing of the cutting and whether the maximum number of cuts is necessary. In a normal growing season the rural cutting commences on Priority Routes during mid-May. Urban cutting usually commences in April. Any cuts additional to the maximum number will be regarded as being for amenity or environmental purposes and will be the responsibility of City, Borough or District Councils. Partnership arrangements for commissioning the highway and amenity work are encouraged where appropriate.

Additional cutting (including other areas) will be undertaken to facilitate other maintenance works for example surface treatment or ditch cleaning. Also to provide forward visibility to essential road signs.

The residual height of rural cutting is 100mm, and urban cuts 40mm.

No early cut is to be carried out on moorland roads where cut bracken may harm animals;

The use of grass growth retarder is not permitted.

Weed Control/Clearance

1.0 Scope

Approved policy and procedures for highway weed killing

2.0 Statement of Objectives

Weed growth can cause damage to the highway network. The overall objective is to control the impact of weeds rather than eradicate all growth. (The Priority Network consists of winter service priority one salting routes). Community self-help to address local issues by provision of volunteer work or funding will be enabled and encouraged.

2.1 Limited control of excessive weed growth on hard surfaces such as carriageways, footways and cycle ways where the size and density of the weed growth may create a hazard to the highway user or result in serious damage to the structure or surface, on a reactive basis

2.2 Control weeds in granular bed drainage systems on the Priority Network (French drains).

2.3 Control weeds prior to footway construction or highway maintenance works as a preventative measure.

2.4 Control weeds in escape lanes or arrested beds.

3.0 The policy to achieve the objectives

3.1 Manual control methods will be used to remove excessive weeds on hard areas. Where possible weed treatment work will be integrated into a co-ordinated programme with the City, Borough or District Council's highway sweeping. Where Town or Parish Councils undertake similar works, integration will also be encouraged.

- 3.2 The total, non-residual herbicide glyphosate will be used to control weeds on filter/French drains. The herbicide will be applied to the weed growth only. The glyphosate used will be that approved for use near watercourses i.e. aquatic approval.
- 3.3 A total residual herbicide containing glyphosate and sulfosulfron will be used prior to application of thin surfacing, slurry seal, micro asphalt or surface dressing; and also part of footway construction or other highway maintenance works. It will also be used to control weeds in escape lanes/arrester beds. The herbicide will be targeted at existing weed growth and areas of potential weed growth as a preventative measure. Under no circumstances will this herbicide be used near water or where it might enter a water course, and its use strictly targeted to weed growth and also areas of potential weed growth e.g. front and back of footway edge, 300mm swathe width covering the kerb edge.
- 4.0 Procedure
- 4.1 Weed killing with herbicide will be undertaken to the appropriate specification contained in the Term Maintenance Contract.
- 4.2 All herbicides shall be approved by the Chemicals Regulation Directorate and used strictly in accordance with the product label and the requirements of the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use Regulations) 2012 and any advice issued by the Chemicals Regulation Directorate and the manufacturer.
- 4.3 Herbicides should not be applied during or before weather conditions that would render their use ineffective or result in the contamination of surrounding areas.
- 4.4 Weed spraying within one metre of a water course or from the top of a river bank, requires Environment Agency notification prior to work starting, using an AQherb01 form, available from the Environment Agency.
- 4.5 Prior consultation with the Environment Agency will be needed before herbicides are used on filter or French drains which abut or traverse Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- 4.6 In some locations, such as moorland areas where weed growth is unlikely to create a problem the appropriate Authority should be consulted before weed killing is undertaken.

**Appendix III
To HCW/15/27**

On Street Parking Account 2015/16

Scheme	Budget Allocation £
Transport Coordination Support	1,246,000
Park and Ride Business Rates	100,000
Stover Country Park & Grand Western Canal	212,000
Grass Cutting	200,000
Civil Parking Restriction Signing and Lining Maintenance	225,000
Route reviews and improvements to road signs and lines	100,000
Exeter Residents Parking Scheme	249,000
Traffic Management Plans	200,000
Speed Management	60,000
CPE Schemes & Maintenance Staffing Costs	339,000
IT costs relating to Parking and Traffic Management programmes	20,000
Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)	10,000
Real Time Passenger Information	78,000
Variable message signs - maintenance of	10,000
Special events , coning and signing	20,000
Disabled Bays	55,000
TOTAL	3,124,000