

**Questions concerning Call Outs for Highway Defects requested by Councillor Christine Marsh**

Report of the Head of Highways and Traffic Management

***Please note that the following recommendation is subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.***

**Recommendation: It is recommended that the report is noted.**

**1. Summary**

Questions have been raised by Councillor Christine Marsh concerning Call Outs for Highway Defects and how they are serviced.

**2. List of Questions**

- (a) How much money are we spending on call outs?
- (b) Are they dealt with at the first visit?
- (c) Blocked drains, I understand they are cleared once a year, what is our response if they are blocked again?
- (d) Safety is our highest priority, inspection policy says safe for all. How many safety repairs are carried out that are not pot holes or trips and the costs?
- (e) Why are pot hole repairs done on a day works cost and not per hole as they were?
- (f) Who determines how many or to what standard they are done?
- (g) Are accidents being recharged and how is this process now managed?
- (h) The cyclical maintenance budget where are we with this is it over or under budget?

**3. Responses**

- (a) From 1 April 2012 until the end of July 2012 we had responded to and completed 3,109 call-outs or emergencies at a cost of £259,075.00.
- (b) The vast majority of callouts are dealt with during the first visit but this is dependent on the nature of the problem, some can only be signed and remedial works programmed for a later date. An example of this could be where a road has collapsed or a bridge is unsafe, the road may need to be closed and barrier-ed off to allow an expert inspection to be carried out in daylight hours.
- (c) Currently the vast majority of road gullies are cleared once a year. However when a report of a blocked gully is received if it is causing a safety issue or related to flooding of a property a gang is despatched to clear the problem.
- (d) Number of potholes safety defects from April-August 2012 = 41,985.  
Number of other safety defects for same period = 14,319.
- (e) Under the new Virtual Joint Venture (VJV) trial we are looking for ways to improve the effectiveness of operations and one of the ways already trialled is to reduce the number of orders in the system for payment for small works, i.e. pothole repairs. This has reduced administration with the average cost per pothole reducing from £145 in 2010 down to a current average of £41.
- (f) Inspections are carried out on the County Highway Network in strict accordance with section 5 of Devon County Council Highway Inspection Manual wherein is stated the frequency of inspections for the various categories of footways and carriageways. To

be labelled as a defect a certain criteria has to be met; this determines the number of defects needing attention. Once a defect is identified there is a prescribed time limit for the repair to be completed which is dependant on the maintenance category the Highway falls into.

In order to monitor the quality or standard of the repairs an audit sample of all works types are taken each month by all of the Neighbourhood groups and a reported monthly.

(g) The process for recharging our time following call outs for accidents is managed as follows:

- All orders are processed against 1 monthly order. (Including re-charges).
- DCC Finance use a spreadsheet to highlight/raise the re-charge jobs.
- At the end of each month, staff check the spreadsheet against the monthly call out order and approve/disapprove as appropriate.

The above removes any possibility of duplicate charges.

(h) We are on track to spend the budget by the end of the year.

#### **4. Financial Considerations**

The works referred to in section 3 are funded from the Highway Maintenance revenue budget.

#### **5. Legal Considerations**

There are no specific legal considerations

#### **6. Risk Management Considerations**

This Highway Management policies and procedures have been assessed and all necessary safeguards or action have been taken/included to safeguard the Council's position

#### **7. Public Health Impact**

Maintaining the public highway in a safe condition will reduce the impact on public health services.

#### **8. Options/Alternatives**

The report provides details the current service provided and does not consider options.

#### **9. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion**

The recommendation is to the note the answers provided which comply with current policy and procedure.

Lester Willmington  
Head of Highways and Traffic Management

**Electoral Divisions: All West Devon**

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Reference
Nil		

pn091112wdh  
sc/cr/questions on call outs for highway defects councillor marsh  
04 131112