

COUNTY COUNCIL: 16TH MAY 2023

Agenda Item No. 16e) – Motion from Councillor Alan Sharp – Liberal Democrat Amendment

Proposed by Councillor A Beckett

Seconded by Councillor N Shailer

Additions in bold and deletions shown in strikethrough

Core Purpose: The condition of the highways, footpaths and cycleways in Cambridgeshire is completely unsatisfactory, therefore an urgent injection of resources and an improvement in the way repairs are carried out is proposed to help address the situation.

This Council notes that:

- the Joint Administration ~~decided to ignore inflation meaning the total highways budget for maintenance was cut by £710k in real terms for this financial year~~ **took over control of Cambridgeshire County Council in 2021 following 10 years of decline in our highways network under Conservative leadership at the council.**
- furthermore, since coming to power they have ~~repeatedly rejected calls from the Conservatives to increase the budget by voting against its proposals.~~ **increased the funding available for highways maintenance by £2.4m, but this is unfortunately not enough to compensate for the increases in inflation caused by Conservative government policies.**
- the **poor condition of our roads** ~~result of this~~ is plain to see and the public are clamouring for something to be done.
- this Council welcomes the additional indicative £3.617m increase in pothole funding (over and above the £8.329m expected and budgeted for) the Conservative Government has allocated through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) to the County Council, **but regrets that this will still not be enough to keep pace with the increased inflationary costs, nor compensate for the years of managed decline which have left our highways network in such a dreadful condition.**
- **Cambridgeshire has seen its real terms cash settlement under the Conservative central government fall from £144.31m to 67.87m.**

- whilst the Joint Administration is prepared **will need** to wait for the CPCA to advise the Council and Strategy and Resources Committee to allocate funds later on in the year, ~~the Conservatives propose an immediate allocation to boost the highways, footpaths and cycleways maintenance budgets (Hereafter called the highways maintenance budget).~~ **but welcomes the work the administration and officers have been doing in preparing for this money and working at pace to secure additional resources ahead of other councils. The Joint Administration welcomes the arrival of three additional dragon patchers which will enable us to operate on a proactive basis rather than the purely reactive strategy adopted by the previous administration.**
- this early action will help accelerate planning for expenditure in the Summer months when preventative action is more effective than delayed actions leading to reactive pothole filling.
- **under the previous administration no sampling of maintenance work quality was undertaken and welcomes the changes by the current administration to develop reliable key performance indicators on maintenance work quality.**
- **highways improvement, including the focus on potholes, deserves full and proper scrutiny and consideration by the Highways and Transport Committee – which enables officers to contribute to this, rather than a report to full Council.**
- ~~making this decision at full Council now also prevents the Joint Administration from allocating this welcome increase to the highway's maintenance budget to simply paying off debt, which it chose to use the increased money for last year.~~

This Council also recognises:

- ~~the need to bring to~~ **that Highways Maintenance is already a top priority for the council, and that** the attention of the Chief Executive **is fully engaged with this topic thanks to** the often-repeated claims by members of the public that repairs are not of an acceptable standard.
- **the Council's management structure is clear that Highways is the functional responsibility of the Executive Director of Place and Sustainability. With our new Executive Director, who was unanimously appointed to the role by the cross party Staffing and Appeals Committee, having recently taken up post, it would seem sensible for the Executive Director to lead on this work, enabling the Chief Executive to maintain his oversight of all Council services.**

- ~~there is little to be gained by an increase in allocation of funding without an assurance the money will be well spent.~~
- ~~the need to ask the Chief Executive to treat this matter as one of the highest importance and take personal oversight to ensure that the organisation effectively spends highways maintenance monies.~~

This Council agrees that:

- the roads and footpaths are in an unacceptable state of repair **following years of under investment and mismanagement from Conservative led administrations over many years.**
- urgent action is required to address this situation, **including the continuation of the expansion of the proactive action being taken during** ~~and develop plans for the warmer months as early as possible in~~ of the year.

This Council recommends that the:

- Highways and Transport Directorate is informed that the full amount of the Government's pothole fund will be allocated to it for use as part of the highways' maintenance budget.
- Chief Executive allocate sufficient resources and take a specific interest in the quality and quantum of highways maintenance.
- **Executive Director of Place and Sustainability** ~~Chief Executive~~ deliver a draft action plan to members for improvements in dealing with Highways Maintenance **for consideration by the Highways and Transport Committee in July** ~~at least one week prior to the July meeting of Council.~~