

COUNTY COUNCIL – 17 JULY 2018
WRITTEN QUESTION UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 9.2

1. Question from Councillor Lorna Dupre

The Oxford-MK-Cambridge England's Economic Heartland grouping has announced that it intends to create a sub-national transport body and produce a transport strategy. Given the recent very public disagreement between the Mayor and the Greater Cambridge Partnership about aligning their respective transport plans and projects, how will the county council and its representatives on the relevant bodies ensure that the England's Economic Heartland transport strategy for Cambridgeshire aligns with both the Mayor's transport strategy and the work of the GCP, and also with the residual transport responsibilities and plans of the County Council?

Response from Councillor Ian Bates
Chairman of Economy and Environment Committee and the
Council's representative on the Greater Cambridge Partnership

The County Council has worked closely with the England's Economic Heartlands Alliance since its inception over two years ago and shares its aims to address the considerable transport, economic and social challenges that are common across the Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge arc corridor.

If the Alliance does create a Sub National Transport Body, part of that process will also involve producing a transport strategy. This, however, will focus on the overarching strategic infrastructure across the whole of the area covered such as East West Rail and the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway as well as broader national connections to maximise the economic potential of the area and County and Unitary Councils (in our case, the Combined Authority) will continue to have their own Local Transport Plans to cover local priorities. The key strategic objectives of the Heartlands Alliance are shared by the County Council and the Combined Authority and so building on the close working relationships that have been formed with Partners in the Alliance, we are confident that our respective transport plans are consistent and will be aligned as the new Transport Plan develops.

2. Question from Councillor van de Ven

Given the state of 'managed decline' of the County Highway network, which is reflected in the dramatic jump in numbers of pot holes reported and compensation claims made thus far in 2018, should the County Council be reviewing and increasing its network inspection schedules?

Response from Councillor Mathew Shuter
Chairman of Highways and Community Infrastructure Policy and Service
Committee

Assessment of the overall condition of our roads over the past 10 years shows that they are in a broadly steady state condition, largely as a result of the extra investment that we have made. The existing situation is therefore not one of managed decline.

In common with numerous other counties, Cambridgeshire's roads suffered extensive damage following the severe winter of 2017/18. As is reflected across the country, this has resulted in the formation of an exceptional number of potholes. Council officers and Skanska colleagues have worked together closely to address this issue and significant progress has and continues to be made.

Inspections of the county's roads for dangerous defects are carried out at intervals as set out in the approved asset management policies. It is these inspections that constitute a key part of the Council's defence to third party claims. In addition to these safety inspections, the network is constantly monitored by the Local Highways Officers.

The work to address the exceptional situation following last winter has involved Local Highway Officers making an increased number of site visits. This has enabled investigation of reported potholes and marking for repair in accordance with our approved standards.

Where there are a number of potholes in close proximity, officers' work with Skanska colleagues to assess for suitability for the Dragon Patcher. This has helped the effective and efficient repair of increased numbers of potholes, especially in rural areas.

In addition to these reactive pothole repairs, the Council continues to make significant investment into planned maintenance works, in accordance with the Authority's asset management policies. It is this planned, preventative work which will help stop the formation of potholes and will continue to prevent the overall deterioration of the network.