

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMY, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

The Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee met on 16 March 2016.

Present: Councillors Richard Stogdon (Chair), Mike Pursglove (Vice-Chair), Claire Dowling, Pat Rodohan, Rosalyn St. Pierre and Barry Taylor.

Also present: Councillors Chris Dowling (Lead Member for Community Services), Carl Maynard (Lead Member for Transport & Environment), Councillor Rupert Simmons (Lead Member for Economic Development)

1. Scrutiny Review of Highway Drainage

1.1 The Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee has completed its Scrutiny Review of Highway Drainage. A copy of the Committee's full report has previously been circulated to all members and is available on request from Andy Cottell (Tel: 01273 481955).

1.2 The maintenance and improvement of the road network, and the drainage networks that run alongside and beneath it, are vital to the prosperity of East Sussex. Highway drainage has an important role in prolonging the life of the carriageway surface, preventing flooding and ensuring road safety.

1.3 The Scrutiny Review examined all the factors involved with highways drainage including:

- the arrangements for gulley emptying;
- maintenance of drainage ditches and grips;
- maintenance and renewal of highway drainage pipes and culverts; and
- the impact of street cleansing on highway drainage.

1.4 A Highways Asset Management Drainage Strategy has been developed by officers which outlines the work needed and makes the case for additional investment in highway drainage infrastructure. Under this approach having a complete knowledge of the highway drainage asset is of key importance, as this will ensure ESCC makes the most effective use of any investment available.

1.5 The Review found that:

- Intelligence led gulley emptying programmes are in place that mean that all gullies are emptied regularly. However, this does not deal with pipework damaged by tree roots or other pipework problems which can lead to highway flooding.
- There are currently 4,000 – 5,000 outstanding drainage problems, where repair work is needed to fix damaged or blocked drains. Without additional capital investment the Communities, Economy and Transport (CET) department will only be able to deal with the most urgent drainage problems where houses or property are at risk.

- The CET department has developed the Highways Asset Management Drainage Strategy and continues with work to gain a better knowledge and understanding of the drainage asset.
- Further investment is needed in the highway drainage infrastructure, on an invest - to - save basis, to reduce incidents of highway flooding and long term maintenance costs by prolonging the life of carriageways.
- Adjacent landowners and householders should be made aware of their responsibilities in respect of highway drainage and the role they can play in reducing run-off and keeping drains, ditches, grips etc. in good working order.
- There would be benefits in establishing a forum with other organisations to focus on improving highway drainage and flooding issues, as well as sharing information on drainage infrastructure.
- It would be worth exploring measures to better co-ordinate the scheduled highways drainage maintenance work and street sweeping operations.

1.6 The Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee **recommends** to the County Council –

Maintenance arrangements for highway drainage

1.6.1 The Committee recognises the value of the Council's changed approach away from routine maintenance of drains and gullies to a risk based approach which focusses on actual need. The Committee endorses the following key performance indicators in the new Highway Maintenance contract (below) which incentivise actions to keep the drainage infrastructure in good working order:

- (1) The percentage progress of gully cleansing against the agreed (accepted) Service Delivery Programme.
- (2) The percentage of emergency response incidents attended within the specified timescales.
- (3) The percentage of safety intervention defects (including drainage related) repaired within required response time.

1.6.2 It therefore recommends that the department ensures the new Highways Maintenance contractor develops this approach, and uses all the contractual tools available. The department should also check satisfactory performance of the highway drainage network and that all elements of the highway drainage system work effectively, to ensure surface water is captured and discharged efficiently.

Responsibilities of adjacent landowners

1.6.3 The Committee considers that clear information needs to be communicated to residents regarding their responsibilities as adjacent landowners and householders to the Highway drainage network. The Committee recommends that clarification is provided as to that for which the County Council is responsible, and that for which landowners and householders are responsible.

Investment in the highway drainage infrastructure

1.6.4 The Committee:

- (1) recommends that measures are taken to accelerate the projects underway to ascertain a fully and more detailed knowledge of the scope, condition and location of the East Sussex highway drainage infrastructure including its connecting pipework and outfall arrangements;

- (2) advocates and wholly supports the application of additional capital investment in the highways drainage infrastructure – invest to save – as part of the department’s capital financing process; and
- (3) endorses the principles of the draft Highways Asset Strategy Management Drainage Strategy 2015-2018 and recommends its adoption.

Working with others

1.6.5 The Committee considers the Director of Communities, Economy & Transport and the County Council generally are well placed to co-ordinate its strategy in regard to flooding with the strategies of different organisations and agencies charged with responsibility within East Sussex for flood management. That particularly applies, to Southern Water, Environment Agency, Boroughs, Districts, Town & Parish Councils along with the local drainage boards. The Committee therefore recommends:

- (1) The creation of a forum to include such organisations to align strategies and increase local knowledge of highway drainage assets and the impact on them from the surrounding land and built form;
- (2) In the County Council’s capacity as statutory consultee with regard to planning applications and as Lead Local Flood Authority, the County Council needs to focus particularly on securing adequate highway drainage in respect to new development within East Sussex;
- (3) By working with the Joint Waste Partnership the County Council needs to establish pilot projects to tackle flooding “hot spot” areas to gauge the impact of street and road cleaning activity on flooding events and frequency of gully blocking.

[See also Report of the Cabinet – 26 April 2016]

16 MARCH 2016

RICHARD STOGDON
Chair