

COUNTY COUNCIL – 10 OCTOBER 2023
QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Question from Rod Calder, Forest Row, East Sussex

Background

In the last twelve months I have submitted three questions to three Full Council meetings, regarding the totally unacceptable surfacing work carried out by Costain on the A22 in Forest Row last July. Despite numerous E mails, a meeting on site on 11th January and an assurance on 6th April that the remedial work would be included in this years planned work programme, there has been absolutely no progress on site.

In June the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport stated that the remedial works would now be carried out by Balfour Beatty during Sept/Oct. Well, nothing happened in September!

Question

So my question on behalf of the residents of Forest Row is;

If the remedial works are not complete by the end of October as stated by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport will the Lead Member agree to meet me and our local Councillor during the first week of November to discuss outstanding issues and the way forward? At that meeting would the Lead Member also explain why the only two Carriageway Surfacing projects to be carried out in Forest Row this year are:- 1. Stonepark Drive; this is a short cul de sac which, incidentally joins Post Horn Lane which is also a cul de sac!
2. Twyford Lane; this is, predominantly, a single track lane in the Forest with a stream running across it!

I do not understand how either of these projects would take priority over finally surfacing all the A22 in the village.

Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

I thank Mr Calder for his further query. This year ESCC commenced a new Highway Services Contract with our providers Balfour Beatty Living Places. As part of this contract they will delivering a wide range of schemes across the County including the works along the A22 in Forest Row.

We provide an indicative timeframe for all schemes at the beginning of the year but all highway schemes require investigation and design to properly determine the timing of the works and our programme is updated accordingly.

I am afraid as can happen with a live delivery programme there has been a delay with the start of these works. Unfortunately delays on a live programme do occur. Our works are very dependent on weather, the availability of resources/materials and what else is happening on the network. Works on the A roads, including the A22, are particularly demanding as they form the main transport links within and in and out of the county. We also need to coordinate our works with the National Highways team because the diversion routes affect their network as well as our own. Whilst we endeavour to optimise our programme there are times where a delay from one scheme has a knock-on effect on others. However, residents should be assured that we do intend to deliver these works in March 2024 and they will be contacted when we have a definitive date for the works.

Regarding the works in Stonepark Drive or Twyford Lane, both roads have been identified as requiring repair due to surface cracking/deterioration as they have reached their end of life. However, these works have not taken priority over the works on the A22 Forest Row. Our annual programme is not delivered in order of road type priority. Works are scheduled when the conditions are best for the type of repairs we are carrying out and resources are available.

2. Question from Anna Sabin, St. Leonards, East Sussex

There are many very inexpensive road painting and flower pot interventions that could be made to a few roads in Hastings which would enable shopping streets to be pedestrianised, walks to school to be made safe and walks from railway station to beach to be marketable and enticing. Would you, or one of your transport officers, come to Hastings to work out where these active travel initiatives could be implemented so that you can make plans for them and apply for funding for them?

There is a climate emergency meaning the current pace of 'modal switch' needs radically speeding up.

Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

The County Council has and continues to undertake significant work to promote and encourage active travel choices in the County, including in Hastings, utilising funding that we have successfully secured towards the delivery of location specific or packages of schemes. These schemes include pedestrianisation in town centres, introducing school streets and improving active travel access to/from rail stations and other destinations.

As you may be aware, the Government published its 'Plan for Drivers' last week. As further guidance emerges from Government on elements of this Plan, including Low Traffic Neighbourhoods which often comprise some of the interventions you have suggested, we will need to consider how this relates to East Sussex.

We are planning to commence a review of the County's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan in 2024, to ensure that it is aligned with our emerging Local Transport Plan which will be subject to consultation later in the autumn. Our updated LTP will set out the County's approach, working with partners, to decarbonise transport and support the local economy up to 2050.

As we review our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, we will be engaging with key local stakeholders on the extent of the existing identified networks, discuss the opportunities to update these and consider further schemes to include in the updated Plan. Therefore, this engagement process will be the mechanism to discuss any potential active travel related schemes in Hastings for consideration and inclusion in the Plan.

Once updated, the Plan will then be used as our evidence base to prioritise schemes for development and delivery across the whole of East Sussex, and in turn inform the content of future bids for active travel funding.