

Report to: Place Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 23 November 2023

By: Chair of the Review Board

Title: Scrutiny Review of Pothole Management

Purpose: To present the outcomes of the scrutiny review and make recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Committee considers and endorses the report of the Review Board, and makes recommendations to Cabinet for comment, and County Council for approval.

1. Background

1.1 Potholes are the number one issue residents contact their local councillor about, and there are concerns about damage to vehicles and road safety, as drivers try to avoid driving over damaged road surfacing. In particular, the repair of clusters of potholes in the same section of road is of concern to people, especially when only the potholes that meet the Council's intervention criteria are repaired and other potholes or defects developing nearby appear not to be tackled. As a consequence, the Place Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Review Board to undertake a Scrutiny Review of Pothole Management at the meeting held on 28 March 2023.

1.2 The scope of the review included an investigation of various aspects of policies and procedures for repairing potholes and other carriageway defects including:

- Pothole repair techniques and costs;
- Quality of pothole repair works;
- Alternative pothole intervention levels and costs;
- Consideration of current policies to take into account vulnerable road users (e.g. those who walk, wheel, cycle, and motorcycle etc.)
- Consideration of budgets for pothole repairs and safety defects; and
- Consideration of the effectiveness of the Council's patching programme.

1.3 The review has sought to focus on the factors that the Council can influence, and improvements in our own internal policies and procedures for pothole management, in order to make a difference to the number of potholes and road condition. It has sought to identify areas for improvement that are affordable, cost effective, and represent value for money, bearing in mind the financial constraints and cost pressures the Council faces.

2. Summary

2.1 The members of the Review Board are Councillors Matthew Beaver, Julia Hilton, Ian Hollidge (Chair), Eleanor Kirby-Green and Philip Lunn.

2.2 During the course of the review the Cabinet and Council agreed additional capital investment in highways maintenance for 2023/24, in order to help tackle the problem of potholes and deteriorating road condition. As the review progressed it became evident that the situation is changing and that the Council, together with its highway maintenance contractor, are taking action to address the issue of potholes through a proactive, 'right first time' approach within the financial constraints that exist for the Council. Although residents and councillors have started to notice a difference in approach, it will take time for the impact of the additional investment to become apparent as the planned repair programmes start to be delivered.

2.3 The Board has made thirteen recommendations which it believes will further develop the approach to pothole management and will help address residents' concerns about road conditions in East Sussex. Overall, the Board believes good progress and plans are being made to reduce the number of potholes within available resources and to address residents' concerns as far as possible. The Board has recommended that the Place Scrutiny Committee maintain an overview of the highway maintenance contractor's performance, especially after the first year of the new contract once the contractor has become established and receives annual performance monitoring reports on the contract key performance indicators (KPIs).

2.4 The attached report (**appendix A**) contains the findings and recommendations of the Review Board. Copies of evidence papers listed in the report and other support documentation are available on request from the contact officer.

2.5 The Committee is recommended to receive the Review Board's report for submission to Cabinet and County Council on 23 January 2024 and 6 February 2024 respectively.

3. Recommendations and conclusion

3.1 The Committee is requested to consider and endorse the report of the Review Board for submission to Cabinet and Full Council.

COUNCILLOR IAN HOLLIDGE Chair of the Review Board

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LOCAL MEMBERS: All.