



Haringey Council

Report for:	Leader of the Council	Item Number:	n/a
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Title:	Pothole Repairs
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Report Authorised by:	Lyn Garner Director Place and Sustainability
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Ward(s) affected: All	Report for Key/Non Key Decisions: Key Decision
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1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 This report proposes a trial in relation to the inspection and repair of carriageway potholes to provide reduced intervention levels, an accelerated programme of inspections to locate and repair potholes more quickly following the severe winter and reduced repair timescales so that potholes are repaired faster.

2. Cabinet Member introduction

- 2.1 The weather during last winter and the early part of spring was exceptionally severe and led to a dramatic increase in the number of potholes on borough roads. Because of this we have already seen an increase in the number of potholes we are repairing, but there is still a higher-than-usual number of potholes on our roads and unless we take action the impact of this will continue through the summer and into early autumn. Residents want to see the roads repaired as quickly as possible and this report sets out a strategy for doing this as well as providing the opportunity to review the business case for permanent change to the highway reactive maintenance policy.



3. Recommendations

That it is agreed:

3.1 To undertake a trial in relation to the inspection and repair of carriageway potholes based on the following principles:

- reduced intervention levels for the repair of potholes for a period of six months in accordance with Option 1C at an additional cost of £310,800 (see paragraph 5.7) and this is to be funded by an allocation from Council reserves;
- an accelerated programme of inspections to bring forward the identification of potholes on unclassified roads for a period of three months in accordance with Option 2B at an additional cost of £32,300 (see paragraph 5.13) and this is to be funded by an allocation from Council reserves; and
- the use of 24 hour and 7 day timescales for all pothole repair orders for a period of six months in accordance with Option 3B (see paragraph 5.18).

3.2 To report back to Cabinet in January 2014 on the outcomes of the trial in order to review the business case for permanent changes to the Council's policy on highways maintenance and repair (see paragraph 5.21).

4. Alternative options considered

4.1 The option to adhere to the current policy for reactive maintenance of carriageways - which sets out intervention levels, inspection frequencies and repair timescales – was considered. This option was not chosen because it would not be sufficient to improve carriageway conditions quickly following the dramatic increase in potholes caused by the severe winter weather.

5. Background information

5.1 The completion of programmed cyclical highways inspections and repair of defects identified during the inspections is a minimum requirement for the council to meet its statutory duty to maintain the highway in a safe condition. Officers responsible for undertaking highways inspections and ordering of repairs have regard to the 'Policy for Reactive Maintenance (Footways and Carriageways)' – see Appendix 1 - which sets out the policy for regularity of inspections and intervention levels for raising repair orders. The current intervention levels are based on the depth of defects and are at the limit of what is acceptable should the council have to defend a claim for injury or damage.

5.2 It is usually the case that freezing weather conditions lead to more potholes. The latter part of the winter of 2012/13 was exceptionally cold and freezing weather continued right into the early part of April 2013. These circumstances have resulted in higher-than-usual numbers of potholes following the winter. We have already seen the impact of this with the number of pothole repair orders increasing



month on month from December 2012 through to March 2013. Without mitigation measures being put in place, the impact of last winter's severe weather on carriageway conditions will continue to be felt through spring, summer and early autumn as the six-monthly programme of inspection of unclassified roads rolls forward. This can be addressed in three main ways:

- Adjust carriageway defect intervention levels so that more potholes are repaired
- Undertake an accelerated programme of carriageway inspections for faster identification of potholes requiring repair following the severe winter weather
- Agree faster repair timescales for carriageway pothole repairs

Options around how these can be implemented are detailed below.

Options to adjust carriageway defect intervention levels

5.3 The current intervention levels for repair of carriageway defects are:

- Classified roads and shopping areas – potholes at a depth of 50mm or more
- Unclassified roads – potholes at a depth of 60mm or more

5.4 For comparison, Table 1 below provides details of the pothole intervention levels of near neighbour boroughs.

Table 1 – Comparison of intervention levels with near neighbour boroughs

Borough	Pothole Intervention Levels
Haringey	50mm to 60mm
Barnet	40mm
Waltham Forest	40mm for emergency works
Hackney	35mm
Camden	30mm
Enfield	20mm to 50mm

5.5 In order to improve carriageway conditions in the borough and reduce the number of potholes, intervention levels must be reduced from the current policy levels. Options considered in this report to adjust carriageway intervention levels are detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Options to adjust pothole intervention levels



Road classification	Classified	Unclassified
Option 1A – maintain current carriageway pothole intervention levels	50mm	60mm
Option 1B – reduce intervention levels by 10mm for both road classifications	40mm	50mm
Option 1C – reduce intervention levels by half for both road classifications	25mm	30mm

5.6 The pros, cons and risks associated with Options 1A, 1B and 1C are set out in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Pros, cons and risks of adjusting pothole intervention levels

Option	Pros	Cons/Risks
Option 1A – maintain current carriageway pothole intervention levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional expenditure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant proportion of potholes would remain unrepaired. • Impact on enjoyment of the highway by the public. • No improvement to carriageway conditions. • Insurance claims for injury and damage would continue at current levels. Each claim has potential for significant costs.
Option 1B – reduce intervention levels by 10mm for both road classifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimated increase of the number of potholes repaired is +45%. • Fewer complaints about potholes. • Some improvement of carriageway condition and therefore user perception. • Possible reduction of insurance claims. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase of expenditure, estimate +£93k during the trial period.
Option 1C – reduce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimated increase of the number of potholes repaired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase of expenditure, estimate +£311k during the



intervention levels by half for both road classifications	<p>is +150%.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much fewer complaints about potholes. • Significant improvement in carriageway condition and therefore user perception. • Possible reduction of insurance claims. 	trial period.
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5.7 Option 1C, to reduce the current intervention levels by half, will deliver the greatest level of improvements in the short term. Based on a sample survey of the number and depth of potholes on Haringey roads, the estimated additional cost to implement Option 1C in 2013/14 is £310,800. It is recommended that a trial of reduced intervention levels for repair of potholes in carriageways is undertaken for a period of six months in accordance with Option 1C at an additional cost of £310,800.

Options to undertake an accelerated programme of carriageway inspections

5.8 In order to meet the statutory requirement to maintain the highway the council undertakes a programme of cyclical highways safety inspections. Under this programme classified roads – which are the busiest main roads and shopping areas – are inspected every month, this is 25km (8%) of the network. Unclassified roads – which are the remainder of the roads in the borough and mainly residential – are inspected every six months, this is 298km (92%) of the network.

5.9 As most of the highway network is inspected on the six-monthly cycle, the impact of increased numbers of potholes will extend into the summer and early autumn if the normal programme of inspections is allowed to take its course. To achieve earlier pothole repairs on roads suffering the effect of the severe winter – and not programmed for inspection again until August, September and October - an accelerated programme of carriageway inspections would be required.

5.10 Options for the programme of inspections are:

- Option 2A - Rely on the existing planned cyclical highways inspection programme and reports from the public for the identification of potholes for repair.
- Option 2B - Undertake a programme of accelerated inspections to identify potholes on roads on the six-monthly inspection cycle that are not due for programmed inspection again until August, September and October, this would be around 45% of the total highway network. This would be arranged through the use of overtime working at an estimated cost of £32,300.

5.11 The pros, cons and risks associated with Options 2A and 2B are set out in Table 4 below.



Table 4, Pros, cons and risks of options for the programme of highway inspections

Option	Pros	Cons
Option 2A: Rely on the existing planned cyclical highways inspection programme for the identification of potholes for repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No additional cost for inspection process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potholes developing over the late winter and early spring period 2013 may not be repaired until September, October and November 2013. Insurance claims for injury and damage would continue at current levels. Each claim has potential for significant costs.
Option 2B: Undertake a programme of accelerated highway inspections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be implemented quickly using existing staff, mainly from the Neighbourhood Action Team. In combination with Option 1C will provide a noticeable improvement in highway conditions at an earlier stage. Possible reduction in the number of highways insurance claims. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional cost. Relies on volunteers to undertake the inspections on overtime. Possible knock-on effect on other routine functions in core hours. Risk that contractor could struggle to meet the demand of increased flow of repair orders.

5.12 In order to clear the backlog of pothole repairs more quickly following the severe winter it will be necessary to carry out an accelerated programme of inspections on unclassified roads. The proposal detailed in Option 2B would deliver this. The cost of implementing Option 2B is estimated at £32,300.

5.13 It is recommended to implement a trial of accelerated carriageway inspections for a period of three months on unclassified roads for faster identification of potholes for repair in accordance with Option 2B at an additional cost of £32,300.

Options for faster repair timescales on carriageway pothole repairs

5.14 Under current arrangements for repair of highway defects, repair orders have timescales attached to them as follows:

- 24 hours – defects causing immediate risk to life and limb (about 20% of reactive works orders are raised in this category)



- 7 working days – defects at intervention level (about 50% of reactive works orders are raised in this category)
- 28 working days – defects very close to intervention level, likely to deteriorate to intervention level in the short term (about 30% of reactive works orders are raised in this category)

Under current contractual arrangements there are no additional costs for the faster repair timescales.

5.15 Options for faster repair timescales on carriageway pothole repairs are:

- Option 3A – maintain the current practice for placing timescales of 24 hours, 7 days or 28 days on repair orders
- Option 3B – switch to the use of only the 24 hour and 7 day timescales for all carriageway repair orders

5.16 The pros, cons and risks associated with Options 3A and 3B are set out in Table 5 below.

Table 5, Pros, cons and risks of options for the programme of highway inspections

Option	Pros	Cons
Option 3A: maintain current repair order timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractor can more easily manage workflows based on current timescales • Less likelihood of timescales being missed if there is prolonged wet weather. • Potholes in locations that require Traffic Management Orders and road closures to effect repairs can be programmed on 28 day timescale. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where defects on 28 day timescales are paint-marked but not repaired for a number of weeks, there may be a perception of ineffective service and failing to meet expectations.
Option 3B: switch to 24 hour and 7 day timescales for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repairs carried out more quickly. • Better perception of the repairs service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk that contractor could struggle to meet the demand for faster repair timescales - this is exacerbated when



carriageway repair orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional cost. 	<p>considered in combination with Options 1C and 2B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolonged wet weather would affect the ability of the contractor to meet the faster timescales. • Potholes in locations that require Traffic Management Orders and road closures to effect repairs cannot always be repaired within 7 days.
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5.17 There is no cost associated with Option 3B but there are risks that the repairs contractor could struggle to meet the 24 hour and 7 day timescales for all repairs in certain circumstances. Officers can work with contractors to implement strategies that aid the completion of repairs more quickly. With regular dialogue and co-ordination of activities it is possible to deliver a high percentage of pothole repairs in accordance with Option 3B.

5.18 It is recommended to implement a trial to use 24 hour and 7 day timescales for pothole repair orders for a period of six months in accordance with Option 3B at no additional cost.

Communications

5.19 Residents regularly report potholes to the council for investigation and repair. Even so, it remains the case that just 15% of pothole repair orders arise from resident's reports. In order to encourage more pothole reporting from residents and to publicise the initiatives recommended in this report to improve carriageway conditions following the severe winter, a communications plan will be implemented.

Review of Reactive Highway Maintenance Policy

5.20 Whilst a trial of reduced intervention levels carries cost implications in the short term, it is possible that the reduced intervention levels could lead to savings in reactive maintenance costs in the medium to long term. This is because potholes that are not deep enough to meet current intervention levels - but are small in area - are not currently repaired. By the time the pothole is deep enough to be repaired it will likely have grown in area and so the ultimate repair cost per defect is higher. After the initial surge of repairs and cost that would follow the implementation of the reduced intervention levels proposed in this report, it is likely that in the medium term higher numbers of lower cost repairs will be raised and this - combined with the planned £5.75m of capital investment in 2013/14 for borough roads - may deliver overall savings to the reactive maintenance budget.



- 5.21 It is recommended to report back to Cabinet in January 2014 on the outcomes of the trial of reduced intervention levels, the accelerated programme of inspections and the use of faster repair timescales, in order to review the business case for permanent changes to the Council's policy on highways maintenance and repair.

6 Comments of the Chief Finance Officer and financial implications

- 6.1 The additional cost of the measures outlined in this report is estimated to be £343,100, and it is recommended that this is funded from an allocation from Council reserves
- 6.2 As the capital investment in planned maintenance has increased for 2013-14, this may reduce the need for reactive maintenance in the medium-term, but this level of capital investment would need to be maintained over a longer period in order to have a long-term impact on the amount of reactive maintenance required

7. Head of Legal Services and legal implications

- 7.1 The Head of Legal Services has been consulted on this report.
- 7.2 The Council as Highways Authority is under a duty to maintain and repair the highway at public expense, in accordance with section 41 Highways Act 1980. This report proposes a pilot change to the Council's current policy on highways maintenance and repair. Any further amendment to the policy beyond this pilot will require Cabinet approval.
- 7.3 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

8. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments

- 8.1 Well-maintained highways are important to all users of the highway to ensure they can move around the borough safely as pedestrians and on wheels.

9. Head of Procurement Comments

- 9.1 n/a

10. Policy Implication

- 10.1 The 'Policy for Reactive Maintenance (Footways and Carriageways)' sets out the policy for highway inspection intervention levels, frequencies and repair timescales. This report proposes a trial of reduced intervention levels, accelerated carriageway inspections and faster pothole repairs.

11. Reasons for Decision



11.1 The reasons for carrying out the trial of reduced intervention levels, accelerated highway inspections and faster pothole repairs are:

- To provide improved carriageway conditions by dealing with the dramatic increase in potholes on borough roads following the severe winter; and
- To provide the opportunity to review the business case for permanent changes to the Council's policy on highways maintenance and repair.

12. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Policy for Reactive Maintenance (Footways & Carriageways)

13. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Well Maintained Highways – Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management (see following link);

<http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org/en/UKRLG-and-boards/uk-roads-board/wellmaintained-highways.cfm>