

SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING: Overview and Scrutiny

DATE: 19 July 2022

SUBJECT: Highways Maintenance and LGA Peer Review

REPORT FROM: Councillor Alan Quinn
(Exec Member for Environment, Climate Change and Operations)

CONTACT OFFICER: Neil S Long
(Assistant Director of Operations)

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Since 2017/2018 there has been an investment across two 3-year periods of £10 million to improve the quality of the road surface across the Borough. We are currently in the final year of the second 3-year period and the Council has committed a further £10 million of investment for the three-year period 2023/24 to 2025/26. This investment programme is known as Highways Investment Strategy (HIS).
- 1.2 The highway network across Bury is worth almost £1 billion and is made up of:
- 660km of carriageway
 - 1,200km of footway
 - 300km of footpaths
 - 228 structures
 - 19,000 street lighting columns
 - 36,500 road gullies (including drainage)
 - 15km of guardrail, signs, and street furniture
- 1.3 There are two services that are responsible for the maintenance of the highway, namely,
- **Streetscene** which incorporates reactive, planned, and preventative highway maintenance, street lighting, highways safety inspections, highway drainage and winter Service.
 - **Engineering** Services which incorporate Asset Management, major resurfacing, bridges, and structures maintenance.
- 1.4 Early this year the Council initiated a Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review of highway maintenance to understand whether this level of investment gave the Council value for money and at the beginning of June the LGA Peer Review took place. The scope of this review was to look at the following elements of work –
- Highways resurfacing programme.
 - Highways preventative maintenance programme.
 - Highways inspections.
 - Highways Asset Management Policy; and
 - Strategic asset management and longer-term planning.
- 1.5 Peer challenge is a key part of sector led improvements based on the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) peer review methodology. It is not an

inspection – lead peers are invited as ‘critical friends’. The HMEP strategic review focussed on four key components

- **Context and priority setting** – transport policy, corporate vision, and stakeholder expectations
- **Planning and performance** – strategy, performance, data and information and lifecycle planning
- **Enablers** – leadership, risk management, asset management and monitoring
- **Delivery** – programme, service delivery and procurement

1.6 The LGA Peer Review team interviewed the Council’s senior leadership team, including the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder, and Deputy as well as officers from across Engineers and Streetscene as well as representatives from TfGM. Focus groups were also held with officers to understand how the highways maintenance service is delivered and managed.

1.7 Supporting ‘Lets Do It’

- **Local Neighbourhoods - Carbon Neutrality by 2038**
Streetscene use Spray Injection Patching for reactive repairs. This process uses cold materials reducing CO2.
Full fleet modernisation to Euro 6 and EV will reduce CO2.
- **Strengths-based approach – Population health**
Maintaining safe access to health and greenspaces settings
Maintaining cycle lanes, promoting modal shift and increasing population health
- **Improving the quality of the borough’s roads**, by building new routes and improving both local and major junctions to reduce congestion and pollution – such as the major resurfacing of Jubilee Way, Bolton Street and Crostons Street, an area of 29,000 m² at a cost of circa £1million through HIS2.
- **Making it easier to get around without driving**, by creating new walking and cycling routes – such as the new signalised ‘Cyclops’ junction at Angouleme Way/Market Street incorporating both pedestrian and cycling facilities.
- **Supporting the Regeneration Plans for the Borough**, through investing in our highway network, and working in collaboration with planning colleagues, to support regeneration schemes across the Borough, such as the regeneration of Radcliffe Town Centre and Radcliffe hub

2.0 ISSUES

2.1 The LGA Peer Review Team were asked for an independent view on the following five key questions: -

- Given the size and condition of the Council’s highways network, is the current level of capital and revenue funding appropriate for managing the highway asset and meeting the Council’s statutory duty to maintain the highway?
- Is the Council’s Strategic approach to reactive, preventative, and planned maintenance suitable and sufficient?
- Is the Council’s delivery approach to reactive, preventative, and planned maintenance suitable and sufficient?
- Are the expected returns in the current level of investment as would be expected in terms of condition improvement, insurance claims and public satisfaction?
- Following on from £20m of investment over the last 6 years, is the Council acting prudently in seeking to invest a further £10m in the highway network over the next 3 years? Should further investment be stopped, paused, reduced, or increased

2.2 In terms of the impact on the highway network of the HIS and DfT investment, this can be quantified as follows –

- 45 roads (or sections) resurfaced in HIS 2.
- 13 roads proposed for 22/23
- 12.1km in length for HIS 2 (6.8km complete and 5.3km to do).
- 3620 Sq. M of paving re-laid at The Rock
- In 21/22 94.5% of £3.6m major resurfacing was completed
- In 21/22 the £1m (112,000 sq. m of surface dressing/treatment programme completed
- In 21/22 12,000 pothole repairs completed
- In 21/22 and additional £70k spent on white lining works
- In total for 21/22 84.4% (£5.6m) of the planned £6.6m was spent

It should also be recognised that staff from Streetscene helped secure the continuity of waste collection during the peak of the Covid pandemic as also helped to establish the covid testing and vaccination sites across the borough.

2.3 **The LGA Peer Review Team** set out their feedback at the end of their 3-day visit and a follow up action planning day is set to take place on 12 July. Their feedback is summarised below –

2.3.1 **Key messages**

- Peer challenge comes at a crucial point in time for the future of the service
- Network – some improvement but significant deterioration in unclassified network
- Further developing the partnership with TfGM
- Linking with the regeneration of the borough and re-investing in the service
- Amount of Good will and attitude across the team was a joy for the review team to see
- Ensuring the golden thread is evident from priorities to delivery
- Ensure coherent management system together with a clear vision for the service
- Progress the service improvement strategy and plan

2.3.2 **Strengths**

- 'Let's do it' strategy provides a clear vision for Bury focusing on growth, communities, and delivery. Evidence also exists showing that the strategy is being embedded within the service.
- GM 2040 Transport Strategy - Bury is positioning itself to maximise the opportunities for the district by developing its own Bury Transport Plan.
- Relationships with TfGM are established and positive and it is clear that Bury are performing within the GMCA to maximise all opportunities.
- A fit for purpose service, the £10m capital for HIS3 is required.
- Some excellent areas of work highlighted around Key Road Networks which is being shared as best practice by TfGM (asset data management and deterioration model)
- Good relationship between service, portfolio holders and other elected members
- Network – there is clear evidence of improvement
- Ongoing review of organisational structures to better equip the service to meeting existing and future demands
- The Loyalty and commitment shown by staff and the Exec Cllrs was obvious
- 100% attendance at all the LGA meetings including group meetings which is not often seen and was appreciated.
- There is renewed focus on delivering an improved customer experience as a priority with progress being made on new web presence
- In-house delivery of reactive works – the workforce is skilled, committed, empowered to deliver with embedded H&S practices

- Evidence of operational improvement, e.g., vehicle and kit replacement aligned with green agenda, move to Alloy system, handheld / digital approach
- Professional and multi-skilled teams across the departments, multi-tasking to get things delivered

2.3.3 Considerations and Future Development

- Significant levels of deterioration in our unclassified roads are driving up complaints, demand, risk and add to the reputational problems for the service.
- We need to capitalise appropriate professional fees, to be retained as growth/capacity, and not to be presented as saving options.
- Service in a precarious position following sustained reductions – in some areas 75% of required revenue budgets historically reduced.
- Develop the relationship with TFGM but some real improvements in this aspect already being seen.
- Improve our Policy Processes and procedures to add reassurance around our delivery – make our delivery more visible.
- Further Project management support required in the service to get the fundamentals in place.
- Wider consultation on developing the £10m HIS3 needs to take place with Members and staff feedback together with challenge and scrutiny
- Establish a corporate capital programme board.
- An update to the Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP) is required to reflect deterioration in parts of the asset, climate change and emerging transport plan.
- Embed data and evidence-led approach to track performance, delivery, and success.
- IT/Digitalisation is a key development for the service and is key to transform – Staff in particular fed back they could perform better with increased focus and support in this area.
- Workforce Planning and development essential – need for graduates and apprentices and rebuilding the loss in capacity.
- Update, resource and deliver communications strategy – to raise awareness and deliver behavioural change, end to end across all stakeholders.
- Increase use of benchmarking against other GM authorities and the wider highways sector to measure successful outcomes, and limited focus generally on performance management across Operations.
- Collection / use of performance data to improve service delivery and customer satisfaction.

3.0 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 Following the recent LGA peer review of highway maintenance an action planning day will take place 12 July 2022 with development of the service improvement strategy and plan.
- 3.2 The programming for the £10m HIS 3 (23/24 to 25/26) and other funding such a CRST will be progressed over the next 6 months including wider consultation with members and stakeholders and challenge from scrutiny.
- 3.3 22/23 Highways Maintenance Programme will include repairs to a further 12,000 potholes, additional £100k on white lining works, 5.3 km of roads resurfaced and 150,000 Sq. M of preventative maintenance surface treatments to the highway (70,000 Sq. M of Micro-asphalt already completed).

List of Background Papers: -

LGA Peer Review - position statement
Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP)

Contact Details: -

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Peter Stokes – Head of Streetscene
Carmel Foster-Devine Head of Engineers

Executive Director sign off Date: 06/07/22

JET Meeting Date: _____