
REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting:	4 June 2019
Subject:	Final report of the Scrutiny Review of Highways Maintenance
Responsible Officer:	Alex Dewsnap, Director of Strategy
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	Community: Councillor Ghazanfar Ali and Councillor Jean Lammiman
Exempt:	No
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	Final report of the Scrutiny Review of Highways Maintenance

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Highways Maintenance, which took place between December 2018 and May 2019 and whose scope was agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2018.

Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

1. Consider and endorse the report of the Scrutiny Review of Highways Maintenance
2. Forward the review's report and recommendations to Cabinet for consideration and response
3. Agree that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the implementation of the recommendations after 12 months.

Section 2 – Report

Background

Issues around highways maintenance were originally identified for the scrutiny work programme as a result of the Residents Survey 2017 which highlighted to members the level of residents' concerns around highways. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the review's scope on 13 November 2018.

The purpose of this review was to better understand and influence how Harrow's schedule of highways work is prioritised so as to better inform, engage and consult with residents.

The objectives of the review as set out in the scope are:

1. To establish the nature of residents' concern about the condition of roads in Harrow and other highways issues, as raised in the Residents' Survey 2017.
2. To understand how Harrow's schedule of planned highways maintenance works is formulated and understand the criteria, including financial, for determining in what way works are carried out.
3. To ascertain if and how the Council coordinates different types of planned works to roads and pavements.
4. To ascertain if and how utilities companies coordinate planned works with the council.
5. To investigate how council policies around dropped kerbs and enforcement impact upon the conditions of Harrow's roads and pavements.
6. To examine the quality assurance around contractors' performance on highways maintenance, including enforcement by the council of its contractual rights.
7. To understand how planned works and their progress are communicated to residents.
8. To understand the sources of funding and associated pressures, including TfL involvement, that affect Harrow's highways maintenance programme.

This report presents the findings and recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Highways Maintenance. The intelligence to inform this review was pulled together between December 2018 and May 2019 and comes from desktop research, question and answer sessions with officers and the Environment Portfolio Holder, review of briefings from the services, data analysis and site visits.

Recommendations from the review are:

1	That on an ongoing basis, the council better informs councillors and residents about the highways inspections that it conducts and commissions, the different types of defects, and the different investigative levels. The Highways Team are to work with the Communications Team in order to produce an information leaflet of bitesize information that could be used by councillors and also given to residents to provide the key facts and figures around highways issues.
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2	That the council considers charging all residents applying for planning permission an additional charge for any damage to driving over verges, which would be refunded if, after building works are completed, it can be shown that no damage was caused.
3	That the council more widely informs residents of planned works, through regular articles in Harrow People and the MyHarrow emails sent to residents. The content of these articles should include messages around behaviour change and highlight the cost impact on the council of selfish behaviour by the public (e.g. driving over verges) which may not be malicious but nonetheless costs the council – money that could be used elsewhere in service delivery. Messages around enforcement should also be reinforced.
4	That the council explores alternative and additional sources of funding for greening, for example in bids to the GLA.
5	That there is greater transparency to members on the Planning Committee on the long term cost to the council of adopting and maintaining a built asset. It is suggested that a standing item on Planning Committee reports provides clarification on officer recommendations in respect of responsibility for assets built by developers and adoption by the council of assets, and allows for check or review of previous decisions on implementation in accordance with guidance.
6	That the Environment Portfolio Holder call a public event for stakeholders on highways maintenance, which disseminates the findings of this review, shares the learning and briefs stakeholders of the key issues around highways maintenance. The event could also demonstrate the websites that use planned works information and that would be useful for residents in identifying nearby roadworks, as well as provide the opportunity to give out the leaflets designed as per Recommendation 1.
7	That members and highways services help make residents better aware of the online tools available to them around reporting defects and tracking the progress of remedial work.
8	That members are strongly encouraged to use the EE members' portal to log concerns. If for any reason members approach individual officers instead, the EE members' portal should be copied into correspondence so that all queries are captured.
9	That the service be asked to design a diagram/map which depicts the route that all residents' queries follow and are handled, so that members can then share this with residents. This will also allow residents to know how to navigate their concerns to the services.
10	That the highways services undertake scenario modelling to explore different models of investment for the highways asset, and that this be used to inform decisions around future spend.

Ward Councillors' comments

Not applicable as the report is not ward-specific.

Financial Implications

There are no specific financial issues directly associated with the report.

Performance Issues

There are none specific to this report.

Environmental Impact

If accepted, the scrutiny recommendations could in particular impact upon the council's delivery of the climate change strategy and legislation/strategies relating to traffic and transport; air quality and pollution; and biodiversity, flora and fauna.

Risk Management Implications

Risk included on Directorate risk register? No
Separate risk register in place? No

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? No

Council Priorities

The findings and recommendations from this scrutiny review relate most to the delivery of the following priorities:

Building a Better Harrow

- Create a thriving modern, inclusive and vibrant Harrow that people can be proud to call home

Protecting Vital Public Services

- Harrow has a transport infrastructure that supports economic growth, improves accessibility and supports healthy lifestyles

Ward Councillors notified:	NO, as it impacts on all Wards
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Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Nahreen Matlib, Senior Policy Officer, 020 8424 9204

Background Papers:

- Final report of the Scrutiny Review of Highways Maintenance, as enclosed
- Scope for the review, as agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 November 2018:
<http://modern.gov:8080/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=276&MId=64420&Ver=4>