

Scrutiny Review

Highway Maintenance

May 2009

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Foreword

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this review, especially to all contributing staff from Environmental Services, who at the time of this review were working extremely hard to manage the effects of this winter's unusually cold and icy weather on the county's roads. This includes John Hobbs, Director of Environmental Services, Peter Blake, Head of Integrated Transport, Nick Twaite, Engineering and Assessment Manager, Nils Wilkes, Highways Service Manager, Bob Lloyd, Streetworks Manager, Jon Fraser, Highways Community and Response Manager, and the Highways Control Centre Staff. Thank you also to Karen Seabright, Insurance Officer. Particular thanks go to Ian Bamforth, Highways and Countryside Manager and Pete Burnham, Pavement Management Engineer, who gave us a great deal of information and time. John Evans, in his role of Scrutiny Liaison Officer provided invaluable guidance.

We received a very good response to our county councillor questionnaire, and appreciate the time taken by those who contributed, and also to Chris Baker from the Research Team for his analysis of the survey results.

We would like to record our appreciation for the film and written evidence we received from a member of the public.

From the scrutiny team I am very grateful to John Jordan and Emma James for their hard work and guidance in producing this review report.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Task Group, whose co-operation and hard work made this short but intense review possible.

Liz Tucker
Lead Task Group Member

Highways Maintenance Scrutiny Review

Introduction

1. In January 2009, the Overview and Scrutiny Steering Committee agreed that it was an appropriate time to revisit the February 2007 Highway Maintenance Scrutiny. It was agreed to carry out a short scrutiny review, focusing on what progress had taken place by the Directorate of Environmental Services, towards the recommendations made from the 2007 Scrutiny, and what the impact had been on the condition of Worcestershire's roads.
2. In February 2009, a Task Group was set up, which included four members who had participated in the original highways scrutiny.
3. When the findings of the original highway maintenance scrutiny were presented to Cabinet in March 2007, fourteen of the Task Group's recommendations were agreed. One of the key recommendations was around the importance of an asset management approach. The report also recommended an injection of capital spend to improve the condition of non-principal roads, and estimated that around £40 million over 6 years (£30m on roads, £10m on footways) would be needed to result in considerable improvement. This led to an additional £15 million capital being allocated for a special project to improve urban unclassified highways.
4. It is evident from our research that a substantial amount of work has been achieved in the two years since the 2007 scrutiny, and perhaps equally importantly, further improvements are planned.
5. This report includes progress statements from the Directorate against each individual recommendation, alongside our own evidence gathering. In this way, we have sought to expand our summary, so that it provides not only a statement of progress, but also outlines any further suggestions for improvement, and explores any underlying issues.

Terms of Reference

6. The agreed terms of reference were to find out:
 - What progress had been achieved in implementing the agreed recommendations?
 - What had been the impact on the condition of highways?
 - What were the main issues around future investment in highway maintenance?

Asset Management

Original Report Recommendation (Page 25, paragraph 130)	Progress report from Directorate of Environmental Services
<p>We therefore recommend that the Directorate carries out detailed modeling in order to assess the programme of work, and its cost, required to prioritise the road network and improve the condition of our roads. This modeling should balance the capital sum required against revenue consequences and sustainability of the highways budget, if revenue consequences cannot be funded from elsewhere.</p>	<p>As part of the Transport Asset Management Plan, lifecycle plans have been or are being developed for all major Highway Assets.</p> <p>The carriageway lifecycle plan has just been updated with the latest survey results.</p> <p>These life cycle plans can be used to predict and assess the investment requirements in relation to the resultant long and short term asset condition.</p>

7. The 2007 Scrutiny highlighted the academic work of Professor Snaith from Birmingham University, which advocates an asset management approach to highway maintenance. Professor Snaith's work stemmed from using road data to build a model which would determine the optimum point at which to intervene with maintenance at lowest cost.
8. This asset management approach to resource allocation uses data on road condition to determine when it is best to carry out less costly preventative treatments on (amber) sections of the network, to prevent them deteriorating to the point (red) where they need much more expensive repairs in the future.

What we found

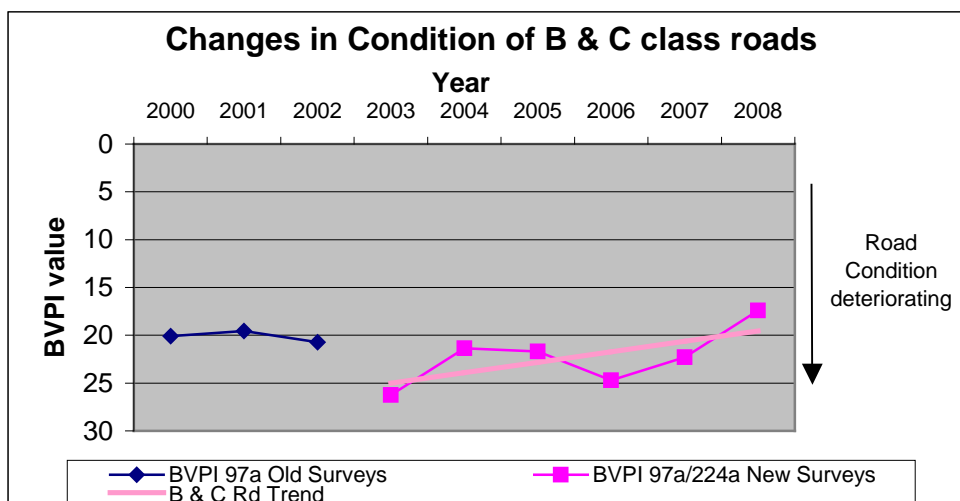
Carriageway Lifecycle Plans

9. During the review, the Task Group looked at the draft Carriageway Lifecycle Plan, which explores the various survey data in use, performance monitoring, maintenance requirements, deterioration trends and options for future treatment. We also spoke with some of the key officers responsible for this monitoring and analysis, which feeds into preparation of the Plan. It is clear that the standard of data collection, and its contribution to planned maintenance works, continues to be very good.
10. Linked to the Council's development of a Carriageway Lifecycle Plan is a shift in government direction. We understand that whereas previously, the Government looked for plans addressing each individual strand of service, such as Highways, Transport etc., the new requirement is for a more integrated transport plan. These changes give the Council greater clarity on its capital investment allocation, which in turn makes it easier to plot work. We believe that the Directorate is indeed adopting a more long-term, project planning approach, and anticipate the favourable impact this will continue to have.
11. However, the Carriageway Lifecycle Plan is in draft form. It still needs to be pulled together in order for it to fulfil its potential, and be used as an effective management tool, to drive and prioritise highway maintenance. Completion of the plan is also needed to enable the Council to consider the long-term budget requirements for maintaining the county's roads.

12. A further reason for swift completion of the Plan is to avoid over-dependency on the expertise and experience of individual staff, which inevitably brings with it a degree of risk.
13. We urge the speedy completion of the Plan. Whilst we appreciate that this a complex exercise, further complicated by changes in benchmarking, and in government's direction, the Plan needs to be in place before the Council can maximise the gains of an asset management approach.
14. During the finalisation of this report, we discussed our findings with the Cabinet Member, and Director of Environmental Services, accompanied by the Head of Integrated Transport. The Director advised that the Directorate had successfully secured funding from the Department for Transport for support in obtaining outstanding data to assist with the asset management inventories. The funding for 2008/9 was £211,500. The funding for 2009/10 is £138,000.
15. They reassured us that a significant amount of work had been dedicated to the Carriageway Lifecycle Plan, and that the data needed to complete the Plan was relatively minor.

£15 million Capital Project on Urban Unclassified Roads

16. A key finding of the original Scrutiny was that 'the only solution to the problem of deteriorating road condition in Worcestershire is an additional programme of work requiring an injection of extra funding'. Subsequently, in September 2007, Cabinet agreed plans put forward by the Directorate, for a defined £15 million capital project of work on unclassified urban roads, to be done over an 18-month period. This defined project was deemed realistic to co-ordinate within the timeframe, and the revenue consequences were manageable within the existing departmental budget. We understand that this has in part been funded by overall improvements in efficiency, for example the reactive maintenance teams now each repair an average of 11 defects per day, compared to 3 defects previously.
17. Whilst £15 million clearly falls short of the £40 million which the 2007 scrutiny had identified as being needed, it is a significant sum of money and has brought substantial improvement on that particular category of road.
18. From the evidence we have gathered, allocation of the £15 million capital project on urban unclassified roads has been well planned and executed by the Council and by the contractor, Ringway. This work will mean savings in the long-term, as the work has substantially reduced the call on maintenance for these roads in future years. The programme of intervention and 'catch-up' has prevented these roads from reaching the point where their condition would deteriorate rapidly, and where repair costs to address this would have escalated disproportionately.
19. The graph below, supplied by the Directorate of Environmental Services, shows the improvement in road condition of non-principal roads since 2007, using the Performance Indicators from annual Coarse Visual Inspection (CVI) surveys. The Non-Principal road network constitutes some 86% of all carriageways in Worcestershire.



20. We can also assume that the additional maintenance should reduce numbers of temporary repairs, pothole repair costs, and complaints from the public, although the effects of this year's exceptionally icy winter will obviously have brought an exceptional number of new problems. (Water in cracks in the road freezes and the ice causes the surface of the road to break up and form deeper than usual potholes.)
21. The additional £15 million capital project on unclassified urban roads has meant a substantial amount of work for those tasked with planning and delivering the improvements. This was an area which drew praise from everyone we spoke to during this Review, which in turn means that Highways is now very well placed to co-ordinate and deliver any possible funding injections in the future.
22. During our meeting with the Director, we asked what would happen to roads which had had to be dropped from the £15 million capital project. We were advised that early on the Directorate had been alerted to this potential problem, due to engineering complications with some schemes, which had raised costs. Any roads which had been left out would be incorporated into the planned patching maintenance programme.

What progress has been made with maintenance backlogs?

23. We received a substantial amount of in-depth information on asset management, the statistics behind it, how maintenance needs are identified, and the options for the future. This information has been central to our findings on asset management, and so we have tried to include the key points in this report.

What is the maintenance backlog?

24. The 2007 Highways Maintenance Scrutiny highlighted the fact that Worcestershire's road condition for B, C and Unclassified roads was below average, and sought to identify what was needed to improve them. During this review we wanted to look at what progress had been made to improve their condition and address maintenance backlogs, including the impact of the £15 million special project on urban unclassified roads. Environmental Services staff responsible for data collection and analysis gave us the following summary defining maintenance backlogs:

'Backlog can be interpreted as the absolute expenditure to repair all lengths of the network warranting treatment. However, by repairing everything the network would effectively be perfect which is not financially achievable. There has to be and always will be a proportion of the network that is defective (painting the Forth Bridge). If we manage the maintenance of the network in a judicious way, we should be able

to prevent this defective proportion of the network from growing. Looking back a proportion of the road network is always in poor condition and therefore the perennial challenge facing Highway Engineers has been to keep this length in check.

However if the resources available for maintenance of the network are unable to keep pace with rates of deterioration, the defective proportion of the network will start to grow. This increase in defective length equates to the maintenance backlog and carries with it a burgeoning associated cost.'

25. We wanted to find out how the Directorate had progressed with this balancing act. The evidence highlighted the complexity of this area of work, which is further complicated by constant changes in national performance indicator monitoring, particularly for Principal roads and Non-principal roads. For example, between 1999 and 2008, at various times there have been six different reporting methods for principal roads. We can see that this makes it difficult to accurately pinpoint what progress has been made, and therefore to determine maintenance backlogs.

26. The table below shows the Best Value Performance Indicator results and quartile ranking for the review period:

BVPI	Description	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09	
233 (96)	Principal Roads Condition	8%		5%		5%	
224a (97a)	Non-principal Classified	20%		11%		8%	
224b (97b)	Non-principal Unclassified	22%		21%		20%	

Key	Quartile Rank (AE)
	Above Upper
	Above Median
	Below Median
	Below Lower

27. To enable comparison to be made, and to assist maintenance management decisions, the Directorate has chosen to continue monitoring Coarse Visual Inspection survey (CVI) data, which it has done since 1998. Although this survey method has been discontinued at a national level, locally the surveys offer continuity of data collection, which the Directorate finds invaluable. We agree that this was a wise decision by the Directorate, and that the value of the data outweighs the additional cost.

28. Evidence from the Directorate indicates that the backlog has been reduced, but not eliminated. When set against 1977 road conditions (considered to be steady state) we still have a maintenance backlog of £6.48million in 2008/09, as compared to a backlog of £25.33 million in 2006/07

Road Classification	Steady State 1977	Original Report 2006/07	Current Review 2008/09
	Costs /£m	Costs /£m	Costs /£m
B & C	22.00	35.84	24.65
Unclassified	18.27	29.76	22.10
Total	40.27	65.6	46.75

Budget figures

29. In considering the issue of managing maintenance backlogs, we looked at overall headline spend areas for the Directorate for 2009/10, which are set out below:

Headline capital spend areas for 2009/2010:

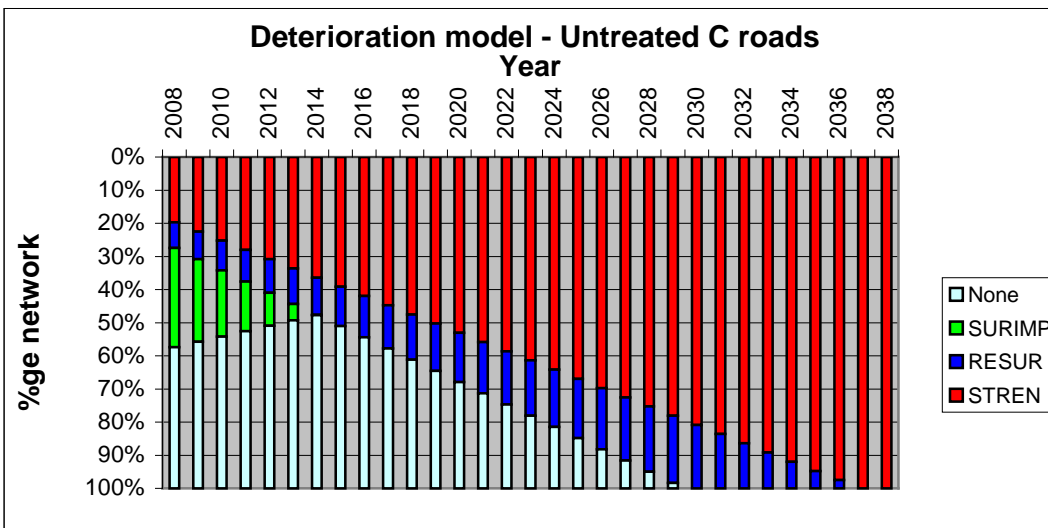
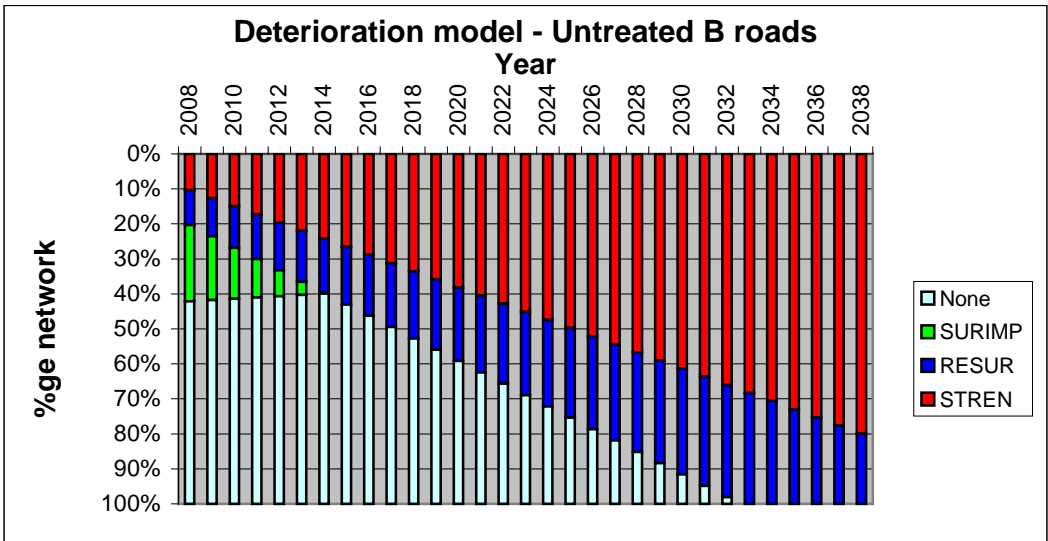
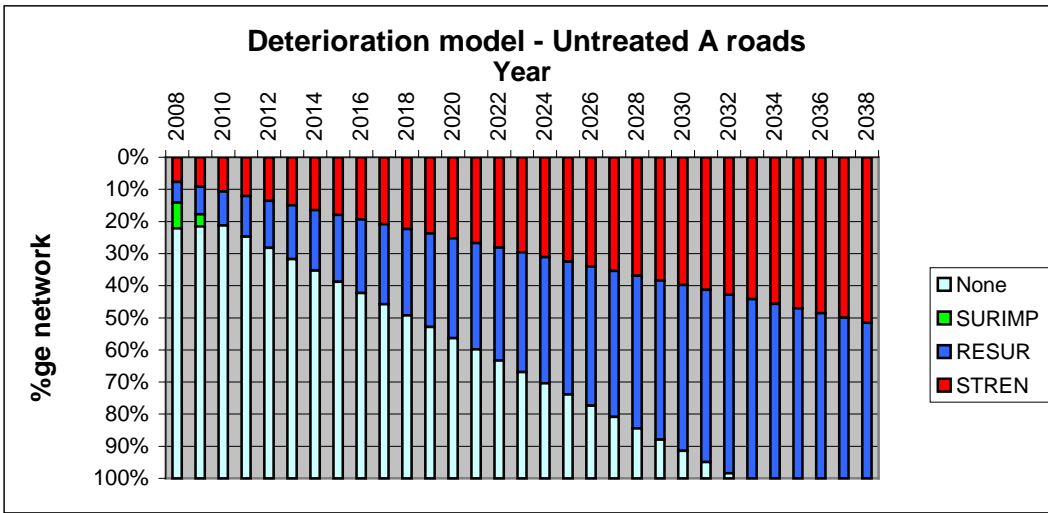
Carriageways	£7.3m
Structures	£0.7m
Safety Barriers	£0.25m
Street Lighting	£0.15m
Minor Capital schemes	£0.4m (F/W Maintenance for 2009/10)
Footway Schemes	£0.2m

Headline spend area for the revenue allocation:

Planned Footway works	£1.45m (plus £600k from capital = £2.15m)
Planned C/W patching	£1.40m
Other general planned repairs	£0.70m
Drainage	£0.60m
All Reactive works	£2.10m
Winter Maintenance	£1.10m
Lighting	£3.20m
Structures (works)	£0.20m

Key Issue of Deterioration of Road Sub-Structure

30. Despite what has been achieved with the £15 million additional project on urban unclassified roads, we can see that deterioration of road sub-structure remains a key issue. As set out in the draft Carriageway Lifecycle Plan, the percentage of roads where re-surfacing alone will be sufficient to maintain their condition is diminishing. Whereas surface dressing is an effective treatment on roads as preventative maintenance, it is only effective in maintaining their condition if the underlying structure of the road is coherent. The current practice of patch and repair one year, followed by surface dressing the following year is fine, but it does not correct deterioration of the road sub-structure. How to address this will be an essential task of future councils.
31. The following three graphs set out below show how untreated roads will deteriorate in the future if we do not address this issue. (The green shows the shrinking proportion of road where surface dressing alone is a viable option. The red shows the length of road requiring strengthening).



Recommended action

- The Carriageway Lifecycle Plan needs to be finalised and in use to ensure the benefits of an asset management approach can be maximised and for it to act as a management tool to further drive and prioritise highways maintenance.
- The original Highway Maintenance Scrutiny made stark statements in relation to the problem of road deterioration: 'Worcestershire is fast approaching, if indeed we have not already reached, the "tsunami" point – where the cost of repairs to the most critical roads overwhelms the available funding - and, without intervention, this situation will continue to develop. It is clear to us that the only solution to the problem of deteriorating road condition in Worcestershire is an additional programme of work requiring an injection of extra funding.'

In our view, the 'tsunami' is still there. Although the £15 million capital project of work on unclassified roads has been very effective, it has not addressed the foundation structure of our roads. How to address this, will be an essential task of future Councils.

- To do so, the Council will need to raise the budget profile of Highways maintenance, in order to avoid the 'tsunami' happening, and even greater financial input in the future.

Footways

Original Report Recommendation (Page 9, para 22)	Progress report from the Directorate of Environmental Services
We recommend that the Council adopt a new local performance indicator for footways, which ensures that expenditure can be re-prioritised so that the condition of category 3 footways (quiet urban) can be improved.	In progress - New performance indicator category 3 footways - Assessing resource requirements and Countywide work identification and programming procedure. Condition trend can be graphically shown. Currently assessing the practicalities and cost of carrying out sufficiently detailed surveys on the 2,300km of this category of F/W to enable an accurate KPI to be developed.

32. Leading up to this review, at the November 2008 Council meeting, members had already voiced their concerns regarding the condition of the county's footways. As a result of this, the Directorate of Environmental Services is already preparing a three-year improvement plan to address the condition of footways, the options for which are due to be presented to Cabinet in May 2009.
33. We welcome the news that an additional £3 million has been allocated to improve footways. In anticipation of these plans, our review has therefore not looked in detail at footways. Inevitably, there are limits to what this funding can realistically achieve. Nonetheless, our comments below are intended to assist the Directorate's plans for targeting footway maintenance, and we look forward to seeing the detailed programme of work.

What we found

34. Progress has been made on category 1 (main shopping) and category 2 (busy urban) footways. However, this represented under 4% of the total length of the county's footways, and the Best Value Performance Indicator relevant to categories 1 and 2 has now been dropped.
35. However, in our view, progress to date to produce a Performance Indicator for category 3 footways (quiet urban) has been insufficient.
36. Ensuring that footways can be walked safely contributes to the County Council's sustainability and health agendas, by encouraging people to walk. It is important to consider the profiles of footway users, which tends to include higher numbers of young people, elderly people and parents with pushchairs. Members feel the current criteria for determining intervention levels is unfit for purpose, as they are not robust enough to ensure footways are safe for all users.
37. Unsafe footways can also have implications, such as increased third party insurance claims made against the Council.
38. The Directorate has advised us that the £3 million additional project will be carried out to a higher standard, and during the project it may be possible to start looking at hierarchies of networks within communities. We hope that the Directorate will then work towards having criteria to produce this higher standard in the longer term.
39. We understand from our discussions with the Directorate that Officers are wary of changing the intervention criteria as it would be very costly.

Recommended action

- **In the short-term, the Task Group would like the Council's priorities for urban footways to be focused on a selection of 'primary' and 'secondary' routes for each community, based on usage, and their links to key services. This hierarchy should be established through consultations with local and parish members. This will ensure that future maintenance programmes target the most well used, popular routes.**
- **The Directorate discussed with us the possibility of using cluster maps of public complaints as a possible tool in reducing complaint numbers. However, we feel this should not be the only focus for assessing footway condition.**

Satisfaction

Original Report Recommendation (Page 10, paragraph 33)	Progress report from Directorate of Environmental Services
The reintroduction of a highway maintenance newsletter to parish councils and councilors. (Page 10, para 33)	Completed – newsletter reintroduced from September 2007. Newsletter format currently under review.

<p>That individual relationships be forged via regular meetings between the County Highway Liaison Engineers, other relevant highways officers/engineers, and parishes. (Page 10, para 35)</p>	<p>Completed – County Highways Liaison Engineers regularly attend individual parish meetings, where requested by the local County Council Member. The Community and Response Unit also co-ordinate the Parish Lengthsman Scheme in close liaison with the County Association of Local Councils, where a variety of issues are addressed on a day to day basis and reviewed at twice yearly joint meetings. A variety of both internal and external meetings with various internal and District Councils officers' takes place to provide for more effective joint working and co-ordination.</p>
<p>We also recommend that better information for parish clerks should be provided on planned maintenance works and priorities for repair through both the HUB and website, and the creation of a series of information leaflets, which could also be made available for public use. (Page 11, para 36)</p>	<p>Completed – County Highways Liaison Engineers regularly attend individual parish meetings, where requested by the local County Council Member. The Community and Response Unit also co-ordinate the Parish Lengthsman Scheme in close liaison with the County Association of Local Councils, where a variety of issues are addressed on a day to day basis and reviewed at twice yearly joint meetings. A variety of both internal and external meetings with various internal and District Councils officers' takes place to provide for more effective joint working and co-ordination.</p>

What we found

County Councillor Satisfaction

40. During the 2007 scrutiny of highway maintenance, the views of county councillors and parish councillors were sought, and this included a questionnaire being sent to all county councillors. As part of this scrutiny review, we wanted to see whether views had changed, and the questionnaire exercise was repeated. Although the overall results should not be quoted with any statistical significance, they are useful in providing an indication of change in councillor satisfaction over the period. Councillors' satisfaction reflects the nature of matters referred to them by the public, and so gives an idea of whether public satisfaction levels have changed. A copy of the full analysis, provided by the Council's Research team, is included at appendix 3.
41. When compared with the 2007 councillor's questionnaire results, the areas where there are improved satisfaction levels are:
- Condition of verges
 - Contact with the County Council
 - Quality of information received in advance of starting road works
 - Being kept informed more regularly about highways matters
 - Content of the website
 - The Parish Lengthsman Scheme.
42. The majority of respondents are dissatisfied with the:
- Condition of the footways (65.4%)
 - Time taken to repair defects (62.5%),
 - Feedback after defects are reported (58.3%)

43. Although 52.0% of councillors who responded said they are dissatisfied with the condition of road surfaces (potholes), this is an improvement from the 2007 questionnaire, when 85.7% said they were dissatisfied. A number of respondents expressed concerns with drainage of roads around the county.
44. A positive response can be seen for contact with the County Council and quality of information received in advance of starting road works, 60.0% and 56.0% respectively stated they were satisfied. Councillors commented the quality of information received has improved, helped by the weekly e-bulletin.
45. The improvement in communication about highways works, etc. is very much welcomed. In particular, the weekly list of maintenance works is proving very useful to members. It is an economical and efficient way of keeping members informed of the factual information that they need. The reintroduction of Highways News is welcome, although we suggest that county councillors look for factual, rather than promotional content.
46. Could the improved communication be made better still? We believe there could be benefit in reviewing the content and target audience of the weekly list and newsletter, and suggest that it may be possible to expand this weekly broadcast, to include further detailed factual information about maintenance work. Regarding the newsletter, it may be beneficial to address each district area, or north/south areas of the county separately.
47. The Director has advised us that from this April, there is now a communications unit within the Directorate of Environmental Services, tasked with further improvements. These include a new Highways bulletin, and revised weekly e-bulletins, which will include all council and utility works.

Parish councillor satisfaction

48. An electronic version of Highways News is sent to Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils (CALC) for distribution to Parish Councils. Some task group members had anecdotal evidence that not all parishes are receiving the newsletter regularly. We understand that Worcestershire CALC includes the newsletter in its weekly email correspondence with CALC member parishes, which are 89% of all parish councils in Worcestershire. Having checked with the Council's Highways and Communications Units, it appears that the link with non CALC member parishes may be missing.
49. Unfortunately, due to the time constraints of this review, we have been unable to consult with parish councillors, although we would recommend this be included in any future highway maintenance scrutiny review.
50. In respect of forging relationships via regular meetings with County Highway Liaison Engineers, other relevant highways officers/engineers and parishes, we recognise the progress here, but would like this to be viewed as an ongoing project, rather than a completed project.

Recommended Action

- **The improved communication brought by the weekly list and monthly newsletter could be increased, by review of the content and target audience.**
- **Review methods used to circulate the Highways Newsletter to parish councils, to ensure that both CALC member and non-CALC member parishes receive the information.**

Hub / Highways Interface

51. At the time of the 2007 Scrutiny, Highway's use of the Hub was relatively new, and so the Task Group's work did not scrutinise this area. Since then, the Hub/Highways interface has developed into a crucial and high profile aspect of Highway's operation. Therefore, although not linked to specific recommendations in the original report, we have included our observations below, as an additional section on 'Satisfaction'.

Progress report from the Directorate of Environmental Services

The "Success Zone" project activities are nearing completion. (a project set up to improve the way in which customer contact was channelled through the Hub and Highways Control Centre, improve customer satisfaction, and ensure that all referrals are dealt with effectively first time. Daily short meetings were held each morning with representatives from each team, to review agreed action points. A steering group has since been set up, to maintain the momentum of improvements.)

These have focussed on improving both information provided from the Worcestershire Hub on Highways matters and to the Hub to ensure that this information is more effective in providing an answer for the member of public/parish etc.

Improvements outlined as part of evidence to the Task Group include:

- Improve the way in which customer contact is channelled through the Hub and Highways Control Centre
- Ensure all referrals are dealt with effectively the first time
- Improving knowledge base of Customer Service Advisors so that they can answer more enquiries upfront, and extract the right information from the customer
- Keeping language 'jargon free' to make it easier for Hub staff to report back to the public
- More efficient allocation of work, to ensure complex, non-safety critical issues were dealt with more effectively between teams
- Scanning correspondence
- Closer monitoring of outstanding PEMS
- Team Leaders have clearer responsibility and accountability to manage and monitor progress.

What we found

52. We are aware that the Environmental Services Directorate has been working very hard to improve the interface between Highways and the Hub. Councillors' views on this area are well voiced and vary considerably. Reflecting this, evidence from the Task Group Members has also varied. Members place high value on their respective Highways Liaison Officers, typically describing them as 'very good, but very stretched'. Some members choose to refer and trace enquiries online/via the Hub.

53. However, overall, we feel that the Hub/Highways interface has definitely improved. We also acknowledge that much of the improvement made will need time to take root before the anticipated improvement in customer satisfaction becomes more evident.

54. Central to such improvements, is the Public Enquiry Management System, known as PEMS. This is an electronic system used to log and manage customer enquiries. (The Exor Public Enquiry Management System (PEMS) is part of a computer based suite of highways applications, in use by many local authorities. It provides the means for organisations to manage enquiries efficiently, and respond to communication from the general public, businesses and organisations. Customers' service needs are managed in a single, integrated database.)

55. The Directorate told us that many positive changes had arisen as a result of the 'Success Zone' project, completed in January 2009, which was set up to improve the way in which customer contact was channelled through the Hub and Highways Control Centre, improve customer satisfaction, and ensure that all referrals are dealt with effectively first time. Daily short meetings were held each morning with representatives from each team, to review agreed action points. At the end of the project, a steering group was established to maintain the momentum of improvements. The resulting improvements have included:

- A 50% reduction in the number of PEMs
- The number of PEMs outstanding for over 28 has reduced by 72%
- Improvement of 92% in PEM closures
- A 23% improvement in the number of avoidable contacts
- 100%+ increase in recovery from severe weather issues, to 'steady state' – (PEMs reached 2,500 during July 2007 floods, and more than 400 during February 2009 icy conditions)

56. It is clear that PEMS management has improved, and the officers continue to drive further improvements. Highways has taken steps towards recognising the importance of their customers' views. It is essential to develop this as a way forward in improving customer satisfaction with the service.

57. To assist this process, we refer below to observations raised during the review:

Some observations:

- Difficulty tracing a PEM - experienced by the public and by members because some Hub staff are not automatically supplying PEM number for each contact.
- Letter scanning- Introduction of letter scanning for incoming correspondence/letters in Highways Community and Response is an excellent move to greater efficiency, which should help to address the many complaints which councillors receive from the public about the length of time taken to respond to letters.
- Using PEM to generate reports – We were very interested in the potential of the PEM system to generate reports, for example to show hot spots of complaint letters on particular stretches of road, or a particular county division, district ward or parish area. This information would be extremely useful to councillors.
- Outgoing correspondence – Notifying residents of maintenance work planned in their locality is a big improvement. However, care is needed to ensure contact details quoted in the letters are accurate i.e. is it the Hub or Highways?
- 'Complete' status of jobs on PEMS - The Task Group has concerns that when the Council's role has been completed, a job status may be changed to 'complete' status on the Highways IT system, even though further work is required by another organisation/party.

Recommended action

- **Replies to all letters should be within the designated time agreed by the Directorate of:**
 - **All correspondence that require a response – reply within 7 working days**
 - **If 7 days not possible – acknowledgement within 7 working days plus full reply within 15 working days. Where this is not possible, regular updates should be provided.**
- **It is also crucial that responses to letters are as user-friendly as possible.**
- **Care is needed to ensure contact details quoted in the letters are accurate, for example, is it Highways or the Hub?**
- **'Complete' should mean when the job is completely finished 'on the ground', and not that it has been passed on to another party. Where a job or customer enquiry involves work by another organisation which means it has been handed on, we recommend that there should be a system in place to check that this organisation has completed their element of the work. We feel that clarification on 'completion status' would improve both efficiency and customer satisfaction.**
- **The potential of PEM to generate report information for county divisions, district wards and parish areas would be extremely useful, and we recommend the Directorate's development of this facility.**

Term Maintenance Contract

Original Report Recommendation (Page 12, para 46)	Progress report from the Directorate of Environmental Services
We recommend that there is an audit of our KPIs and possible adjustments, similar to the best practice we saw in Gloucestershire.	Revised additional KPI's in final stages of development for Ringway contract extension. Please see table 2 attached. These KPI's will be implemented and monitored in addition to existing contract KPI's.

What we found

58. We were able to obtain details of the Term Maintenance Contract Key Performance Indicators and a breakdown of the detail behind each indicator.
59. The original scrutiny highlighted how other councils placed public satisfaction at the core of service delivery, notably Gloucestershire County Council, where the contractor's profit is based on quality and public satisfaction.
60. During our discussion with the Cabinet Member and Director of Environmental Services, the point was made that national benchmarking surveys on satisfaction revealed a broadly similar picture across areas, and also that the PEM system is used to monitor public satisfaction.
61. Nonetheless, we continue to endorse the approach used by Gloucestershire, and have been disappointed that this does not appear to have been pursued by the Directorate.

Recommended Action

- We continue to endorse the approach of Gloucestershire County Council, where the contractor’s profit is based on quality and public satisfaction. We recommend that the revised KPIs include the issues of quality and public satisfaction.
- As part of scrutiny’s future performance management sessions with each Directorate area, we recommend review of the new key performance indicators, including their impact and how they are monitored.

Quality of Defect Repairs / Area Response Team Work

Original Report Recommendation (Page 13)	Progress report from the Directorate of Environmental Services
<p><u>Quality of defect repairs</u> The directorate should ensure that the necessary training and motivation of Area Response Teams (ARTs) is undertaken, documented and monitored appropriately.</p>	<p>Over the last 18 months the “Target 10” programme has been developed and implemented. This has involved a broad range of review and re-engineering of the delivery of the ART gangs and reactive work in general. This has over the last two to three months resulted in an average of 10 defects per gang per day being achieved, compared to an average of 3.5 per gang at the start of the project. The programme has also reviewed the process of repair so for example “hot” tarmac is now used in the vast majority of repairs a quality check process has also been implemented where Ringway (our HTMC) checks and monitors quality of repairs, and this is independently sample checked to confirm its validity.</p>
<p><u>ART Work</u> We recommend that key performance indicators based on quality of work should be introduced at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Devise a system of checks on the quality of ART work. Serious consideration should be given to implementing a small percentage of checks, rising or falling over time depending on levels of concern, the results to feed into key performance indicators (Page 15, para 68)</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p><u>ART Work</u> Ensure that ARTs have received adequate training and practice in agreed methods of repairing</p>	<p>Practices and methods have been reviewed and refined. This has included a new inspection manual which provides more accurate focus on methods and transfer of information from a defect</p>

<p>potholes and other road defects.</p>	<p>through to its delivery and completion as a part of the Target 10 process. Worcestershire County Council and Ringway are also participating in “Project Patch” in conjunction with the West Midlands Highways Alliance to review and improve further our method of pot hole repairs. In addition, where repeat pot hole defects occur e.g. clusters of pot holes, these are more pro-actively reported and placed on the carriageway patching schedule. This provides for a more permanent longer lasting patch repair than a short/medium term pot hole repair.</p>
<p>Ensure that ARTs are aware of the requirement to repair other potholes close to those identified for repair and can use their initiative and common sense.</p>	<p>It has been agreed that each ART gang has a defined area behind the vehicle in which they can work (in effect the safe working area or traffic management area). In most circumstances if an additional pot hole or similar repair was identified by the gang when they arrived at the location, they would deal with this at the time and update the inspector as necessary.</p>

What we found

62. The co-location of the highways with the Council's contractor in offices and depots has been highlighted to us as a key factor in improved working and communication.

Area Response Team Work

63. Achieving 'Target 10' represents a considerable improvement in ART effectiveness. Nonetheless, we continue to have some concerns about consistency in the quality of defect repairs, and emphasize that it is quality of work that is important, and not just the quantity.
64. We also have concerns about the time-delays between replacing temporary repairs with a permanent solution. The Director's aspiration to replace every temporary repair with a permanent one within 28 days, is wholeheartedly endorsed, and should be a feature of future delivery targets.
65. As part of the information gathered in the original scrutiny and from evidence given in this review, we have been assured of the benefits of using hot-fill bitumen for temporary repairs (except at weekends and out of hours). We would like greater assurance that there is a consistent, county-wide policy in this application.
66. From the evidence gathered on sealing the edges of patches with bituminous emulsion, we are aware that some safety organisations have road safety concerns about its use. There appears to be a lack of consistency in its use across the Country. However, we understand that applying a seal give a much better structure and life to repairs and this is especially relevant to permanent repair work.

Monitoring / inspection

67. We understand that some post inspection is carried out by Halcrow, the term consultant which provides highway design services to the Council. We are aware that inspection processes are currently under review, and that new initiatives, such as before and after photos of repairs, are leading to better work quality. Ringway, the Council's Highways Term Maintenance Contractor now take a photo before and after all defects repaired in normal daily works, and we understand that there are plans for this to be incorporated into the revised contract and required KPIs.
68. Nonetheless, from our evidence we have concerns that the inspection process remains heavily weighted towards pre-inspection, rather than post-inspection, and that this impacts on the quality of repairs. Each member of the Task Group brought their own experiences to the Review, and voiced many concerns about the quality of repair work.
69. We are also concerned that the Council itself does not have a role in post inspection. The Director has told us that he favours the approach of 'get it right first time' and cautioned against a high rate of post-inspections. Whilst we acknowledge this viewpoint, and the work which has been carried out by both the Council and Ringway to improve performance, our evidence tells us that the Council needs to have some role in post-inspection audit of the contractor's work, to ensure we are getting the service we have asked for.
70. Some members have concerns that some post-repair inspections on potholes are done too early, before any problems have become visible.
71. There appears to be to be a lack of consistency in the repair of additional potholes in adjacent areas to identified (marked) defects. The non-treatment of these at the same time as the marked defect generates numerous complaints from the public.

Recommended action

- **We recommend that county council officers have a direct role in post inspection and monitoring of the contractor's work, as we believe this to be crucial to improving the quality of repairs. We suggest this could be achieved in a light touch way, through routine sampling, or through checking audit samples. If necessary this could be funded by diverting funds from pre-inspection work.**
- **We recommend that the Directorate gains clarification on the obstacles to using edge sealing and its use within the County.**
- **We recommend a 29-day post repair check by county council staff should be carried out, to gauge whether the repair was still deemed temporary, or whether it had been replaced by a '29 day' permanent repair within the proposed targeted time-frame.**
- **It may be that ART gangs working to target 10 will be inclined to carry out just the 'marked defect' as instructed on their Works Order, and then move on to the next job. We therefore recommend this issue could be addressed by training inspectors to take a broader view of general road condition which may not have yet reached intervention level status, but where preventative action could avoid this and provide improved public perception and satisfaction.**

Links with Planned Maintenance Programme

<p>Original Report Recommendation (Page 15, para 74)</p>	<p>Progress report from the Directorate of Environmental Services</p>
<p>We recommend that all defect repairs be logged into the planned maintenance programme</p>	<p>Safety defects are now recorded and can be displayed graphically within the Highways database and mapping facility.</p> <p>Planning of the forward programme now takes into account, the number of safety defects that have been recorded on any given section of highway in addition to other survey information</p> <p>In addition, public notices now include the estimated time scale for the completion of any identified works, alongside the stated duration of the legal period for the public notice.</p>

What we found

72. We are satisfied that progress has been made in respect of this recommendation. However, although defect repairs are now logged into the planned maintenance programme, budget constraints and programme delivery can lead to significant time lapses before some repairs are addressed.

Utilities

Original Report Recommendation	Progress report from Environmental Services
<p>We recommend that further work is done on whether the additional costs of inspection at the end of two years would outweigh the costs incurred if the county council had to repair a similar percentage of defects on the remaining 90% of utility openings. (Page 16, para 82)</p>	<p>Work has been done to make working practices more efficient, and the Directorate is now able to inspect the majority of utility reinstatements at the end of the two year guarantee period, with no significant increased cost.</p>
<p>We recommend that the Environmental Services Directorate considers whether examples of best practice in Hertfordshire and Kirklees, through pro-active engagement with the Regional Highways and Utilities Committee (HAUC) could lead to improved relationships with utilities in Worcestershire (Page 17, para 88)</p>	<p>See below</p>

What we found

73. The Directorate advised that it was very difficult to judge whether the additional inspection costs outweigh costs incurred by the Council to repair a similar percentage of defects, because the cost of repairing a defect varies greatly, depending on what it is. However, more efficient ways of working, such as the Streetworks Inspectors being flexibly based, rather than office based, meant that the Council now inspected a much higher percentage of utility reinstatements. The majority are now inspected, at no significant increased cost.
74. We looked at the results of coring failure performance figures for six utility companies between 2000 and 2008, and for reinstatement sample inspection results from 2006/07 to 2008/09. (The coring programme involves taking cores, usually 100mm diameter, to determine the thickness of the bituminous layers of a reinstatement after a utility excavation, to determine that it has been completed to the current specification.) These graphs indicated an overall reduction in the percentage of failed corings.
75. The Directorate felt there was a good relationship with the utility companies, and that generally, they were co-operative in re-doing unsatisfactory jobs. Additionally, utility companies were now trying to build longer-term contracts and partnerships with contractors, which it was hoped would lead to improvements.
76. We can see that progress has been made in improving closer working with utility companies, and in increasing the Council's inspections. Nonetheless, we continue to have some concerns that the Council doesn't always raise problems within the guarantee period.
77. The utility companies help form the reputation of the County Council's performance and quality standards. Even though we do not own the trench or pothole made by them, we do have a responsibility to try and do the best we can to make the highways and footways as safe and as high quality as we can.

Recommended action

- **We recommend that the Directorate continues to maximise the numbers of inspections made nearing the end of the guarantee period.**
- **We recommend that the Council continues to monitor the inspection results and develop closer working with the utility companies.**

Additional issues

Highway Claims

78. Although insurance claims related to highways and footways did not form part of the recommendations from the original scrutiny report, this topic was linked to various discussion points during this Review, and has featured in television and press reports.
79. While we are not aware of a particular problem in Worcestershire, there has not been sufficient time for us to research this area, and we therefore suggest that this may be an issue to consider as part of future progress reviews.

Conclusion

80. Highway maintenance continues to be a very important area for councillors and for the public, mainly because roads and footways are used by each and every one of us.
81. The 2007 Highway Maintenance Scrutiny made some important findings and recommendations for the Directorate's work, and we wanted to see how things had moved forward.
82. Our Review has shown that an enormous amount of work has been done. Highways has undergone a succession of organisational and system changes, whilst coping with peaks of demand from flooding, winter freezes etc, and they have continued to drive forwards with new and more efficient ways of working, the results of which will take time to be more visible. The unusually cold weather which occurred during this review was a timely demonstration of the improved capability of the highways service in managing the effects of adverse weather, and returning to a 'steady state'.
83. The recommended action points we have made are intended to offer constructive guidance for the continued improvement of highways maintenance.
84. There have been two key concerns arising from the review. One has centred on the need to address the deterioration of the road network sub-structure. We believe our review has highlighted that although the recent £15 million capital project on urban unclassified roads has been successfully carried out, that it was only designed to address one aspect of the backlog. The problem has not gone away. This will be a major challenge for future Councils. Through examining this issue, our review also highlights the continued importance of an asset management plan.
85. Our other key concern has been the need for a role of direct involvement by Council officers in post inspections and monitoring of the contractor's work, as we believe this to be crucial to further improving the quality of repairs.
86. In completing the review, we have had to absorb a considerable amount of information within a short timeframe. This has been challenging, at times frustrating, but also hugely informative. Crucially, it will mean that the scrutiny function is better able to continue its watching brief through future performance monitoring.

List of Evidence Sessions

5 February 2009 Lead Task Group Member	Initial progress overview with Peter Blake, Head of Integrated Transport
6 February 2009 Scrutiny Task Group	A look back at the Highways Maintenance Scrutiny Report 2007 Planning and prioritising the scrutiny review programme
13 February 2009 Scrutiny Task Group	Viewpoint from a member of the public – short film on road and footway maintenance from a Redditch resident The Hub / Public Enquiry Management System – Ian Bamforth, Highways and Countryside Manager Utilities – Bob Lloyd, Streetworks Manager Maintenance (operational perspective) – Nils Wilkes, Highways Service Manager
20 February 2009 Scrutiny Task Group	Asset Management and statistics – Pete Burnham, Pavement Management Engineer Budget – how is it allocated, prioritised and what are the issues? – John Hobbs, Director of Environmental Services and Nick Twaite, Engineering and Asset Manager
26 February 2009 Sub-group visit	Visit to Highways Control Centre at County Hall
27 February 2009 Scrutiny Task Group	Visit to Highways Control Centre – report back Film on road repair by Redditch resident – response from Environmental Services Directorate (Ian Bamforth) Highway Claims Emerging findings
6 March 2009 Scrutiny Task Group	Councillor questionnaire analysis Formulation of Task Group's Report – key findings and recommendations
12 March 2009 Sub-group site visit	Meeting with member of the public who had supplied a film and written evidence of maintenance work in his locality. Council officers and Council's contractor Ringway also present.
20 April 2009 Scrutiny Task Group	Discussion of draft report with Cabinet Member for Environmental Services, Director of Environmental Services and Head of Integrated Transport Finalisation of draft report

Summary of Information Provided to the Task Group

- 2007 Highway Maintenance Scrutiny Report
- Response by Cabinet Member for Environmental Services
- Director of Environmental Service's presentation to the OSSC on 15 July 2008 – handouts
- Copy of the 2007 Highway Maintenance county councillor questionnaire
- Progress statement from Directorate of Environmental Services
- Presentation handouts – Improving Hub, Highways and Direct Delivery (Success Zone Project)
- Performance information graph relating to Highways Public Enquiry Management System
- Highways Term Maintenance Contract – proposed additional key performance indicators
- Updated Best Value Performance Indicator figures
- Utilities – coring performance graphs and figures for reinstatement sample inspection results
- Film and written submission from a member of the public about maintenance work in his road, and his communication with the Council.
- Asset management and statistical information update, including maintenance backlogs
- Presentation handouts – 'Peeling Away the layers – use of Multiple Spatial Themes'
- Highways Maintenance and Transportation Service Budgets 2004/05 to 2008/09, and Outline statement for 2009/10
- Highways claims information from 2006/07 to 2008/09
- County councillor highway maintenance questionnaire – analysis results and comparison of 2007 and 2009 surveys
- Draft Carriageway Lifecycle Plan
- Examples of Ringway 'before and after' photos of defect repairs
- Proposed additional Key Performance Indicators, currently being negotiated with Ringway.

There were a total of 26 responses from County Councillors. The table below gives a breakdown of the results:

Table 1

		Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Neither	Fairly Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Condition of road surfaces – holes/potholes	Number	0	7	5	11	2
	%	0.0	28.0	20.0	44.0	8.0
Condition of pavements	Number	1	3	5	10	7
	%	3.8	11.5	19.2	38.5	26.9
Condition of verges – not cut/maintained	Number	1	11	6	3	3
	%	4.2	45.8	25.0	12.5	12.5
Drainage of roads	Number	0	8	5	10	2
	%	0.0	32.0	20.0	40.0	8.0
Time taken to repair defects	Number	0	8	1	10	5
	%	0.0	33.3	4.2	41.7	20.8
Quality of repairs	Number	0	7	8	5	5
	%	0.0	28.0	32.0	20.0	20.0
Feedback after defects are reported	Number	0	9	1	3	11
	%	0.0	37.5	4.2	12.5	45.8
Contact with the County Council	Number	5	10	1	6	3
	%	20.0	40.0	4.0	24.0	12.0
Quality of information received in advance of starting road works	Number	3	11	3	6	2
	%	12.0	44.0	12.0	24.0	8.0
Knowledge about priorities for repair	Number	0	7	4	7	6
	%	0.0	29.2	16.7	29.2	25.0
Being kept informed more regularly about highways matters	Number	1	11	5	7	1
	%	4.0	44.0	20.0	28.0	4.0
The ease of access to information generally	Number	1	8	6	7	3
	%	4.0	32.0	24.0	28.0	12.0
Content of the website	Number	2	4	8	5	0
	%	10.5	21.1	42.1	26.3	0.0
Parish Lengthsman Scheme	Number	8	5	4	0	0
	%	47.1	29.4	23.5	0.0	0.0

County Councillors are generally dissatisfied with highways maintenance across Worcestershire. The areas where there is a higher proportion of Councillors who are satisfied are condition of verges, contact with the County Council, quality of information received in advance of starting road works, being kept informed more regularly about highways matters, content of the website and the Parish Lengthsman Scheme.

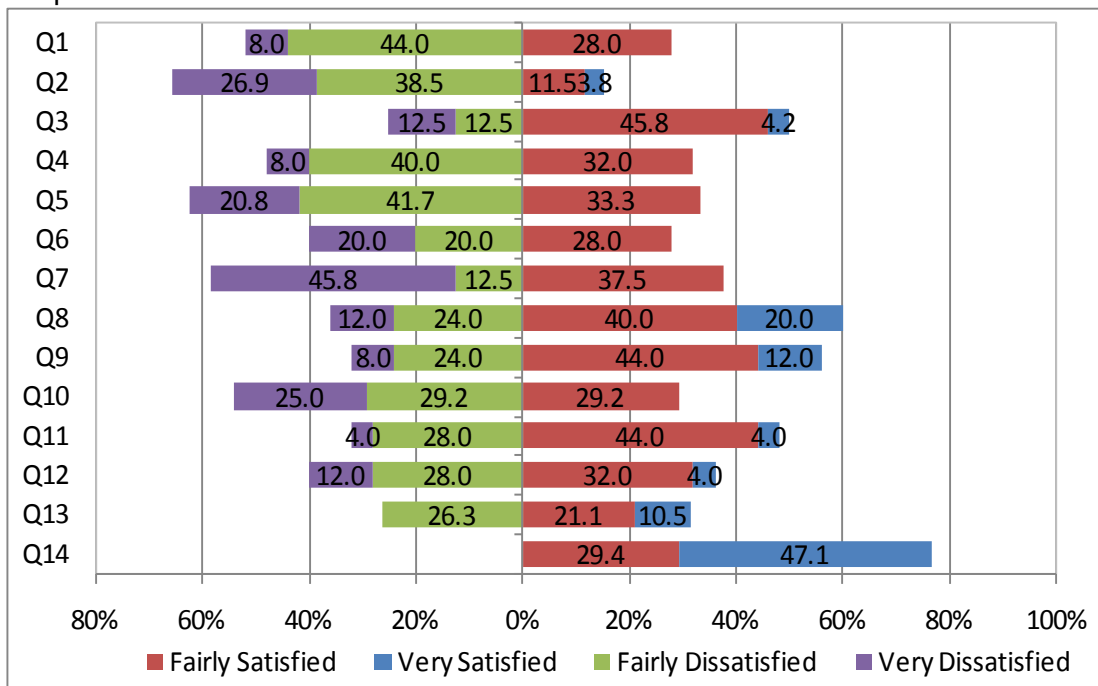
The majority of respondents are dissatisfied with the condition of the pavements (65.4%), followed by the time taken to repair defects and feedback after defects are reported, 62.5% and 58.3% respectively. Comments related to poor inspection of pavements and defects take too long to repair. With regards to feedback after repairs are made, some Councillors stated they were not aware of any feedback. Respondents also stated they were dissatisfied with the quality of repairs commenting they are often poor and unsatisfactory.

There is a negative response from Councillors regarding the condition of road surfaces (holes/potholes). 52.0% of respondents said they are dissatisfied with their condition, compared to 28.0% who are satisfied. Many respondents are satisfied with the condition of verges, however, not with the drainage of roads. There were a number of comments relating to a number of drainage problems around the County.

A positive response can be seen for contact with the County Council and quality of information received in advance of starting road works, 60.0% and 56.0% respectively stated they were satisfied. Councillors commented the quality of information received has improved, helped by the weekly e-bulletin.

Table 1 shows a mixed response regarding knowledge about priorities for repair, being kept informed more regularly about highways matters and the ease of access to information generally. Not many Councillors answered the last two questions; however more were satisfied with the content of the website and most satisfied with the Parish Lengthsman Scheme.

Graph 1



Top Priorities for Improvement

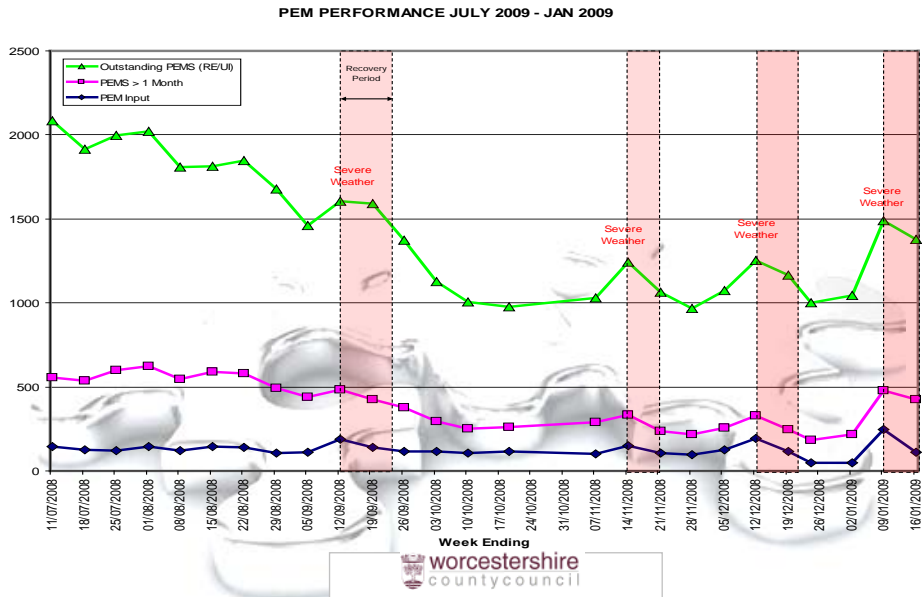
Councillors top priorities included:

- To see action taken within say 10 days, when defects on the road service and footpaths are reported.
- The state of the pavements, which is aggravated by parking of heavy goods vehicles.
- Footpaths - take pedestrians safety as seriously as vehicle safety. Quality of repairs, especially small jobs. Use signage to inform public what is happening, and tidy up after the job is done. Get work programme information into user friendly format so Councillors can easily check what is programmed for their division, what is on a waiting list and what has been rejected.
- They vary year to year but in general. Move to planned maintenance not reactive - it will reduce potholes. Repair road defects as soon as possible and ensure gullies are emptied to reduce road flooding.
- Clarification of criteria used for repairs to highways and footpaths. Communication for residents.
- Shrubbery Avenue - Road surface and pavements (centre of road ok) but sides are breaking up. Many pavements in St. Stephens Division need attention.
- 1. Getting rid of all concrete slab footway surfaces 2. Giving us higher priority for gritting. Compared with most County Divisions our roads are extremely steep. 3. As soon as it becomes possible, continue with the works (connected with the North Site development) at the Link Top junctions of Leigh Sinton Road and Worcester Road.
- Essential repairs to footpaths. Drain clearing needs more attention.
- Footpaths and pavements.
- The quality of pothole repairs. The "intervention" policy needs to be re visited.
- The footpaths and public alleyways, which are rarely if ever litter picked and never cleansed of mud and where the boundary hedges are rarely cut.
- Pavement and verge repairs from damage over winter, i.e. grass seeding/turfing.
- Finishing the Worcester Road wall in Priory Ward. Draining the flooding in Mayfield Road, Pickersleigh Road every time it rains. Provision of Zebra crossing at the Prospect View round about, to help access to Medical centre's Children's centre (when built, still a mound of contaminated earth there!!) and 50 flats behind medical centre.
- Response to private individuals contacting HUB. Great dissatisfaction regularly expresses. It seems to me that the County Council needs to establish who owns the roadside verges (and I know this varies). Maintenance on the whole is ok, but you can cut the grass but the area behind can grow over the cut area.
- Higher Quality of workmanship before accepting repairs
- General Maintenance is poor. Highways in rural areas need to be upgraded. Verges need to be cut 3 times a year.
- Pavement resurfacing Catshill and bus routes. Pavement resurfacing on school walking routes - Fairfield and Catshill. Traffic signage for HGV in rural areas taking traffic away from difficult one car width roads. Roads around quarries that are broken up by HGV and verges broken by HGV. Information and contact management is needed to ensure consistency in Councillor "call for action" ability.
- Traffic Management information- more information on what schemes are planed and also what schemes have been rejected as unfeasible. Would like league table on priorities of immediate, general and long term.
- Draining Issues - these are constantly occurring and some have been going on for years....This is complicated by the fact that sometimes it is not clear whether the issue is the responsibility of Highways Agency or Severn Trent and they don't always communicate.
- Repair of footways - there are so many in my Division that are in a dreadful state - I spent this year's allocation on a footway repair but I could have spent it many, many times over.
- Mayfields Road and Parsons Road. Lines in Plymouth Road.
- Blocked road drains, poor pavement surfaces, damaged verges from parking not attended to.

- State of footpaths and general parking matters. Droitwich would like to trial a resident's only pilot scheme.

A number of general comments were also made, which can be found in the spreadsheet of raw data.

PEM Performance



Project summary

Create a focus area to drive: Right 1st time, Knowledge capture/transfer and Reduction in PEMS

- ✓ Decision trees, SharePoint/Web improvements, highways integration have improved right 1st time
- ✓ Improved web and SharePoint tools, HUB interaction and feedback tools, steering group will also aid
- ✓ 50% reduction [PEMS] and driven focus to sustain these levels (success zone and workshop)
- ✓ Changes in ATLAS to drive responsible/accountability

Proactive communications

- ✓ The daily focus meeting informs entire directorate of departmental issues very quickly

Conflict resolution

- ✓ Interaction between the HUB and Highways has identified and reduced conflict
- ✓ Increased interaction within internal teams, has reduced conflict by increasing communications and removing excuses (nowhere to hide)

Clear prioritisation

- ✓ Team have holistic view, improving planning thus allowing for improved prioritisation
- ✓ Increasing HUBs highways and ES understanding has improved ability to prioritise

Involvement of directorate stakeholders

- ✓ The group consists of key stakeholders and when necessary external stakeholders have been invited
- ✓ This approach is the first initiative that sees directorate stakeholders meeting daily

Contribution from a member of the public

We received a film, photos and written submission from a member of the public, who had been in contact with a member of our Task Group at the time of this Review.

His submission concerned complaints about road and footway maintenance repairs in his local area, and his communication with the Department of Environmental Services. Although the film and written evidence represented one individual's views and experiences, it provided a case study for us to see things from the public perspective, and to discuss the issues raised with the Directorate.

The issues raised included:

- Importance of communication with the public and timely response to customer complaints
- Quality of maintenance repairs, including the fact that the public may not be aware that a 'make safe' repair is not intended to be a long-term repair
- Management of equipment and materials

The Directorate provided the Task Group with its response to the issues raised by the evidence. A site visit and meeting was also arranged, which was attended by the complainant, some members of the Task Group, and representatives from the Environmental Services Directorate, and from the Council's Highways Term Maintenance Contractor.