

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee – 6
December 2017

Subject: Highway Planned Maintenance and Repairs

Report of: Strategic Director, Highways, Transport and Engineering

Summary:

This report is to provide the Committee with an update on the Highways Delivery Plan including information on enhancements in repair performance, quality control, and management of the Service.

Recommendations:

Committee is asked to consider and comment on the information within this report.

Wards Affected: All

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

- Highways Asset Management Policy and Strategy Report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Neighbourhoods and Growth Executive 2nd December 2015)
- Highways Maintenance Report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Neighbourhoods and Growth Scrutiny) 26th January 2016
- Highways Improvement Report to Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee November 2016.
- Review of Highways Senior Management Structure to Deliver Capital Investment Report of Chief Executive Personnel Committee 21st February 2017
- Highway Service Update Report to Audit Committee of 31st August 2017.
- Highways Service Update Report to Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee of 11th October 2017.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In response to a report from the Strategic Director of Transport, Highways and Engineering presented to Audit Committee on 31st August 2017, a number of items were raised, including referral to Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee, for further updates around the Highways Planned Maintenance Forward Programme and work around inspections and repairs.
- 1.2 A subsequent report from the Strategic Director of Transport, Highways and Engineering was presented to Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 11th October 2017.
- 1.3 This current report provides an update to Committee on its specific request in October for further analysis of the number of highway defects reported and repaired. Similarly, it provides further detail on how the Service manages the quality and performance of third party utility companies undertaking work on Manchester's highway.
- 1.4 It also offers an update on questions from Audit Committee in August seeking further information and clarity on the following:
 - 1.4.1 Effectiveness of the system for checking the quality of work;
 - 1.4.2 Effectiveness of work to understand the longevity or repairs, including consideration of spray injection ('Jet Patching') techniques being used in support of the current repair programme; and
 - 1.4.3 Progress on the appointment of Senior Officers.

2 Highway Repair and SLA Performance

- 2.1 All highway defects deemed to be actionable, notified either through CRM, other Requests for Service, or identified as part of a scheduled highway safety inspection, require a Works Order to be placed electronically before any repair is undertaken.
- 2.2 In the recent past, individual Works Orders could contain multiple defects but as part of Service improvement, this has recently changed to a system whereby each Order now only contains a single defect for repair – a key driver for this change was an aspiration to enhance the simplicity and accuracy of performance measurement but in the short-term, it makes a like-for-like comparison between present and past performance a little fragmented. It does however give a more robust platform for future monitoring and reporting of performance.
- 2.3 As has been previously documented, the Service has been concentrating through this year on reviewing and refining long-standing processes and procedures around work allocation and repair – including the deployment of additional resource (both internal and externally procured); the development of potential new call-off contracts for external support; utilising more efficient and

cost-effective methods of repair in particular circumstances (for example, Jet Patching where appropriate); and rolling-out enhanced monitoring and management of performance.

- 2.4 System monitoring has shown that between January and the end of October 2017, the Service successfully completed and closed almost 13,000 Works Orders (including many containing multiple surface defects).
- 2.5 Similarly, a historic backlog of repairs, totalling almost 14,000 Works Orders in May 2017, has been reduced by circa 30 percent to November and the backlog figure continues to fall.
- 2.6 In addition to the Service having recently changed its method of recording of individual defects against a single Works Order, the Council is also currently reviewing its own future performance targets for highway maintenance. This is in-line with the industry-wide requirement to move towards a more risk-based approach as specified in "Well Managed Highways – A Code of Practice" that sets new more tailored targets that must become effective by October 2018.

3 Managing Quality and Performance of Utility Companies

Permitting and approval of works undertaken

- 3.1 All utility companies and associated contractors who wish to undertake work on the Council's roads are obliged to have a Greater Manchester Road Activity Permit Scheme (GMRAPS) permit to work. Demonstrating the scale of activity and level of monitoring undertaken, the Service has during the last 12 months granted more than 10,500 permits.
- 3.2 The type of permit depends on the size and duration of works being scheduled and all applications are subject to a robust two-stage approval process undertaken initially by Transport for Greater Manchester before final evaluation and determination by the Council. It is also routinely the case that larger works and those requiring comprehensive traffic management are discussed on-site with a designated Council Officer prior to any application being made and this further ensures sufficient control over all activities being planned.
- 3.3 Given the nature of works following initial investigation, there are inevitably occasions when planned activity on-site needs to change and under these circumstances, the Service robustly manages this process through GMRAPS requiring the contractor to request a variation which again may be approved or declined until concerns are sufficiently mitigated.
- 3.4 Each permit has a number of conditions to which the utility company must adhere. These are numerous and specific to each site and can include such things as duration (number of days occupation and times of day which works may or may not be undertaken); where materials and plant are to be stored; requirements and form of any associated traffic management arrangements;

and any particular requirements for consultation / engagement with local residents and businesses. Robust site monitoring during works activity ensures compliance and, under circumstances where specific conditions are breached, the Council has revoked permits and issued Fixed Penalty Notices accordingly.

Inspection and management of performance

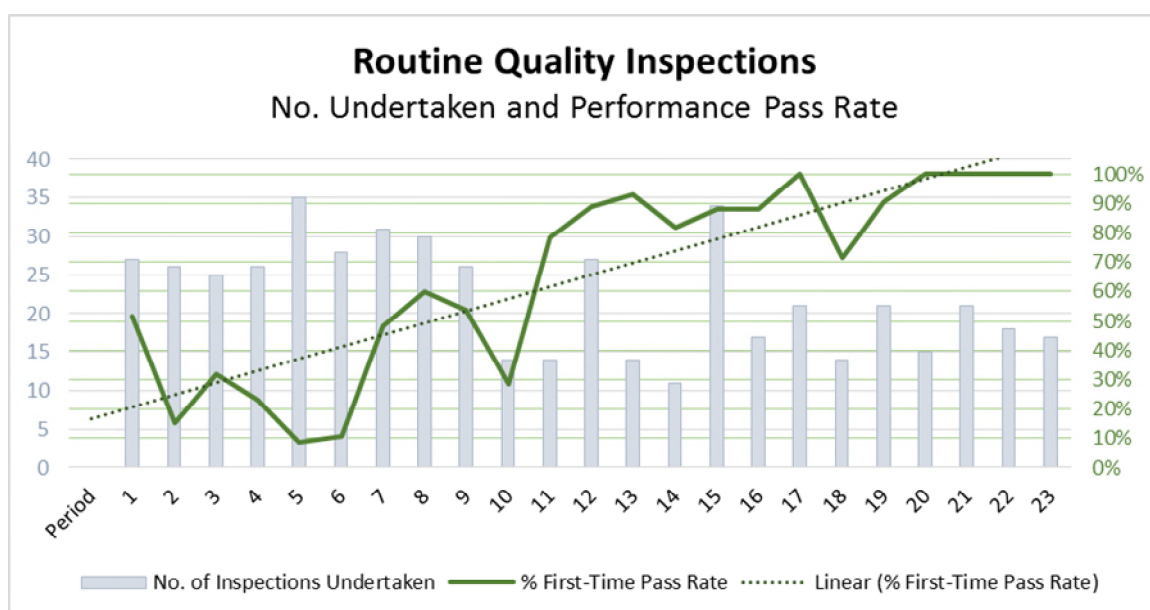
- 3.5 Trained Council Inspectors undertake daily visits to sites where utility works are being undertaken – this is to ensure that activity is being carried out in accordance with permit conditions, including ensuring the site is safe.
- 3.6 Following the completion of works, a final inspection is undertaken to assess the quality of reinstatement. If the Inspector identifies and reports sub-standard work, the utility company is issued with a Defect Notice and associated cost charge, and instructed to attend a site meeting to discuss performance and rectify works at their own cost.
- 3.7 Supporting this, Service Managers hold quarterly forward planning coordination meetings with the larger utility companies and more frequent weekly or fortnightly progress meetings specifically around permitting and performance.
- 3.8 Noting Committee's concerns raised previously with regard to Virgin Media (VM), the Service earlier this year suspended temporarily all VM works across the City due to defects and poor working practices – a matter escalated to the national governing body (HAUC) and not just confined to Manchester.
- 3.9 This subsequently resulted in a reorganisation of VM's delivery team with new personal appointed and more robust quality assurance processes employed. Only when the Service was sufficiently satisfied that VM had rectified its defects were they allowed to continue working in the City.
- 3.10 Demonstrating commitment and scale of monitoring and enforcement of poor performance, the Service has during the last 12 months issued almost 750 FPN's against 13 utility providers together with almost 1,200 Defect Notices issued for failures and sub-standard work.

4 Effectiveness of Quality Checking and Approvals

- 4.1 Since 2016, and with guidance from Internal Audit, the Service has enhanced its processes and procedures around the quality of highway defect repairs undertaken by both its in-house teams and sub-contractors. This has brought greater rigour to the standard of repairs and the control of cost.
- 4.2 A major enhancement with sub-contractors for example is that all applications for payment where conventional repairs have been undertaken must now be supported by 3 no. site photographs (taken before, during and after works have been completed). Updated procedures now require an initial check (managed internally under the guidance of a designated Cost Manager) to

reconcile all payment applications submitted against the original Works Order specification and the appropriate photographic evidence provided. This is supplemented with sample site checks on both the quantity and quality of repairs, undertaken by a designated Council Clerk of Works, before certification is ultimately approved for payment.

- 4.3 This rigorous process ensures that any defective work identified by individual sub-contractors is not paid until there has been appropriate remediation to the satisfaction of the Service. Similarly, more regular meetings between Senior Operational Managers of the Council and their sub-contractor counterparts ensures that quality remains the highest priority and the routine monitoring of performance has shown significant improvement through 2016 and 2017.
- 4.4 As an additional control since August 2016, senior members of the Council's highways inspection and repair teams (now formally integrated as a single operational entity co-located within the Hooper Street Depot) have been conducting further independent random sampling of the quality of inspections undertaken and repairs completed by both Manchester Contracts and its sub-contractors.
- 4.5 Evaluated against pre-determined criteria, any failures in works ordering / specification are communicated back to the relevant Highways Inspector as lessons learned and any sub-standard repairs identified are returned to the appropriate repair team / contractor for explanation and remediation at their own cost.
- 4.6 These independent quality inspections have sampled in-excess of 500 defects over circa 12 months and as evidenced in the following chart, the process has contributed to a significant improvement in the generalised quality of work delivered from an average pass rate of around 30 percent during the first 4 inspections to now being in-excess of 90 percent.



5 Continuous Improvement in Delivering Appropriate Repairs

- 5.1 In December 2014, the Secretary of State for Transport announced that £578 million of capital funding would be made available between 2015/16 and 2020/21 for an incentive fund scheme, to reward councils who demonstrate they are delivering value for money in carrying out cost-effective highway maintenance improvements.
- 5.2 Each highway authority completes a self-assessment questionnaire annually to determine the share of the incentive fund they are eligible for. This involves an assessment to determine performance against three overall bands. Manchester's strong and improving performance is reflected in the fact that the Council is currently progressing towards the highest band for how it delivers its highway maintenance function.
- 5.3 The Service delivers pothole and large patching repairs together with its resurfacing programme fully in accordance and compliance with industry accepted Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) guidance
- 5.4 The most appropriate type of repair for each individual defect is identified at source by the Council's formally trained and accredited Highways Safety Inspectors who have extensive knowledge and experience in selecting the most appropriate repair material for each specific location, aligned with the prevailing road conditions, such that reinstatements are cost-effective and provide sufficient longevity.
- 5.5 Many of the Council's current team of Inspectors have operated within their respective geographical areas over many years and a number of them also have previous experience in undertaking highway reinstatements themselves, assisting further in ensuring the ordering of a 'right first time' repair.
- 5.6 During 2017, as part of ongoing drive towards achieving greater efficiency and longevity in repairs, the Service has procured and deployed selective spray injection 'Jet Patching' techniques in addition to conventional repairs.
- 5.7 The process of spray injection has been readily available and used with good effect by other UK highway authorities over recent years. In the right circumstances, it fills and seals carriageway defects to remove any possible hazard and can halt any further deterioration. It has similar longevity to other more conventional treatments but the much shorter time for implementing a repair makes Jet Patching a very cost-effective solution.
- 5.8 The Council has utilised the spray injection process in a proactive manner to not only remove defects deemed by inspection to be actionable but also to treat other sites as a formal preventative pre-patching solution where follow-up surface treatment yields an even longer lasting repair.

6 Appointment of Senior Officers

- 6.1 The Service has now formally recruited and embedded its new Highways leadership structure, one that is helping to drive and ultimately realise ambitious improvement and efficiency objectives, encompassing such things as refined process and procedures, technology enhancements, and a refined delivery structure.
- 6.2 Following appointment to the positions of Strategic Director for Highways, Transport and Engineering and Head of Transformation (Strategic Business Partner for Highways) in early 2017, significant progress has been made since the last Committee with the formal appointment of a new Director of Operations (Highways).
- 6.3 This additional Director role (now occupied) brings further operational direction and scrutiny in effective work programming and efficient delivery and it further enhances the governance of Manchester Contracts and its supply chain.
- 6.4 Similarly, reporting to the Director of Operations (Highways), the Service has recently appointed a new Head of Delivery (interim now in post) with responsibility for the wider highway project portfolio in terms of design, programming, commissioning, and delivery.
- 6.5 These senior appointments and their operational leads are now focusing fully on continued development and delivery against a robust 12-point priority Action Plan supported fully by the Strategic Business Partner.