



To:
Councillor Mark Thomas
Cabinet Member for Environment Services

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Date 20 February 2018
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Summary: This is a letter from the Roads and Footway Maintenance Working Group to the Cabinet Member for Environment Services following the meeting of the Working Group on 31 January 2018.

Dear Cllr Thomas

The Roads and Footway Maintenance Scrutiny Working Group met on 31 January to look at functions, standards and operational activities in relation to highway maintenance. This letter provides you with feedback from that meeting.

We would like to thank you, Stuart Davies and Bob Fenwick for attending to present the report and answer questions. We appreciate your engagement and input.

Whilst the Working Group found the meeting informative and interesting, it did have some concerns and we would like to make the following comments:

- We expressed our concern about costs to the Council of non-adopted roads. We were informed that there is currently no legislation to force developers to have new roads adopted but that the Authority does encourage developers too. We also heard that this is a problem facing other Local Authorities across Wales.
- We felt that Swansea needs to look at the influence Planning can have in terms of roads and footway maintenance and that there is a need to look at how these obligations are policed. We also felt that there is a need to encourage the Welsh Government to introduce legislation in this area.
- We heard that if more than 50% of householders with frontages on a road want it adopted, it can be, but householders will be charged to bring the road up to standard first. We feel there is a need to increase public understanding of adopted/non adopted roads.

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- We expressed our concerns about vehicles parking on footpaths and the safety risks this poses for the public and heard that there is no legislation to prevent this unless the vehicles are causing an obstruction.
- We heard that footpaths and footways are classed as part of highways in terms of budget for maintenance and that safety inspections of footways are carried out at regular intervals (minimum of once a year)
- In terms of capital spend we were informed that approximately £1.3 million is spent on roads and £600 thousand on footways and that proportionally footways have had a big increase in spend in the last 5 to 7 years. We also heard that there is a routine maintenance programme for footways. We were pleased to hear that the Authority is ahead of the 5 year programme.
- We were concerned to hear that the backlog of £54 million of work is for roads only and that it is approximately £150 million for all works including bridges, footways etc. We heard that evidence has been submitted to the Welsh Government about the backlog of work in Wales as Local Authorities are unable to tackle the problem themselves.
- We heard that the Authority has received additional grant funding from Welsh Government for a number of projects because we were able to complete them within a short timescale.
- We felt that if drainage was improved less would be spent on road maintenance. We were informed that more drainage and gullies are put in place in new roads. We heard that we only have three road sweeper machines in Swansea so it is very difficult to keep all drains clear. Maintenance of gullies is every three years but try to do the ones that cause accidents every 6 months. We suggested that surface water flooding and drainage is something for planning enforcement to deal with if it is due to new developments.
- We were pleased to hear that a list of planned maintenance of highways is available to view on line and that the target for completion is within 28 days. If damage is reported under the pothole initiative it is usually completed within 48 hours. We felt that this initiative needs to be publicised more.
- We heard that the removal of weeds on roads and footways is not statutory. There were problems with removal of weeds last summer due to issues with the contractor and because the weather was a lot wetter than normal there were a lot more weeds. We expressed our concerns about indiscriminate spraying.
- We felt that it was difficult to cover this topic in one Working Group and that it should be a future scrutiny inquiry.

Following the meeting, we discussed progress and made the following conclusions:

1. We felt the Planning Department could do more for new developments in terms of ensuring developers consider adoption of roads, layout of roads, car parking etc, either through additional legislation from the Welsh Government or by putting pressure on developers. We recommend that the Authority investigates whether there are additional measures that can be brought in or if we can lobby Welsh Government if there currently are not.
2. We think it is important that any planning procedures which come to Highways for comment make very clear the effect they will have on drainage etc.
3. In relation to drainage we would like to know if there are any provisions in place in case rain fall increases in the future i.e. wetter weather.
4. We feel that planning enforcement is really important and that planning enforcement officers should be involved at the first stages of any new

development and should work with developers of sites to deal with any issues. We feel it is worth considering employing a Clerk of Works/Inspector for future housing developments to report directly back to the Council/s Highways & Planning Departments, so that a monitoring exercise can be recorded on how works are proceeding and to ensure developers are abiding by the planning conditions/consent.

5. We feel that the pothole initiative works well. We were pleased to hear that members of the public, councillors etc will receive a response if email addresses are supplied, whether the issue has been dealt with or not. However we wonder how well this initiative has been publicised and are not convinced members of the public are aware how easy it is to report. We would therefore like to see the initiative better publicised.
6. We would like to see a Code of Practice introduced in relation to obstruction of carriageways by vehicles particularly developers/ builders etc.
7. In terms of footway obstruction and damage and also blocked drains/gullies we would like to see a registered list of companies who can provide these services to builders and contractors who operate in the City & County of Swansea and surrounding areas.
8. We have concerns about indiscriminate weed spraying and would like reassurance from you that spraying is done on a planned basis and the products used are not calcinogenic.
9. We feel that a more in depth piece of work is needed to fully cover this area and will be recommending to the Scrutiny Programme Committee that Road and Footway Maintenance be considered as a future scrutiny inquiry topic.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We are interested in hearing your thoughts about the issues raised and would ask that you respond by 13 March 2018.

Yours sincerely

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