

ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 DECEMBER 2020

PRESENT: Councillor J.D. James (Chair)

Councillors:

J.M. Charles, T.A.J. Davies, J.A. Davies, K. Davies, P.M. Edwards, S.J.G. Gilasbey, T.M. Higgins, E. Morgan, B.D.J. Phillips, J.S. Phillips, D. Thomas, A. Vaughan Owen and A.D.T. Speake.

Also in attendance:

Councillor H.A.L. Evans, Executive Board Member for Environment;
Councillor P.M. Hughes, Executive Board Member for Public Protection.

The following Officers were in attendance:

S. Pilliner, Head of Transportation & Highways;
R. S. Waters, Highways and Transportation Manager;
C. Nelson. Highways Asset Manager;
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer.
R. Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer;
J. Corner, Technical Officer;
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator;
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer.

Virtual Meeting:- 10:00am - 11:30am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM.

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

The following declaration of interest was made:

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
T. Higgins	4 – Highway Asset Management Plan – Annual Statement Report 2020	Councillor Higgins is a resident of Penygarn Road.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. HIGHWAY ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN - ANNUAL STATEMENT REPORT 2020

[Councillor Higgins, having earlier declared an interest in this item, remained in the meeting, took part of the consideration of the report and voted.]

The Committee received the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) Annual Statement Report 2020 presented by the Executive Board Member for Environment.

The Annual Statement Report 2020 included an overview of the highway network and provided detail on the following three key highway asset areas:

- Highways (carriageways, footways and cycleways)
- Bridges and Structures
- Highway Lighting and Traffic Signals

For each of the abovementioned asset categories, the report detailed the condition, how the condition had changed since the last report and explained the future changes based on funding scenarios set out within the report.

The Committee received a presentation which supported the content of the report.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:-

- It was asked if the Welsh Government grant funding of £5.2M was a one-off payment or would there be further funding made available? The Highways and Transportation Manager explained that the WG grant funding was a three-year funding package which started in 2018/19 and that dialogue with the WG was currently taking place regarding any future funding.
- Specific queries were raised in relation relating to ongoing concerns about the road surface of Penygarn Road, Tycroes, Ammanford. Queries included: when would the matter be resolved and if any Officers/Contractors had viewed the condition of the road? The Chair interjected to advise that local issues where to be raised outside of the Committee. However, the Head of Transportation and Highways explained that the road in question was subject to a process called hydro jetting which was carried out by a surface contractor in 2019 and regular inspections had been carried out. The road had been assessed as safe. The Head of Head of Transportation and Highways offered to provide a further update on this particular matter to the local members.
- In response to a query raised in relation to the completion of the LED conversion programme, the Executive Board Member for Environment and the Highways and Transportation Manager confirmed that the programme was substantially completed in 2020, however, whilst the pandemic had delayed the programmed completion date, the Public Lighting Team had worked to complete the conversion project of all sodium lights to LED's before the end of the summer 2020.

- In relation to impact of extreme weather on road surfaces, it was asked what role climate change had in the future scenario of how long conditions will remain acceptable and was this factored into condition reports? The Highway Asset Manager clarified that whilst 20 years was the recommended time to retain a road surface there were many factors that could affect and vary the recommended lifespan. Therefore, the highways department utilised corrective and preventative treatments in order to extend the lifespan, unfortunately the application of such treatments were reducing as the budget reduced.

In response to a further query, the Highway Asset Manager explained that guarantees were obtained when investments in treatments were made. In addition, the department would work towards obtaining the most value from investments by securing the right treatment for the right location.

- Reference was made to Table 1 on page 18 of the report. In relation to 'C' Class roads it was raised if the necessary investment was not being made on the roads now there were concerns in what the figures would look like in the future. The Executive Board Member for Environment explained the continuing difficulties in relation to obtaining the necessary funding required to keep abreast of the road maintenance and echoed that roads with a high volume of traffic must be prioritised. The Head of Highways and Transportation added that essentially due to the backlog of £36m the department had to ensure that resources were prioritised accordingly.
- With reference to the new video survey technology, a query was raised if this method was utilised in the rural area. The new method had been used in rural areas and was also a good tool for surveying cycle-paths across Carmarthenshire.
- In response to a query raised regarding potholes and why they reoccurred in the same location, the Head of Highways and Transportation explained that potholes occurred for a number of different reasons including general ageing of the road surface, possible weakness in the structure of the surface and/or the underlying material and under surface water just to name a few.
- Concern was raised that 'C' class roads would deteriorate with the capital funding being concentrated on repairing and resurfacing the roads with a higher volume of traffic.
- Reference was made to page 28 of the report - Strengthening/Replacement of bridges. Clarification was sought in relation the 54 bridges which had been classed as substandard. The Head of Highways and Transportation further confirmed that bridges carried a maximum weight limit of 44-ton which was the main reason for the substandard classification, however, he reassured Committee Members that the bridges were inspected regularly and were structurally safe.

- Reference was made to page 30 of the report – Lighting Columns. In acknowledging that there were currently in excess of 20k street lighting columns which included bracketed units on third party wooden poles, it was asked if there was any potential to investing in more third-party poles? The Highways and Transportation Manager explained that unfortunately the recent trend signified the contrary in that third parties were asking to remove Council owned apparatus.
- In order to be able to quickly react to sudden adverse weather such as heavy rain and local incidents of flooding, it was asked if there was any scope in working closely with Town and Community Councils to store and access sandbags? The Head of Highways and Transportation stated that the Sandbag Policy included strategic locations where sandbags were deployed and these locations were monitored following severe weather events.
- In response to a query raised in relation to the land-owners that have been informed that there was a presence of Ash Die-back disease on their land, the Highways and Transportation Manager explained that the team worked closely with landowners and in the case of an identified safety implication to the highway, the Highways department would liaise with the landowner to advise in the arrangement of urgent removal of the diseased tree.
- The Head of Highways and Transportation, in response to a query in relation to capital investment into footway maintenance, clarified that whilst resources were prioritised if capital was not invested this placed pressure on revenue budgets. The Highway Asset Manager added that £100k had been invested in the County's footway and cycleway network.
- It was asked if S106 money could be used to rectify highway safety issues? The Highway and Transportation Manager explained that S106 money was only to be utilised for consequences of a new development and clarified that the money was not to be used for routine highway maintenance.
- The Executive Board Member expressed her sincere thanks to the officers for providing a very comprehensive and valuable report which illustrated the significant amount of assets that had to be managed on a limited and ever reducing budget.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Highway Asset Management Plan – Annual Statement Report 2020 be noted.

5. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

In relation to the Joint Transport Plan for South West Wales which was referred to the Committee by the Policy and Resources Committee, the Head of Highways and Transportation explained that due to the emergence of CJC's the expiry date of the Plan had been extended by the Minister for Transport and would be presented to the Committee following a lead time of an 18month period required to develop the Plan.

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items for the Committee meeting to be held on the 1st February 2020 be agreed.

6. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 24TH NOVEMBER 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee held on the 24th November, 2020 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE