

Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth Decisions
17 December 2024

PROCEDURAL MATTERS – MEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Question submitted by Cllr Catherine Baart

I note that the “Spring Clean” of roads and pavements has already begun in Leatherhead Guildford and Ashford. I note a full programme of works is planned for the rest of the county, and the county council proposes to spend an additional £5M in 25/26 on tidying up roads and pavements.

I would like to understand how the proposed extra £5M will be spent across the county on different “tidying up” actions, compared to the work carried out this year. Please could you provide a breakdown of how the proposed additional £5M will be spent, by type of activity for each district/borough, please give the breakdown by cost and also by % increase in hours compared to this year.

Would you consider a scheme by which residents undertake to carry out weed control themselves on particular roads, in preference to glyphosate weedkillers being used?

Reply:

As you may have seen from my recent communications with all Members (most recently on 5 December 2024), we are undertaking significant work to improve the local network. As an elected Member, you are encouraged to suggest areas where you would like us to focus our efforts.

The £5 million allocated for next year will be used to support various initiatives aimed at enhancing both the visual appeal of the network and, importantly, how it can be accessed by our residents. The planned works will include vegetation clearance and the restoration of rural footways where detritus has reduced their effective width. I have asked Officers to review different options, and the intended allocation of this additional funding for 2025/26 is as follows:

- **£1.5 million:** Additional grass cutting resources
- **£0.25 million:** Additional weed treatment
- **£2.0 million:** Roadside Rangers
- **£0.5 million:** Extensive flailing programme
- **£0.25 million:** Additional highway tree works
- **£0.5 million:** Contingency / staffing / to be determined

Further details of the new activities planned for 2025 are provided below:

Additional Grass Cutting

This funding will ensure that there are at least three grass cutting crews per district, which will help maintain the cutting programme and prevent delays.

Additional Weed Treatment

This funding will allow for a second countywide weed treatment in June or July, should growing conditions warrant it. Weeds have been a significant concern for some residents in 2024, and we are keen to prevent a recurrence next year.

Roadside Rangers

Members have already been informed about the range of tasks these new teams will undertake. The plan is to deploy eight two-person gangs for the entire year (with additional

resources for traffic management, as necessary). This equates to approximately 16,000 gang hours annually across the network. These gangs will be deployed throughout the County, and I have requested Officers to keep Divisional Members regularly updated. The process for requesting specific works is outlined in my email of 5 December 2024.

Extensive Flailing Programme

This programme will be carried out, where needed, countywide outside of the bird nesting season. It will help ensure that carriageways and footways are not overgrown, making these important assets more accessible to our residents.

Additional Highway Tree Works

Highway trees are a vital asset, and it is crucial that they are regularly inspected and any safety-related works are completed promptly. This additional funding will target identified defects and help maintain the safety of the network.

Contingency / Staffing/ To Be Determined

This portion of the funding will be used to cover staff resources needed to have manage the additional activity, and any remaining will be allocated during the year, based on feedback from Members, residents, and the actual costs incurred.

The resources outlined above are for use across the entire county and have not been split on a district-by-district basis. The exception is grass cutting and weed control which are priced on an individual district basis, with work allocated through our competitively tendered countryside framework contract.

These resources and associated works are in addition to those initially planned for 2025. An allocation of £3 million for 2024/25 was made late in the financial year, allowing for the commencement of the roadside ranger programme, the flailing programme, additional tree works, and the mobilisation of grass cutting contractors and weed control specialists to begin work in March. Without this additional funding, this would not have been possible. Weed control is important not just for the look of the streetscene but also it helps to protect our highway network from damage that weeds can cause. Therefore, in the first instance we would not look to remove roads from the programme and pass sole responsibility onto residents. However, if residents of an area are keen to assist, we would welcome this and have an established "Community Highways Volunteer" scheme (details can be found via the [link](#) here). This scheme does include weed removal, where it is safe for volunteers to do so. Should a volunteering scheme prove to be successful and maintain momentum, we can consider removing individual footways / roads from weed spraying on a case by case basis.

Matt Furniss

Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth

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