

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (EPSOM & EWELL)

DATE:

SUBJECT: PETITION – Meadow Walk
DIVISION: Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington



PETITION DETAILS:

A petition has been received, signed by 115 residents with the following concerns and questions regarding Meadow Walk and Highfield Drive, Ewell.

1. The surface conditions the footways and carriageways in Meadow Walk are in a dangerous condition, some residents do not feel safe when using the footway.
2. The sunken section in the carriageway in Highfield Drive, has been present for a long time. When is this going to be repaired?
3. The workmen who cut the grass verges always do a poor job, leaving grass all over the road and blocking the drains
4. The gutters are full of weeds, due to the road not being swept regularly

Within the covering letter attached to the petition the following points of concern were also raised;

- i) General concerns for safety, due to Surrey County Council's Part Night Street Lighting Scheme
- ii) Why was Highfield Drive's Footway resurfaced and not Meadow Walk
- iii) Breakdown on where Council Tax money is spent

Lead petitioner: Mrs P Irestone

OFFICER COMMENT:

1) SURFACE CONDITIONS OF MEADOW WALK

Carriageway

Meadow Walk does not currently feature on any programme of works for resurfacing. Road maintenance works (schemes) are prioritised using a number of criteria including traffic volumes, types of usage, condition of the roads (e.g. broken paving slabs, tree/weed damage, potholes, issues with kerbs) and claims. These priorities are based upon inspections, surveys, known defects, customer complaints and claims and accident data.

All schemes are held on rolling programmes and an annual priority list is created

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from this. This rating system ensures that the available funding is used on the roads and pavements that are in greatest need of treatment in a fair and consistent manner across the county.

Surrey County Council does not repair all highway defects as a matter of routine, but only those that are large enough to be considered Safety Defects. It is the depth of a defect, rather than its area that determine whether it is considered to be a Safety Defect. Any defect less than 40mm deep on the road, and 20mm on the pavement is not considered to be a Safety Defect, regardless of the area of the defect.

Further information on the Highways Safety Defect Matrix & Inspection Regime can be found here;

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roads-and-transport-policies-plans-and-consultations/roads-and-transport-policies-and-plans/highway-safety-inspections-standards-and-procedures>

In a road like Meadow Walk with a concrete structure and thin (less than 40mm) asphalt overlay, patches of missing overlay would generally never be considered to be Safety Defects. This does not mean that the road is in good condition, just because it has no safety defects, only that it is not considered unsafe. A road may be in terrible condition, with extensive crazing and lesser defects, but still be considered safe.

Footway

There is a planned programme of resurfacing of some footways across the county, however, due to the financial constraints, we are under, Surrey County Council is focusing the limited resources on those footpaths judged to be in the worst condition but which are also in areas of highest footfall, for example near shops, schools and hospitals. Unfortunately, Meadow Walk does not meet these criteria when compared with other locations and is not on the County programme for resurfacing.

However, safety defects will be repaired and if you are aware of any particular safety issues please report them using the Surrey County Council reporting page here;

<https://www9.surreycc.gov.uk/highwayproblem/LocateProblem.aspx?GISDefectTypeId=8>

Please use the link below to Surrey County Council's Asset Strategy webpage which explains the prioritisation process and the necessary criteria required to be met for roads and pavements.

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/road-maintenance-and-cleaning/maintaining-our-roads-and-pavements/how-we-prioritise-road-maintenance>

The Local Committee may choose to allocate funding to resurface Meadow Walk in a future Financial Year, but is advised to weigh up the relative priority of such a scheme compared to the other demands on the Local Committee's budgets.

Surrey Highways welcome reports from residents and road users of potential safety defects, as this helps to keep the network safe.

In response to this petition the Highways Team have undertaken an ad hoc inspection of the carriageway and footways in Meadow Walk for any safety defects.

In the meantime, Surrey Highways will continue to keep Meadow Walk in a safe condition through their regular programme of Highway Inspections and repair of safety defects, including responding to issues raised by residents and road users.

2) HIGHFIELD DRIVE

The defect present on Highfield Drive appears to have been caused some time ago due to the edge of the concrete slab breaking, this has created a depression drop. Under the county's prioritisation regime this is considered to be a defect which is uneven and undesirable, and not an immediate danger to the highway user.

The site has been closely monitored by the local officers since Surrey Highways became aware of this defect.

Advisory signs were placed on site to advise drivers that the carriageway was uneven and to drive accordingly.

This financial year the Local Committee has allocated £12,000 to contribute towards repairs for this location. Without this funding the proposed repairs would still likely not be going ahead as the condition remains as it has for a number of years.

Contractors started the repair works on 1 November 2017. The work is scheduled to be completed by the 17 November 2017.

3) GRASS CUTTING

The agency agreement between Surrey County Council and Epsom Borough Council states that the grass should be cut and loose cuttings blown back onto the grass verge. Street furniture, such as road signs should then be strimmed round to remove the long grass. Hence you will often see a team of three working together. The grass should not be blown onto the road, unless a road sweeper is on site at the same time to pick up the arising's. Epsom & Ewell are responsible for the grass cutting contractor, as well as road sweeping.

Estimates were carried out last year into the cost of collecting the arising's, rather than allowing them to mulch back into the grass verge as we do currently. This was estimated to be nearly 7 times the current rate.

The extra cost is attributed to the following factors;

- investment in additional specialist mowing equipment
- increased staff as our contractor estimated that it could take up to 6 times as long to complete 1 cut so you could require 3 times the volume of staff in order to complete the works in the same time frame
- Increased cost for transporting the material to a suitable tipping site (which will need to be located as green waste sites are limited in Surrey for commercial waste).
- The extra cost incurred in disposing the waste

It is not just the cost, but also the environmental factors to consider. When you cut the grass regularly it breaks down and replenishes the soil but if you were to remove the arising's you would effectively be removing the goodness from the site and this may lead to problems with the quality & establishment of the grass in the future and may lead to the establishment of weeds which are more resilient.

Surrey County Council do not have the budget available to spend significant more money on grass cutting, but in response to this petition, Surrey Highways have requested that Epsom & Ewell verify that their contractors are fulfilling the specification of removing all grass arising's from the footway and carriageway during their cutting process.

4) STREET CLEANING

Street Cleaning is the responsibility of Epsom and Ewell Local Borough, not SCC. Any resident can make a request for an ad hoc street clean via their website here;

<http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/street-cleansing>

RESPONSES TO ISSUES RAISED WITHIN THE COVERING LETTER

i) Part night street lighting

Among many initiatives, the Council identified the opportunity to save electricity and thereby benefit from both the financial and carbon savings by switching off some street lights for some of the night.

Many Highway Authorities are now already using part night lighting in some roads or are in the process of implementing it. Surrey County Council officers researched current practices by other authorities to determine its approach.

In October 2016, the Council's Cabinet approved the implementation of part night lighting which was on the basis of risk assessments for each road. It was and is recognised that this could have an impact on residents in respect of road safety and crime and so the risk assessment was designed to take this into account.

For example, part night lighting was limited to non-strategic routes and delayed until midnight with lights staying off until 0500. By limiting part night lighting to non-strategic routes and switching lights off when the number of people using the county's roads are significantly fewer than at other times of the day, the above risks are mitigated as much as possible.

On roads where it was proposed to implement part night lighting, road by road risk assessments were carried out and if any of the Avoidance Criteria were present those roads were excluded. All roads that "passed" the risk assessment were then considered by the Council's Road Safety Team and Surrey Police to evaluate any concerns where part night lighting might have an adverse effect on either road safety or crime and if this was the case the roads were excluded.

Figures from Surrey Police shows that there although there has been a rise in the total level of crime, the proportion of crime committed during the hours of darkness (between midnight to 5am) is no greater than it was before the streetlights were turned off. (Annex A)

The Council has also implemented a decision review process which allows residents to challenge the decision either to exclude or include a road in part night lighting. It should be noted that having carried out the above risk assessments, decisions will normally only be reversed where something has been missed or new information has been provided which impacts the risk assessment.

To make a request for a decision review please use the following link;

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/road-maintenance-and-cleaning/street-lights-traffic-signals-and-signs/part-night-street-lighting/reviews-process-for-part-night-lighting>

Whilst there are residents who do not support this programme, there are many in favour of it for differing reasons. As part of the Cabinet paper, 842 people responded to the consultation with over 75% in favour of switching off some lights. Whilst this number of responses is a small proportion of the population of Surrey, it is reflective of the anecdotal feedback in the media, including social media, both prior to and since implementation.

ii) Why was Highfield Drive's footway resurfaced and not Meadow Walk

Before 2016/2017 individual County Councillors in Epsom and Ewell had an allocation of (about) £30k each year which they could allocate to individual highway projects and repairs. Part of the footway in Highfield Drive was surfaced using this funding. However with the cut to local funding of 80% in 2016/2017, individual County Councillors are currently not being allocated these Divisional funding streams. Should the future Committee budgets increase, it is expected that County Councillors will be able to consider funding local maintenance schemes in a similar way to previous years.

iii) Breakdown of where Council Tax money is spent

Council Tax is shared between Surrey County Council, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and Surrey Police. Council Tax is only part of the income received by Surrey County Council. The other major income contribution has been a per capita grant from central government. Last year Surrey County Council experienced an unexpected £47million reduction in this Government grant.

This reduction in funding has come at a time when Surrey is facing significant pressures including: the cost of caring for older people (the number of people in Surrey aged 65 and over is increasing – adding more than £20m per year to the cost of adult social care), the cost of providing more than 11,000 additional school places over the next five years, and increasing demand for other services. These are real costs which have a real impact on a range of other services.

Approximately 4% - 5% of the County Council's revenue is spent through the Highways and Transport Service. The County Council's major expenditure is within our social care business, where many of the services we provide are statutory obligations.

Surrey County Council is facing a significant challenge of providing services to its residents during times of reducing budget and increased demand for social care. In light of these challenging times, we have had to review many of our processes to

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ensure that we are making the best possible use of the funding and resources that we do have at our disposal. This is intended to ensure that the Surrey tax payer receives the best value for money.

There is information on how your Council Tax is spent on our website here;

https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/115629/SCC-Council-Tax-leaflet-2017-18.pdf.

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/your-council/council-tax-and-finance>

RECOMMENDATION

The Local Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note the petition and officer response.

Contact Officer:

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