

CABINET MEMBER OF THE MONTH - 27 JUNE 2023

NAME: Kevin Deanus, Cabinet Member & Jordan Beech, Deputy Cabinet Member
PORTFOLIO: Highways & Community Resilience

Grass cutting

Adhering to the grass cutting programme has been an issue following the transfer from District & Boroughs and there are two main reasons for this:

- 1) We have new contractors who are learning their areas and as they do so, they are getting additional insight into the time it will take them to cut each area and that then impacts the next cuts. It has become evident that previously published dates may have been unrealistic. This is entirely to be expected at the start of a new contract.
- 2) Wet weather - we had a very wet few weeks and cutting the grass whilst raining or when the grass is wet is not advisable due to risk of damaging the blades, grass clippings clumping, tearing the grass at the root and impacting the quality of the cut. This means we have to return to the areas missed once they dry out which has a knock-on impact to the ongoing programme.

To help combat the increase in enquiries and complaints, we have now updated the programme to show previous cuts and next cut, stated when the programme was last updated and how often we will endeavour to update it going forward. We have also updated our website to make it clearer why cutting cannot be done when the grass is wet and how this could impact the programme.

The decrease (in some areas) to 4 urban and 2 rural cuts a year has also generated further enquiries with concerns regarding tics, fleas, dog mess and sightline issues. To help alleviate the number of these types of enquiries we have bolstered the information on our website which provides additional details about the impact of longer grass.

As mentioned previously, the start of a contract always has teething issues and we have been reactively addressing the issues raised to date. We are now evolving into a more pro-active approach where we will have daily whereabouts information from contractors, a more regularly updated programme and enhanced information on our website.

The task and finish groups are also looking into other operational suggestions such as increasing the number of cuts, road sweepers to keep grass out of drains and gullies, collecting grass cuttings and additional signage for blue heart verges and additional resource to respond to enquiries. Updates will be given on these in due course.

Parking enforcement

The new parking enforcement service has now been running for just over two months. Here are the highlights at the beginning of June:

- Twelve Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) transferred from the D&B teams to NSL under TUPE regulations on the 01 April which was a lower number than hoped. During the first week of April staff underwent training and familiarisation with new

areas, equipment and IT systems etc. As of the first week of June, there were approximately 40 NSL CEOs working on our Surrey contract following an extensive recruitment drive. Other important appointments at NSL include supervisors and base managers as well as a contract analyst who will concentrate on reporting enforcement data and identifying/targeting enforcement activity where needed as well as other improvements to the service.

- Training and recruitment are ongoing, NSL have recently met ex-military groups and will be attending recruitment fairs. Typically one or two new CEO appointments being made each week.
- At the beginning of April two D&B staff transferred to our new SCC enforcement team under TUPE regulations. The Parking Enforcement Team Leader role has been appointed to an experienced applicant who starts in July. Three Parking Liaison Officers will start late June and will be able to respond to enquiries and help plan enforcement activities with NSL.
- During April there were 4,154hrs hours of enforcement activity with 10,965 vehicle observations resulting in 3,423 Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) across the county.
- During May there were 22,458 vehicle observations resulting in 6,122 PCNs countywide.
- Enforcement patrols have been active weekdays, weekends and bank holidays, however during April it was generally not possible to deploy CEOs after 6pm due to the limited numbers and need to prioritise the busier daytime periods. Patrols have been extended to 7pm in the evenings by the end of May. It is planned to extend this to 8pm by the end of June as part of targeted enforcement and in areas where restrictions operate later into the evening.
- The resident parking permit application system is operational. There are 3 main ways to apply:
 1. Via our web pages www.surreycc.gov.uk/parking and creating a 'permit account'
 2. Over the phone by calling **0330 175 5930** and speaking to the permit team
 3. By email SCCpermits@nslservices.co.uk
- Verification documents can be uploaded, attached to an email or sent via the post to the NSL permit team. Average wait times for the phone line are now less than 2 minutes. There were longer wait times in the first two weeks of April and it seems many permit holders felt the need to call the number despite our messaging to the effect that they did not need to do so unless their permit was due for renewal. Calls per day reduced from 300 at the start of April to 100 at the end. There were also reports of missing addresses when using the online permit renewal system however these are now decreasing as corrections are made and address data checked.
- Traffic order amendments are being made in some areas of the county as part of the transition from paper to virtual permits. We have already decided to retain paper 'Carer' permits for (often more elderly) housebound residents who need regular visits from friends/family and health professionals. The associated statutory consultation process required for the changes is allowing us to identify any other areas where paper permits may need to be retained. This is only likely to be visitor permits in cases where residents are unable to access the internet.

- Parking enforcement problems can be reported via a dedicated email address that goes direct to NSL SurreyParkingEnforcement@nslservices.co.uk. This is also publicised on our website.
- By the third week of May around 60 schools were visited per week around the county by enforcement officers either in the am or pm. 29 vehicles were moved on and 4 PCNs issued.
- Delays have been experienced in fitting out our ANPR camera car with a long lead in time for some specialist components.

Activities for the June/July/August

- New SCC Enforcement Team members will join in June/July and recruitment at NSL will continue. This will help manage the service and improve the response we can provide to enquiries.
- A contract analyst has started at NSL who will be able to significantly improve the reporting capabilities and information available for the enforcement back-office system.
- The ANPR camera car will be delivered.
- In July we will send borough/district specific enforcement updates to county members with an offer to attend a parking task group for their area. This will be an opportunity to discuss local parking issues with the NSL/SCC Team such as patrol areas and school enforcement.

Potholes

Potholes have been a plague across the country since the beginning of the year. A combination of periods of very cold and very wet weather over the winter and spring, coupled with a hot summer last year has left many roads across the country in a poor state.

We appreciate how frustrating the increase in potholes is for our residents. We are fixing as many as we can, and as quickly as we can, but we understand some of our road conditions are poor at the moment which is making driving and cycling challenging in some locations.

We have increased our highways teams by 300% and they are working night and day to fix around 1,600 potholes and other defects every week. We are still receiving high numbers of reports of potholes and it is sometimes taking us longer than usual to make repairs. However, we are pleased to report that the situation is improving. The number of new reports of potholes are dropping and we are increasing how many are being fixed. We cannot be everywhere all at once, but please be assured if a pothole is reported, we will get to it, and we will fix it.

Our priority is to ensure the safety of the highway. We therefore sometimes need to put temporary repairs in place, purely as an interim measure. Sometimes we have to carry out a temporary repair initially which could be because the pothole is on a busy road and closing it at that time would cause significant traffic problems for road users, or because the ground is wet and not suitable for a permanent repair at that time. These temporary repairs will be

marked 'Temp'. We understand that temporary repairs can frustrate people, but our priority is always to make the road safe and we will always return to make a full repair.

Sometimes we also carry out larger patching repairs where we consider this to be the most suitable approach. We are also rolling out a “find and fix” approach with our pothole repair gangs where they will be able to fix potholes that meet our intervention criteria even if they have not been reported or inspected yet. We are programming over 50 emergency resurfacing schemes across the county which will resurface sections of roads that have deteriorated beyond where pothole repairs are possible.

The emergency surfacing programme will continue until the end of the summer. In addition to this we are also spending £70m on our Horizon programme which will see many more roads and pavements treated during the coming year.