

County Council Meeting – 8th February 2024**Question to Councillor David Williams
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport****By Councillor Afsar**

Question

It has become an all too common occurrence for our Highways Contractors Amey, to selectively fix a singular pothole while overlooking nearby ones, some of which are in equal or worse condition.

Considering the substantial disruption borne by the residents of Burton on Trent owing to recent concurrent roadworks, leading to considerable traffic snarls and commuter delays

Can the Cabinet Member for Highways please confirm that his much vaunted "whole place" approach to pothole repairs in a locality will actually be rolled out and when can we expect to see the benefits of such a policy.

Reply

Staffordshire county council has committed an extra £50m into local road maintenance over the next three years. Through this investment we will deliver an enhanced programme of capital maintenance schemes to replace sections of life-expired roads and carry out around 100 miles of pothole prevention surface treatments and 30,000 individual pothole repairs each year.

A 'whole place' approach is adopted when delivering our capital maintenance schemes. This means that other highway issues, such as drainage, barrier and signage repairs are also attended to at the same time.

Similarly, the extra investment is enabling larger repairs as part of our pothole hot-spot and pre-surface treatment patching programme. This means that it's not just the offending pothole that gets repaired, but also any surrounding area that has started to deteriorate and if left unchecked will later become a new pothole on its own.

Elsewhere, and in accordance with national codes of practice, individual pothole repairs are prioritised on a risk basis. Experienced county council highway inspectors identify and categorise each pothole defect, stipulating

its repair timescale and treatment type, which the scheduling team then group together for repair in the most efficient and effective way.

Complimenting this the dedicated £2m Member's pothole fund enables local Members to identify and prioritise particular local potholes for more urgent attention.

However, despite all these efforts there can still be many reasons why some pothole repairs are completed one-day and other nearby potholes have to left until a future return visit. These include things like:

- A number of emergencies, category 1 and category 2 defects in the local area are approaching the end of their statutory repair timescale and must be given priority.
- Different types of pothole repair treatment or traffic management is required – this is more common when adjacent pothole defects are located on or close to road junctions.
- The capacity of the attending repair crew has been reached e.g. all repair material has been used or spoil collected from earlier repairs needs tipping; and
- Changing weather conditions puts a halt to pothole repairs midway through the day.

The recent rainfall and freezing temperatures has seen a huge rise in high risk pothole defects this winter. Even with all our extra investment resources are finite and crews are pulling out all the stops to undertake holding repairs to the worst and most dangerous to help keep our roads as safe as possible. The main programme of road maintenance will then start in the spring when weather conditions are more favourable to creating long-lasting repairs.

