



TECHNICAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

REPORT ON THE PANEL'S SCRUTINY OF THE COUNCIL'S HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE POLICIES

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following Terms of Reference were approved by the Panel at its meeting held on 5th November 2001 (Minute 31 refers):-

"To consider the Council's policies for the maintenance of highways (carriageways and footways)".

2. GOVERNMENT'S VIEW ON THE NATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

Andrew Smith, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has made the following comments during the 2000 Spending Review, which has been included within the report for Members' information.

"To get the best value out of this new investment, and to make best use of existing assets, departments need clear long-term plans..."

"For too long short-term funding pressures have meant the longer-term benefits of a sound infrastructure have been neglected. For too long an annual 'patch and mend' mentality has existed in place of a coherent strategy for investment over the long term to deliver the shape and scope of public infrastructure required for effective public service delivery".

3. MEMBERS OF THE PANEL

Councillor P Robinson (Chair), Councillor M Wardle (Deputy Chair), Councillors Doubleday, Downs, Meredith, Roberts, Smith and S Quinn.

4. METHOD OF REVIEW

4.1 The Panel interviewed the following people for the purposes indicated:-

4.2 Steve Jackson (District Assembly Inspector);
Lynda Wimpenny (Quality Audit Inspector),
Paul Arundale (Clerk of Works);
Dennis Smith (Risk Management Inspector)

- to ascertain the current situation, regarding the borough's highways, what problems are experienced and how they can be rectified.

- 4.3 Steve Wilson (Section Engineer – Operations Division); David Browne (Assistant Engineer, Maintenance Management); Ken Crimes (Risk Management Consultant, Borough Treasurers Division); Lesley Richards, (Risk Management Officer, Engineers); Dave Walker (Risk Assessment Inspector, Engineers).
- who provided information on the current state of the highways in Tameside, including both carriageways and footways, the insurance claims and their implications on the Council's budget, and ways in which the Council's budgets regarding highways maintenance could be better distributed.
- 4.4 The Panel received a presentation from Mr Richard Abell MSc., Statistics and Operational Research, BSc (Hons) Physics, the Senior Research Scientist of the Transport and Road Research Laboratory, who outlined the UKPMS system, the concept of whole life costing and varying types of road surface. Information was also provided about the recycling of material.
- 4.5 The Panel received a presentation from Dr Andrew C Collop BEng PhD CEng MIMechE MIHT MIAT a Senior Lecturer from Nottingham University School of Civil Engineering. Dr Collop provided information on the main functions and design principles of highways, associated problems including cracking, bad drainage and symptoms, and solutions/remedies to such problems.
- 4.6 The Panel interviewed the following representatives from the Utility organisations, to obtain information about their practices and co-ordination with the Council's engineers with regard to their effect on road surfaces:-
- Mr Paul Chesworth – TRANSCO - Gas
 Mr Bryn Griffiths – TRANSCO – Gas
 Mr Tony McLoughlin – Enterprise plc – Water/British Telecoms
- 4.7 The Panel interviewed the following Town Managers to clarify their role in the maintenance of highways and budget allocation:-
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|--------------------|---|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mr Colin Fielding | – | General Manager, Ashton-Under-Lyne; |
| Mr Rick Malone | – | Town Manager, Stalybridge and Dukinfield; |
| Mr Stuart Mollison | – | Town Manager, Denton and Audenshaw; |
| Mr Mike Round | – | Town Manager, Hyde, Longdendale and Hattersley; |
| Mr Robert Wheeler | – | Town Manager, Droylsden, Mossley and Stalybridge North East. |
- 4.8 The Panel interviewed Councillor Alan Whitehead, the Cabinet Deputy (Technical Services) and Mr Dennis Smalley, Head of Engineering to discuss the Council's policies and resource allocation relating to highway maintenance.
- 4.9 Observations were invited from the Emergency Services and Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive. Comments received are detailed in the correspondence contained in the Appendix to this report.
- 5. OBSERVATIONS RELATING TO THE INTERVIEW WITH THE HIGHWAYS INSPECTORS**
- 5.1 The Panel was informed that the Council has an excellent working relationship with the utilities companies.
- 5.2 It was reported that Tameside has got a good record for ensuring that reinstatement repairs undertaken by the utility companies, following works carried out by their organisations, are satisfactorily completed.

- 5.3 Tameside is also recognised as being a proactive local authority, in ensuring that the majority of reinstatement work is carried out to an acceptable standard, whilst maintaining excellent relations with the utility companies.
- 5.4 It was suggested that the quality of some highways maintenance work could be compromised by the incentive scheme used by the external contractors employed by the Council to undertake the work. Jobs are timed, and the times allocated to each job are regularly reduced. There was concern expressed that as a result of this, the quality of work undertaken might be adversely affected.
- 5.5 The Panel noted that current budgets are insufficient to bring existing road networks up to appropriate standards, and concerns were expressed on this matter.
- 5.6 Problems are encountered regarding vehicles parking on, and driving over flagged footpaths and grass verges. The costs relating to the reinstatement works required can often be extremely high and Members enquired about alternative surfaces, for example tarmac or concrete. However, these are often deemed to be too expensive for the current budget provision, unless they are included within pre-planned reconstruction work.
- 5.7 It was noted that accurate "Maintenance Policies", which provide detailed information on the total structure of highways, are not yet fully completed. Although there is still local knowledge in maintenance teams, records do not exist on when old roads were first constructed and this would be extremely beneficial in automatically highlighting carriageways, which are coming to the end of their design life.
- 5.8 The Council does not currently have sufficient funding available to pay for many of the remedial works required when the carriageways are in need of optimum maintenance treatment.
- 5.9 The Inspectors reported that there is wastage of existing materials, removed when work was undertaken which could be reclaimed and reused for other purposes. In particular, flags could be utilised for other projects, instead of being thrown away.

The Head of Engineering has however, indicated that all waste flagging is re sold or sent for crushing for recycling to an amount of 7000 tons per year.

- 5.10 There were reuse problems however, associated with differing measurements (metric/imperial), storage and cost.
- 5.11 There were differences in standards and types of inspection between District Assembly Inspectors although there had recently been some rationalisation.

6. OBSERVATIONS RELATING TO THE INTERVIEW WITH THE RISK MANAGEMENT INSPECTORS

- 6.1 The Panel was informed that the Council's Winter Gritting Policy is far more comprehensive than the legal requirement, and covers all main roads and bus routes. Additionally, during severe weather it also covers through routes on estate roads and priority pedestrian areas.
- 6.2 The effects of salt on the highways causes deterioration on the structure of roads and bridges, however, alternatives to salt are extremely expensive.

- 6.3 A and B roads are priority gritting groups, C routes are not generally on the priority plans, however they are gritted if they are used regularly. Machine gritting does not usually occur on minor side avenues or streets, unless there is continuous severe weather. (See report on Winter Gritting published by this Scrutiny Panel in March 2000).
- 6.4 There seemed to be increasing evidence of poor standards of surfacing work in some town centres, which has resulted in regular site inspections being undertaken in order to alleviate problems and ensure these areas are maintained on a regular basis.
- 6.5 Insurance claims were increasing due to:-
 - (i) Increased public/customer awareness.
 - (ii) Increased advertising, especially on television, offering no win no fee litigation.
 - (iii) Increased marketing by legal firms including door to door calling, etc.
- 6.6 The Council undertakes a full cyclical inspection programme in order to ensure that reasonable steps have been taken to avoid accidents and thus substantiate evidence against any fraudulent negligence claims, which may be submitted.
- 6.7 The Council does have a very thorough risk management's investigations team, who are able to reject more than 50 per cent of unreasonable accident claims, at source ie. Prior to receipt by Zurich Municipal, the Council's claims handler.
- 6.8 Due to the high excesses required by the Council's Insurance company to be paid by the Council, ie: up to £150,000, per claim, the Council effectively self-insures.

For details see Figures 1 and 2 over:-

Figure 1

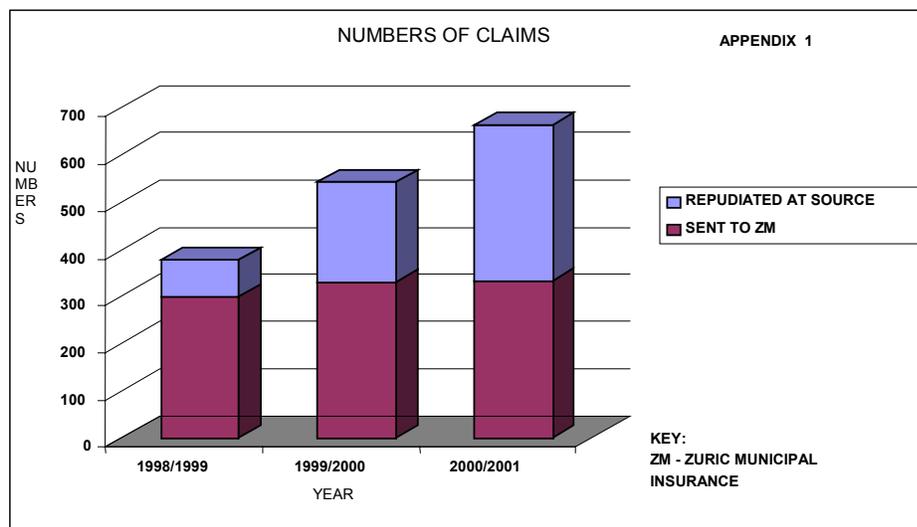
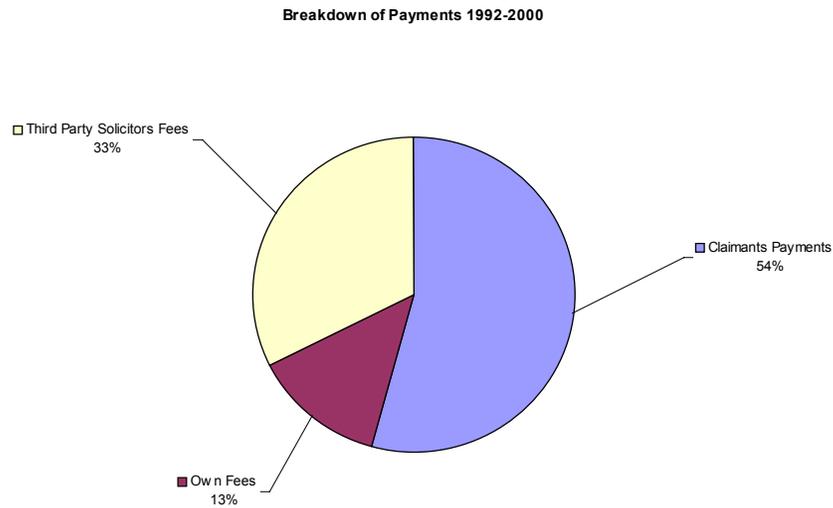


Figure 2



- 6.9 Problems have recently been encountered with particular paving stones known as “E70’s”. These paving stones have not stabilised adequately due to action of mechanical sweepers and drainage resulting in the loss or movement of jointing/bedding sand. A “foam fix” method, although not aesthetically pleasing has provided a method of repair.
- 6.10 Disabled organisations have expressed concerns that the gradients for dropped kerbs are often too steep or dangerous for wheelchair users.
- 6.11 Concern has been expressed regarding the high cost to the Council, of bringing its network of pavements up to standard.
- 6.12 Currently the authority is spending £3.4 million per annum to maintain its road network in its current condition. The 1998 UKPMS pilot survey indicated that £5.6 million would be required to deal with the backlog maintenance for carriageways and footways for the Council’s unclassified roads.
- 6.13 Plans have been formulated for the next 3-5 years, of proposed highways maintenance requirements in the borough.

7. OBSERVATIONS RELATING TO THE INTERVIEW WITH MR RICHARD ABELL, CHIEF RESEARCH SCIENTIST (HIGHWAYS) FROM THE TRANSPORT AND ROAD RESEARCH LABORATORY

- 7.1 Mr Abell reported that the Transport and Road Research Laboratory was particularly involved in the management, lifecycle, maintenance requirements, timings and costs of maintaining roads and provided consultancy experience in both developed and underdeveloped countries. Much emphasis was being made on the development of road networks in the next ten years.

- 7.2 The Transport Research Foundation was a government office until 1996, when it became privatised and was registered as a Scientific Research Organisation.
- 7.3 It has recently established an airport branch and also looks at the bus and train network.
- 7.4 Safety is a very important aspect of research.
- 7.5 Much of the work at the Laboratory is currently centred around a Ten Year Transport Plan which, will have a major impact on the transport network. In addition, a Code of Practice has been established which is also intended to have a major impact, and large incentives are being made to improve Sustainable Development. Recycling and waste management will also have a major impact on the transport network.
- 7.6 The government works within anticipated traffic flows in relation to width and standards of the main roads network. This includes single carriageways and all types of roads. However, forecasts on all roads are unreliable.
- 7.7 Systems are being introduced where contractors undertaking work on roads have to undertake work within a specified time to ensure “reliable predicted journey time” are available for all road network users.
- 7.8 Compared to European countries, the British roads network is extremely confined. For example, when work is undertaken on roads in Europe, it is not unusual for up to 20 miles of network to be closed during maintenance. In Britain, it is the government’s intention to keep traffic moving, and therefore the use of “cones” is far more widely used.
- 7.9 There is a standard European Design Method for maintaining and building road networks, however, each country usually adopts its own methods.
- 7.10 The main cause of cracked roads is the total “axle weight” of large vehicles bearing their loads on the road. The “gross vehicle weight”, is considered a major reason for damage to bridges.
- 7.11 The maximum axle road limit and the gross vehicle weight specifications are not the same in all European countries, and many countries allow heavier vehicles to use their road networks, than is allowed in the UK. British vehicles are therefore built with a lighter weight specification than some vehicles from other European countries. The UK however, does not prevent European vehicles, with heavier weights than British vehicles, to use its road networks, because some European countries have lighter weight restrictions than those in the UK and they still allow British vehicles to use their road networks.
- 7.12 The Ten Year Plan covers improvement plans for the deterioration of strategic main and local roads.
- 8. OBSERVATIONS RELATING TO THE INTERVIEW WITH MR ANDREW COLLOP, SENIOR LECTURER FROM NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF CIVIL ENGINEERING**
- 8.1 The main problem associated with road surfaces is inadequate drainage.

- 8.2 Cracking of roads, which is load associated, is problematic particularly for Local Authority roads because they are not as dense as Highways Agency roads.
- 8.3 Rutting of road surfacing is a particular problem for Local Authority roads because traffic usually travels at lower speeds than on Highways Agency networks and therefore causes indents in the road surface.
- 8.4 Gully and chamber tops are areas of concern because their structures under the road surface are often unsuitable to withstand the weight of regular traffic. The ironworks, are often very old and rusty and are located just under the surface, sub-surface support for ironwork was rigid in comparison with the flexible of the road surface. This causes cracking and separation.
- 8.5 Water ingress into potholes and surface cracking causes many problems with Local Authority roads because maintenance repairs are often inadequate, and persistent leakages spread beneath the road and subsequently damage the structural integrity, including the surfaces.
- 8.6 Local Authorities have their own design guides, which are based on the Highways Agency design guides.
- 8.7 Roads in the United Kingdom has some of the safest surfaces in Europe regarding skid resistance.
- 8.8 The key to the most cost effective maintenance management is appropriate assessment:-
- (i) Routine Structural Assessment
 - High speed road monitor;
 - Visual conditions survey;
 - Deflectograph survey.
 - (ii) Detailed Structural Assessment
 - Coring, test pits etc;
 - Falling weight deflectometer;
 - Ground penetrating radar.
- 8.9 If poor quality materials are used for patching work, inadequate results will be experienced, and substandard surfaces will not withstand the weight of regular traffic.
- 8.10 It was felt that any excavation in a road would inevitably weaken it and shorten its design life.

**9. OBSERVATIONS RELATING TO THE INTERVIEW
WITH THE UTILITIES REPRESENTATIVES -
MR TONY MCLOUGHLIN – ENTERPRISE PLC
MR PAUL CHESWORTH – TRANSCO
MR BRYN GRIFFITHS – TRANSCO**

TRANSCO

- 9.1 The New Roads and Street Works Act is proactive in ensuring all works undertaken by the Utilities are adequately re-instated.
- 9.2 Transco has a dedicated Reinstatement Section, whereupon contractors produce reports on the work that has been undertaken, in order to ensure a thorough job has taken place.

- 9.3 Contractors do not get paid if the work undertaken is not of a good standard.
- 9.4 Transco in Tameside, uses contractors from John Kennedy, and less than 1% of defects are reported from the total works undertaken.
- 9.5 Officers from Transco “walk the job” prior to each job being designated completed to ensure all work is undertaken to a high standard.
- 9.6 Some highway openings, which are unfilled for long periods of time are monitored on a daily basis, however, sometimes higher priority jobs result in other outstanding jobs being incomplete for longer periods of time than originally anticipated.
- 9.7 Transco is currently undertaking a national programme of work to remove all cast iron pipeworks under road networks within the next 25 years.
- 9.8 All work carried out by Transco and its contractors, must comply with the standards specified by the government.
- 9.9 Existing road surfaces determine the type of patch up and reinstatement work required. Sometimes however, specialist contractors have to be consulted thus resulting in an extremely expensive task, eg. the replacement of specialist surfaces.

ENTERPRISE PLC

- 9.10 Enterprise plc (the contractor for United Utilities and BT) has experienced failures on materials, however, a Working Group has been established which has suggested improvements. Self auditing is also taking place.
- 9.11 All holes which have been left open for work to be undertaken should be monitored on a regular basis, however, human errors do sometimes occur and openings can be forgotten and left open for long periods of time. Enterprise plc, are aware of this problem, and are looking at ways to improve their monitoring systems. One way in which this is being addressed is the employment of independent inspectors, who are more rigorous than their own staff.
- 9.12 All work is carried out in accordance with the submitted specifications, however, problems have been encountered regarding poor workmanship, and this matter is currently being addressed.
- 9.13 Problems have also been encountered with some suppliers providing substandard materials for work, which is being undertaken. This is now monitored and Enterprise plc was taken measures to ensure appropriate quality is maintained.
- 9.14 Every site should have an identification board stating that the work is being carried out by a particular organisation, together with contact details in case of emergencies.

10. OBSERVATIONS RELATING TO THE INTERVIEW WITH THE TOWN MANAGERS

- 10.1 Devolved budgets to the District Assemblies have been particularly useful because works have been undertaken following discussions and liaison with the local ward members and the local residents. On many occasions the priority of jobs has been made on this basis.

- 10.2 In addition, response times relating to urgent works have been quicker, and there has been a greater customer focus, at local level, to ascertain and ensure the priorities of local people are carried out.
- 10.3 Generally, highway maintenance is prioritised on the state of streets, surfaces and footpaths, following examination by the Engineers and the Street Inspectors. However, other pressures for works to be carried out on particular highways not identified as a priority in engineering terms, could have a negative effect on the borough's highways.
- 10.4 The Council is represented at quarterly co-ordination meetings with the utilities organisations, and good professional relationships have been established.
- 10.5 Town Wardens and Street Inspectors play a major role in the reporting of highway problems. Work is then co-ordinated and work undertaken.
- 10.6 Problems are encountered in the towns managing vehicles, which are parked on footpaths. Unfortunately, this happens on such a large scale, that although it is illegal to obstruct a footpath, it is impossible for the police to manage. The introduction of the "decriminalisation of parking", is an initiative which will place some control with the local authority.
- 10.7 A recent Homezone Scheme has been secured in an area within Ashton, which will designate pedestrianisation zones. This scheme is a government pilot and will be considered at other locations in the borough.
- 10.8 Planned highways maintenance is undertaken following discussions with the Engineering Division, and the elected members, who will have discussed issues on this matter with their constituents.
- 10.9 The Council is currently working with New Charter Housing and housing developers to forge relationships and establish good working practises for maintaining highways. The Council would like to form a partnership with these organisations, as this would be considered to be beneficial for all parties concerned.

11. OBSERVATIONS RELATING TO THE INTERVIEW WITH THE CABINET DEPUTY (TECHNICAL SERVICES) AND THE HEAD OF ENGINEERING

- 11.1 The Government's ten year Transport Plan indicates that there will be an increased investment of £30 billion into local roads, bridges and street lighting over the next ten years of which Tameside has already obtained some funding for 2001/2002 and thereafter.
- 11.2 The Local Transport Plan budget for the Highways, Bridges and Structures Maintenance this year is £2 15 million, compared to last year's budget, which totalled £1.07 million.
- 11.3 Although this additional funding will help the situation, it is recognised that there is a still a gap between the funding required and the money available to bring the authority's highways up to a good standard. This is particularly relevant on unclassified urban roads, which are deteriorating every year.
- 11.4 Generally, the North West has fared much better than other Metropolitan Borough Council's and the London Borough's for next year's Local Transport Plan budget settlement.

- 11.5 The £2 million funding has been earmarked for undertaking works, which are on a scale, which the Council have previously been unable to address. There are also many problems associated with retaining walls and bridges, safety schemes and improvement schemes.
- 11.6 Previous reports have been made by independent experts stating that some of the Borough's roads are unsafe.
- 11.7 The Head of Engineering indicated however, that although there are a number of "unsound" roads in Tameside, any roads which are identified as being potentially dangerous are remedied immediately. The Council does undertake tests on structures of existing roads in order to ascertain any potential problems.
- 11.8 The in house contractor has been attempting to recycle all inert waste, for example old flags and kerbs, and a company based in Glossop is currently being used to crush the materials which can be reused as highway base and sub base layers.
- 11.9 The Engineers are aware of the need to recycle and in conjunction with Environmental Services are considering undertaking a pilot scheme using glass as an inert filler for tarmac.
- 11.10 In this regard, a number of Contractors have contacted the Engineers, with proposals that the Council provides some inert materials, and in return they will provide the Council with crushed materials at a much reduced cost. Negotiations are still continuing.
- 11.11 When large expensive specialist machinery is required for particular jobs, it is much more cost effective for the Engineers to hire specialist contractors to undertake the work. The Council has now built up a framework of reliable contractors who are able to undertake large specialist jobs.
- 11.12 There is currently a national skill shortage in all aspects of engineering work, and agency staff are sometimes employed on a temporary basis, to cover workload problems and skill gaps.
- 11.13 The Engineers would like to continue to employ apprentices in order to build up its own team of skilled staff, however the Council's human resources and financial policies need to be able to accommodate this.
- 11.14 The Council has established a Tree and Woodland Policy Document, which identifies trees, which could be a potential highway hazard, in order that they are urgently addressed. However, the management of trees is the responsibility of District Assemblies. The management of trees located on highways also requires an input from the Cabinet Deputy for Technical Services, together with the Head of Engineering to determine the prioritisation of urgent works.
- 11.15 There was concern expressed about the considerable damage caused to footways by the parking of vehicles, and although this is illegal, difficulties are experienced in enforcing the legislation. However, the "decriminalisation of parking" will give the local authority the powers to enforce parking restrictions.
- 11.16 The Council welcomes the concept of "Homezones" and would like to extend this initiative throughout the borough. Schemes of this nature, however, are relatively expensive.
- 11.17 The Council keeps records on the "residual life" of classified roads/principle roads, and are aware of the work required to maintain the roads in a safe and serviceable condition. The Council also keeps records on its rolling programme and within its asset register.

- 11.18 Unclassified roads, which include main bus routes and residential roads are particularly problematic regarding HGV and light goods vehicles. These roads were only built to withstand the weight of cars, but regular use by refuse collection and delivery vehicles is causing damage to their structures. All defects and repairs undertaken are recorded on the symology computer system. This system highlights any areas of concern.

- 11.19 Problems are experienced by the Council when trying to clean gullies due to parked cars. Although consideration has been given to alternative locations of gullies, none have been feasible. Initiatives involving leafleting and liaising with residents have not proved successful.

- 11.20 Current legislation imposes a “modern” reinstatement to all roads. The utility organisations therefore have to adhere to this law and

they are required to undertake any reinstatements to a proper legal specification.

- 11.21 Previous performance indicators have shown that Priority 1 and 2 repairs were not always completed within the target period of 14 days. The Panel was informed that this has now been addressed following the establishment of a continual improvement group, which had resulted in improved working methods and communications between the Engineers Division and the District Assemblies and empowering the manual repair gangs to undertake work if thought to be necessary.

- 11.22 The Council does not currently have any formal contractor partnerships. It is not cost efficient for contractors to undertake small jobs for the council, work requirements need to be maximised in order to be cost effective. This is currently achieved by employing local sub contractors working along side the Council’s in house contractor.

- 11.23 The Council constantly monitors workmanship and if this fails to meet the required standard the future use of that contractor is reconsidered.

- 11.24 The council uses the United Kingdom Pavement Management System (UKPMS) to assess the conditions of the roads but the views of elected members, district assemblies and residents are influential regarding highway maintenance priorities.

- 11.25 The UKPMS system also monitors the condition of footpaths and footways, which is very beneficial because accidents caused on footways cost the council more money than carriageway claims.

- 11.26 The Council is investing in training staff in new working methods. There are a number of staff within Engineers who understand the most up-to-date technology and are able to train other staff in this matter.

12. OBSERVATIONS SUBMITTED BY THE EMERGENCY SERVICES AND GREATER MANCHESTER PASSENGER TRANSPORT EXECUTIVE (GMPTE)

Observations from the above organisations are detailed on pages 22-27.

**13. OBSERVATIONS SUBMITTED BY THE BOROUGH
TREASURER ON THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF
THIS REPORT**

- 13.1 Revenue Budgets for 2002/2003 for highways maintenance are £3.4 million in Engineering Services and £1.4 million in District Assemblies. In addition there is a budget of £0.9 million for insurance premiums for highway claims in Engineering Services with capital provision for bridges and structures and highways structural maintenance of £1.5 million for 2002/2003.
- 13.2 Whilst it is not clear if the decriminalisation of parking will produce surpluses, any of which accrue will be available for highway improvements but not maintenance – (Road Traffic Act 1984). However, additional funds from decriminalisation could facilitate the introduction of whole life maintenance for highways by, for example, using surpluses to fund safety work with the budgets freed from that being considered for whole life maintenance. In addition, a medium to longer-term strategy needs to be devised which will identify proportions of the highways maintenance budget which can be utilised for whole life maintenance.
- 13.3 Alternative ways of relocating the highways budget between District Assemblies reflecting needs and priorities need to be examined and options put forward to determine the most appropriate way forward.
- 13.4 The panel needs to consider whether the split of responsibilities for highways between two different parts of the organisation is sensible and cost-effective way of managing highways. This same point also applies to having two different inspectorates.
- 13.5 The learning from pilot studies examining day to day repair of roads in Stalybridge/Dukinfield and Denton/Audenshaw (with a view to increasing responsiveness) needs to be applied across the whole of the borough.

14 CONCLUSIONS

General Condition of Roads in Tameside

- 14.1 It is generally accepted that the unsatisfactory condition of the unclassified road network is a **national** problem and Tameside is no exception. The MORI customer satisfaction survey indicates increasing dissatisfaction with the maintenance of the Borough's roads and footpaths. Considerable efforts are, however, being made to improve the standard of maintenance and co-ordination between the main participants in this service.
- 14.2 The Panel has been informed that there is a capital shortfall in the maintenance investment within the highway network of Tameside. Within the existing asset stock capital will be consumed over time through usage and age. Unless sufficient investment is committed, assets tend to fall in value over time and depreciation is the measure of fixed capital consumption.

Budgets

- 14.3 Street Inspectors and Quality Auditors raised problems associated with the way in which budgets were allocated to District Assemblies. Some District Assemblies might require additional funding to reflect the greater need for highway maintenance in their respective areas.

14.4 The current budgets are insufficient to bring existing road networks up to national recommended standards (see paragraph 6.12). It was welcomed, however, that the Engineers were actively looking to undertake improvements as a consequence of additional funding from the Government's ten year Transport Plan.

14.5 Officers expressed concerns that there were impressions that not all maintenance works were being undertaken in accordance with the engineering priority programmes. They were particularly concerned that some roads which required work as a priority were perhaps not being maintained, as they should, and roads of a less priority were receiving attention.

Communication

14.6 It appeared that there had been a number of communication problems between services within the Authority and other organisations, which if rectified, could eliminate duplication of work and lack of co-ordination.

14.7 The Panel were pleased to note however, that during the last four months, conscious efforts had been made to alleviate these problems.

Materials/Recycling

14.8 Large quantities of materials could be reused, for other projects.

14.9 The Panel are pleased to note that the Engineers have an arrangement with a company in Glossop, to whom they deliver their inert waste, and receive crushed materials at a reduced cost that will be recycled in highway sub base and base layers.

14.10 In addition, Members noted that discussions have been held with a number of contractors who are interested in the type of business detailed in the paragraph above, which would prove beneficial to the Council.

14.11 Major problems had previously been encountered with paving stones known as E70's including settlement and laying issues. These were considered to be extremely time consuming and remedial works had to be constantly undertaken to "fix" the flags.
It had been agreed that E70's would no longer be specified "automatically" for town centre and prestige locations. Good drainage beneath the flags is considered critical when laying surfaces. The Panel received overwhelming evidence that the use of brick sized block paving instead of E 70s would provide a far more satisfactory surface.

Storage

14.12 It has recognised that storage is limited for used and waste materials been. In addition, some used materials are discarded, this is because space and operative costs are at a premium with the Tame Street Depot and an alternative location is unavailable.

14.13 The Panel noted however, that if a detailed evaluation was undertaken, it might prove cost effective to sort out used materials, so that they might be recycled and used elsewhere. It was recognised that currently, space was unavailable to store used material prior to its recycling.

Workmanship

- 14.14 It was noted during a trial in Denton, that the use of one particular work gang in each District Assembly area, ensures a better quality of work, because variation in works do not apply.

New Developments

- 14.15 Members noted that the building of new residential or commercial developments, would have an impact on the “feeder” roads leading up to them, and would have to withstand an increased usage of traffic. It was not considered feasible for developers to be charged a tariff to upgrade these feeder roads and make them more sustainable when considering their planning applications. It was acknowledged however, that in order to pursue this otherwise logical course of action, a change in legislation would be required.
- 14.16 That the excellent work of the Risk Management Unit in reducing claims be acknowledged and the need for an annual inspection to be continued, be endorsed.

15. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 15.1 That the importance of the highway network, as a vital council asset, be recognised.
- 15.2 That the Engineers Service conduct an exercise to evaluate the highway network showing its current and future value, taking into account the existing and future levels of investment, adjusted against depreciation.
- 15.3 The Council considers the overall benefits of “Whole Life Costings”, rather than short term costings, when considering highway maintenance. Although temporary remedial/maintenance works may be cheaper in the short term, they are usually more expensive in the long term.
- 15.4 That a proportion of the Highways Maintenance Budget should be identified for whole life maintenance of highways, with this being gradually increased each year.
- 15.5 That the Council introduces a strategy for on-street parking, including the decriminalisation of parking. This will also address parking partially on pavements where appropriate, together with consequential pavement strengthening methods.
- 15.6 That consideration be given to the introduction of a more gradual gradient for new dropped crossings.
- 15.7 That Members of each District Assembly undertake an annual inspection visit looking at the road network within their wards.
- 15.8 Consideration is given on the ways the allocation of the highways budget is distributed between the District Assemblies, in accordance with the requirements of the individual towns in the Borough.
- 15.9 That the Council continues to explore the introduction of risk removal strategies, which will result in an enhanced amount of funding which can be used to maintain highways.

- 15.10 That alternative brick sized paving blocks be instead of E70 paving blocks.
- 15.11 That alternative methods of use be found to reuse reclaimed materials.
- 15.12 That the regular Co-ordination Meetings between the Council and utility organisations continue, in order to improve the existing excellent relations.
- 15.13 That regular liaison meetings regarding Programmes of Work, be held in order to discuss any forthcoming maintenance schemes, between the Council and utility organisations.
- 15.14 That the Annual Inspection of the Borough's bridges be fully undertaken to meet the legislative requirements.
- 15.15 That the Highway Maintenance Unit be involved in the planning of new housing an industrial estates and that the detrimental effects upon feeder roads be taken into consideration.
- 15.16 That consideration be given to current and anticipated future road use and maintenance when determining the level of road reconstruction.
- 15.17 That clear lines of communication and co-ordination be established between all units of the Engineering Service, and especially the Traffic and Highway Maintenance Section, together with any external contractors/organisations, in order to ensure thorough dialogue and liaison is engaged, when traffic calming measures and safety measures are planned and implemented.
- 15.18 That the Council examines the possible use of specialist companies, who deal specifically with new methods of patching, which will adequately repair roads, which are damaged.
- 15.19 That further possible recycling initiatives be considered and investigated, and the cost benefits of recycling, be analysed, with a view to developing partnerships.
- 15.20 That employees receive co-ordinated and adequate training on any new systems which may be introduced and that the same priority classification for reported highway remedial action be used for each District Assembly.
- 15.21 That a "Monitoring Policy" be established which is primarily used to monitor repetitive maintenance works, with a view to undertaking more effective alternative methods of improvements.
- 15.22 That consideration be given to the establishment of a boroughwide "Footways Policy" which highlights priority footways and the works required to maintain the most heavily used footways.
- 15.23 Consideration should be given to the establishment of partnerships with other local authorities, with a view to sharing specialist large or expensive equipment.
- 15.24 That the same work gangs be used for each District Assembly area, in order to ensure that continuity of standards of work, are maintained.
- 15.25 That whenever possible, works which are identified objectively as a priority, be completed first.
- 15.26 That the provision of security barriers surrounding holes in the roads/footways be monitored more carefully.

- 15.27 That District Assemblies are provided with information on how the Highways Maintenance Priorities list is established, together with the reasons for suggesting the priority of each scheme.
- 15.28 That the Tree Policy be better co-ordinated with greater involvement of the Arboricultural Unit in Highway design and improvement.
- 15.29 That the UKPMS system be used to measure the effectiveness of the District Assemblies Highway Maintenance Programme.
- 15.30 That the Engineering Service engage in negotiations with Registered Social Landlords with a view to the development of a programme of domestic dropped crossings to overcome the current damage and obstruction to footways. These negotiations to include funding arrangements.
- 15.31 That the completion of Priority 1 and 2 work be monitored to ensure that the perceived improvement is continued.
- 15.32 That the provision of Highway Maintenance Apprenticeships be reviewed and if financially viable recommenced.
- 15.33 That the Best Value Inspectors' report on the Highways Maintenance Best Value Review, together with the Improvement Plan, be considered by this Panel when it is published, in relation to this report.