Cheshire East Council

Well Managed Highway Consultation

Summary of results

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Introduction

Background and Methodology

From 2nd July to 27th August 2018 Cheshire East Council consulted on a number of draft policies in relation to Highway Safety Inspections and Winter Service activities. Respondents were provided with a summary of the five documents listed below:

- Draft Highways Inspection Policy
- Draft Code of Practice for Highways Safety Inspections
- Examples of Old and New Inspection Process
- Draft Winter and Adverse Weather Policy
- Winter and Adverse Weather Plan Consultation 2018

The consultation comprised of two sections the Highways Inspection Policy 2018 (section one), and Winter and Adverse Weather Policy (section two). Respondents were asked for feedback to help align the management of the highway network with risk and usage levels.

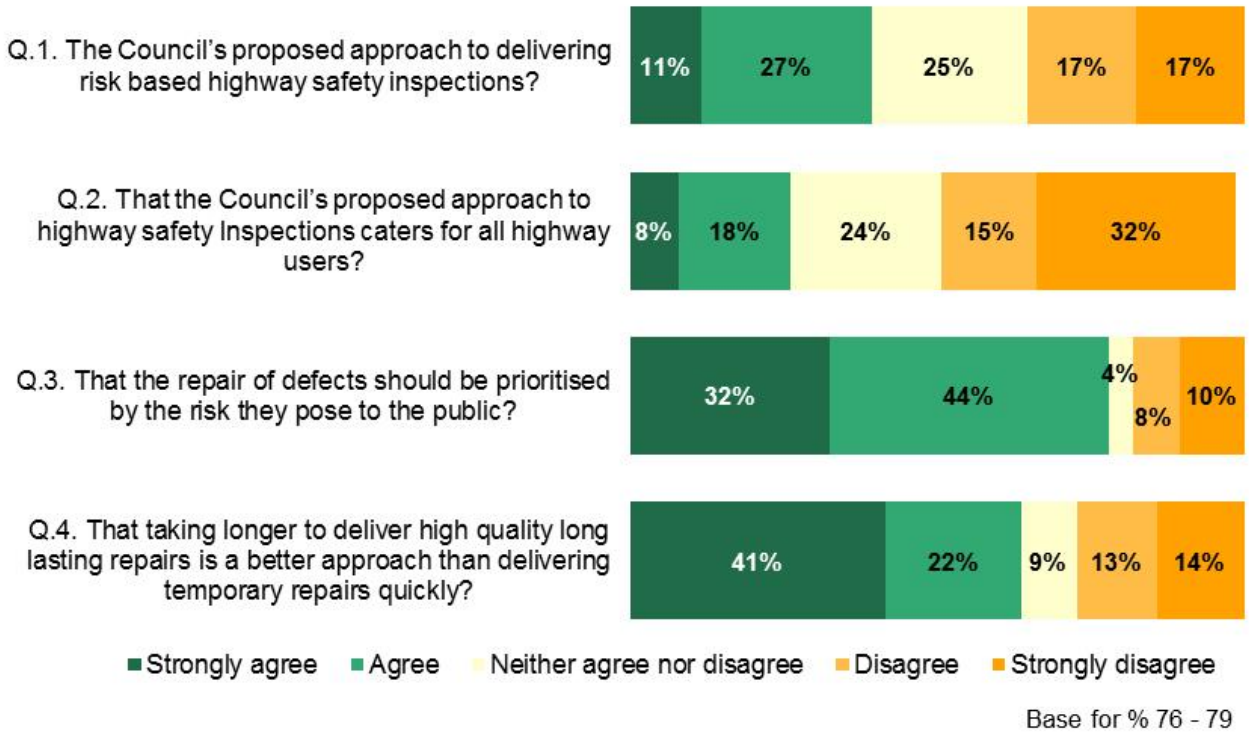
The Well Managed Highways consultation was advertised through the Cheshire East Council website and through Social Media. It was predominantly online, however, paper copies were made available at all Cheshire East Libraries and key contact centres.

In total, 93 respondents replied to the online/ paper questionnaire, this report is a summary of the findings from this questionnaire. In additional 3 e-mail responses were received, these can be seen in appendix two.

Part One: Highway Inspection Policy 2018

Section one considered the Highways Inspection Policy 2018. This document promotes the adoption of an integrated asset management approach to highway infrastructure based on local levels of service through risk-based assessment. It provides a number of key recommendations, particularly relating to the development of a network hierarchy as well as establishing the theme of a risk-based approach. Respondents were asked four questions regarding this policy as detailed by Figure 1.

Figure 1. To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following?



Respondents were generally split around the Council's proposed approach to delivering risk based highway safety inspections with 38% in agreement and 34% in disagreement. Respondents were more likely to disagree (47%) that the proposed approach to highway safety inspections caters for all highway users (26% agreement). Respondents were clearly in support that the repair of defects should be prioritised by the risk they pose to the public as 76% agreed. Respondents also agreed that taking longer to deliver high quality long lasting repairs was a preferred approach (63%).

Respondents were asked to explain their reasoning if they disagreed with any of the above. A total of 37 comments were left which for the purpose of analysis have been coded into three main themes of repair of defects (26 references), cater for all highways users (12 references) and consideration of local roads (9 references), these are detailed further on the next page.

Repair of defects (26 references): Respondents felt that the schedule of repair works and inspections needed to be undertaken more frequently and that a more proactive approach should be adopted (8 comments). They also felt that quick/temporary fixes should be carried out as soon as possible to prevent damage with a scheduled longer term fix (7 comments) although some respondents felt that these were a waste of money and that long term repairs should be the priority (3 comments). Respondents felt that more money should be spent on road maintenance, with no cuts or reductions in service (5 comments). Overall respondents felt that repairs needed to be completed as soon as possible and to a high standard (3 comments).

Cater for all Highway Users (12 references): Certain respondents indicated that they disagreed with aspects of the policy as they felt it did not cater for all highway users, of particular concern were cyclists and pedestrians. These respondents felt that not enough consideration was given to road defects that have a bigger impact on these groups than on vehicles, especially in regard to pothole depth (12 comments).

Consideration of Local roads (9 references): Respondents felt there was a lack of consideration given to local roads and the usage of these requesting that they required a greater level of inspection and maintenance as they were considered as vital local links (9 comments).

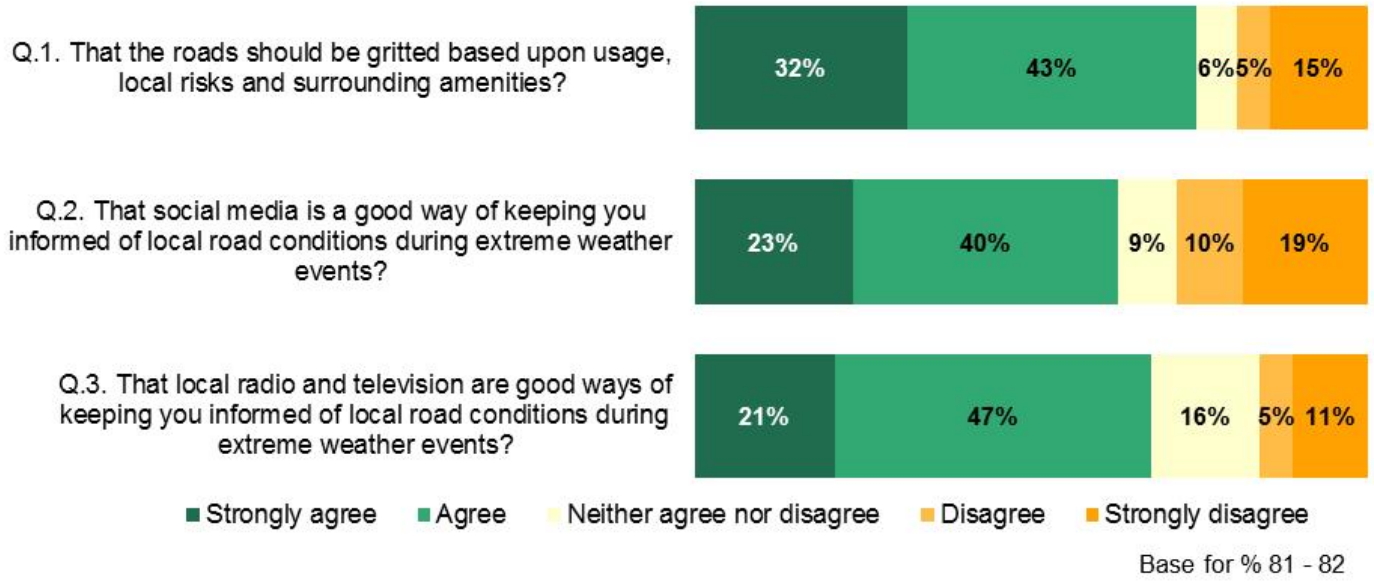
Respondents were also asked if there were any further considerations which should be taken into account with regard to the Code of Practice for Highway Safety Inspections. A total of 23 comments were received in response to this. Further considerations included the following:

- The need for more comprehensive repair work (repairing potholes in proximity), rolling maintenance and more patrols (8 comments)
- The poor quality repair work currently being undertaken, which needed improvement (5 comments) and the need for quick action to undertake repairs (2 comments)
- Concerns about specific areas such as Altrincham Road on approach to Styal school, should be given more priority (4 comments)
- Proper maintenance and inspection of cycle ways (2 comments) and more enforcement around roadside parking (1 comment)
- A consideration for alternative routes that are used to circumvent traffic and therefore have a high volume and use than would be expected (2 comments)

Part Two: Winter and Adverse Weather Policy

Section two considered the Winter and Adverse Weather Policy. This policy has evolved over a number of years to take into consideration best practice. The last revision of the policy was developed to take into consideration the guidance provided in Well Maintained Highways, published in 2005 by the UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG). Respondents were asked three questions regarding this policy as detailed by Figure 2.

Figure 2. To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following?



Respondents agreed that local roads should be gritted based upon usage, local risks and surrounding amenities (75%). More respondents agreed that local radio and television are good ways of keeping them informed about local road conditions (68%) than social media (63%).

Respondents were asked to explain their reasoning if they disagreed with any of the above. A total of 27 comments were left which for the purpose of analysis have been coded into three main themes of communication methods (17 references), roads (7 references) and consideration of rural areas and cycle ways (4 references), these are detailed further on the next page.

Communication Methods (17 references): Certain respondents indicated that they disagreed with aspects of the policy as they felt that not everyone has access to social media, and that it has a limited impact (13 comments). However some respondents felt that all forms of communication should be supported (2 comments). While others felt that a better solution was needed (2 comments), especially for those already on the road at the time of incident (2 comments).

Roads (7 references): Respondents felt that more roads should be gritted, including local streets (5 comments). Respondents also felt that generally more money needed to be spent on gritting roads and pavements (2 comments).

Consideration of rural areas and cycle ways (4 references): Certain respondents indicated that they disagreed with aspects of the policy as they felt it would have a larger impact on rural communities and could potentially isolate individuals during bad weather (2 comments). Respondents also criticised the lack of support for cycle ways and pavements in the allocation of pre-treatments (2 comments).

Respondents were asked if there were any further considerations that should be taken into account with regard to the draft Winter Adverse Weather Strategy. A total of 28 comments were received in response to this. Further considerations included:

- Greater consideration for rural areas, having access to salt and grit (2 comments) and the feeling that local and rural roads/pavements should still be a priority for gritting (7 comments)
- More money to be spent on gritting roads (3 comments) and more timely gritting of roads (2 comments)
- Gritting of cycle ways and pavements should still be considered to prevent accidents (3 comments)
- Specific requests for gritting were received such as: Gaw End Lane to allow Arriva buses to leave the Lyme Green depot in Macclesfield (1 comment), and Altrincham Road to allow safe access to Styal Primary School (8 comments).
- The use of text alerts for communication (1 comment)
- Clarification around severe weather conditions and how town and parish councils are to assist without the provision of equipment (1 comment)

Summary and Conclusions

Overall, average general support for aspects of the 'Highway Inspection Policy' (25%) was weaker than for aspects of the 'Winter and Adverse Weather Policy' (34%). This is mainly driven by the high disagreement rate expressed to Q2 that the policy caters for all highways users. Analysis of the comments reveals that this disagreement is likely to be driven by concerns for cyclists and pedestrians. Cyclists in particular were highlighted as an 'at risk' group and respondents felt they should be a priority and a greater consideration when assessing pothole depth.

Respondents also expressed concerns about the impact of both the 'Highway Inspection Policy' and the 'Winter and Adverse Weather Policy' on rural areas, suggesting that they would have a much harsher impact and that the policies were designed to cater to urban populated areas, neglecting the rurality of Cheshire East.

Despite these concerns respondents were in agreement that repair defects should be prioritised if they were a risk to the public (76%) and that taking longer to deliver high quality long lasting repairs was a better approach than temporary fixes (63%). Respondents agreed that local roads should be gritted based upon usage, local risks and surrounding amenities (75%)

While respondents expressed concerns about the use of social media as a sole source of information, generally all information types were considered to be helpful with further suggestions such as more local radio involvement and text alerts suggested by respondents.

Finally there were some specific requests for consideration from respondents such as the gritting of Altrincham Road to allow access to Styal Primary School and Gaw End Lane for the bus network to run in wintery conditions. Clarification was also requested on the role that Town and Parish Councils were required to undertake in extreme weather conditions as this is currently unclear in the policy.

Next steps

For the relevant department to review the above findings in relation to the proposed policies and to consider the comments made by respondents.

Appendix One: Demographic Tables

How do you normally travel in or through Cheshire East? - Multiple choice		
Row Labels	**Count**	**%**
In a car/van as the driver	36	95%
In a car/van as a passenger	12	32%
On a bus	9	24%
On a motorcycle	1	3%
On foot	23	60%
On a bicycle	12	32%
Other	3	8%
Withheld Data*	55*	
Total number of respondents		**38**

Why do you travel in or through Cheshire East? - Multiple choice		
Row Labels	**Count**	**%**
Live in Cheshire East	37	97
Work/Study	15	39
Visit local town centre/shops	28	74
Use health and Social Care facilities	21	55
Use local leisure facilities	18	47
Other	6	16
Withheld Data*	55*	
Total number of respondents		**38**

What is your gender identity?		
Row Labels	**Count**	**%**
Female (including trans female)	15	44%
Male (including trans man)	18	53%
Other gender identity	1	3%
Withheld Data*	59*	
Grand Total	**34**	**100%**

What age group do you belong to?		
Row Labels	**Count**	**%**
16-24	0	0%
25-34	1	3%
35-44	4	12%
45-54	8	24%
55-64	6	18%
65-74	9	26%
75-84	5	15%
85 and over	0	0%
Withheld Data*	60*	
Grand Total	**33**	**100%**

What is your ethnic origin?		
Row Labels	**Count**	**%**
White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish	25	83%
Any other White background	2	7%
Asian / Asian British	1	3%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean / African / Asian	1	3%
Withheld Data*	64*	
Grand Total	**29**	**100%**

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?		
Row Labels	**Count**	**%**
No	28	97%
Yes	1	3%
Withheld Data*	64*	
Grand Total	**29**	**100%**

*Under GDPR Compliance respondents can select to submit a survey response with no demographic data attached to it. Out of the total 93 respondents, 52 respondents abstained from providing personal data, and 59 from sensitive data and respondents are also able to select a ‘prefer not to say option’. Due to this high number those who ‘withheld’ data they are not included in the percentage base of the demographics tables.

Appendix Two: E-mail Responses

Email Response 1.1

22 August 2018

Consultation Response to Well Managed Highways in Cheshire East

Congleton Town Council welcomed the opportunity to have a look through the consultation documents on Well Managed Highways in Cheshire East. Unfortunately there was not an opportunity to take it to committee.

Much of the documentation made sense and is following national guidance so is hard to argue against. It is good to have clear guidance on how frequently Cheshire East Highways inspect various roads. It is understandable but possibly a sad reflection on society that so much of the guidance seems to be based around avoiding litigation. It makes sense for the most effort to be concentrated on the areas that are the most well used, but it is important that all residents are aware of how easy it is to report faults and problems. We still have a large rural community.

It is welcomed that the Primary walking routes are being checked monthly, although there is no glossary or reference that we could find to give a definition of a primary walking route so a little uncertain what this is. Safe Routes to Schools are scheduled for quarterly checks, but again it would be good if the schools were educated to understand what is considered a fault and how to report it as we all want to see more children walking and cycling to school.

We also noted the following changes

- Good to see that the repair times for emergencies has been reduced from 1.5 hours to 1 hour - which seems positive
- Pothole investigation level use to be 50mm and is now 40-100mm or greater than 100mm – again positive that the lower limit has been reduced – but that's quite a big level to investigate and not clear if action must be taken when at 40mm deep.
- Localised Edge deterioration has not changed, but the policy seems to be concerned only if the cracking at the edge of the road comes more than 250mm into the road and is over 100mm deep and doesn't require vehicles to alter their course. The policy is not clear whether bicycles are considered vehicles, but although this damage may be manageable by cars we would anticipate that this level of deterioration would be dangerous for cyclists.
- There hasn't been a change in the measurement of pavement slab differences in pedestrian areas before they require action (25mm). We feel that while this may be acceptable for pedestrians, but can be difficult for wheelchair users and would have liked to see the level reduced.
- We are concerned to see that new policy 3.5 of the Winter Maintenance: states that the routine precautionary treatment of footways, footpaths and cycleways will not be carried out. This seems a like a backward step.
- 3.6 Winter Maintenance states that during prolonged severe winter weather conditions all available resources may be employed in predefined roads (this is understandable). It also states that where possible the Council will work in partnership with town and parish councils to arrange for snow clearance on local roads and town centres. As a Town Council we need a greater understanding of what this means, and where the liabilities and funding lie if we are to carry out these functions.

We look forward to greater clarity around these points.

Email Response 1.2

I think this needs a serious conversation;

Youve skirted round an outrageous omission: how can you justify not gritting cycle and footways against your commitment to active green travel?

3.5 The routine precautionary treatment of footways, footpaths and cycleways will not be carried out.

3.3 Footways and Cycleways

Pre-salting of footway and cycle tracks will not be undertaken, in accordance with the Council's Winter and Adverse Weather Policy. However, in the event of snow and subject to resources being available, CEC may clear and treat key footway routes in priority order within the first 24 – 48 hrs. Resources to treat footways will be allocated based on a number of factors including population, town centres, routes to transport hubs, hospitals, schools, medical facilities.

Email Response 1.3

Please see formal response from the Town Council to the consultation.

Members reviewed the consultation and made the following comments in response to the highway safety Inspection Policy and Code of Practice:

- That the classification hierarchy should road reflect usage in addition to the proposed hierarchy. Bus routes and heavily trafficked local roads should be inspected at least quarterly.
- That the policy does not address the prioritisation of limited resource within categories of defect, or the need to ensure that temporary repairs are subsequently fixed permanently in a timely manner to avoid repeated temporary repairs.
- There should be flexibility so that if a category 1 repair is situated alongside a category 2 fault they are both dealt with at the same time rather than by separate visits.

Crewe Town Council