

OSC 8 March 2007 – List of Member Questions for Highways

(a) Highway Maintenance and Repair work

1. When are the pavements and roads in Chigwell going to be repaired/resurfaced? Many elderly residents living in Chigwell Row are finding it hard to cope with the poor conditions.

Councillor B Sandler Chigwell Row

Response:

We do not carry out repairs by area however as and when individual defects are reported they are dealt with. If these are localized then a large area of patching is identified.

If there are any specific areas that Cllr Sandler would like to be flagged for attention my Acting District Manager – Trevor Baker will attend a site meeting to discuss.

I understand that we have identified some works on the route through Chigwell Row – the details can be discussed with TB.

2. When will the road in School Green Lane, North Weald be repaired?

Councillor D Stallan – North Weald Bassett

Response:

TB is very busy and is currently covering for two posts. He is an outstanding officer who is often the last one in the office and first one in the mornings. Unfortunately working under pressure – things slip through which I can only offer my apologies.

School Green Lane was inspected and does not require any works. Beamish Close, works to the kerbs was carried out and some funding has been allocated for further kerb works although this can be made available for other repairs/works.

3. Why are the roads in the north of Essex so much better maintained than those in the south? Is it because no account has been taken of relative traffic volumes in each area? Are investment decisions based on road miles rather than traffic miles?

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

Basic maintenance funding is set aside for potholes and patching and allocations are based on a formula taking into account the length of county roads (roads of more than local significance) and local roads in each district. County roads receive a greater weighting in the formula.

The capital funding for carriageway and footway maintenance (larger schemes) is allocated taking into account the results of our latest condition survey but in recent years it has been apparent that a formulaic approach has

not always reflected the anecdotal view of the areas road condition. So the Portfolio Holder exercises his judgment.

4. Why hasn't the road repair work for Buckhurst Hill, to be implemented after the resurfacing works to the Loughton High Road, been carried out especially as the road surface is in a poor condition in places?

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

The Loughton High road works were carried out and funded by the District as part of the Town Centre scheme. Buckhurst Hill will be machine surfaced in the next few weeks.

5. How are you dealing with the unclassified but extremely busy roads (such as Oakwood Hill) to ensure they are not ignored.

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

We have received more funding for unclassified roads this financial year and we have identified work in our 07/08 programme. This programme is draft and yet to be approved by our Cabinet Member.

(b) On Street Parking – Crossovers

6. What is the "official" position about whether resident's cars be parked in the street or in driveways?

Councillor Roland Frankel - Theydon Bois

Response:

The only position the highway authority has on this is that residents have a responsibility to park their cars legally and not to cause an obstruction. It is their choice whether that is on a street or in driveways.

7. What strategies will be adopted to rectify sunken kerbs to stop cars parking on pavements causing pedestrians to be placed in hazardous situations?. This relates especially to Ongar High Street between the Post Office and Ongar Bridge

Councillor K Wright - Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash

Response:

This can occur historically for many reasons. Where there is a low kerb height which is deemed to be hazardous we are happy to look at assessing the location with a view to addressing the issue. This can be achieved a few ways depending upon the specific circumstances.

8. Has any strategy for addressing the problem of parking on pavements and across car entrances, which is endemic near schools, been considered? If not will one be? Chipping Ongar Primary School is a case in point. The use of bollards could provide a solution

Councillor Keith Wright - Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash

Response:

Parking on pavements where vehicles are causing an obstruction can be dealt with by the Police who have enforcement powers. This is the same with crossovers or car entrances. Where a waiting restriction exists this extends for the full extent of the highway and therefore parking enforcement officers can deal with cars parked on pavements.

The only other way of dealing with such a situation is to formalize parking in a parking zone.

Chipping Ongar Primary School, does this school have a school travel plan? – bollards and other measures can be introduced as part of such a plan. It is sensible that all school issues are raised and addressed as part of a formal plan rather than ad hoc measures.

9. What responsibilities do Essex Highways have for bollards and how is this provided? How many accidents have occurred within the vicinity of bollards in the past three years?

Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse – Epping Hemnall

Response:

Ultimately street furniture such as bollards is the responsibility of the highway authority. This includes its location and maintenance. I cannot answer that as personal injury accidents statistics are recorded on the basis of contributory factors and you can search the database for specific factors. It is not usual to note the accident in terms of its location relative to bollards – it is more usual to note the vicinity of zebra crossings and whether it is dark/wet or road surface is slippery. In my experience the location of the bollards would only be listed as part of the description of the accident if it was relevant.

10. Why hasn't any emergency Traffic Regulation Orders been issued to deter all day commuter parking which has driven some traders out of business and is causing serious difficulties in Debden Broadway.

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

The Burton road car park is the subject of traffic orders which the District are preparing and as part of this the District is seeking consent from the County. The Cabinet member is being consulted along with County members on their views although the process of producing the orders by the District is ongoing. It has been raised that Commuters will be pushed into neighbouring roads once excluded from the car parks and the County working with the District have been carrying out parking surveys with a view to developing proposals to

address the possible problems. This will of course be the subject of discussion and consultation.

(c) **Pot Holes**

11. Why do some of our major roads such as Valley Hill and Oakwood Hill (with major traffic flows) continue to have dangerous pot holes ?

Councillor S Murray, Loughton Roding

Response:

We continue to inspect and repair them. The frequency of pot holes is related to the general structure of the road. It has been identified that Oakwood Hill be resurfaced and we are keeping an eye on Valley Hill. We consider it a priority and we will endeavour to identify funding as soon as we can.

(d) **Footpaths**

12. Why is a much used pedestrian footpath between Cheltenham Gardens and Highland Avenue in Loughton still unpassable after heavy rain. No indication has ever been given about when the work will be done even though both the ward members and residents have frequently reported the issue.

Councillor S Murray, Loughton Roding/ K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

The unmade section has been identified for resurfacing and the made up section has been inspected and we are currently considering what measures need to be taken to address the problems.

(e) **Street Lighting**

13. Why is a lamp column on a busy junction (Oakwood Hill , Valley Hill and Roding Road) still not working?

Councillor S Murray, Loughton Roding

Response:

Lamp column 17 Roding Road lamp out was received on 15 Jan and completed 28 February 2007. The delay to repairing the outage was caused by the need to use traffic management due to the location near to a busy junction.

Lamp column 44 Oakwood Hill lamp out 1st received on 18 November 2006 and completed 23 January 2007. The second received 15 January and completed 28 February. Another call on 5 March from Cllr Murray on Monday 5 march to inform us that Lamp column 44 Oakwood Hill was still not working – contractors attended Monday night and Tuesday morning and have assured us that the job is complete.

Our Contractor should attend in 7 days initially however if there is further work needed. We have raised performance issues formally with our contractor who

has provided an undertaking to increase resources. I have recently recruited a new member of staff who will be able to assist in monitoring the contractors performance. We can report that already additional resources have been allocated and we are hopeful that our contractor will continue to improve their performance record.

14. What action will be taken to repair the two streetlight in North Weald (one in School Green Lane and one in Beamish Close)

Councillor D Stallan – North Weald Bassett

Response:

North Weald Parish Council owns the lighting in Beamish Close and School Green Lane. We have continued to manage the repair of the NWPC lighting as a good will gesture. Given my problems with staffing I would like to bring this relationship to an end.

Because of the arrangements these lights do not form part of the night time scouting of the County lighting stock and we rely on reports of outages from the Parish.

Beamish Close

We have not received a report of a day burner but we have received a number of reports of outages over the last year;

L/C 6032 Lamp out received date 05/06/06 completed date 09/06/06 = 35w SOX lamp

L/C 6033A Unit leaning received date 24/11/06 completed date 19/12/06 = Replump column

L/C 6028 Lamp out received date 24/11/06 completed date 15/12/06 = 35w SOX lamp & ignitor

L/C 6030 Lamp out received date 04/12/06 completed date 18/12/06 = 35w SOX lamp & ignitor

L/C 6026 Lamp out received date 18/12/06 completed date 15/01/06 = 35w SOX lamp and photocell.

School Green Lane

We have not received notification of any faults since 12/10/05 for this road.

(Since the meeting I have been informed that the Parish reported it to a consultant who attended a meeting on ECC's behalf – it appears that this was not reported to the office)

15. Will Highways reconsider the proposal to cut off street lighting across the District over the later part of each night? The matter is also ready causing concern to residents in the South of the District with the problems with antisocial behaviour and the later opening hours of public houses. Without adequate lighting CCTV will not be effective.

Councillor D Bateman Chigwell

Response:

You will be consultee on the part night switch off. It is currently only being piloted in Uttlesford in the West Area.

Areas with CCTV are exempt from the switch off for those reasons

(f) Rural roads

15. What action will Essex County Council take to eliminate/ reduce the damage caused to the County's roads by Heavy Goods Vehicle should the additional funding requested by the Portfolio for this work not be received?

Councillor Mrs A Cooper - Lower Nazeing

Response:

My district engineers do not perceive that this is a major issue in Epping however we will continue to repair defects.

(g) Local Liaison Arrangements

16. When will the step to establish local repair teams for minor work (as promised by the Portfolio Holder when he attended Loughton Town Council last year), be implemented? When will the liaison promised between the District and Local Councillors for addressing specific issues when re-surfacing takes place (e.g. damaged verges) be put into effect?

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

Local repair teams for minor works are being discussed at present and we are currently in discussions with our contractor on how they will resource this. We have Highways Panel meeting when District Officers, District members and local County members meet with me. I also meet your lead officer once a month to update on progress and issues. I am happy to meet

Councillor Bass has asked me to offer to facilitate a meeting with your representatives in County Hall or at the Area Highways Office with the Service Director for Highways, myself and with the Local County Members in attendance.

17. How would Highways respond to an EFDC forum on which they were represented, to list and prioritise approved schemes (such as lay – bys and parking improvements) which would be surveyed and costed by Highways in a similar way to which Housing have dealt with their land in the past?

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

Tony Ciaburro, our service Director, has recently offered to seek funding for improvements in the Epping area. We are discussing priorities with John

Gilbert and I know that he will be seeking your views. Once we have an indication of where or what you want you have identified then we will cost your the schemes and collate a bid.

(i) **Telephone Enquiries**

18. Why do some of your officers never reply to telephone messages?

Councillor S Murray, Loughton Roding

Response:

We have around 20 vacancies in an establishment of around 100. They are currently filled by agency staff. We appear to be suffering from a large turnover of certain staff mainly at inspector level and this puts additional workload pressures on our existing staff. Not responding to telephone messages is one of the issues – No-one does this deliberately and I know that I have gone for days sometimes not being able to respond to individuals. Sometimes we need a site visit before we can respond to another investigation into land ownership and this then means there is a delay and 20 other messages are left. So yes, I don't deny that this happens but I can assure you that it is not deliberate. We have given John Gilbert the direct lines for myself, Trevor Baker and Spencer Brookes. Please use them if someone has not responded and will endeavour to get a response.

19. Who should residents contact to report serious faults in pathways and roads?

Councillor K Wright - Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash

Response:

We have a computerised system – so the office number will be manned and will be responded to. All information will go on there and be actioned. If you want to track progress then you can email Trevor Baker.

(i) **Resources**

20. Do you feel that this part of Essex with its dense population and hence heavy traffic flows is obtaining its fair share of resources from the central Essex pot ?

Councillor S Murray, Loughton Roding

Response:

Just looking at the capital for major projects – West Area received 40% of the total allocation for Essex and 33% of this was allocated to Epping and 46% of the total for the West Area will be allocated to Epping for next financial year.

Over the last three years Epping has received 31% of the total allocation for Basic Maintenance. It is worth noting that the West Area which comprises of 4 districts.

21. What is Highways doing about addressing the staff shortages in their West Area offices?

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

We are currently using agency staff. We only filled 12 positions in Oct 06 after a recruitment drive and still currently have 22 vacancies. Some of the positions were filled by internal promotion leaving gaps in the structure behind them. Also we have since have been given a further 4 members of staff in recognition of deficiencies in our structure. The County have accepted that there are significant issues with recruitment and are considering a recruitment and retention package for West Area staff.

22. What is the annual budget for the provision of traffic signs (eg crossroads)?

Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse – Epping Hemnall

Response:

I have £147,000 for minor works for the Area. New signs comes out of this budget but maintenance and replacing stolen signs comes from basic maintenance. This money I add to the LDB budget to make up around £200,000 a year for Epping. Epping gets the lion's share of the LDB pot – roughly 33% of the total allocation.

23. To what extent has the amount spent on the replacement of signs, due to many being stolen, substantially affected the provision of new signs?

Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse – Epping Hemnall

Response:

It doesn't – they come from different budgets. The replacement of stolen signs does eat into the basic maintenance of roads and that includes patching and potholes.

(h) Traffic/congestion

24. Does County Council feel that government policy to reduce car journeys is working in Essex? What studies have be made to determine at which point traffic density becomes unsafe?

Councillor R Frankel - Theydon Bois

Response:

Government transport policy in Essex is shaped by the influence fo the East of England Plan and the County Council's own Local Transport Plan. Both plans include policies to manage a demand for travel and car travel in particular, and the LTP contains targets to reduce traffic volumes entering Colchester and Chelmsford, as well as the rate of growth in distance traveled across the County area. At the same time land use policies continue to put pressure on Essex to accommodate more housing and provide local employment

opportunities as well as national priorities such as expansion of ports and airports. So managing demand for car travel needs to consider both today's demands and those from future land use pressures, which are considerable.

Both sets of LTP targets are on track at present, with reductions observed during 2005 and 2006. There may be many factors behind this trend but there is no doubt that successful transport schemes such as park and ride, increased cycle facilities, reduced travel to school by car, travel plans and quality bus routes all contribute to reductions in car use.

IN conclusion policies do work at the local level but these local successes may be tempered by a general rise in traffic growth caused by background trends such as development pressures and the tendency for the average trip length to rise over time.

25. What causes more pollution: a) stopped cars, b) stop/start congested traffic, c) constantly moving cars?

Councillor R Frankel - Theydon Bois

Response:

According to the Highways Agency Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Vehicles operate most efficiently and produce least pollution when they are driven in freely flowing traffic at moderate speed (35-30mph fro NOz emissions)

Measurements have shown that the highest rates of emission occur in congested, slow moving traffic, and that there is also a tendency for emission rates to increase at high speeds, especially those of oxides of nitrogen. Emissions rates under stop-start driving conditions are much higher than those when vehicles are driven more slowly.

26. Since EFDC members permitted commercial development on Chigwell Lane, is there now any possibility of a full M11 junction 5?

Councillor R Frankel - Theydon Bois

Response:

I cannot answer this but will endeavour to obtain a response.

27. Baring in mind the work to be carried out on the A414 from 12 March 2007, why has there been no consideration of the fact the first bus leaves Ongar just after 6am and any delay will cause residents who use this first bus service to be delayed getting to work?

Councillor D Stallan – North Weald Bassett

Response:

When closures occur over night from 9pm to 6am – there will not be a problem as the first bus leave at 6.11am

28. Should the cost of traffic disruption (for the road users) be an issue for the time taken on repairs?

Councillor R Frankel - Theydon Bois

Response:

Yes, and we take this into account. Road works are programmed to avoid peak periods and we will try to do the most disruptive work at off peak periods. This is also taken into account when we allow utilities to work on the highway.

(j) Road Safety

29. At the end of 2006, the total number of road deaths in Essex County Council reached 101. Can Essex Transport confirm the total number of deaths in this District and provide a breakdown of how many occurred on:

- a) National Motorways and Primary Routes
- b) County Primary Routes 1 and 2
- c) Local Routes?

Councillor Mrs A Cooper - Lower Nazeing

Epping Fatalities – 17

M11 – double fatality

M11

M25

M25

A104 from Woodford Green

A113 London Road

A113 j/w High Road

A113 Double Fatality

A121 towards Honey Lane

A414 towards Harlow

B194

B194 crooked Mile

B181 High Road

B181

Unclassified Theydon Road

Trunk Road- 5

County Routes-10

Local Roads-1

(k) General

30. When will we be assured of a quicker response to local issues and a better service from highways?

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

32. Are you beginning to understand why local residents and some district councillors are very dissatisfied with the level of service provided by Essex Highways ?

Councillor S Murray, Loughton Roding