

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21 FEBRUARY 2018

**STATEMENT OF THE ACCESS PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR
DON MACKENZIE (INCLUDING HIGHWAYS, ROAD AND RAIL TRANSPORT,
BROADBAND, MOBILE TELEPHONY)**

Highways and Transportation

Winter Weather Update

Our gritting team has performed very well during this winter's challenging weather conditions. Priority routes have so far all been treated in a timely manner according to policy and the overwhelming majority of our road network has remained usable throughout. Any temporary closures were of short duration.

We are fortunate to be able to call upon the services of dozens of farming contractors, who do a great job in helping to clear snow and ice from local roads, keeping access open for residents and businesses.

I thank our highways team who are again delivering a service of the highest standard, surpassing both national guidelines and that typically provided by similar authorities. Also worthy of mention are the efforts of our communications team and their daily winter weather briefings via our website and social media.

Street Works Permit Scheme

This new scheme, one of our key projects, went live on 7 February. Utility companies must now apply for and purchase a permit before commencing works on our roads.

The County Council now has the ability to manage and coordinate the activities of utilities much better than under the previous system of notification. Targeted benefits of the permit scheme include less disruption for the travelling public, shorter duration of road and lane closures and, with the new core sampling procedure, better reinstatement of the highway.

Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme

The County's Section 151 officer signed off our self-assessment questionnaire under the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme and this was submitted to the Department for Transport on 1 February. We have again assessed ourselves as a band 3 highways authority, which is the highest rating. We scored top marks in 21 out of 22 questions, up one on the previous year. The rating ensures that we retain maximum funding, which is worth £1.5m in 2018/19, rising to £2.5m in the next year.

A63 Selby Bypass

I must inform colleagues that we are about to commence legal action to secure payment for all the work we have carried out to repair the A63 Selby Bypass, which was transferred to us when the road was de-trunked in 2009.

This road was constructed by the Highways Agency in 2003. Its condition had deteriorated badly and was subject to regular complaint by residents, businesses and road users in Selby.

Over three phases starting in 2015, our contractors have resurfaced the whole length of the bypass bringing it up to excellent condition. The cost of the upgrade is £7.8m, and it has been our stated intention to recover most of this cost back from Highways England.

The County Council has been unable to reach an agreement with Highways England, and consequently we have informed the Department for Transport that we intend to begin legal action to secure fair settlement.

Vehicle Activated Signs

Colleagues are aware that our current policy covering the leasing out to parish councils of VAS equipment on a temporary basis will be scrutinised by the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. At its meeting on 23 January, the committee decided to appoint a task group to conduct a review. That task group will meet on 8 March to begin its work.

It is expected that the group will present its report to the TEE Scrutiny Committee on 12 July.

Integrated Passenger Transport

Stephenson's of Easingwold

This bus operator held a number of County Council home to school and subsidised bus service contracts. It was with considerable surprise that our Integrated Passenger Transport team received notification from the company at 4.30pm on Friday 19 January that it could no longer meet its contractual commitments with effect from the following Monday morning.

In addition to those services, a number of commercial bus routes were terminated.

Once again, I pay tribute to the efforts of our IPT team who spent the weekend of 20/21 January arranging no fewer than 27 emergency replacement bus services for 900 pupils. Every pupil was picked up as usual on the Monday morning and all parents received letters from us to explain the situation.

As for the six subsidised bus services - five new services were up and running by the following Friday, and the sixth was replaced on Monday 29 January. All but one of Stephenson's commercial bus routes have now been taken over by other operators.

Longer term contracts have since been issued for all school and supported services.

As colleagues know, this is the third time in six months that the IPT team has been called upon at very short notice to replace bus services, and on each occasion it has performed remarkably well. We have good reason to be proud of them.

Broadband and mobile telephony

The £20.5m contract for phase 3 of the Superfast North Yorkshire broadband roll-out programme was awarded last month to BT plc, who have committed to connecting up 14,239 more properties. Of that number, some 12,500 will benefit from state-of-the-art Fibre to the Premise technology. Average download speeds will be 281Mbps, with some subscribers receiving up to 330Mbps, which is amongst the best anywhere in the country.

DON MACKENZIE