

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 8 December 2022

Maintenance of footways and cycleways

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Routine All
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Transport and Environment Committee is asked to note the contents of this report, and specifically:
 - 1.1.1 Plans for the introduction of dedicated resources for year-round maintenance of the dedicated path and cycleway network; and
 - 1.1.2 The operational approach that is now being deployed and the increase in machinery being dedicated to pavement sweeping.

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Report

Maintenance of footways and cycleways

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report responds to a request from Committee in December 2022 to explore the possibility of changing the Council's approach to maintenance of footways and cycleways.
- 2.2 The report also sets out the operational changes in the street care service (formerly street cleansing) following the allocation of additional investment in the Council's budget for 2023/24.

3. Background

- 3.1 On [8 December 2022](#), Transport and Environment Committee received a report on the maintenance of footways and cycleways in the city.
- 3.2 This report outlined a trial that was being undertaken in the North West of the city which provided a dedicated maintenance team in respect of what is considered to be the off road path and cycleway network. Committee requested officers to give consideration to extending the trial across all four Locality areas.
- 3.3 The actions agreed by Committee were:
 - 3.3.1 To provide a pathway and cycleway maintenance team in other localities, following the trial of a dedicated team in the North-West Locality;
 - 3.3.2 To employ this team to take a more proactive approach to leaf sweeping in leaf fall season;
 - 3.3.3 To reallocate a share of road gritting resource to path and cycleway gritting; and
 - 3.3.4 Along with the associated equalities impact and financial implications, to provide a brief report in advance of summer recess in summer 2023.
- 3.4 On [20 April 2023](#), Committee received an update on Street Cleansing performance which set out proposals to spend additional funding (£2.74m) allocated to delivering improvements in the cleansing service as part of the Council's budget in 2023/24.
- 3.5 As set out report in April 2023, all roads and footways are zoned in respect of the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (CoPLAR). Zoning applies to any land or roads under the direct control of the Council. As such pathways and cycleways are included, alongside roads and pavements. Zoning is undertaken on the basis of

footfall/usage levels and allows the service to base operational plans, specifically the schedule of sweeping, on this. Whilst sweeping removes litter, it is also effective at removing detritus (defined as decaying organic material) and therefore removing growth medium for weeds.

- 3.6 This allowed for the purchase of additional compact sweepers which, outwith the winter season, maintain roads and pavements from a litter and detritus perspective. In the winter season, they are also available for the dedicated gritting of footways and cycleways when weather determines. In 2022/23, these additional compact sweepers enabled additional coverage of cycleway and footway routes in the North of the city, beyond those which had previously been treated (including three dedicated Travelling Safely routes and two dedicated cycleways).

4. Main report

Resources to tackle approach roads and rural roads

- 4.1 To improve cleanliness on approach roads and rural roads, as well as improving the appearance of the main routes into the city (including pathways and cycleways), some of the additional funding received in 2023/24 has been allocated towards recruiting additional staff and investing in equipment. Resourcing and equipment requirements have been defined and recruitment is due to commence in June with a view to having dedicated staff in place ahead of leaf fall season.
- 4.2 Rather than being exclusively responsible for the cleaning of a route, the team will be multi disciplinary and tasked with litter picking, sweeping, verge, pathway edge, and hedge maintenance. The activities of this team will be complimented by more specialist resources within the wider team, specifically forestry and large mechanical sweeping as and when the need arises. The staff in these teams will also complement existing resources deployed during leaf fall season.

Pedestrian and Mechanical Sweepers

- 4.3 It is intended to purchase pedestrian sweepers, which are fully electric walk behind sweepers which can deploy a weed brush in addition to the normal sweeping brush. These machines come equipped with a vacuum attachment to tackle problematic issues such as cigarette litter and also have a spray lance. Two of these sweepers have already been received and will be deployed initially in the city centre and further machines will be brought in over the course of 2023.
- 4.4 In addition, an increase in the number of compact mechanical sweepers allows for more formal scheduling and routing for sweepers. The introduction of these formalised routes was delayed primarily due to COVID-19, but they will be introduced over the course of 2023.
- 4.5 The regularity of the sweeping regime will be determined by the zones within CoPLAR. High footfall areas such as Zones 1 and 2 will be maintained by manual sweeping during the day and mechanical sweeping at night. Other zones, mainly residential, will be covered by crew vans undertaking what the service refers to as

blitzing. An example of this is shown in the image below which was taken in the Hutchison area of the city.



Removal of weeds

- 4.6 A further element in respect of maintenance of footways and cycleways is the removal of weeds. Whilst the measures outlined in 4.3 will assist in respect of removing weeds and growth medium, removing weeds through sweeping means alone is not sufficient.
- 4.7 Whilst glyphosate continues to be licensed for use, there are a growing number of areas in the city requesting no chemical treatment. Officers recognise that chemical treatment needs to reduce and continue to consider non-chemical alternatives such as hot water and thermal lances alongside increased sweeping and, where appropriate, mulching and hand weeding.
- 4.8 It is intended to bring forward a report to Committee in September 2023 on the options to reduce reliance on chemical treatment and outline what this will require from both a staffing and financial perspective. This will also set out whether a degree of increased tolerance to weeds might be required.

Gritting

- 4.9 In terms of gritting operations, paragraph 3.6 sets out some of the changes that have already been made to provide improved winter weather coverage on the path and cycleway network. To support this, £0.5m has been transferred from the winter weather budget to street care (£0.3m in 2021/22, and £0.2m in 2023/24). This is recurring funding.

- 4.10 The wider Neighbourhood Environmental Services team, specifically staff from cleansing and grounds maintenance, also provide support in respect of gritting pathways, particularly to care homes and doctors surgeries when the need arises.
- 4.11 The Council has a duty to ensure that the Priority One road network ((primarily routes which are considered A roads and the bus network) is gritted to ensure that people who are using public transport are able to travel. Any reduction in the existing gritting budget would have a direct consequence of not being able to treat the Priority One network to current levels.
- 4.12 The approach set out in this report in respect of path and cycleway gritting allows other teams to focus on road gritting.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Recruitment will commence in June 2023 for the team to tackle approach and rural roads, as set out above. It is hoped that recruitment will conclude by the end of the summer but in advance of leaf fall season as this is the best period for maintenance of hedgerows and overgrowth.
- 5.2 A report will be prepared for Committee in September 2023 on options for the future treatment of weeds in the city.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The activities outlined in this report are carried out within the Council's existing financial resources and are detailed in the main report.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 As noted above, Council officers continue to work with volunteers to maintain the Council's network of footpaths, off-road paths and on-street cycle lanes where it is possible to do so. Officers will also engage with key stakeholders on opportunities for joint working.
- 7.2 Further investigation of opportunities to include volunteers in the Council's work programme, particularly work undertaken in parks and greenspaces, is underway.
- 7.3 As requested by Committee in December, officers are currently developing an integrated impact assessment to consider the equalities (and other) impacts arising from the footpath and cycleway maintenance arrangements set out in this report. The final report will be published on the Council website and will be included in the Business Bulletin for Committee in August 2023.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 None

9. Appendices

- 9.1 None.