

Report to	<b>Lead Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment</b>
Date	<b>22 February 2010</b>
Report By	<b>Director of Transport and Environment</b>
Title of Report	<b>Departure from Highway Maintenance Policy</b>
Purpose of Report	<b>To note the departure from the Highway Maintenance Policy</b>

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**RECOMMENDATION: The Lead Member is recommended to note the departure from the Highway Maintenance Policy and the progress made in repairing the roads.**

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## **1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 Cabinet has approved an additional £1.0m to deal with the pot-hole situation following the recent cold weather and to provide much needed drainage works.

## **2. Supporting Information**

2.1 As a result of the recent winter weather, and in particular the freeze-thaw conditions experienced over Christmas and in January, the roads across the County have incurred considerable damage. This is not unique to East Sussex and has occurred nationally. The scale of the problem is unprecedented.

## **3. Comments/Appraisal**

3.1 Our maintenance teams and our contractor, May Gurney, were tasked with of repairing all pot-holes within a 3 - 4 week period, a period of time that was felt a reasonable period of time given the scale of the pot-hole problem. In order to achieve this ambitious, but necessary task it was decided to employ a different system of working to that we currently use. Rather than have our inspectors locate pot-holes and then pass on to May Gurney we have introduced a 'seek and fix' programme whereby May Gurney have been tasked with fixing pot-holes systematically street by street i.e. gangs out on the highway moving from road to road filling pot-holes as they go. We will prioritise the A roads and those fast / high volume roads first. May Gurney have bought in an additional 20 maintenance gangs to deal with this situation and we are expecting Council Members to approve an additional £1.0m for this work.

3.2 Given the unique scale of damage, the ability to make swift progress and to work efficiently was being hampered by our current Highway Maintenance Policy requirement to attend Priority 1 Defects within 2 hours of a defect being identified. This resulted in May Gurney spending more time travelling across the County than fixing pot-holes.

3.3 Consequently you agreed a relaxation of this requirement for four weeks. Instead our inspectors recorded all Priority 1 Defects which were then collated and dealt with by dedicated gangs the following day, or sooner where practicable. As a result of this we were able to plan these repairs on a daily basis and be far more productive. Clearly Health and Safety is a key consideration and our Highway Inspectors exercised a judgement over which defects still need to be attended promptly. Warning signs were erected where appropriate. Given the unprecedented situation the County Council faced this was considered a reasonable approach.

## **4. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation**

4.1 As a result of the relaxation of the usual system, good progress has been made across the County with over 7000 pot holes being fixed in the first two weeks. Twenty six maintenance gangs have been deployed across the County and it is estimated that, to date, 60% of the work has been completed broken down as follows;

- A roads - estimated 90% complete
- B roads – estimated 75% complete

- C roads – estimated 20% complete U roads – mainly only in urban areas of the major towns with Eastbourne, Hastings, Seaford, Lewes, Bexhill, Hailsham and Heathfield about 40% complete.

It should however be noted that the current situation will only worsen if the cold weather returns.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None