

Highways

Following the recent lockdown announcement, I wanted to share with you our current operational arrangements relating to highway maintenance activities.

Having been through the lockdown process on two previous occasions, the highways service now has well established Covid-19 working arrangements. We have learnt from the previous two lockdowns and have kept our working arrangements tightly in line with Government and Public Health England guidelines. As such, there are minimal operational changes required as result of the current lockdown and highway services continue to be delivered.

However, staff are now required to minimise travel and reduce face to face meetings as far as possible in order to reduce the risk of the infection spreading. This will mean that site meetings will generally be avoided and site inspections will need to focus on high priority safety issues/ defects but the usual channels of communication remain open should you require advice or assistance.

With specific regard to the Area teams, they continue to:

- Inspect the highway and record defects;
- Manage defects that are reported on website here from customers;
- Respond to requests for service received by the Customer Service Centre (highways@norfolk.gov.uk or 0344 800 8020);
- Coordinate street works activities;
- Supervise and inspect estate road developments;
- Manage and monitor the delivery of highway repairs;
- Manage the highways emergency response to extreme weather events such as flooding, high winds and winter services. This includes the ongoing clear up and repair operations from the flooding events on 23/24 December.

As is customer expectation, the Area teams will do their best to ensure highway defects are delivered on time in line with defect priorities detailed in the Transport Asset Management Plan.

I am pleased to report that our supply chain contractors continue to function well, albeit with an increase in Covid-19 infection rates in some locations, some reduction in capacity is being experienced. This is inevitable as infection rates increase, but we continue to liaise closely with them in order to ensure the continuity of service.

Finally, I am grateful to you for your assistance again during this challenging period, and the support you have shown the staff.

Budget

The County Council will only increase the Council Tax precept by 4% for the coming year even though the Government would have allowed 5%. This is 1.99% normal increase plus a further 2% for Adult Social Care.

Adult Social Care is increasing at an alarming rate increasing from £355m in 2016 to £448m last year and this is not COVID related. This means an increase from 35% in 2016 to 40% in 2020. We are still awaiting a White Paper from government on how we can manage this ever-increasing budget cost nationally.

Flooding

I will be looking at the issue of flooding and how we can improve a coordinated strategy for dealing with this problem at the Committee I chair in two weeks' time but meanwhile here is a link to the Cabinet response held today.

<https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/local-council/fears-over-future-flooding-6898390>

Vaccinations

See attached