

Sent: 12 May 2023 16:44

To: Paul Bartlett - MEM <Paul.Bartlett@kent.gov.uk>

Subject: FW: Ashford JTB 7th March 2023 - Officer & Highways Cabinet Member comment requested

[Sent on behalf of David Brazier](#)

Dear Paul,

I understand that at the Ashford Joint Transportation Board meeting on 7 March you sought confirmation that frontline highway maintenance services were not at risk given current budget pressures. I'd like to first reassure you that our approach to inspecting the highway to address safety critical defects and therefore meet our legal duties under the Highways Act remains in place.

Our approach to highways maintenance is set out in our [Highways Asset Management Plan](#) for 2021/22 to 2025/26 (HAMP), which KCC formally adopted and published in July 2021. Amongst other things, it set out what the then current level of funding would buy over that period in terms of future highway condition, the services we do and do not provide and an analysis of risk. The approach outlined in that plan, and a higher level of investment than before, meant that we could carefully target and prioritise resource, but ultimately we were not even then able to fund steady state condition. Our highways can thus be said to be in a state of managed decline.

A lot has changed since we published the HAMP document. Firstly, the Department for Transport reduced the amount of capital grant for highway maintenance by £9m. Secondly, the construction and highway maintenance sectors have experienced hyper-inflation in the last year or so. For example, steel prices have increased by 55-50%, road resurfacing prices have increased by nearly 30%, and the cost of road preservation and reactive repairs has risen by around 20%. Consequently, the actual amount of road maintenance carried in 2023/24 will correspondingly reduce and that will lead to poorer condition roads.

The extra money for road maintenance announced during the Spring Budget is welcome but the level of DfT funding is still lower than 2021 when the HAMP document was adopted, even before hyper-inflation is applied.

I hope this helps to explain the position.

Yours sincerely

David Brazier