

County Council Meeting – 18 May 2023**Question to Councillor David Williams
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport****By Councillor Pardesi**

Question

When will it be accepted that it is not sustainable to expect Amey alone to deliver in a timely fashion?

Reply

The highways service already uses a range of different providers, including EoN for street lighting, SWARCO for traffic signals, a number of Borough and District Councils for grass cutting and other environmental maintenance activities, and of course Amey for a wide range of day-to-day operational activities. Furthermore, the Amey workforce is typically made up of around a 50/50 mix of directly employed local operatives and a wide range of local subcontractors. Around 85% of all expenditure through the Amey contract remains within Staffordshire and neighbouring authority areas.

Working in partnership with a tier 1 national provider like Amey provides the county council many benefits, including added Resilience, Scale of Economy and Buying Power. It means that when additional funding becomes available, like it did last summer when Cabinet committed to the first year of £15m extra investment to fix more roads, we are well placed to respond quickly and competitively to bring on-board the extra capacity needed to ensure delivery and value for money for our residents.

With the extra investment being made by the county council over the next two years extra sub-contract resources will again be brought in. These include specialist resurfacing and surface treatments teams, extra pothole repair teams - including the specialist velocity patcher and thermal patching techniques, continuation of the additional Member priorities gully emptying team and additional drainage repair teams.

It's also worth mentioning that as part the ongoing Highways Transformation Programme we are currently moving to a new Hybrid-Mixed-Economy operating model. Whilst retaining the benefits of having a Tier 1 strategic delivery partner the new model will also provide the council

with much greater control and assurance of the highway service. Under the new model each separate function, from carriageways to footways and from drainage to winter gritting, will each have its own politically agreed budget, service level, specification and performance requirements, including Quality, Customer Service and Value for Money. Delivering on Members priorities will be a key design feature of the new model.

Cabinet have reviewed the options and agree that the fastest, most efficient way to transition and start to realise the benefits of this new model is to extend our relationship with Amey – but on very different contracting terms:

- a. Under the new arrangement a lot of inspection, works prioritisation and quality assurance activity has already been moved back in house and is now being managed directly by the council;
- b. And even though it's a 5-year contract – under the new arrangement Amey are not guaranteed any work. If any element of activity is under-performing, or we feel things can be done better in a different way, then we retain the freedom to move functions into new arrangements, for example in-house or through a new delivery partner.

Amey have recently been sold and their new owners are really excited and want to work with us on innovative new solutions. They like the look of this new model and are confident it will help them to demonstrate to us and others in the sector the added value they offer.

All that being said even with infinite resources and the best possible delivery model available, we still can't always do everything as quickly as we would like to. Roadworks are, by their very nature, disruptive. Our own operations actually only make up only about 1/3rd of all activity that takes place on the road network, with utility providers, including the major fibre roll out, making up the majority of the rest. It takes careful management to plan and co-ordinate activity to minimise delays and prevent as far as possible traffic diverting on to inappropriate local routes.

Despite these challenges fixing more roads is a priority for this council. I along with all other Cabinet Members and the highways team really appreciate the support from local members in helping us to achieve this goal.
