



PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Wednesday, 4 February 2026 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.23 pm.

Present:

Voting Members:

Councillor Liam Walker - in the Chair
Councillor Bethia Thomas (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Thomas Ashby
Councillor Emily Kerr
Councillor Lesley McLean
Councillor Toyah Overton
Councillor Susanna Pressel
Councillor Leigh Rawlins

**Other Members in
Attendance:**

Cllr Andrew Gant, Cabinet member for Transport
Management

Officers:

Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways
Sean Rooney, Head of Service – Highway Maintenance
and Road Safety
Andrew Ford, Road Safety Education Team Manager at
Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service
Andrew Vidovic, Team Leader – Inspections
Anthony Kirkwood, Team Leader – Vision Zero
Dale Stevens, Insurance Manager
Nigel Clark, Team Leader – Volunteer Coordination
Paul Wilson, Operational Manager (Operations)
Richard Lovewell, Business Director for MGroup
Highways
Steven Fitzgerald, Operational Manager (Highways
Maintenance
Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer

The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

1/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS (Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr Brant, substituted by Cllr Overton, and Cllr Gordon. Cllr Thomas had sent apologies that she would arrive late.

2/26 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

(Agenda No. 2)

Cllr Kerr declared that she was a Bike Ability instructor.

3/26 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The Committee **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2015 as a true and accurate record.

4/26 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

(Agenda No. 4)

Danny Yee spoke on behalf of Oxfordshire Liverpool Street regarding the Vision Zero strategy. He emphasised the importance of addressing injury hotspots but argued that limited resources required cost-effective, area-wide measures. Mr Yee advocated for speed limit reductions and changes to motor traffic volumes and routing, highlighting the need to remove sources of danger through network design. He suggested shifting traffic from side streets to main roads and implementing low traffic neighbourhoods and bus gates. Mr Yee also noted that the strategy should focus more on equitable mobility, citing specific locations where lower speed limits would improve walking and cycling connectivity.

Peter Barnett addressed the Committee with key statistics from the Vision Zero reports, noting that Oxfordshire's killed or seriously injured (KSI) figures had risen by 11%, while the draft budget for Vision Zero had decreased by 6%. He highlighted that the projected fatality figures for 2024 and 2025 remained around 20, suggesting the budget should be increased rather than reduced. Mr Barnett referenced cost-benefit studies supporting greater investment in road safety. He also raised questions about the progress of direct vision standards and construction safety measures and pointed out the low rate of prevention of future deaths reports following inquests, advocating for improvement.

5/26 COMMITTEE ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

(Agenda No. 5)

The Committee **NOTED** the action and recommendations tracker.

The Committee discussed the proportion of recommendations accepted, partially accepted, or rejected over recent years, with data available in the scrutiny annual report. The Committee was informed their acceptance rate was among the highest.

Cllr Thomas joined the meeting at this stage.

6/26 RESPONSES TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

(Agenda No. 6)

The Committee **NOTED** the Cabinet responses to the Committee's reports on:

- Part Night Lighting
- Verge and Vegetation Management
- LGR – One Oxfordshire Proposal
- OxRail 2024

7/26 COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN

(Agenda No. 7)

The Committee reviewed its forward work plan and **AGREED** to upcoming topics including the illegal waste dump near Kidlington, with plans to invite the Environment Agency and District Council. The Committee confirmed that it wished to consider items on bus services and rural transport, and minerals and waste planning.

The Committee also **AGREED** to add school streets to the April agenda, partly as a result of concerns about poor signage and enforcement at a local school.

The Committee also discussed the need to monitor changes to Household Waste and Recycling Centre bookings and address verification, agreeing to include this as a future agenda item.

8/26 ROAD SAFETY INITIATIVES IN OXFORDSHIRE

(Agenda No. 8)

Cllr Andrew Gant, Cabinet member for Transport Management, Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, Sean Rooney, Head of Service – Highway Maintenance and Road Safety, Andrew Ford, Road Safety Education Team Manager at Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service, and Anthony Kirkwood, Team Leader – Vision Zero, were invited to present the report.

The Committee had also invited a representative of Thames Valley Police (TVP), who sent apologies and a short statement in response to questions raised in advance. The statement explained that a dedicated roads policing team would work within communities to engage, educate, and enforce in areas with high casualty rates, targeting persistent offenders and collaborating with other agencies to address road safety issues. Written questions were welcomed for the TVP to address.

The Cabinet member for Transport Management opened the item by emphasising that safety sat at the centre of all transport policy. Vision Zero had been presented as the overarching framework guiding the Council's decisions, with the ambition to eliminate all road deaths and serious injuries. The principle that deaths and serious injuries should not be seen as an acceptable cost of economic or environmental functioning had been reiterated throughout the discussion.

Recent and ongoing initiatives were highlighted, including the countywide 20mph programme, the expansion of school streets, and the delivery of segregated active-travel infrastructure. The Cabinet member stressed that safety should take precedence across the transport network.

The Head of Service – Highway Maintenance and Road Safety noted that maintenance and safety must be managed together and prioritised, with Vision Zero

at the forefront as a collaborative system involving multiple teams. The Head of Service highlighted the necessity for unified strategies across engineering, operations, and engagement.

The Road Safety Education Team Manager at Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service outlined how road safety education had moved into the Fire & Rescue Service's Prevention team, which already worked extensively with schools and communities. The longstanding "three Es" - Environment, Education and Enforcement - continued to shape the programme. Vision Zero had helped to bring these elements closer together operationally. Officers highlighted a range of successful education programmes, including pedestrian training and cycle training reaching more than 6,000 children each year. There was an ambition to reach all schools, although instructor capacity had remained a limiting factor. Work with young drivers included advocacy for graduated licensing, behavioural-change campaigns and advanced driver training opportunities. Officers had also delivered targeted engagement with motorcyclists and continued joint operations with TVP, offering equipment, safety advice and enforcement.

The Director of Environment and Highways acknowledged the recent publication of the national Road Safety Strategy and confirmed that Oxfordshire's Vision Zero strategy would be reviewed to ensure alignment with the revised national framework. This review was seen as an opportunity to update priorities, strengthen partnership work, and reflect emerging best practice.

The Committee considered the organisational structure of road safety functions and discussed why Bikeability delivery sat within Fire & Rescue rather than Highways. Officers explained that several years earlier, when national road safety funding had been reduced and many councils had disbanded their safety teams, Oxfordshire had transferred the educational element into Fire & Rescue to preserve staff capacity. This approach had enabled the Council to avoid losing expertise at a time of instability nationally. Members questioned whether the model remained the most effective arrangement, especially given performance pressures and recruitment challenges. Officers accepted the concerns and stated that the structure could be reviewed, particularly in the context of future local government reorganisation, although they emphasised that outcomes rather than organisational location should guide decisions.

The Committee discussed the ongoing national shortage of Bikeability instructors. Officers explained that Oxfordshire worked with five contracted providers and a small internal team, all of whom were operating at maximum capacity and struggling to recruit. To create a more resilient model, officers were developing a new recruitment pool of instructors directly contracted to the Council but available to all providers. This would give greater flexibility and help address peaks in demand. Further work was underway with neighbouring Councils, the Bikeability Trust and local institutions to broaden recruitment and build long-term stability for training providers, alongside strengthened engagement with schools to increase participation.

Members drew comparisons with Cambridgeshire, noting that its model appeared to provide greater stability for providers and more consistent instructor recruitment. Officers explained that Oxfordshire's multi-provider system had originally been

chosen as a lower-risk approach when national funding appeared uncertain. Although this approach had helped the county expand capacity, officers accepted that the Cambridgeshire model and other comparators should inform a future review, especially in light of ongoing recruitment challenges and the need for predictable long-term delivery.

The condition of cycle lanes and the risks posed by potholes and poor surfaces were raised. Members described cases where cyclists had been forced into the carriageway to avoid defects, particularly in poor weather or at night. Officers acknowledged these concerns and reiterated that safety and maintenance were closely connected. Data on collisions, road condition and cycling patterns informed maintenance programmes, and interventions such as surface dressing, structural patching and drainage improvements were used to extend the lifespan of key active-travel corridors. Officers emphasised that infrastructure improvements sat alongside education, behaviour change and design measures within a safe-system approach.

Concerns were also raised about cyclists' equipment and visibility. Officers confirmed that equipment formed a key part of education and enforcement. Roadside engagement events with TVP involved distributing lights, high-visibility equipment and reflective accessories, funded from road safety budgets. Seasonal campaigns promoted visibility and planned improvements to public information, including updated materials and a refreshed website, aimed to strengthen safety messaging.

Bus speeds on arterial routes were discussed, with members suggesting that high speeds created a hostile environment for cyclists and pedestrians. Officers explained that while 20mph limits had been implemented widely across the county, decisions on arterial routes in Oxford were linked to broader transport considerations. Improving bus reliability and reducing congestion were identified as safety measures in themselves, reducing conflict points for cyclists. Officers acknowledged that speed enforcement rested with the police but noted that ongoing reviews of speed limits and road design on A and B roads formed part of the wider Vision Zero programme.

The Committee explored the handling of post-collision information. A cited case involving a cyclist injured by a pothole on Botley Road highlighted inconsistent reporting from TVP to the Council. Officers acknowledged the issue and stated that while joint post-collision site visits already took place, the system needed strengthening to ensure timely intelligence reached highways teams.

Members questioned the long-term impact of the 20mph programme, noting that compliance varied between locations. Officers reaffirmed the programme's importance to Vision Zero, referencing early evidence from other areas indicating reductions in casualties. Behaviour change was expected to develop over time, with further work on reviewing A and B-road speeds underpinning wider safety objectives.

FixMyStreet was examined as a tool within Vision Zero. Officers explained that FixMyStreet formed a core element of the Council's intelligence-led safety approach, enabling real-time reporting of defects and helping identify patterns and clusters of risk. The transparency of the platform was seen as a strength, allowing the public to track how defects were triaged and repaired. Members raised concerns about delays

and the premature closure of some reports, and suggested stronger links between FixMyStreet data, Officer decision-making and post-collision information. Officers confirmed that improvements were underway, including system updates, clearer communication and improved engagement with members.

Members inquired about the methods used to identify future schemes and how they might access forward plans. Officers explained that a multi-year programme was published outlining resurfacing, maintenance, and safety-focused initiatives, all determined by casualty data, FixMyStreet reports, asset condition surveys, and predictive modelling. Particular emphasis was placed on active-travel corridors and bus routes to advance Vision Zero objectives. Locality meetings were described as valuable forums for members to contribute local insights prior to finalising programmes.

The Committee explored why A-roads and junctions were prominent in casualty statistics. Officers explained that turning movements, particularly at side roads and roundabouts, created points of conflict where pedestrians and cyclists were often injured. To address this, new funding had been secured for schemes on Banbury Road and Iffley Road, incorporating side-road entry treatments and measures to slow turning vehicles. These interventions formed part of the safe-system approach, alongside engineering, enforcement and behavioural measures designed to account for human error. Upcoming corridor studies would further identify locations needing safety improvements.

Members discussed leadership structures and questioned whether the Council had a single officer with clear responsibility for both highways and road safety. Officers confirmed that the Head of Highways Maintenance and Road Safety also held responsibility for road safety, a deliberate decision taken two years earlier to strengthen strategic oversight and align asset management, engineering and safety work. Members welcomed the clarity and sought reassurance that this alignment translated into delivery; officers stated that the combined role improved responsiveness and use of safety data, though conceded that member communication could be strengthened.

Concerns about road signage and infrastructure, particularly around schools, were raised. Officers acknowledged that signage at certain school-street locations, such as Windmill School, had led to non-compliance and confirmed that improvements had already been made or were planned, including backing boards, refreshed markings and improved carriageway signs. Broader discussions recognised the importance of consistent design and clear signage within the safe-system framework, with ongoing review of risks and compliance issues.

The Committee examined pedestrian casualty patterns, noting that some districts, especially Cherwell, showed high levels of pedestrian deaths and serious injuries. Officers confirmed that casualty data underwent detailed annual analysis and could be broken down to identify risks at junction or corridor level. They proposed using locality meetings to explore district-specific patterns and ensure future investment aligned with areas of greatest need. Pedestrian safety remained a core focus within Vision Zero, with future programmes shaped by the evidence.

The safety of larger vehicles, including Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) connected with construction sites, was discussed. Members asked whether Oxfordshire should adopt standards similar to London's Direct Vision Standard (DVS) or expand the use of Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS) or Construction Logistics and Community Safety (CLOCS) type safety requirements. Officers explained that, whilst national requirements could not be mandated locally, the Council worked with developers through Construction Traffic Management Plans and acknowledged that references to DVS and CLOCS could be strengthened. Although national vehicle regulation would ultimately deliver the largest improvements, officers were exploring how procurement, contractual standards, and partnerships with universities and city partners might extend local safety expectations.

Members questioned how funding decisions were made and whether safety schemes were truly guided by evidence. Officers explained that some funding streams, such as the Safer Roads Fund, required spend on specific corridors, but other investment was wholly evidence-led. Collision analysis, condition surveys and modelling helped identify high-risk junctions and areas used frequently by vulnerable road users. Predictive tools and FixMyStreet trends also shaped priorities.

Finally, the Committee asked about the completion of 20mph signage updates, including Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS). Officers confirmed that the remaining conversions, around fifty units, were being funded from the final stages of the 20mph programme budget. Progress had taken longer than expected owing to the volume of signs, but a dedicated Officer was working nearly full-time on the remaining updates. Members stressed the importance of completing the conversions promptly to reinforce compliance and support wider safety outcomes.

The Committee **AGREED** to recommendations under the following headings:

- That Council should work to improve the post-collision responses in regard to communication and follow-up, particularly about serious incidents.
- That the Council should launch a campaign to recruit more Bikeability instructors and investigate the underlying limiting factors.
- That the Council should improve the road-safety website and marketing, ensuring clearer public information and better visibility of safety campaigns.
- That the Council should strengthen communication between officers and members, with clearer reporting routes and updates.
- That the Council should ensure Vision Zero / road-safety data is taken to locality meetings for more granular analysis.
- That the Council should develop a specific pedestrian-safety programme, focused on areas with high numbers of fatal and serious pedestrian casualties.
- That the Council should work with Thames Valley Police to encourage the increase of enforcement, including use of more speed cameras.

- That the Council should review the use and deployment of Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) to assess effectiveness and improve the process.
- That the Council should update the Vision Zero Action Plan (Annex 1 and Annex A) so that actions marked as complete or overdue are properly recorded.
- That the Council should encourage primary schools to have leaders for road safety.
- The Council should advocate nationally for improved HGV safety standards (e.g., type-approval requirements).

The Committee adjourned at 11:28 and reconvened at 11:36.

9/26 REPAIRING OF DEFECTS AND SUPERUSER REPORT (Agenda No. 9)

Cllr Andrew Gant, Cabinet member for Transport Management, Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, and Sean Rooney, Head of Service – Highway Maintenance and Road Safety, were invited to present a report providing an overview of pothole repairs and superusers.

The Committee also invited Richard Lovewell, Business Director for MGroup Highways, Andrew Vidovic, Team Leader – Inspections, Nigel Clark, Team Leader – Volunteer Coordination, Paul Wilson, Operational Manager (Operations), Dale Stevens, Insurance Manager, Steven Fitzgerald, Operational Manager (Highways Maintenance).

The Committee **NOTED** the report of the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on FixMyStreet, submitted to Cabinet on 27 January 2026.

The Cabinet Member for Transport Management introduced the item and set out a strategic overview of the position on highway defects. He emphasised the standards expected of the contractor, MGroup, including responsibility for non-chargeable defects, and noted that although the transition to the new contract had been successful, it was not free of imperfections. The report deliberately presented an unvarnished picture of outstanding repairs; the date on the underlying data had been corrected for accuracy. He stressed that he and the team had been leading a process of continuous improvement and that the timing of the report was appropriate given the unprecedented operational challenges seen locally and nationally.

The Head of Service – Highway Maintenance and Road Safety followed by confirming the report's purpose as a candid overview rather than a claim of perfection. He highlighted collaborative work with MGroup to pinpoint and address areas for improvement, describing an intelligence-led, data-rich approach to prioritising a significant volume of defects. He also paid tribute to the Superusers volunteer scheme, with around 230 volunteers had been signed up, though activity

varied seasonally, and reiterated the service's commitment to transparency and continual improvement.

Members of the Committee expressed strong concern on behalf of residents about recurring potholes, the perceived inadequacy of some repairs, and a compensation process seen as complex and slow. They felt a recent Council press release attributing problems to winter conditions failed to acknowledge that similar issues recurred annually and that the current backlog was unacceptable.

Officers recognised the frustration and set out how the service had been moving to an asset-management approach to break the cycle of winter-driven spikes: larger and more durable structural patches, an expanded surface-dressing and resurfacing programme, and greater investment in drainage to prevent water-related failures. They also described improved forward planning, including earlier publication of multi-year programmes so contractors could secure resources in advance. At the same time, they cautioned that resource constraints meant deterioration could not be eliminated entirely.

Councillors sought explanation for the contrast between stronger performance reported in 2023/24 and the sharp rise in potholes during 2024/25. Officers explained that the 2023/24 figures reflected the very large number of defects generated by a wet and cold winter, which allowed crews to plan and respond to a predictable, gradually rising pattern. In 2024/25, by contrast, there had been an unexpected and rapid 82% increase in reported defects in January alone, which placed severe strain on resources and made the picture appear markedly worse. Officers stressed that these variations primarily evidenced the impact of weather patterns rather than any decline in contractor performance.

Further questions were raised as to why winter preparations had not started earlier given the early-2025 surge. Officers said winter planning had been in place based on multi-year trends, but the specific combination of prolonged freezing temperatures and heavy rainfall that triggered the January spike could not reasonably have been predicted. They added that resources were constrained: the same crews deployed on preventative work were also needed for gritting, and the service did not hold spare capacity in reserve. Learning had been built in for future seasons, including earlier contractor mobilisation and better integration of drainage, asset-management data and risk-based prioritisation.

The Director of Environment and Highways reflected on the distinction between budgets for planned maintenance and the separate programme for defect repairs. He acknowledged the worsening condition of parts of the network and the growing volume of work, exacerbated by extreme weather. He accepted that the Council could have reacted more quickly to the most recent spike and identified this as a lesson learned. Saw-cut permanent repairs had become the preferred approach and were now used for most defects, though crews faced operational challenges in persistent wet and cold conditions.

Councillors raised concerns about oversight of temporary repairs in light of sweep-and-fill patches that failed within hours or days. Officers said both MGroup and the Council carried out checks: MGroup supervisors and supply-chain

supervisors reviewed daily completions, including before-and-after photos, while the Council undertook independent quality inspections, with about 1,700–1,800 since the start of the new contract. Early failures remained MGroup's liability and defects were returned for permanent repair.

Officers explained that weather was the principal cause of early failure, with rain and freeze-thaw cycles preventing proper bonding, particularly on waterlogged or deteriorated surfaces. Temporary sweep-and-fill treatments were used only for immediate safety where full traffic management could not be arranged and were never intended to be durable; such cases were recorded for follow-up permanent works.

Recognising public dissatisfaction, officers accepted that communication with residents had not been strong enough. Work had begun with the Council's communications team to provide clearer, more regular updates, including weekly social-media messaging and plainer explanations of winter pressures and scheduling constraints. A public-facing statistics dashboard had been devised to show defects reported and repaired, workforce deployment, and progress on backlogs, supporting both residents and Councillors in handling enquiries.

Councillors emphasised the importance of local knowledge in prioritising works, noting that risk-based models, FixMyStreet data and inspection results did not always capture lived realities such as rural pinch points, popular cut-throughs or bus-route stress. Officers acknowledged this and committed to clearer escalation routes, improved locality-based engagement and more consistent member responses via the Member Portal. They reiterated that the service would strengthen how local intelligence was combined with asset-management data to inform prioritisation.

Concern was expressed about the difficulty of contacting the Highways service during urgent incidents. The existing routes, FixMyStreet, the Member Portal, engagement Officers and out-of-hours lines, were described as confusing and sometimes ineffective. Officers accepted this and explained that frontline staff had been under severe pressure due to the surge in defects. The Head of Highways Maintenance said Councillors could contact him directly if necessary and committed to working with the Customer Service Centre to ensure a reliable escalation route to someone empowered to act on urgent matters.

The Insurance Manager highlighted a significant rise in pothole claims, with 903 received in January alone, exceeding previous annual averages and straining both investigation and administration. Additional staff were allocated, but response delays persisted. The Operational Manager noted that many claims required on-site checks by highways staff, further increasing workload amidst high volumes. Councillors requested data on outcomes and costs for these claims; officers explained that only early December cases were being processed, so January results were unavailable. However, for context, the Council had paid around £240,000 for just over 1,900 claims during 2025, illustrating the financial burden of pothole damage.

Councillors also sought clarification on liability in the period between an initial report and a pothole reaching the intervention threshold. Officers explained that liability depended on defect severity, the Council's inspection regime and adherence to

response times. If a road had been inspected within the defined interval and the defect had not met the intervention threshold, the Council would generally not be liable. If a defect had been reported and not repaired within the set timeframe, liability could arise.

The importance of photographs when reporting defects was discussed. Many FixMyStreet reports lacked images, slowing assessment and repair. Officers agreed that photographs improved accuracy, and triage process, and confirmed that FixMyStreet was developing an enhancement to allow a photograph to be uploaded at the start of reporting, with geolocation to place the defect automatically. Better-quality reports would reduce avoidable site visits and speed network-wide repairs.

It was noted that some FixMyStreet cases appeared to be closed before any visible repair had taken place, damaging public confidence. Officers explained that closures could reflect temporary emergency works or scheduling into a wider programme, which automatically updated the case even though a permanent fix had not yet happened. They committed to improving the workflow and public messaging so residents could see whether a repair was temporary, permanent, or part of a larger scheme.

Councillors queried whether utility companies could be fined retrospectively for reinstatements that later failed. Officers explained that under the New Roads and Street Works Act, statutory undertakers - organisations that have a legal right to place, maintain, repair or remove apparatus in the public highway - guaranteed reinstatements for two years. Within that period, the Council could require companies to return and fix defects at their own cost. After two years, responsibility reverted to the Council. Tracking responsibility could be practically challenging where companies had left the area or contractors had changed, but the Council pursued remediation whenever a failed reinstatement within the guarantee period was identified.

The Cabinet Member left the meeting at this stage.

Councillors then highlighted repeated failures on bus routes, particularly those with heavy or electric buses, where temporary repairs rapidly collapsed. Officers acknowledged the issue and confirmed that, whilst emergency safety treatments were sometimes unavoidable, sweep-and-fills were not durable on high-stress corridors. Such failures remained MGroup's liability and were escalated to permanent structural repair. Analysis of repeat failures on bus routes was underway, assessing whether alternative materials, larger patches or revised scheduling were needed. Officers confirmed that bus routes were already scored more highly within the asset-management prioritisation system.

Concerns were raised regarding the out-of-hours contact system, including a reported instance of an inappropriate response to a Councillor seeking assistance with an emergency hazard. Officers agreed the response was unacceptable and would be investigated. They reiterated that an out-of-hours service existed and that serious hazards should be phoned in rather than logged online. The structure, staffing expectations and escalation routes of the service would be reviewed to improve reliability, particularly during severe weather and high-defect periods.

Cllr Ashby left the meeting at this stage.

Feedback was then received on the Superuser scheme. One Councillor, also a Superuser, reported a substantial increase in workload, having received 43 additional reports that same morning, but confirmed that officers generally responded quickly and effectively to high-risk escalations. Officers welcomed this positive feedback and acknowledged opportunities for improved communication. They agreed to explore additional training and support, including refresher material and clearer escalation processes.

Cllr McLean left this meeting at this stage.

Councillors asked whether more could be done to prevent HGVs using unsuitable C-roads. Officers acknowledged that heavy vehicles contributed significantly to road deterioration. Enforcement of weight restrictions rested primarily with TVP, but the Council continued working with them through road-safety partnerships. Officers emphasised that preventative measures, drainage improvements, structural patching and prioritised resurfacing on HGV and bus corridors, were essential and agreed to review additional tools to limit heavy-vehicle impacts.

Questions were raised about whether higher-specification materials such as graphene-enhanced mixes could be used universally. Officers explained that various materials and techniques were already used, chosen according to weather, defect characteristics and road type. Results from earlier trials at a Stevenson test site had been absorbed into practice. While permanent repairs were increasingly larger and more robust, using the highest-specification mix everywhere was not always cost-effective or technically suitable, especially in winter or for rapid-response safety works.

Councillors sought clarification on inspection routines and Government funding. Officers explained inspections included routine cycles, ad-hoc checks prompted by FixMyStreet reports, and joint quality assurance with MGroup. While inspections followed national practice, increasing capacity would be explored. Government funding was highlighted as vital but insufficient, with only £33 million allocated annually against the £49 million required for network maintenance. Funding remained short-term, limited, or ring-fenced, failing to meet longer-term needs. High defect volumes were linked to extreme weather and historic under-investment, rather than recent local maintenance shortcomings.

The Committee **AGREED** to recommendations under the following headings:

- That the Council should improve communications with residents, including clearer updates on ongoing works and challenges.
- That the Council should launch the new public-facing statistics dashboard to provide visibility of defect volumes and repair progress.
- That the Council should strengthen communication and escalation routes for Councillors, including reviewing the adequacy of the out-of-hours service.

- That the Council should increase visibility and clarity of programmed works, supported by earlier publication of multi-year plans.
- That the Council should improve integration of local knowledge, especially of elected members, into prioritisation of repairs and programmed works.
- That the Council should review the FixMyStreet process, ensuring cases are not closed prematurely and status updates are clearer.
- That the Council should enhance training and support for the Superuser scheme.
- That the Council should review approaches to temporary repairs, including failure patterns on bus routes.
- That the Council should explore further measures to limit the impact of HGVs on vulnerable roads.
- That the Council should consider whether additional inspection capacity is needed and strengthen inspection processes.
- That the Council should continue to embed learning from repair failures, including materials choices and method improvements.
- That the Council should undertake a review of the impact of cars being significantly heavier on average than previously and the resultant pressure on roads.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing