



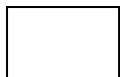
Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (City Development)

Date: 8 February 2011

Subject: The State of the Roads in Leeds

Electoral Wards Affected: All



Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Purpose

To update members on the condition of the roads and pavements following the snow and extended period of cold weather earlier this winter which was requested at the last Scrutiny Board meeting.

Background

Over £60m has been invested between 2004 and 2010 to improve the condition of local roads in Leeds. This is additional to normal funding streams from revenue and Government supported borrowing.

As a consequence of the funding from all three sources, some considerable improvement in the condition of the highway network has been achieved as measured through national performance indicators. These are included in performance monitoring data for City Development.

However, there are still a number of roads in a relatively poor state of repair in need of major maintenance.

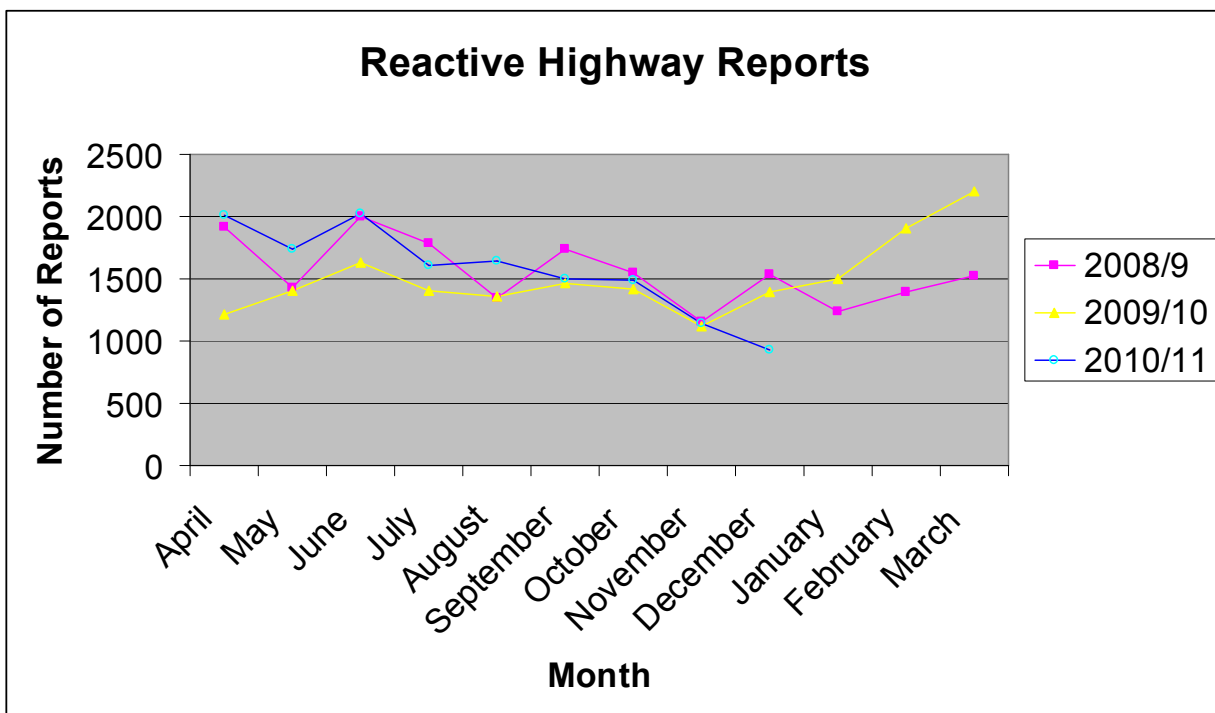
While there are several factors which cause roads and pavements to deteriorate, the ingress of water and subsequent freeze thaw action is the most aggressive. Having three successive harsh winters has therefore slowed down progress to improve condition.

This impact can be demonstrated in four ways:-

- Number of reports from the public and council highway inspectors which are issued with a target of making safe by the end of the following day (generally pothole reports).
- Number of claims for vehicle damage from potholes or personal injury from trips
- Increase in cost of repair of those streets which have seen accelerated deterioration.
- A slowing down of the anticipated improvement in performance indicators.

The graph below shows the monthly pothole reports over recent years. The impact of winter weather is very clear. In particular it shows that the number of reports lags the severe weather by around two months but can then continue for almost five months. This is because the potholes do not all appear instantaneously. Furthermore we suspect that initially the public assume the council is aware of the situation and only report a pothole after it has been left un-repaired for a period of time.

Highway inspectors re-commence routine quarterly driven inspections of the busier roads as soon as the snow melts but it could be up to twelve months before some residential streets get their next annual inspection. Public reports are therefore very helpful in identifying streets which need pothole repairs.

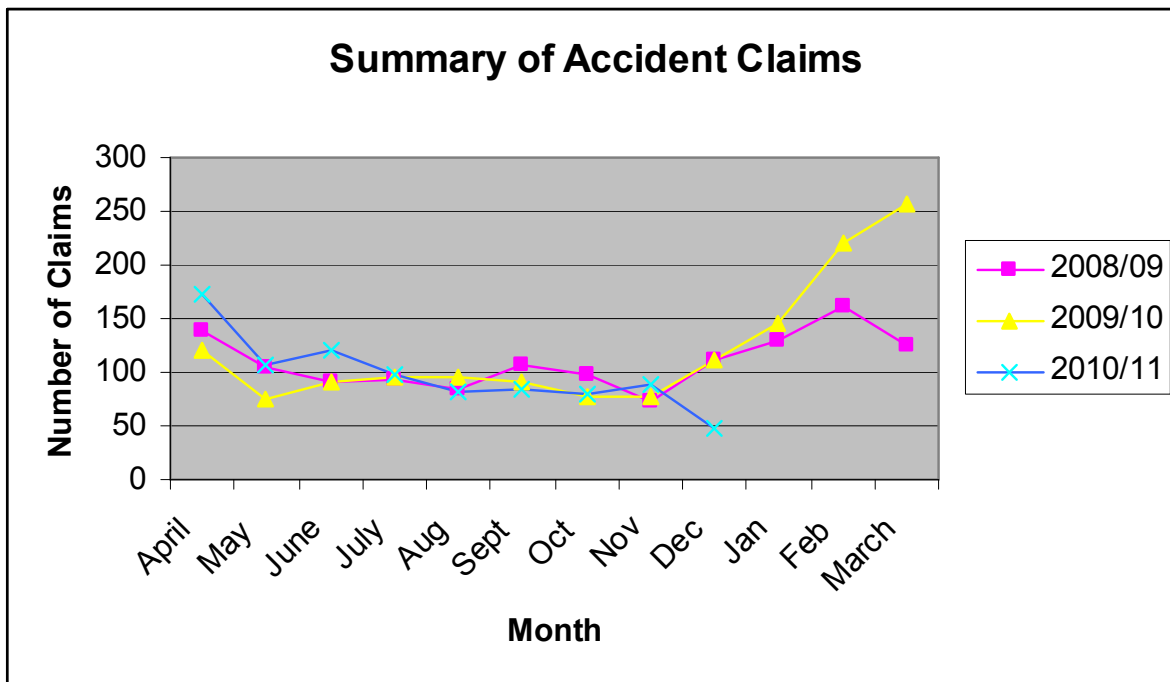


Overall last winter, some 2500 additional reports were received above an average yearly total of around 18,000. At around £50 per repair, this represents a cost to deal with the potential danger from “winter weather potholes” of around £125,000.

Of greater financial concern is the increased costs when these roads are programmed for planned maintenance. There are several streets which before each adverse winter could be made good for an estimated 20 years with some patching and a thin surfacing at minimal cost (typically £5,000). Some of these deteriorate so quickly that they subsequently need full resurfacing, increasing the cost approximately six fold.

The impact on claims is shown in the information below. Last winter some 400 claims were received additional to the regular 100 claims per month. Around 50 were from people who

slipped or skidded in the ice or snow. The majority of the remaining 350 were for vehicle damage from pot holes. Pay out on claims is reducing significantly year on year due to inspection and repair policies which allow the council to successfully defend claims. However this does not negate the staff costs involved in processing claims or the inconvenience, financial hardship and distress caused to people when accidents occur.



With regard to condition indicators, these are calculated annually and are published at the start of each financial year. The results for 2009-10 showed improvement but this did follow on from the two years with the highest investment levels and much of the survey work had preceded the winter weather. The 2010-11 results are more likely to show that successive bad winters are slowing down improvement.

Conclusion

The maintenance work which has taken place in Leeds over recent years has protected many streets from damaging impacts of water ingress and freeze thaw. Observations indicate that these streets have survived successive winters. However, in some cases rapid deterioration has occurred on streets which were not water tight. The immediate impact is an increase in the number of potholes. December's weather is expected to result in an increase in reports over the coming months with an associated rise in the number of claims received and potentially a significant increase in the repair costs of damaged roads when they are eventually programmed for repair. The condition survey results due to be published later this year will begin to take account of recent winter related deterioration.

Recommendation

Scrutiny Board is requested to note the contents of this report.

Background Reports

None