



Your views on reducing how much we spend on non-safety critical highway maintenance

Overview

Norfolk County Council plays a huge part in people's lives – ensuring children and young people have the best start in life, protecting vulnerable people, maintaining a safe road system and helping to create a thriving economy. We'll continue to spend over a billion pounds every year providing public services that you, your family and friends use every day.

Norfolk is facing some big challenges though. Our population is growing, people are generally living longer and the type of services that people need is changing. And as you know, the cost of living is going up. As things become more expensive we also have higher costs, and the amount of money we have coming in isn't keeping up. At the same time the grant that central government gives us has fallen by £189 million since 2011 and is expected to fall to zero by 2021.

Even though we are proposing to increase council tax next year, the amount of money we hope to raise wouldn't be enough to balance our budget. This means we have to make some difficult decisions about how we spend your money.

Since 2011 we have saved £334 million. However, we now need to save a further £125 million by 2021. We have therefore been looking at many options for saving money, including on our highways maintenance.

We are proposing to reduce how much we spend on non-safety critical highways maintenance in order to save £300,000. If our proposal went ahead, it would mean that during 2018/19 we would have to reduce the amount of non-safety critical highway maintenance work we do across Norfolk.

We have a highway defect risk register and all items which need action to keep our highways safe would continue to be completed. However, we would not be able to fund some of the 'cosmetic', lower category work we have done in the past.

Why we are consulting

We want to find out what people think about our proposal and how it might affect them if it went ahead. Your views will help us to decide whether we should reduce how much we spend on non-safety critical highways maintenance.

We are consulting through:

- Our online consultation – visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget to complete this consultation online.
- This paper copy of our consultation.

We are consulting from 6 November 2017 to 2 January 2018. Please note that if we receive any consultation responses after this date we cannot guarantee that we will be able to take them into account.

We will feed back the findings from our consultation to our county councillors as part of the evidence they will use to help them come to a decision about our proposals.

If you need a copy of this consultation document in a different format please email haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk, call 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

Background information

We have a legal duty to maintain our highways and this includes roads, footpaths and verges, making them safe for road users. We meet this duty through a wide range of activities and we prioritise highway maintenance work by looking at the strategic importance of the road and how severe the maintenance problem is. This process is set out in the Norfolk's Transport Asset Management Plan, approved by our members and updated every year.

You can read Norfolk's Transport Asset Management Plan on our website, or call us on 0344 800 8020 for a copy:

www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/policy-performance-and-partnerships/policies-and-strategies/roads-and-travel-policies/transport-asset-management-plan.

What's happened in previous years

In 2013 we asked for peoples' views on a proposal to make a one-off saving of £1 million on highway maintenance. We received 262 responses to our consultation.

The majority of people who responded disagreed with our proposal. One of the main reasons that people disagreed with our proposal was that people said Norfolk's roads are in a poor state and that any further reduction in maintenance, whilst making short term savings, would result in more expense in the long term. The impact on road safety was also identified as a key reason why the proposal should not go ahead, as were concerns about possible reduction to gritting.

Most of the people who agreed with our proposal did not explain why they agreed with it. Those that did provide an explanation suggested that it was necessary, albeit for one year only, bearing in mind the scale of savings being sought by the Council.

The council agreed with the proposal which meant that our budget for highway maintenance for 2014/15 was reduced to £23 million.

In 2014 we then proposed to make a permanent saving of £385,000 from our highway maintenance budget. We asked people what they thought of this proposal. We received 380 responses to our consultation.

The majority of people who responded agreed with our proposal. Many of those agreeing with the proposal did so as long as safety was not compromised and national standards were kept to. Others agreed with the proposal because the work is "non-essential" or "does not seem urgent". Some respondents argued that this area of work is less of a priority than some other areas.

A large proportion of people disagreed with the proposal because of concerns about safety. Others felt that the roads were already in a poor condition and that the proposal would make the situation worse. Some respondents worried that reduced maintenance would cost the council more in the long term. Some emphasised the importance of roads to rural accessibility and the economy.

The council agreed with the proposal and we reduced our budget by £385,000.

In 2015 we then consulted on a proposal to spend less on maintaining roads, maintaining bridges and gritting. Our proposal was to save £980,000. We received 321 responses to our consultation.

The majority of people who responded disagreed with this proposal, concerns were raised about: the safety of the roads and that the proposals would lead to more accidents on rural roads; the need to maintain or increase gritting and winter maintenance; the perceived existing poor state of the roads; and the impact of short term budget savings upon long term maintenance costs.

Of those who agreed with this proposal, a number agreed with the package of proposals but with provisos, including: not making any changes to gritting and winter maintenance; and ensuring that road safety is not compromised. The proposal was also supported by people who saw this as an opportunity to protect the verges and hedgerows and preserve or promote wildlife.

Sixteen per cent of respondents to this proposal raised concerns about any reduction in winter gritting. Following the consultation, County Councillors decided not to go ahead with this proposal.

Between 2013 and 2016 there has been an overall reduction in the highways budget totalling £9.5m.

Our proposal – who would be affected and how

We are now proposing to reduce how much we spend on non-safety critical highways maintenance in order to save £300,000. If our proposal went ahead it would mean that during 2018/19 we would have to reduce the amount of non-safety critical highway maintenance work we do across Norfolk.

We would continue to carry out all urgent works and any works that were high risk. So if branches were to block roads, footways, cycle-ways and road signs, these would be dealt with. Road signs would continue to receive maintenance when damaged. We would not be able to fund some of the 'cosmetic' (lower category) work we have done in the past, so our proposal could mean:

- It may take longer for some damaged verges and vegetation to be repaired; these damages would be considered 'cosmetic' such as churning-up of a verge caused by the tyres of a large vehicle, although it will not affect scheduled grass and verge cutting
- We may postpone some bridge maintenance work such as making good damaged paintwork
- It may take longer to clean road signs
- We are looking at reducing the frequency of gully emptying in non-critical areas, for example we may find areas where we are cleaning the gullies when there is little material being removed and in these circumstances gully emptying could be reduced.

Your views on our proposal and the impact it might have

- 1. What do you think of our proposal to reduce how much we spend on non-safety critical highways maintenance? What impact, if any, do you think that the proposal would have on you?**

Please write in the box below:

About you

Personal information, confidentiality and data protection

We use this information to see how representative the feedback is of Norfolk's population. We also use it to see if any particular groups of people are especially affected by our proposals.

We will process any personal information we receive from you in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. This means that Norfolk County Council will hold your personal data and only use it for the purpose for which it was collected, being this consultation. Under our record management policy we will keep this information for five years.

We will also, under normal circumstances, not pass your personal data on to anyone else. However, we may be asked under access to information laws to publish or disclose some, or all, of the information you provide in response to this consultation, including any personal information. We will only do this where such disclosure will comply with such relevant information laws which include the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

2. Are you responding as...?

Please select one answer

- An individual / member of the public ☐
- A family ☐
- On behalf of a voluntary or community group ☐
- On behalf of a statutory organisation ☐
- On behalf of a business ☐
- A Norfolk County Councillor ☐
- A district or borough councillor ☐
- A town or parish councillor ☐
- A Norfolk County Council employee ☐

3. If you are responding on behalf of another organisation, what is the name of the organisation, group or business?

Please write your answer in the box:

4. Are you...?

Please select one answer

- Male ☐
- Female ☐
- Prefer to self-describe (please specify below) ☐
- Prefer not to say ☐

If you prefer to self-describe please specify here:

5. How old are you?

Please select one answer

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Under 18 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 55-64 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 65-74 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 75-84 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 35-44 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 85 or older | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 45-54 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Prefer not to say | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6. Do you have any long-term illness, disability or health problem that limits your daily activities or the work you can do?

Please select one answer

- Yes ☐
- No ☐
- Prefer not to say ☐

7. How would you describe your ethnic background?

Please select one answer

- White British ☐
- White Irish ☐
- White other ☐
- Mixed ☐
- Asian or Asian British ☐
- Black or Black British ☐
- Chinese ☐
- Prefer not to say ☐

Other ethnic background - please describe below ☐

8. What is your first language?

Please write your answer in the box:

9. What is the first part of your postcode? (e.g. NR4)

Please write your answer in the box:

How we will make our decision and report back to you

We will take a report about the findings to this consultation to our Environment, Development and Transport Committee on 19 January 2018. The report will feed back what people have told us about the potential impact of our proposal. The feedback will also be reported at Full Council on 12 February 2018.

Our county councillors will consider the consultation responses we receive very carefully. In particular, they will take into account:

- The impact of any proposal on individuals, groups or communities and in particular on people identified as having 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. As well as this equality impact assessment, councillors will consider the impact of proposals on rural areas
- The views of people and stakeholders consulted
- The evidence of need and what is proven to work effectively and well
- The financial and legal positions and any constraints at the time
- Any potential alternative options, models or ideas for making the savings.

You can fill in our online feedback form at: www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget

You can send back a paper feedback form to:

Freepost Plus RTCL-XSTT-JZSK, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH.

However, if you want to help the council save money please use a stamp and send to this address: Stakeholder and Consultation Team, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, NR1 2DH.

You may wish to keep a copy of your response to our consultation for your own records.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Customer Services on 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

November 2017
