

REPORT OF THE
Economy, Transport & Environment Select Committee
PART I

**120. CONSIDERATION OF MOTION REFERRED FROM COUNTY COUNCIL:
URGENT AND EMERGENCY UTILITY WORKS ON THE HIGHWAY**

1. On 18 September 2014 County Council considered a Notice of Motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 18.1 as proposed by Councillor David Simpson and seconded by Councillor Bruce Tennent. The Motion read:

2. “This council notes the high proportion of road works which are classified as Emergency or Urgent works by particular Utility companies and therefore not subject to the usual advanced warning and programme notification to the County Council. These are disruptive and cost residents and the country a lot of money in lost time and fuel wasted which damages our economy. Therefore:

3. Hampshire County Council calls upon those Utility companies who have the highest proportion of road works listed as Urgent or Emergency to explain to the Council what steps they are taking to improve their regular maintenance and works planning to reduce the proportion of works classified as emergency or urgent. Furthermore the Council will review the relevant provisions of the New Roads and Streetworks Act and consider whether the Secretary of State should be asked to strengthen any of the Highway Authority powers in this regard.”

4. County Council resolved to refer this motion for consideration by the Economy, Transport & Environment Select Committee. The Select Committee considered the motion at the meeting held on 20 January 2015. The committee had been provided with data on the number of urgent and emergency works undertaken by utility companies in both 2013 and 2014, and a briefing note on the County Council’s role with regard to works by utility companies as a ‘notice authority’ and associated powers under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991.

5. Further details, including the data on number of works undertaken by each utility company, can be found at www.hants.gov.uk/councilmeetings.htm by typing in the relevant reference number: 6420

6. Select Committee Members heard that the most disruptive works on the highways (involving road closures or temporary traffic lights) constituted 5% of ‘immediate’ works (those categorised as urgent or emergency as per the legislation), and 1-2% of all highway works. Investigation by officers of the types of work undertaken indicates that utility companies are using the ‘immediate’ works category appropriately.

7. However, Members recognised that there was significant disparity between the different utility companies in the percentage of works undertaken as immediate rather than planned. For example, for three water companies immediate works constituted around 20% of all their works, and for two others immediate works constituted around 70% of all their works. This could indicate a reactive rather than proactive approach to maintenance of their infrastructure. Therefore, Members took the view that this issue could be raised with those companies undertaking the highest levels of immediate works. It was suggested that meetings with those companies be requested

to discuss their works on the highway, and that the Chairman of the Economy Transport & Environment Select Committee and the proposer of the motion be involved in such meetings.

8. The Select Committee also offers to review the situation in a year's time, to reflect on whether there has been any change, and depending on their findings at that time, consider whether the County Council may wish to take any further action.

9. Therefore, as a result of consideration of the motion, the Economy, Transport & Environment Select Committee propose the following recommendations to County Council:

RECOMMENDATION

That the County Council:

- (a) Request that the Director of Economy, Transport & Environment arrange for the Chairman of the Economy, Transport & Environment Select Committee, together with the proposer of the Motion, to meet with those utility companies undertaking the highest proportion of 'immediate' works, to encourage them to consider industry best practice to increase the proportion of works undertaken as regular maintenance.
- (b) Requests that the Economy, Transport & Environment Select Committee review the situation in January 2016 to consider whether there has been any improvement, and consider any further action.

The documents considered by the Select Committee can be found at www.hants.gov.uk/councilmeetings.htm by typing in the relevant reference number:

- Motion referred from County Council: Urgent and Emergency Utility Works on the Highway (search item reference 6420)

COUNCILLOR SHARYN WHEALE
Chairman of Economy, Transport & Environment Select Committee