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Dear Mr McNaney

**QUESTIONS ASKED BY COUNCILLORS, FOLLOWING PRESENTATION OF ROADS SERVICE PROGRESS REPORT**

When I presented the Roads Service Report to Council on 28th October 2013, I agreed to give consideration to a number of matters. My response to these is as follows:

1. **Councillor Convery – a number of gullies on Serpentine Road appear to be full and over the winter this would contribute to possibly the icing up of the road.**

The gullies at this location were inspected and found to be full of leaves. The gullies were cleared on the 31 October 2013.

2. **Councillor Rodgers – requested a direct contact number for sole use of elected representatives during severe weather conditions.**

Roads Service provides call handling both during and outside working hours and I would request that elected representatives make use of this facility as the most efficient means of contacting our staff. In addition to this the Section Engineers for Belfast North and Belfast South are also available to answer any queries directly. During times of severe weather such as heavy rain or prolonged snow Roads Service will provide additional call handling capacity to accommodate any increase in calls from the public. In addition to this, there are also other numbers available such as the Flood Incident Line (FIL) that can be used. Roads Service does not have the additional resources to operate a dedicated line for use by elected representatives during periods of severe weather.

3. **Councillors Rodgers, Haire and McCarthy - concern expressed that due to the Bus gate and traffic signals interaction there is no clear guidance as to when exiting City Hall on to Donegall Square South can safely take place.**

The exit from the back of City Hall is a private access and as such does not require give way road markings. Egress onto the public highway at the signal controlled junction

should be carried out with due care and attention.

As detailed in our response to the Council on 30 May 2013, the current arrangement for access to the rear of the City Hall from Donegall Square South is through a narrow single archway. This shared access, which operates with single vehicle use in and out of the car park, can only be brought under the control of the traffic signals if the archway is opened to provide separate in and out traffic flows, which we are advised is not an option the Council wishes to pursue.

**4. Councillor Rodgers, Haire and McCarthy - request for information on the overall objective for the introduction of the bus lanes.**

The aim of the Belfast on the Move project, which introduced the new bus lanes into Belfast city centre, was to make the city centre more accessible to everyone including those using sustainable forms of transport – public transport, cycling and walking.

A key objective of the project was to provide greater opportunity for people to use public transport for their journeys instead of the private car. This has been supported by significant investment in new trains, buses and Park & Ride facilities providing an attractive alternative for the travelling public. As a result Metro passenger numbers have increased considerably, with an additional 190,000 passengers in the period April to October 2013 compared to the same period last year. In addition passenger numbers have increased on Ulsterbus by 150,000 and on NI Railways by 952,000.

**5. Councillor Garrett – Finaghy Road North/Brenda Park - Parking issues restricting access for large vehicles such as bin lorries.**

This was replied to in our response in August 2013 to questions raised at Council meeting on 30 May 2013. See below.

Roads Service had received a previous request to mark the corners of Finaghy Road North/Brenda Park with double yellow lines but due to strong objections received from local residents and the fact that the majority of the congestion occurs for a short duration during the school peak period, it was agreed not to mark these corners.

**6. Councillor Garrett – holistic view needs to be taken as kerbing work has been marked out for Finaghy Road North. This has not been listed in the report and should include Finaghy Road South.**

Following a recent request from a local resident and wheelchair user, we carried out a survey of Finaghy Road North to establish the extent of access difficulties he was experiencing along this stretch. Subsequently, we were able to allocate funding to have this dropped kerb and tactile paving scheme added to our programme of works for this financial year. The construction of this scheme started in November 2013.

There has been major resurfacing work carried out on Finaghy Road South over the last number of years resulting in the resurfacing of both the footways and carriageway from

Upper Malone Road to Upper Lisburn Road. Full pedestrian access has been provided along this route within these works.

**7. Councillor Garrett - requested consideration for the placing of speed signs in Brooke Park.**

Brooke Park is situated within an overall 30 mph zone in the Greater Belfast area and it is our current policy not to provide repeater or additional signs within a 30 mph speed limit as this would lead to an over proliferation of unnecessary signs. The presence of street lights in the area indicates that, in the absence of other signs, the speed limit is 30 mph. This is confirmed in paragraph 103 of the Highway Code. Paragraph 104 further states that the speed limit is the absolute maximum and does not mean it is safe to drive at that speed irrespective of conditions. We therefore have no plans to provide 30 mph speed limit signs in Brooke Park.

20 mph zones, in Northern Ireland, are an extension of traffic calming schemes. As such, they are generally implemented in residential areas, where there is an extensive network of streets, and where self-enforcing measures are already in place to reduce vehicle speeds to approximately 20 mph.

As this is not the case for Brooke Park, and as we have no plans to provide traffic calming measures as there are a significant number of other areas competing for inclusion within our traffic calming programme that are deemed to be of greater priority, we therefore do not intend to introduce a 20 mph speed limit or provide traffic calming measures.

You may be interested to know that we plan to implement a pilot 20 mph zone in Belfast City Centre, where no traffic calming measures already exist. This scheme will be monitored for its effectiveness and if successful may be implemented in other areas of Belfast.

If your constituents feel there is a persistent problem with speeding or poor driver behaviour in Brooke Park they may wish to report such instances to the local Police station.

**8. Councillor Beattie – St Mary’s Gardens has been completed for 10 years but has not yet been adopted. Can details be provided as to why? Also requested information on the overall general adoption process.**

St Mary’s Gardens has been adopted from 28<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

**9. Councillor Beattie - requested details on the work programmed for the Islandbawn Street bridge. With all other work ongoing in the area what will the inconvenience be to the residents.**

The Council Report highlighted that a Principal Inspection was to be carried out on Islandbawn Street bridge. This is a detailed physical inspection of the structure which is carried out every 8 years and supplements the biennial General Inspection regime.

This inspection has now been carried out and I am pleased to advise that the structure was found to be in good overall condition and no remedial work is currently required.

10. **Councillor Austin – New Barnsley Estate - new street lighting was placed in the summer. This work removed two lights from an unadopted alleyway and these were not replaced. The lights were there for a substantial period of time and why take them away. The residents are requesting that the lights be replaced. This enquiry had been received prior to the meeting however Councillor Austin noted that he was not content with the response.**

Roads Service installed a new street lighting scheme in August 2013, however, this alleyway was not considered for lighting as it's not adopted by Roads Service.

11. **Councillor Rodgers – Cromac Street/Hamilton Street/East Bridge Street junction – Can the provision of yellow boxes at this junction be considered as they will facilitate traffic movement?**

The traffic signals at the above junction operate under an adaptive form of control called SCOOT. This allows the green times to be determined and amended as a result of prevailing traffic conditions at the time. Traffic movements at this location are also monitored by CCTV by staff in our Traffic Information & Control Centre who can re-adjust signal timings when appropriate to address any significant traffic progression or congestion difficulties.

Despite the sophisticated control system described above, traffic volumes can be such that during the morning and evening peaks there can be some congestion at times. An overall assessment of this location has suggested that whilst some form of yellow box may be beneficial we want to wait until an overall assessment of the recently installed Sustainable Transport Enabling Measures (STEM), entailing Bus Lanes, Bus Gates and Pedestrian Measures in the city centre, has been carried out before installing any further measures at this location. The assessment will take place in the New Year.

12. **Councillor Rodgers - Crumlin Road at Mater Hospital – request for double yellow lines at this location. Right turning traffic into the hospital causes tailback of traffic to Carlisle Circus.**

Roads Service will consider providing waiting restrictions (double yellow lines) to aid traffic progression on the Crumlin Road at the entrance to the Mater Hospital. This will be subject to the necessary legislative process which will provide adjacent businesses/ premises the opportunity to make representations to the Department.

13. **Councillor Rodgers - Victoria Park Underpass – ongoing flooding issue that needs resolved as there are improvement works being brought to completion in the park.**

Roads Service carried out drainage investigations at this location in early December 2013 and the Roads Service storm sewer is clear and running normally. However we are aware that there are problems with the combined sewer at this location and we understand that discussions are taking place between Northern Ireland Water and Belfast City Council.

- 14. Councillor Newton – had reported damage to wall in Bloomfield Drive without a response.**

Councillor Newton reported this damage to Belfast South on 12 June 2013. On checking the location it was found that the wall in question was owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). Councillor Newton's letter was passed to NIHE on 14 June 2013 for their attention.

- 15. Councillor Carson - Stewartstown Road - requested an inspection of this footway as it is in poor state of repair with a number of trips along its length.**

Roads Service inspects the footways and carriageways in this area on a 4 week cyclical basis and anything which is considered to be hazardous to the public is identified and programmed for repair. The most recent inspection took place on 30 November 2013 and the need for some remedial work was identified. It is expected that this work will be completed by the end of January 2014.

- 16. Councillor Carson - Comber Greenway – issues with ongoing maintenance especially grass cutting.**

Roads Service policy is to cut grass within adopted areas five times per year in urban areas and twice per year in rural areas. Along the Comber Greenway a 1.2 m wide swathe of grass along both sides of the pathway is cut five times per year. The dates of the cuts this year were 1 May, 31 May, 4 July, 21 August and 1 October.

- 17. Councillor McCarthy - Ormeau Road/Shaftesbury Avenue - recent placing on of lines at the Gasworks has meant that school buses unable to stop to collect and drop off children. Cars now need to park further out along the Ormeau Road at Shaftesbury Avenue. Can this be looked at?**

Vehicles are permitted to stop on waiting restrictions (yellow lines) provided they are in the process of loading/unloading, such as collecting/dropping off children from a school bus.

- 18. Councillor McCarthy – requested inspection of Lagan Walkway.**

The Lagan Walkway is not adopted and therefore Roads Service is not responsible for its maintenance.

- 19. Councillor McCarthy – why has Wellington Square not been adopted. As with Councillor Beattie's request can the general adoption process be distributed to the Council.**

Wellington Square has been adopted since 28<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

- 20. Councillor McCarthy – reported that a number of gullies in Balfour Avenue/ Cooke Street are blocked.**

Roads Service carried out a major gully cleaning operation in this area during the first two weeks in July 2013. During this exercise all the carriageway gullies in Balfour Avenue and

Cooke Street were cleaned and noted as running normally. In addition the footway and back entry gullies were cleaned in the week ending 13 December 2013. A visual check of the carriageway gullies at the Balfour Avenue/Cooke Street junction was carried out on 12 December 2013 and the gullies were noted as operating normally.

**21. Councillor Spence – requested that a one way system be introduced into Fairhill Estate.**

Roads Service received a similar request from Nelson McCausland MLA and has agreed to carry out a detailed assessment of Fairhill Park, to assess its appropriateness for the introduction of a one way system. This will include consultation with the PSNI.

**22. Councillor Spence - requested a direction/ information sign be placed on the Whitewell Road to direct traffic to the community centre.**

Roads Service receive numerous requests for direction signs and in order to minimise 'sign clutter', signs are only erected where the relevant criteria for providing such signs are met.

The current Roads Service Policy and Procedure Guide (RSPPG) for the assessment of direction sign applications states that community halls/centres shall only be signed if they are difficult to locate or there is a road safety reason for doing so. In addition all of the following criteria have to be satisfied:

- they are non-denominational;
- they are owned or managed by or on behalf of the local Council; and
- there is evidence that such halls are used extensively and on frequent occasions by large numbers of visitors drawn from outside the immediate catchment area.

Following a telephone call to Belfast City Council it was established that White City Community Centre is not owned or managed by or on behalf of BCC and, as such, we are unable to approve an application for direction signs.

**23. Councillor Spence - requested information on operating hours for Traffic Attendants.**

Traffic Attendants are deployed primarily Monday to Saturday, 07:30 to 18:30. In Belfast City Centre, two Traffic Attendants continue patrols up until 22:30 Tuesday to Saturday, and four Attendants patrol 13:00 to 18:00 on Sundays.

**24. Councillor Spence – (after meeting) - request that the first bus stop on the left hand side of Monagh Road be relocated to its original position – approx 40 m at the shops.**

The location of bus stops is an operational matter for Translink. We have however discussed this location with them and Translink is not aware of any bus stops having been moved at this location. I would suggest you raise this matter with Translink directly.

I hope this satisfactorily answers the various questions, raised by Aldermen and Councillors.

Yours sincerely



ROY SPIERS  
Deputy Divisional Roads Manager