

Highways Report Nov 24

This month I have not prepared a pothole report ,instead concentrating on developments of the ;

Enhanced Highway Maintenance (EHM) Pilot Scheme

In a nutshell the Somerset Council used to maintain and repair the parish roads . The main roads like the A359 are the responsibility of the Highways Agency .

The above scheme is a method the Somerset Council has developed to raise funds by transferring the non statutory elements of the cost of the parish roads plus many other items onto the parish councils . The advantage of this to Somerset Council is the Parish can increase its precept as much as it thinks its parishioners can bear . The county council is restrained by legislation ,to increases of no more than 5% , which as you are aware is not enough for the technically bankrupt Somerset Council . As far as the general public is concerned they will be confronted with a much larger increase as the precept is swept up into the overall council tax bill .

On the information we have so far this will not be more efficient ,in fact much less so , but it will raise some money for them ,but only if we agree to a potentially large rise in the precept .

I have attached a letter I have sent to Mr Nathan Turnbull who is a South Somerset employee who has been seconded for a year to Kier and Co the new County Council roads contractor, his title being “community engagement”.

The system as suggested is any schedule of works for pothole repair , as an example , will involve a Kier assessment of the items , they will advise of what is covered by the councils statutory obligation , ie paid by Somerset Council ,and the so called Enhanced (remaining) items that we as the parish will have to fund . All this from an agreed price list that has been proposed .

I have tried to get a view on what costs or liabilities we could be letting ourselves in for and this is where I am at present.

I feel there are potentially quite a few open ended financial commitments to this arrangement and an increase in bureaucracy to all parties involved .Currently the council doesn't seem to have any breakdown of what is currently being spent on the roads in this parish , which is probably to be expected but unhelpful under this new scheme.

Public Reporting of Potholes

I have now been asked to report any parish road issues using the **Somerset Council Public REPORT IT** system . This can be found on the Somerset Website , Roads and Travel etc. This will need a good idea of location preferably citing the neighbouring property, indication of size and depth ,location on road surface and your personal details .

I would ask that if people have concerns they try this system first ,otherwise there is a danger I will simply become a postbox.