

Amendment received in accordance with Standing Order No 8

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP AMENDMENT TO:

The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy Budget Proposals 2023/24

Proposer – Councillor Kitching

Seconder – Councillor Denton

The Liberal Democrat group acknowledges with thanks the hard work of the finance team in again bringing forward a balanced budget, despite the ongoing challenges to funding imposed on local authorities by the government, and by global challenges including the current energy crisis.

As in previous years we recognise that this is a financially well managed council and that prudent decisions made by the finance team continue to allow the Council to remain in good financial shape.

Our amendment therefore does not seek to undermine the budget as a whole, but to bring an exciting and innovative solution to a key area of concern that we – and the communities we serve - believe requires more investment and prioritisation going forward.

We seek to tackle the borough's crumbling roads by improving the capacity, capability and quality of the pothole repairs programme.

We note:

- i. The current high reporting rate of potholes across the borough's roads is generating a great deal of work for the Highways team.
- ii. These traditional repair methods often leads to a need for frequent re-repairs, which is costly and inefficient as the temporary repair often washes out quickly, leaving the road in a worse state than before with additional loose debris.
- iii. The borough's roads need an extensive re-surfacing programme but this is not possible within the current financial envelope and cost of borrowing.
- iv. This leaves the council chasing its tail repeatedly trying to patch crumbling roads and falling behind schedule, as well incurring additional costs in insurance claims.

We further note:

- v. The recent innovation by Stoke on Trent City Council, who invested in a JCB Pothole pro at a cost of approximately £165-185k.
- vi. That this has allowed Stoke on Trent City Council, which in 2021 had the longest pothole repair times in the country – to permanently repair 3 years of potholes in just 4 months.

We therefore propose:

- a. That the council use some of this year's £2m Highways spend to purchase a JCB Pothole Pro machine or equivalent appropriate machine.
- b. The cost of additional materials needed for the significant increase in the number of potholes being repaired can be met from the efficiency savings this method brings as well as from existing highways budgets.
- c. That budget document recommendation p) is amended to include the phrase "but will prioritise purchase of, training on and maintenance of a JCB Pothole Pro or equivalent".
- d. That the Council's communications team run an online contest to name the Pothole Pro, similar to the recent popular gritting machine naming contest.