

Council – 21st March 2024

Notice of Motion: Replacement of Paving Slabs

The policy of replacing paving slabs with a bitumastic type surface was voted through by the Southend council chamber. It was promoted on the information that imperial sized slabs could not be obtained only metric ones making it very difficult to replace broken slabs. Some of the slabs have been in place for over 100 years and remain undamaged. The environmental implications have now changed, so too has the council's commitment to reduce its carbon footprint.

Not declared to Councillors at the time was the following skeleton facts regarding costs environmental damage street scene damage, health risks and services of underground facilities. The environmental damage bitumastic surface continues polluting to the atmosphere and therefore never becomes environmental neutral. Slabs are environmentally neutral after 12 years.

For every 50 yards of bitumastic surface to offset the environmental impact two trees are required. Bitumastic by its chemical make-up encourages weed growth. The surface of bitumastic does not allow drain through as slabs do, this adding to excess surface water and footway puddling. The flow off of bitumastic contains Flux oil that pollutes water courses. Bitumastic surface freezes over, compared to slabs creating a slippery surface forcing residents to walk in the road.

Summer creates higher temperatures with bitumastic compared to slabs preventing dogs wildlife using footways. Bitumastic surface absorbs light compared with slabs, so streetlights have to be brighter to give the same illumination as slab footways. Health, bitumastic as quoted by Southend city council the material is poison to pets wildlife and small children.

Costs currently Southend Council are charged £24 to remove broken slabs and £14 to buy back the crushed slabs for under fill. Any serviceable slabs we are assured are put in storage. But to remove slabs the contractor's smash them as health and safety does not permit the contractor to lift them complete due to the weight.

The Council were not offered the cheaper solution for small sites to lift, level and repack slabs using a small amount of sand. Instead, even good slabs are smashed up and removed to be replaced with bitumastic. The material now being used does not offer a low slip surface, like older materials, thus exposing the council to increase claims for slipping incidents.

Therefore this Council resolves:

To relook at the cost benefit and whole life costs of the current council policy taking into account the environmental and cost impact as well as the disruption to the public and that the Council cannot replace Paving slabs as the current suppliers are unable to supply imperial ones. This is despite the fact that since 1971 council policy has been to only use metric slabs so replacement slabs are available if replacement of post 1971 slabs is required.

Proposer: Cllr Aylen

Secunder: Cllr Cowdrey