



## State of the Market Survey 2018

### Highways





The state of the market survey was conducted by Rob Bailey, APSE Principal Advisor with assistance from Garry Lee, Research and Coordination Officer.

For any enquires in relation to the survey, Rob may be contacted on:

Tel: 0161 772 1810

Email: [rbailey@apse.org.uk](mailto:rbailey@apse.org.uk)

## Highways

### State of the Market 2018

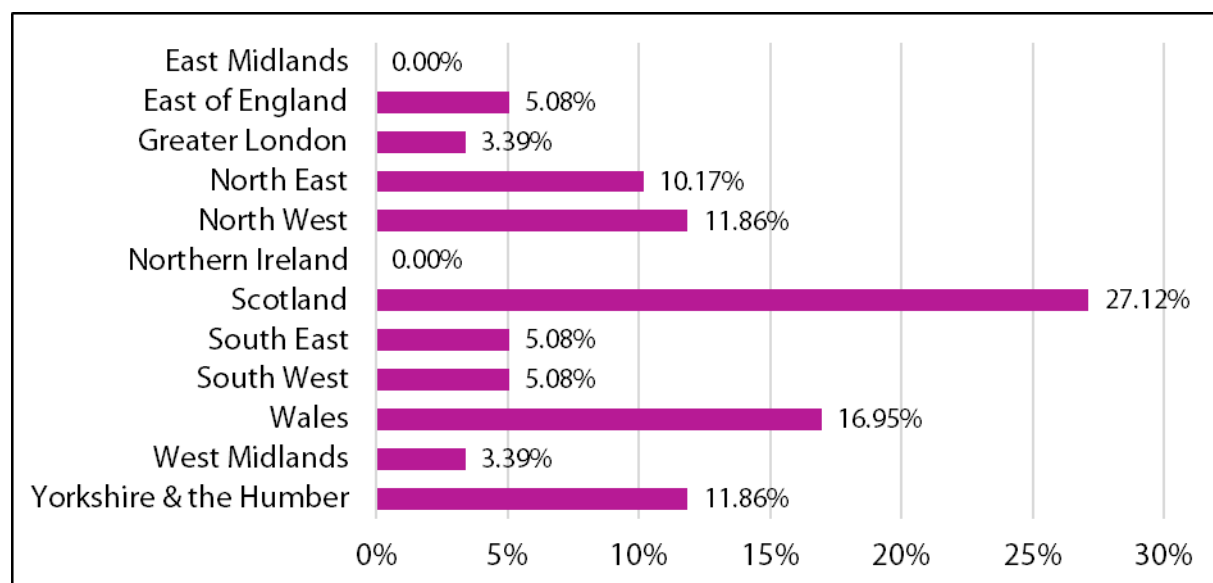
APSE conducted an online survey between May and June 2018. A series of questions were asked covering a range of issues of interest to those officers and councillors responsible for Highways services.

This is the eighth year that APSE has undertaken a state of the market survey for highways, street lighting and winter maintenance. Street lighting and winter maintenance will be covered in separate reports.

The State of the Market surveys are an attempt to understand perceptions of the market amongst people directly involved in delivering services. There were 59 respondents to this survey.

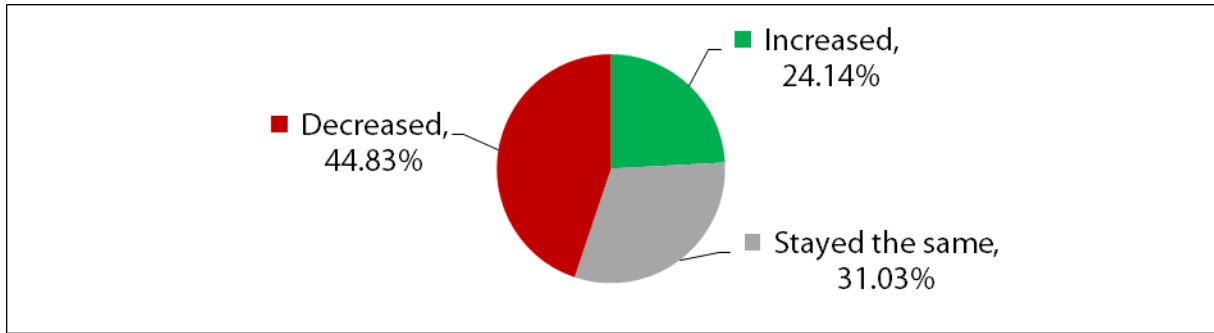
### Results from the Survey

#### 1. Where in the United Kingdom do you work?



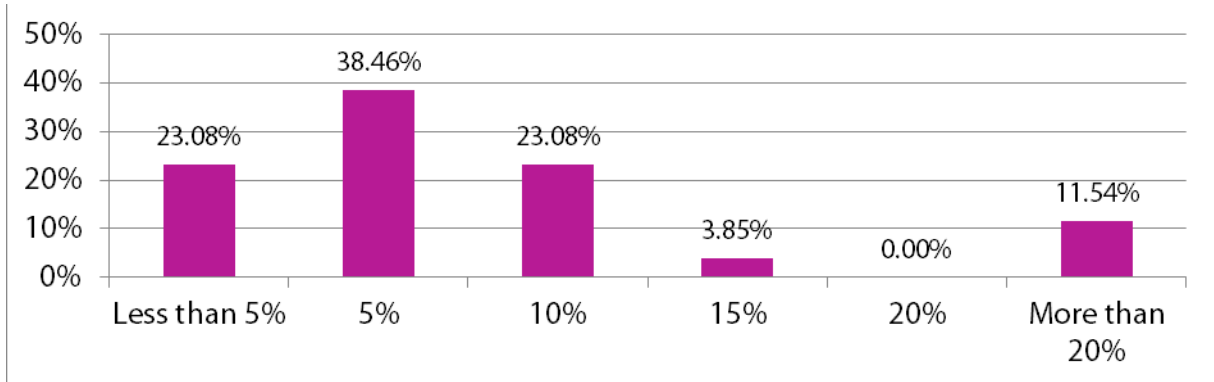
There were 33 respondents from England, 16 from Scotland and 10 from Wales. There were no respondents from Northern Ireland.

#### 2. How has the budget for the highways service changed from 2017-18 to 2018-19?



The majority of respondents have experienced a decrease in their budget from 2017-18 to 2018-19 (44.83%). Among those whose budgets had increased (24.14%), some of the reasons for this were to improve the condition of unclassified roads and to fix more potholes.

**3. If your budget has decreased from 2017-18 to 2018-19, how much has it decreased by?**



61.54% of respondents had a budget decrease of 5% or less. 11.54% had seen their budgets cut by more than 20%.

**4. To what extent will your 2018-19 budget for highways maintenance meet the need to fill potholes and resurface where necessary?**

0-25%	25-50%	50-75%	100%
38.18%	20.00%	34.55%	7.27%

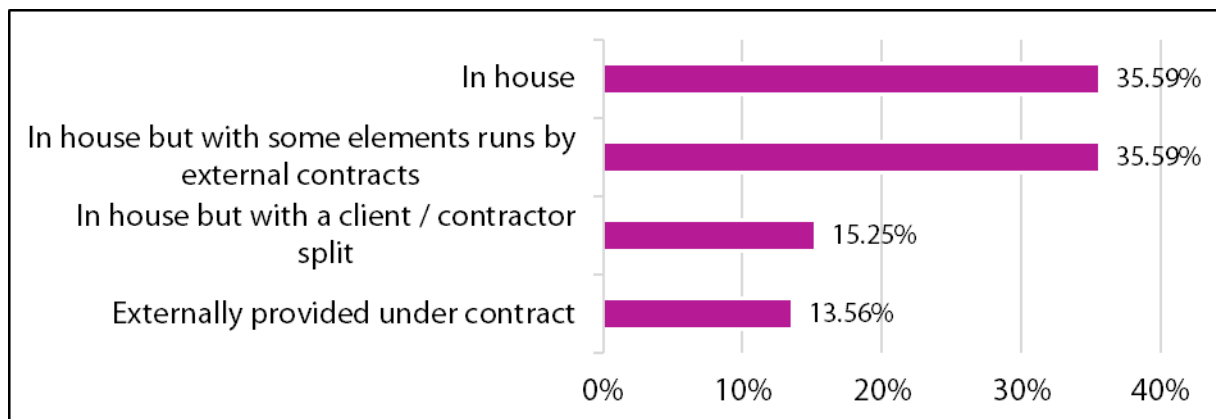
Only 4 of 55 (7.27%) respondents believed that their budget would meet the need of filling to fill potholes and resurface where necessary.

Comments indicated that:

- Some authorities will be able to fill potholes but not resurface, so potholes will continue to form
- Some cannot undertake large extents of surfacing with the available money

- One authority feels that more ringfenced investment is required, as they have regular concerns that this money will be diverted elsewhere
- One authority indicated that while they are able to fulfil their statutory duties, it is at the expense of other areas of need
- One authority said “we have £38 million annual spend to preserve a £7.6 billion asset – i.e. a 200 year asset replacement cycle”

### 5. How are your highways services currently delivered?



86% of respondents to this question have services delivered, at least in part, in-house. 13.56% said that they were externally provided under contract.

### 6. If the service is currently provided in-house, do you expect the service to remain in-house over the next 12 months?

There was only 1 respondent who did not expect their service to remain in-house over the next 12 months.

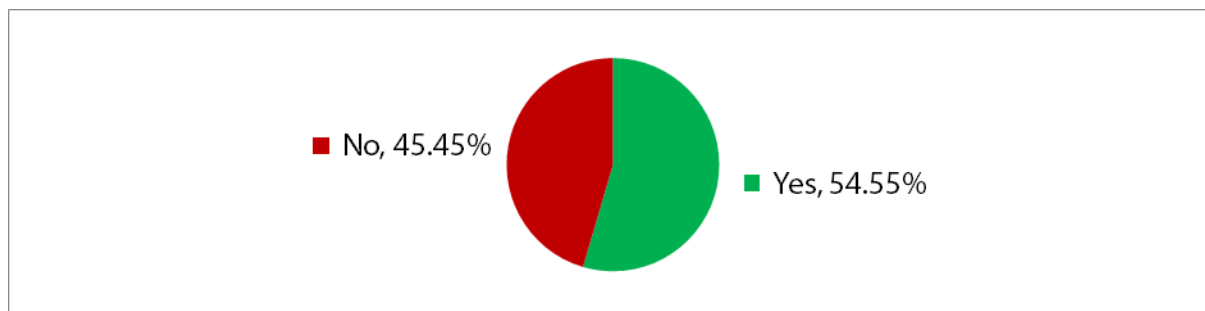
### 7. Where have you had difficulty recruiting or retaining staff (over the past 12 months)?

	Recruitment	Retention	No problems	No staff taken on / left
Operatives	56.27%	37.50%	20.83%	14.58%
Technical / managerial staff	62.96%	35.19%	18.52%	11.11%

The recruitment of operatives and technical/managerial staff remains an issue for the majority of respondents (56.27% and 62.96% respectively).

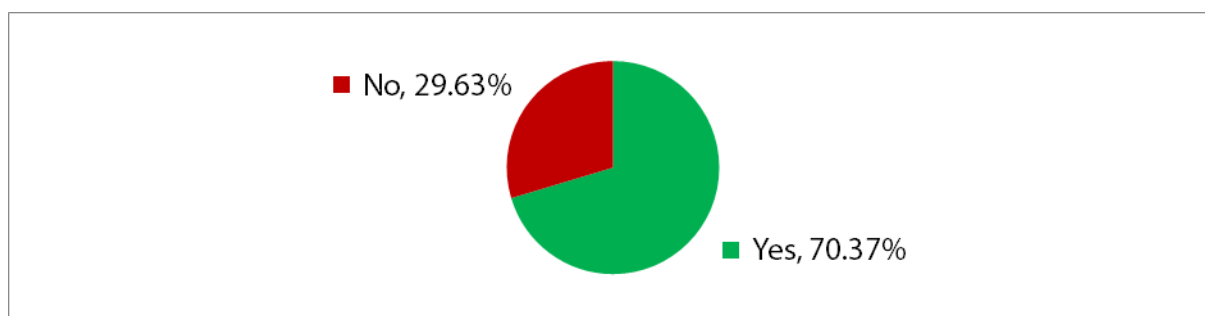
A commenter suggested that one of the reasons for this was because they "have not been able to offer enough money to operatives compared to the private sector", while another said that the "ageing workforce is a concern for the future".

### 8. Do you personally feel staff absence levels are at an acceptable level?



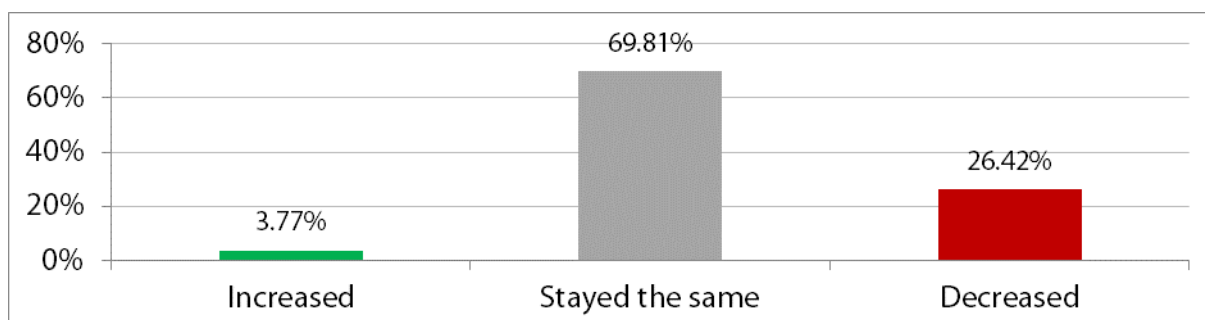
Of the 55 responses, 45% do not personally feel that staff absence levels are at an acceptable level. A few comments suggest that this might be tied to having an ageing workforce, with “older blue-collar staff” having excessive absence levels, “ageing workforce staff having more serious medical issues” and the “considerable pressure on staff” as being a factor in causing more absence and long-term absences. “Stress and mental health issues” are also considered to be a factor in certain long-term absences.

### 9. Do you run an apprenticeship scheme for the highways maintenance service?



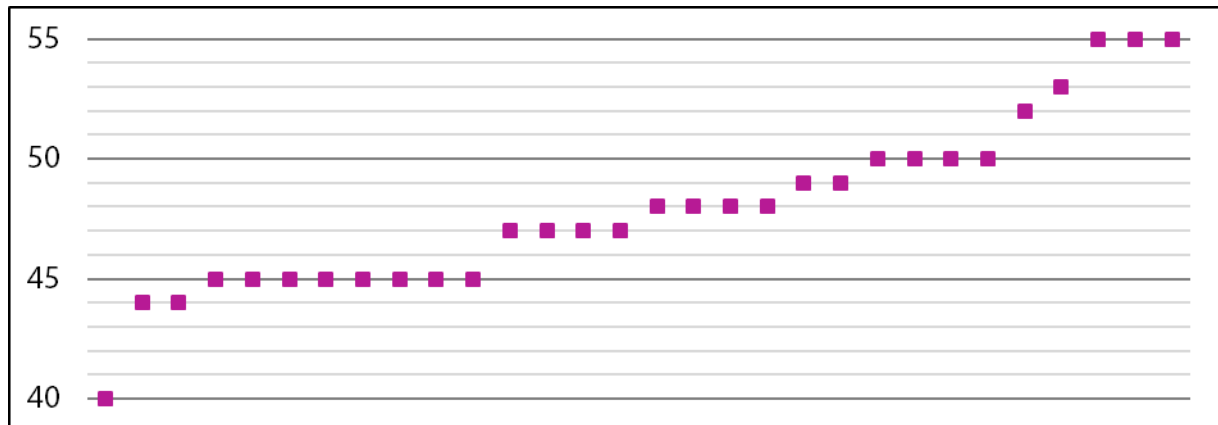
70% of respondents do run an apprenticeship scheme for the highways maintenance service. The number of apprentices taken on varied considerably between authorities, with some only taking on 1 apprentice and another taking on approximately 30. One authority said that they are “keen to find suitable providers”, another said they are “looking to undertake this in 2018/19”. Among those that are not providing schemes, one respondent said “our scheme stops from 2018” and

### 10. What has happened to your highways maintenance training budget over the past 12 months?



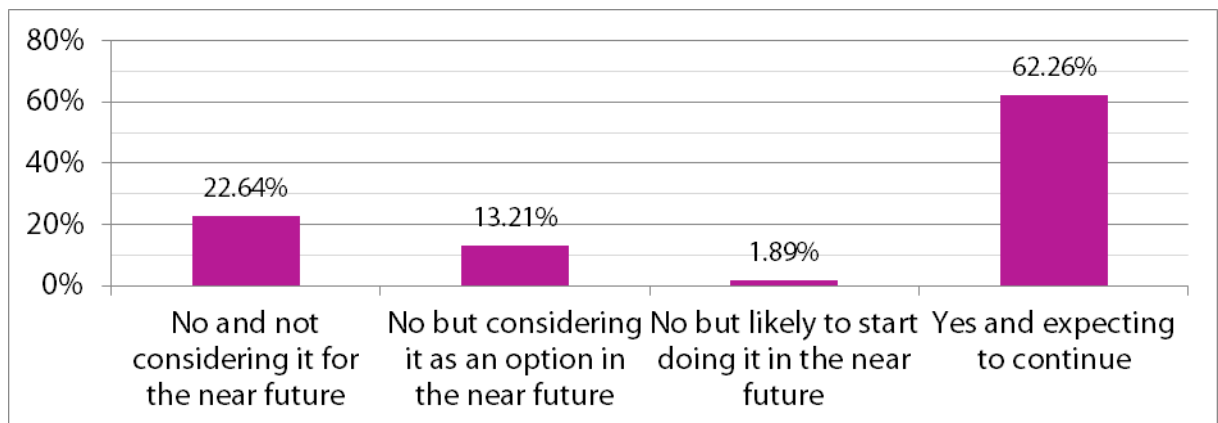
For the majority of respondents (37 of 53), their highways maintenance training budget stayed the same over the past 12 months. 26% reported that their budget had decreased. One individual reported that “only statutory training is undertaken”, and another said their “budget is very low” and that it only buys each employee around half a day’s training each”.

**11. What is the average age of your highways maintenance operational staff? (if known)**



The estimated average age of operational staff is nearly 48 years old. The youngest average reported age was 40, and the oldest average was 55.

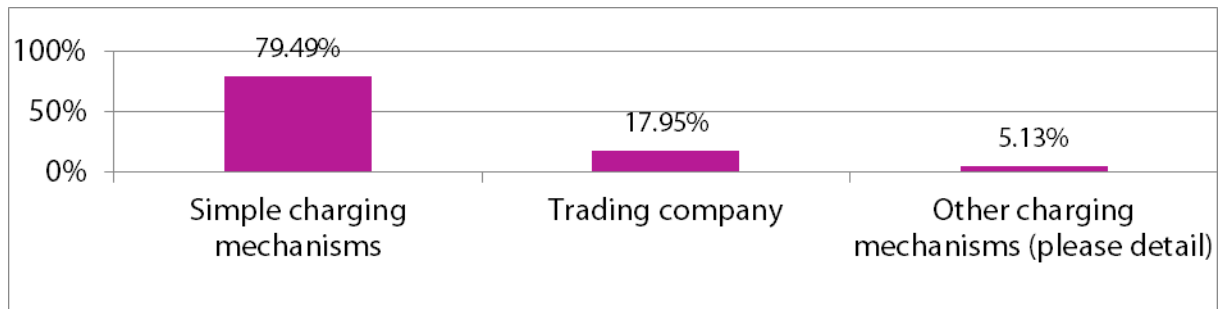
**12. Do you currently sell your services to organisations external to the council?**



62% of respondents do sell their services to organisations external to the council and expect to continue to do so. 13% were considering this for the near future, and 23% were not considering it.



**13. If you do currently sell your services to organisations external to the council, do you use:**



79% of the respondents to this question use simple charging mechanisms, 18% use a trading company and 5% use other charging mechanisms, such as service level agreements.

**14. Where do you see growth areas for the service over the next 12 months?**

The following growth areas were identified by respondents:

- Design and build services for external developers
- Expansion in working for other local authorities
- Increased opportunities to provide more services for the council
- Pothole patching (since resources will not be available to resurface)
- Resurfacing (as a result of an invest to save programme)
- Active travel
- Emergency repairs
- Sponsorship
- Section 278 and 38 development works
- Gully cleansing
- Sports surfacing and play parks

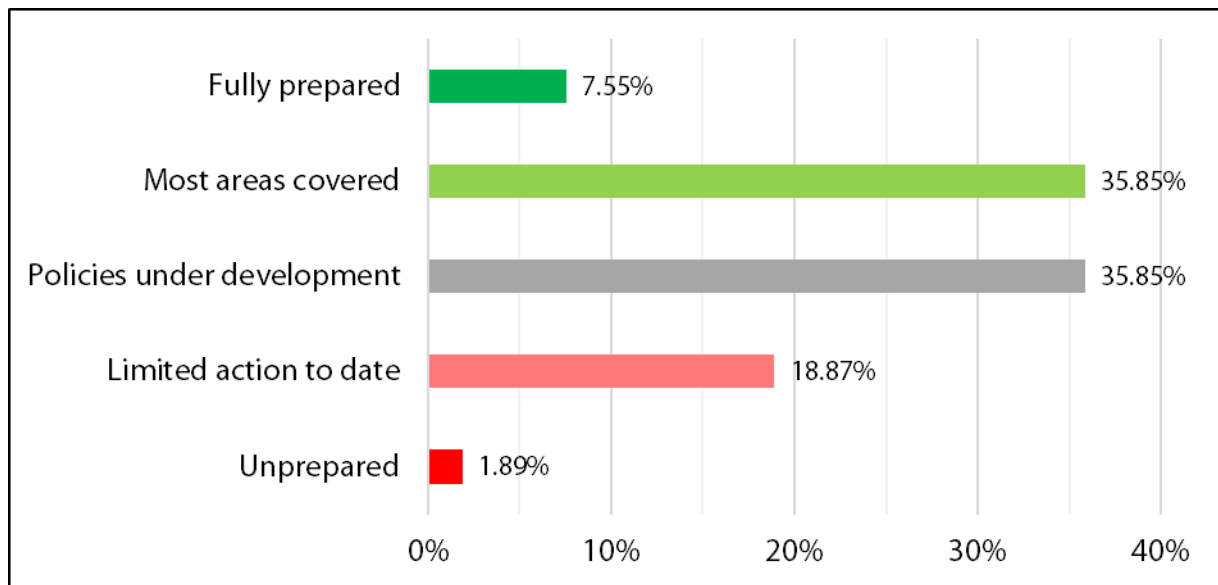
**15. Where do you see areas where work may decrease over the next 12 months?**

Areas identified where respondents expected decreases included:

- Core / routine maintenance
- Capital funding
- Cyclical work
- Planned resurfacing works
- Drainage work
- Footway renewals
- Selling of services to external organisations
- Revenue

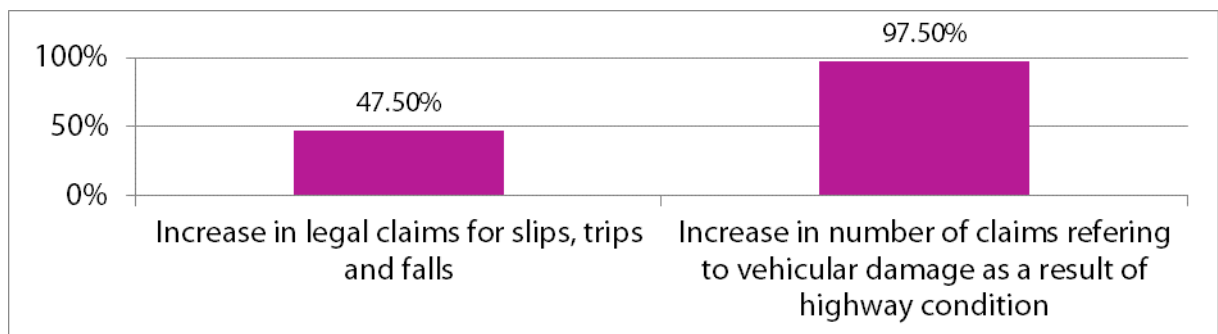
- In-house budgets
- Street lighting repairs (as a result of LED schemes)
- Cycling schemes
- Vegetation maintenance

**16. How prepared are you for the introduction of the New Code of Practice “Well Managed Highways Infrastructure”?**



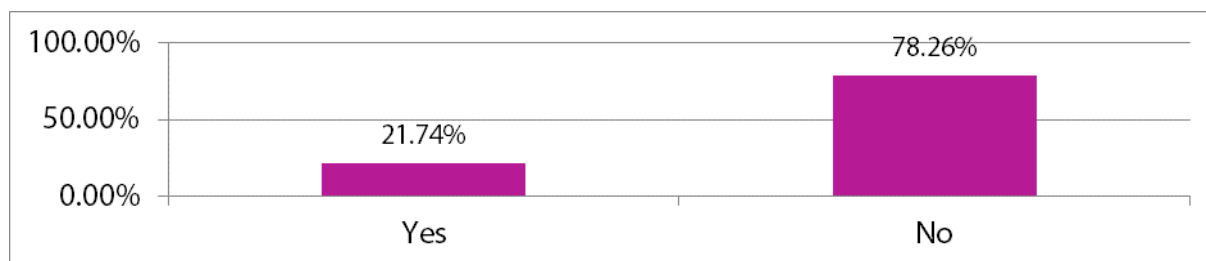
There was only 1 respondent out of 53 that felt unprepared for the introduction of the New Code of Practice, and 10 more who said limited action to date had been taken.

**17. Has the severe weather over the past 3 years led to any of the following (you may answer more than one)?**



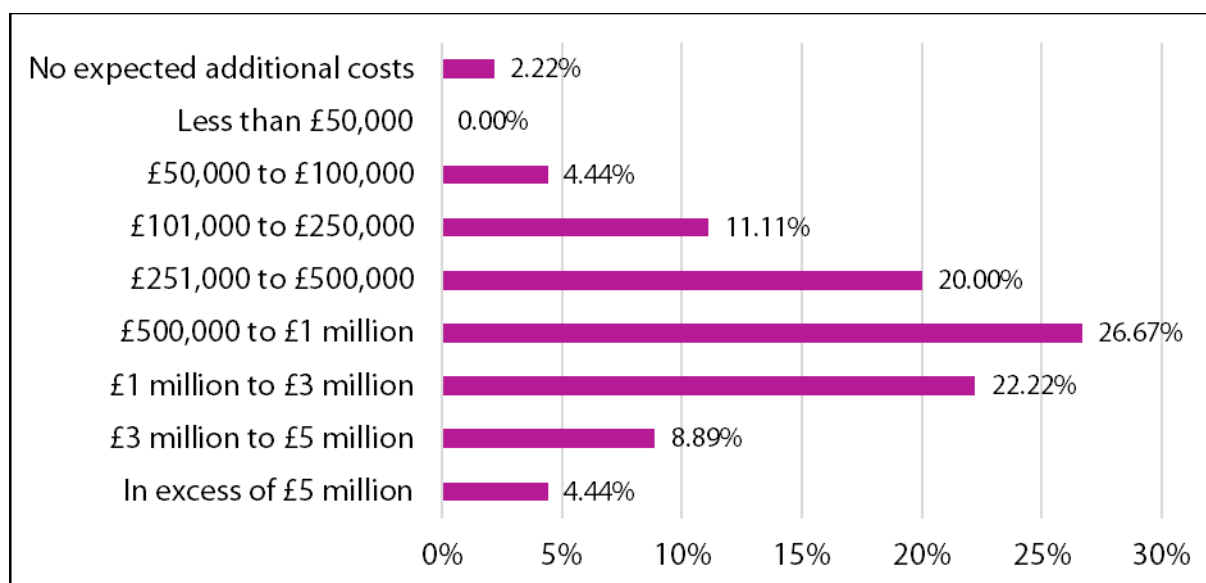
39 of the 40 respondents to this question said they felt that the increase in severe weather had led to more claims referring to vehicular damage as a result of the highway condition, and 19 felt there had been an increase in legal claims for slips, trips and falls.

### 18. Have you recently taken a more aggressive approach to defending claims?



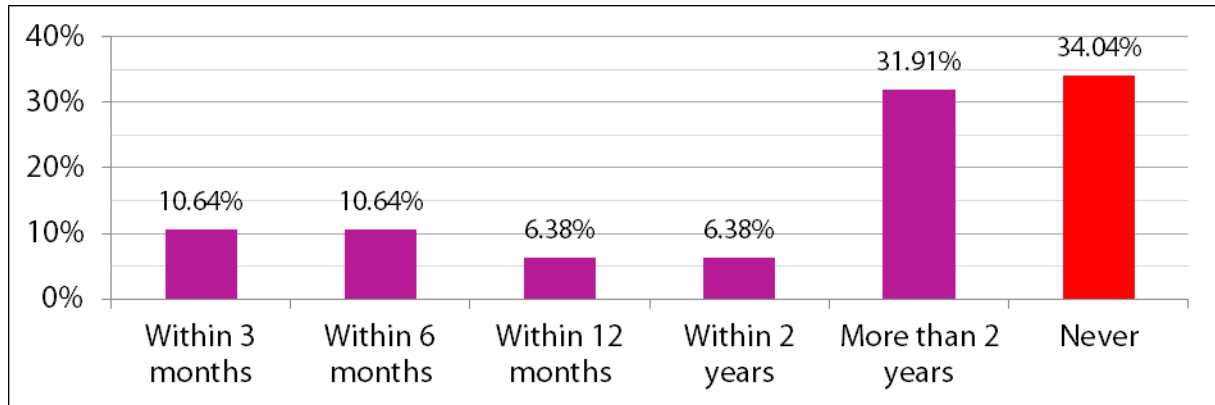
The majority of respondents (36 out of 46) said they have not recently taken a more aggressive approach to defending claims. Many of those respondents commented to say that they have always taken a proactive, robust approach to defending claims.

### 19. What will be the likely costs of repairing potholes which have been identified in your council area?



The amount of likely costs of repairing potholes which has been identified in respondent's council area will vary greatly by the size of authority, the road condition, the methods of repairing potholes and many other factors. 1 authority reported having no expected additional costs, and 2 reported costs in excess of £5 million.

**20. When do you estimate the existing damage to roads in your council area will be repaired to an acceptable standard by?**



The majority of respondents (34%) felt that the existing damage to roads in their council area will never be repaired to an acceptable standard, with the next largest group (32%) indicating that this would take more than 2 years.

**21. What is the most innovative development in highways maintenance you have seen in recent times?**

- Improvements in micro asphalt technology that increases possible areas of application
- Use of cameras and lidar/laser surveys to collect imagery and condition data
- Heatpatching systems
- Plastic substitute in asphalt alongside bitumen
- Geotextiles for use in strengthening failed sections of carriageway
- Slurry based patch repairs
- Automated gritting technology

## **Local Authority Highways Services**

### **State of the Market 2018**

#### **The Association for Public Service Excellence**

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings, and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area, please email: [enquiries@apse.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@apse.org.uk).

Our national advisory groups include: -

- FM & Building Cleaning
- Catering (school meals)
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Environmental Health
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing Construction and Building Maintenance
- Local Authorities Commercialisation, Income and Trading Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Waste Management, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing