

# St. Helens First

Autumn 2012  
St. Helens Council's  
Community Magazine

A top town centre

Economic boost

Council Tax benefit changes



WHAT'S  
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Positive about  
parenting

Little tikes



# Traffic is now flowing freely...



Get that sinking feeling when you hear a traffic alert that's going to cause you real problems? Spare a thought then, for the people who have to put things right – fast – to get things moving again...

**T**housands of vehicles use the St.Helens Linkway every day – but it takes just one to bring everything grinding to a halt.

Late one afternoon the driver of a lorry carrying drums of vegetable oil northbound from the M62 towards the town centre was flagged down by frantic motorists.

With a sinking feeling he realised one of the drums had worked its way loose and he'd been trailing a stream of greasy cooking fat along a 300metre stretch of the northbound carriageway.

But within minutes St.Helens Council's Highways Team – responsible for the maintenance of 470 miles of roads throughout the borough – had swung into action.

One of the first on the scene was Highways Maintenance Manager Steve Walker. After a detailed assessment he knew there was only one course of action he could take.

"We had to close the road," he said. "It was like an ice rink. The worst affected area was the Micklehead roundabout, where the consequences for motorcyclists in particular could have been lethal."

Delays during the following morning's rush hour were unavoidable, with traffic backing up onto the M62. But the council's Traffic and Road Safety Team were at least able to reduce them by maximising the green phase of the traffic lights on the Rainhill Stoops roundabout and organise diversions.

With the carriageway closed off, hundreds of gallons of industrial detergent began to be applied to the road surface. Mechanical brush vehicles then attempted to scour the surface clean. But the crisis was far from over.

Steve explained: "The oil had soaked



Tipping point... the Highways team, had to make a quick decision on resurfacing the Linkway.



True grit... council teams in action at the spill.

into the road surface – and started to work its way back to the surface. So we were left with no alternative but to plane out and resurface certain sections.

"Luckily we found a contractor who was available and able to do the job at short notice, so within a couple of days of the incident everything was back to normal."

For the Highways Team it was just another day. In the middle of it all they had to deal with a four-car pile up on the East Lancashire Road following another oil spillage. But keeping St.Helens on the move is what they do – and if there are problems en route, you know they won't last long.