

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	4 APRIL 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	14
TITLE:	HIGHWAY ASSET MANAGEMENT POLICY		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR A PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	TRANSPORTATION AND STREETCARE	WARDS:	BOROUGH WIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To seek approval from Councillors for the Highway Asset Management Policy
- 1.2 To seek approval for a change in highway safety inspection frequency proposed as part of efficiency savings and Highway Asset Management.
- 1.3 The report outlines the new Highway Asset Management Policy which applies to the creation/construction, acquisition, operation, maintenance, rehabilitation and disposal of all Council Highway Assets.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee approves the Highway Asset Management Policy.
- 2.2 That the Committee gives approval for the proposed change to Highway Safety Inspection frequency.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.
- 3.2 To make travel more secure, safe and comfortable for all users of the public highway.

3.3 To provide a public highway network as safe as reasonably practical having due regard to financial constraints and statutory duties.

4. Background

Highway Asset Management: Code of Practice

4.1 In October 2016 the UK Roads Liaison Group released the latest version of *Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice*, which set out recommendations for the implementation of Highway Asset Management. The Code of Practice states that Local Authorities have 2 years to implement the recommendations. Although it is not specified what will happen should the recommendations not be implemented within this time scale it is likely that funding would be reduced if they are not met.

4.2 The Code of Practice allows local authorities to base their Highway Safety Inspection regimes on Risk Assessments rather than specifying standards by which all inspections must be carried out. In light of the Council having to make efficiency savings a review was carried out into our Highway Safety Inspections to decide if the Councils existing practice could be made more efficient.

5. THE PROPOSAL

Highway Asset Management Policy

5.1 In December 2016 a new Principal Engineer was appointed to oversee the transition to full Highway Asset Management. The first priority for this new role was to secure as much funding as possible from the Department of Transport's incentive fund.

5.2 The incentive funding is awarded based on progress made towards Asset Management. Reading Borough Council was on the lowest of the 3 levels, Band 1 and in order to achieve the next level certain criteria need to be met demonstrating progression towards Asset Management. One of the specified criteria is the publication of an approved Highway Asset Management Policy.

5.3 The Highway Asset Management Policy covers the creation/construction, acquisition, operation, maintenance, rehabilitation and disposal of all Council Highway Assets. Areas covered by the policy include

- Asset Planning - Management of assets and whole life cost cycle cost analysis
- Community Expectations - Managing community expectations with regard to levels of maintenance and assessment

- Risk Assessment and Management - Identifying and managing the risks associated with varying levels of maintenance of assets
- Asset Accounting - Includes Annual Depreciation costs and reporting of gross replacement costs and depreciated replacement costs.
- Budget Allocation - How the maintenance budgets will be allocated based on asset management principles.
- Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) - This will define the management strategies to be adopted throughout the life cycle of the asset
- Highway Maintenance Manual - Details how and when highway maintenance is to be carried out
- Reporting - How and when annual status and option reports shall be presented, including the creation of a Highways Asset Management Board.
- Roles & Responsibilities - Sets out the roles of the Council, management team, managers and staff in delivering Highway Asset Management.

5.4 A copy of the Policy document can be found in Appendix 1

Change in Highway Safety Inspection frequency

- 5.5 As part of efficiency savings the Council approved the reduction in the number of Neighbourhood Officers who carry out safety inspections from 9 to 4. In order to continue to fulfil our statutory duty to carry out Highway Safety Inspections with this significantly reduced resource it is necessary to change how and when these inspections are carried out.
- 5.6 In order to improve the efficiency of the inspections themselves and the process of raising 'work tickets' for any defects found, the inspections will be carried out using hand held tablets. These tablets will be able to record the results of all the inspections, identify the location of defects using GPS and report them directly into the Asset Management system, which will issue any necessary work directly to our Highways and Drainage team. Switching from a paper based system to inputting directly into the Asset Management system will both increase the efficiency of the recording / reporting process and will also provide a more robust record of the inspections themselves.
- 5.7 Whilst the tablets will speed up the process of reporting and recording inspections the current inspection regime would still be too onerous for only

4 Neighbourhood Officers to carry out as the new inspection areas have more than doubled in size. It is therefore proposed to reduce the frequency of inspections as follows

Road Type	Current frequency	Proposed Frequency
Category A	Monthly	3 monthly
Category B	3 monthly	6 monthly
Categories C and U	Every 12 months	Every 18 months

5.8 Prior to proposing these changes a benchmarking exercise was carried out to compare our inspection regime with those of other local authorities. This exercise showed that our inspections are currently carried out in line with those carried out by other authorities. However given the change in resources and carrying out a risk assessment based on guidance in the Code of Practice, the proposed changes are considered appropriate. More recent discussions with our neighbouring authorities have indicated that they are now considering altering the frequency of their inspections to similar to what we are now proposing.

5.9 The frequency of inspections will be reviewed on an annual basis as part of Asset Management to ensure that the inspection frequencies meet our requirements.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

6.1 The Highway Asset Management Policy and Highway Safety Inspections will contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan 2016 - 2019 objectives of:

- Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active
- Providing infrastructure to support the economy
- Remaining financially sustainable to deliver these service priorities

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 The Highway Asset Management Policy includes managing community expectations about how the Council manages its Highway Assets. As progress is made on implementation of Asset Management new policies and standards will be made available on the Council's website once approved by the Highway Asset Management Board.

7.2 The Highway Asset Management Policy will be made available on the Council's website.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:-

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 The Highway Asset Management Policy and Highway Safety Inspections are part of procedures to maintain the Council's existing public highway network. There is no overall change to service delivery at this time only how those service requirements are met. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to carry out highway maintenance and maintain highway structures.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The proposed Highway Asset Management Programme as determined by the Highway Asset Management Policy will be fully funded by the Streetcare Services revenue budget for 2017/18 and the Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement 2017/2018 for bridges and carriageways.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A code of practice

11.2 Policy Committee report 18th July 2016 Efficiency Savings