

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	19 MARCH 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	16
TITLE:	HIGHWAY ASSET MANAGEMENT & HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE CODE OF PRACTICE		
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 report on progress of the implementation of Highway Asset Management systems and the adoption of Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice
- 1.2 To seek Committee approval for the recommended response to Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice
- 1.3 To clarify the definition of highway defects and how they are managed.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the Highway Asset Management Annual Review 2017/2018.
- 2.2 That the Committee notes the review and progress made on the Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice in advance of the October 2018 deadline.
- 2.3 That the Committee approves the approach to responding to Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice (Refer to paragraphs 5.8 to 5.17)
- 2.4 That the Committee approves the clarification of the definition of a highway defect (Refer to paragraph 6)

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 Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice, which set out 36 recommendations for the implementation of Highway Asset Management. Local Authorities have been given 2 years (from the date of publishing) to adopt the new Code of Practice. Although it is not specified what will happen should the recommendations in the Code of Practice not be fully adopted within this time scale the previous codes of practice will cease to be recognised and court rulings will therefore be based on the new code.
- 4.2 One of the most significant changes in the Code of Practice is that local authorities must have a risk based approach to their Highway maintenance regimes rather than there being defined standards. It is therefore for each authority to decide their own levels of maintenance and inspection regimes based on what they consider to be acceptable levels of risk.
- 4.3 In December 2016 Reading Borough Council appointed a Highway Asset Manager who was been tasked with reviewing existing practices and progressing with the adoption of the Code of Practice.

5. THE PROPOSAL

Highway Asset Management Annual Review

- 5.1 In May 2017 Reading Borough Council's Highway Asset Management Policy was published following approval by Committee. The Policy confirmed Reading Borough Council's commitment to Highway Asset Management and outlined how assets will be managed and how progress will be reported, including the establishment of a Highway Asset Management Board (HAM Board)
- 5.2 In September 2017 the first meeting of the HAM Board took place. The Board consisted of the main stakeholders within the Council including Councillors

Tony Page and David Absolom. The first meeting explained what we are doing and outlined the purpose of the board which is to

- Provide direction to the Asset Management team
- Make decisions on technical changes and minor policy changes
- Reporting on progress and spend
- Reporting on efficiencies
- Review and comment on plans for improvements
- Review and comment on documents

- 5.3 The Board has subsequently agreed the governance / terms of reference and established a programme for the board meetings with a full board meeting taking place annually and a smaller board meeting on a quarterly basis. Details of the make-up of each group can be found in the governance / terms of reference.

Asset Management Systems

- 5.4 The Asset Management team has been overseeing the introduction of Asset Management systems. These computer systems will provide a more robust method of recording data and will aid us in managing Highway Maintenance.
- 5.5 The main system change this year has been the switch of the Highway Safety Inspections from a paper based system to handheld devices. These devices are used by the Neighbourhood Officers to record defects directly into the Routine Maintenance System part of our Asset Management system. The Highways & Drainage Operations Manager is now able to assign the defects directly to the works gangs. The Neighbourhood Officers part of the system will be fully operational by the start of the new financial year and the whole system fully electronic shortly thereafter.
- 5.6 Our system for Bridges and Highways Structures is also in the process of being switched to the new asset management system. This should be operational early in the new financial year. One benefit of the new system will be the carrying out of inspections via handheld devices.
- 5.7 Street lighting assets are also being moved to a new asset management system. The intention is to integrate this system into Reading Borough Council's own website allowing members of the public to report street lighting faults directly into the system removing the need for a third party to pass the information onto the street lighting officer. This system is currently being prepared and should be ready to come into operation early in the next financial year.

Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice - Review

- 5.8 Full implementation of all 36 recommendations within 2 years is unrealistic given the resources The Council has available.

5.9 The Council, following advice from the Insurance Industry, will concentrate on key recommendations that we have been advised should be prioritised to ensure highway safety compliance. These prioritised Recommendations are:

1. Consistency with other Local Authorities (recommendation 5)
2. Risked based approach (recommendation 7)
3. Competencies and training (recommendation 15)

Recommendation 5 - Consistency with other Local Authorities

5.10 Discussions between the Berkshire Local Authorities regarding consistency of approach regarding defect definitions, investigatory levels and inspection frequency are taking place. The six Berkshire Local Authorities Highway Managers meet on a regular basis and are working towards meeting recommendation 5.

Recommendation 7 - Risk based approach

5.11 The Neighbourhood Officers are required to risk assess each particular potential defect they find in the carriageway and footway during a safety inspection. Having risk assessed a potential defect the Neighbourhood Officers have the authority to instruct repairs to be carried out on highway 'defects' that do not currently meet the investigatory level should they conclude that the risk of not doing so is too great. Reasons for doing so include, but are not restricted to the following

1. The defect is potentially dangerous due to its location, high level of highway usage and large number of vulnerable users in the area.
2. The defect will potentially meet intervention level before the date it is next due to be inspected

5.12 A risk based approach will also be required for other Highway assets such as bridges and highway structures. At present the frequency and type of inspection for these assets are guided by Highways England's standards for highways. We are currently working with our bridge maintenance consultant to risk assess the inspection of our highway structures to decide whether or not any variance on the current guidance would be acceptable.

Recommendation 15 - Competencies and training

5.13 The Code of Practice recommends that 'the appropriate competency required for asset management should be identified, and training provided where necessary'.

5.14 Given the need to have a risk based approach to Highway Maintenance it has been identified that the Neighbourhood Officers should undergo training to demonstrate that they are competent to carry out on site risk assessment. Whilst the Neighbourhood Officers are experienced in their role such

training will provide formal evidence that they are competent to carry out safety inspections.

- 5.15 Over the last year we have found that there is a need to have additional resilience. This will be achieved by training four additional members of staff to cover the four (4 No.) existing Neighbourhood Officers (Highway Inspectors) during periods of long term absence.

WAY FORWARD

- 5.16 Whilst we are prioritising these 3 recommendations work to meet the other recommendations will also be carried out where possible. The Committee should note that a significant number of local authorities have indicated that they will also be unable to implement all 36 recommendations before October 2018.
- 5.17 The use of the Asset Management systems will be expanded to include the highway works gangs during the next financial year, which will enable the system to direct work repair tickets directly to the gangs from the time they are loaded by the Neighbourhood Officers. This will make the process more efficient, provide priority repair clarity, save time and generate additional capacity within the teams.

6 CLARIFICATION OF THE DEFINITION OF A HIGHWAY DEFECT

CARRIAGEWAY

- 6.1 The Council's current investigatory level for a carriageway defect is 50mm depth over an approximate area of 300mm x 300mm.

FOOTWAY

- 6.2 The Council's current investigatory level for a footway defect is 20mm depth over an approximate area of 300mm x 300mm.

PROPOSAL

- 6.3 The Council is not proposing to alter these investigatory levels at this time. This will continue to be reviewed as we implement Asset Management and the Risk Based approach to safety inspections.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 6.1 The Highway Asset Management Policy and Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice 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 is 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 Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice 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 2018/19 and the Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement 2018/2019 for bridges and carriageways.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A code of practice

11.2 HAM Board Governance / Terms of Reference

11.3 HAM Board minutes

11.4 Highway Asset Management Policy