

Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee



Reading
Borough Council

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12 November 2025

Title	Highway Asset Management 2025/26 Update Report
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Emma Gee, Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhoods Services
Report author	Sam Shean, Highways & Traffic Services Manager
Lead Councillor	Councillor Karen Rowland, Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety
Council priority	Deliver a sustainable & healthy environment & reduce Reading's carbon footprint
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the Committee note and endorse the proposed changes to the Highway Gully Cleaning Regimes.2. That the Committee note the Annual Status Option Reports (ASOR's) for condition of the Council's Carriageways, Footways & Bridges.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the review carried out on the gully cleansing regime and the proposed changes to the Highway Gully Cleaning Regimes and for the Committee to endorse the proposed changes.
- 1.2 To inform the Committee of the Annual Status Options Reports (ASOR) for the condition of the Carriageways, Footways and Bridges.
- 1.3 Appendix 1 – Carriageways ASOR Summary 2025
Appendix 2 – Footways ASOR Summary 2025
Appendix 3 – Structures ASOR Summary 2025

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The Council approved Shaping Reading's Future – Our Council Plan 2025/26 to 2027/28. The Plan reflects the Council's priorities for Reading and provides direction for staff in delivering services to meet the needs of the communities within the Borough whilst working to a budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 2.2 The aim of the Highway Asset Management Plan is to improve Highway Maintenance efficiency, reduce wastage, reduce carbon use and to ensure that a best value sustainable public highway network is available for all users.
- 2.3 To make travel more secure, safe and comfortable for all users of the public highway and to provide conditions that are as safe as reasonably practical having regards to financial constraints and statutory duties.

3. The Proposal

BACKGROUND

Current Position:

Gully Cleaning Regimes

- 3.1 The Council manage over 18,500 gullies on the public highway network and they currently receive an annual clean. The Highways & Drainage Operations Team (H&D) visit each gully with the Gully Emptying Machine and record the condition findings for the Highway Asset Management database using the WDM Asset Management System.
- 3.2 The gully cleaning records show that over the last 2-years the majority within Unclassified Residential Roads have not required additional cleanses and could be cleansed less frequently without a significant increase in risk of flooding. Cleaning these gullies annually is limiting the capacity to address more urgent gullies that require more frequent cleaning
- 3.3 This provides an opportunity for the Council to amend the gully cleansing frequency for the majority of the Unclassified Roads (Residential) from an annual visit to a bi-annual (every 2-years), cleaning regime. We acknowledge that some Unclassified Roads will need an annual cleaning regime, as they are known to be in areas where there is high leaf fall and other known drainage issues.
- 3.4 It is not proposed to amend the gully cleaning regimes on the Classified (A, B & C) Roads, as they are on the strategic routes, with the highest volumes and class of traffic, and therefore the highest risk and should therefore remain the highest priority.
- 3.5 The capacity generated within this amended gully cleaning regime will allow those gullies that need more regular cleaning to receive an enhanced clean, either every 6 months or 3 months in some cases where there are repeated call outs due to slow running gullies or repeated blockages. The Drainage team has received 145 requests to clear blocked gullies since April 2025 with 10% of them in repeat locations.

3.6 Annual Status Option Reports (ASOR's)

Carriageways

- 3.7 The Annual Status Option reports provide updated information on the condition of the Highways Assets and the investment that has been made, also what funding would be needed to maintain a steady state.
- 3.8 The Council manages 404km of carriageways, 29% are Classified Roads and 71% Unclassified Residential Streets.
- 3.9 The Council has invested £17m into improving Roads and Pavements (footways) in Reading since 2020/21.
- 3.10 This investment to date has seen over 900 of 1,334 roads, resurfaced (and / or surfaced). Major Classified Roads receive a resurfacing (plane off 40mm of old road surface and resurface with a new bitumen surfacing) and the Residential Unclassified Roads have received a Micro Asphalt cold applied surfacing layer of between 15mm and 20mm thickness.
- 3.11 Satisfaction levels for Reading Borough Council using the National Highways & Transport (NHT) survey compares well with other authorities, with all indicators above national average.
- 3.12 It should be noted that the road condition indicator for Classified (A, B & C) Roads has deteriorated slightly in 2024/25. This was most likely due to a relatively small amount of resurfacing taking place on the classified roads between the 2023 and 2024 road condition surveys, whilst we prepared a 2-year resurfacing contract. This 2-year contract, which included 70+ sections of mainly major roads, began in late 2024 after the surveys had been completed. This work will be reflected in the latest surveys, (which were carried out in August 2025), and it is expected that this will show a significant improvement in road condition.

- 3.13 The Council's investment has brought the condition of the Classified Major Roads to a good condition, and the Council is now looking to bring forward an extensive and cost-effective preservation programme in the coming years to maintain a good steady state.
- 3.14 The Council has extensively invested in the Unclassified (Residential) road network since 2020/21. This investment has reduced the quantity of unclassified roads requiring treatment to 21%. In other words, 79% of the unclassified roads are now in a 'Green' or good condition. Prior to the start of the investment 50% of the unclassified roads were in a 'Green' or good condition.

Of the remaining 21% less than 1% is in a 'Red' or poor condition meaning that they should be prioritised for treatment. It should also be noted that investigations suggest that the remaining red areas are not entire lengths of road, but more localised areas and clusters of potholes

Footways

- 3.15 The Council manages 820km of footways, ranging from busy pedestrianised footways in the Town Centre to lightly used footways in residential areas.
- 3.16 RBC's level of satisfaction with footways using the NHT, (National Highways and Transport Network), survey compares well to other authorities, with all indicators above national averages.
- 3.17 The quantity of customer contacts about footways defects and condition continues to reduce, and is now at the lowest recorded level in the last four years
- 3.18 The Council's investment is bringing the condition of the public footways to a 'steady state', and the Council is now looking to bring forward a preservation cost effective programme in the coming years to maintain a good steady state.

Bridges

- 3.19 The Council manage a stock of 275 highway structures, of which 19 structures are in need of strengthening and 16 are currently rated to be in a 'poor' condition.
- 3.20 The ASOR report has confirmed that the current routine, reactive and cyclical maintenance Revenue budget is sufficient.
- 3.21 Over the next 5 financial years approx. £1.430m p.a. is to be invested in structures maintenance which will enable 9 structures to be strengthened and 3 'poor' condition structures to be refurbished. The investment will address 12 structures and reduce the current structures backlog to approximately £4.3m.
- 3.22 The Council will continue to seek funding from Department of Transport for addressing the Bridges backlog as and when opportunities arise.
- 3.23 It should be noted that 'poor' condition structures does not mean that they are unsafe and need to be closed, often one element of the structure is in poor condition and just that element requires strengthening or replacement, not the whole structure.

Summary

- 3.24 The ASOR's are showing an improvement in the condition of the carriageway and footway assets. Using innovation and asset management principles, the Council will be looking to use lower cost preservation solutions to extend the life of the good condition assets and address more urgent structural repairs with the available funding.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 Reading Borough Council's vision is:

To help Reading realise its potential – and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

- 4.2 The Council's Corporate Plan has established five themes for the years 2025/28. These themes are:
- Promote more equal communities in Reading
 - Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
 - Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint
 - Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
 - Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future
- 4.3 These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:
- Putting Residents first
 - Building in strong foundations
 - Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
 - Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
 - Being proudly ambitious for Reading
- 4.4 Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on [Reading Council Plan 2025-28 FINAL](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.
- 4.5 The delivery of Highway Asset Management will meet the Council's stated aims by providing:
- A safe, secure and affordable Highway Maintenance Service for all residents and users of the public highway.
 - Maintaining a safe and efficient highway network to support all users, which in turn will maintain economic growth in Reading and the wider region.
 - Support the Council's carbon reduction pledge by improving efficiency, using more recycled materials, lower carbon products, reducing energy consumption with electric vehicles & plant, exploring innovation to reduce carbon, wastes and costs.
 - Delivering the Social Value requirements set out in the tendered contracts to promote local employment and opportunity for residents of Reading.
- 5. Environmental and Climate Implications**
- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2. An Asset Management Approach will benefit the environment by collaborative works, for example the Berkshire Wide Road Sensor Temperature collective trial will improve local road temperature data to provide better decision making. This will lead to reduced number of gritting runs, reduced vehicle usage and reduce waste that will lead to lower carbon emissions and efficiency savings. Using innovation Preservation cold applied products to extend the life of good condition roads and pavements.
- 5.3. All Highways Maintenance contracts include for contractors to consider Environmental Implications and social value.
- 5.4. These contracts include carbon reduction targets and improved sustainability. The intent is to reduce the amount of carbon used to produce the materials at source, using recycled materials, reducing the uncontrolled waste in the environment, to reduce pollution of the natural environment, use of electric vehicles and plant, sourcing green

energy alternatives, carbon off-setting, as well as how they will achieve their own carbon on-going reduction targets.

5.5 A Climate Impact Assessment has been conducted, which considers a net 'low-positive' impact as a result of the Highway Maintenance Regimes. There will be a decrease in the amount of carbon compared with the previous financial years.

5.6 The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council in November 2020, highlights the importance of adapting to climate impacts as well as reducing the emissions which are driving climate change

6. Community Engagement

6.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".

6.2 The public and users of the public highway have access to the highway and any fundamental changes that affects this use will be brought to Committee for consideration and approval should they meet the assessment criteria.

6.3 This report will be available on the Council's website following Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee approval processes.

7. Equality Implications

7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, 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.

7.2. There is no overall change to service delivery at this time, and all users will have a safe public highway. Should any future updates /amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

8. Legal Implications

8.1. The Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, to provide a safe public highway maintainable at public expense.

9. Financial Implications

9.1. Highway Maintenance Asset Management will be fully funded from within the existing Environmental & Commercial Services Revenue Budget.

10. Timetable for Implementation

10.1. Highway Asset Maintenance is a continuous service.

11. Background Papers

11.1. There are none.

Appendices

1. Annual Status Options Report (ASOR's) summaries

- Carriageways**
- Footways**
- Structures**

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report are set out below: -

1. Revenue Implications

Use this Table in the report or as an Appendix to set out the revenue implications:

	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
Employee costs (see note1)			
Other running costs	31	42	43
Capital financings costs			
Expenditure	31*	42	43
Income from:	0	0	0
Fees and charges (see note2)			
Grant funding			
(specify)			
Other income			
Total Income	0	0	0
Net Cost (+)/saving (-)	31*	42	43

* Denotes Actual spend 2024/25

The net cost of the proposal can be funded from existing Revenue Highways & Traffic Services Budgets and capitalisation.

2. Capital Implications

Capital Programme reference from budget book: page line	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure	0	0	0
Funded by			

Grant (specify) DfT LTP Award			
Grant DfT Additional Road Resurfacing Fund			
Section 106 (specify)			
Other services (National Highways Grant)			
Capital Receipts/Borrowing			
Total Funding	0	0	0

Note: where more than one option /proposal is being made it may be easier to set out the above information in an Appendix.

3. Value for Money (VFM)

This is a statutory service provision.

The Asset Management Approach complies with Highway Code of Practice; best practice and existing contracts has shown to be competitive.

4. Risk Assessment.

The Council has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the public highway. The Highway Asset Management Plan will continue to reduce the risk to the Council and the public. The on-going revenue maintenance costs for delivering Asset Management will be absorbed within existing revenue budgets for highway maintenance. Method statements agreed with the existing contractors will continue to ensure delivery during the current financial position and climate changes challenges (flood / heat / drought), as well as ensuring that disruption is minimised. Supply chain for products risk mitigated by the contractor buying large volumes & stockpiling materials based on the size of the winter service programme.

Risk Assessments and Method Statements are included with all Highway Contracts and for the Council's own Highways & Drainage Operations Team.

Increasing fuel costs is and will remain a risk pressure, as will climate change, which will need to be managed throughout the programme.