

Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills, Executive Director for Economy and Environment

Report to:	Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date:	01 June 2015
Subject:	Highway Asset Management Plan

Summary:

The Highway Asset Management Plan (formerly titled Highway Maintenance Plan) sets out the Council's highway maintenance policies, legal duties and standards. The document details any deviation from national guidance which is set out in "Well Maintained Highways - Code of Practice for Maintenance Management". Following changes in our Asset Management Policy and Strategy, the plan is now in need of approval for 2015 due to:

- 1) Revisions to national standards and internal policy documents. The national codes of practice are currently under review, to be published in the Autumn.
- 2) Changes to emergency response times to category 1 and 2 defects.

A copy of the proposed Highway Asset Management Plan is attached for consideration.

A report has been issued by the Executive Director to the Executive Councillor for Highways and Transportation for a decision on 3rd June 2015 with a recommendation to adopt option 1 in the conclusion of this report.

Actions Required:

Members of the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee are requested to consider the attached Highway Asset Management Plan and consider whether they support the recommendation of option 1 in the conclusion of this Report and any comments they wish to make to the Executive Councillor prior to the making of a decision.

1. Background

- 1.1 July 2005 saw the release of *Well Maintained Highways – Code of Practice for Maintenance Management*. *Well Maintained Highways* sets out suggested standards to be used in highway maintenance policy and operation and the document is usually used as a reference point during legal claims. The Highway Asset Management Plan is therefore required to

show Lincolnshire County Council's maintenance standards and where applicable any deviation of these standards from *Well Maintained Highways*. The plan includes levels of service such as highway inspections, grass cutting, gully cleaning and all maintenance duties the Authority is responsible for.

- 1.2 The Department for Transport are currently reviewing *Well Maintained Highways* with a view to changing guidance on a number of areas such as emergency response times to defects within the highway. There is a national recognition that it is difficult for Local Highway Authorities to align with the current Code of Practice due to budget constraints and a degrading national road network. The Midlands Service Improvement Group (MSIG) members are also considering the review of response times and are expecting to follow the Lincolnshire lead on these changes to establish reasonable standards for other Local Authorities to follow.
- 1.3 It has become necessary to review the Highway Asset Management Plan ahead of changes to Well Maintained Highways as it clear that present emergency response times to Category 1 and 2 defects do not reflect the preventative maintenance strategy agreed in the Transport Asset Management Plan. This strategy includes a first time fix of potholes rather than a temporary repair and preventative maintenance which would prevent the potholes forming by the timely application of a surface treatment such as dressing.
- 1.4 The existing policy does not allow for the efficient treatment of highway defects, particularly potholes, and the proposed amendments reflect a change to allow efficient programming and a prioritisation of defects aligned with Road Hierarchy. The review of response times was instigated following the publication of *Prevention and a Better Cure – Pothole Review* by the Department for Transport as part of its Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP). This review states that “Consideration should be given to how local highway authorities develop maintenance hierarchies for all road users based on the function and use of the route”. This approach also reflects the strategy set out in our Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP). The asset management guidance products produced by HMEP also recommend that authorities should employ an asset management approach. The principle "prevention is better than cure" in determining the balance between structural, preventative and reactive maintenance activities is being embraced by Lincolnshire County Council and has shaped the review of the Highway Maintenance Plan (to be retitled as Highway Asset Management Plan as part of the review). This philosophy should improve the resilience of the highway network and minimise the occurrence of potholes in the future, informing the risk-based approach to response times in a move to "first-time fixes" to highway defects. The Department for Transport has indicated that around 20% of funding for local highways authorities will be reliant on an ability to demonstrate an engrained approach to asset management and the pursuit of the efficiency agenda. This includes a move away from reactive to proactive maintenance.

- 1.5 The proposed response times contained within Appendix B of the Highway Asset Management Plan have been developed using a risk based approach which takes into account the changes in likelihood of a defect being encountered on different hierarchy roads. This approach fully reflects the guidance given in the existing Code of Practice. The impact of this change is to give longer response times on infrequently used parts of the Highway Network, but with an expectation that the defect would be permanently repaired. The shift of resources to a preventative maintenance strategy will also see fewer potholes develop as more roads receive a surface treatment.
- 1.6 The plan has been thoroughly reviewed and consultation has taken place with all sections of the Council about the amendments to standards or codes of practice. The formatting has also been updated to make it more user-friendly and electronic versions of the document have a live index and hyperlinks. Changes to street lighting inspection regimes are highlighted in red. The layout of the Asset Management Plan has been brought in line with the TAMP which it is now linked to.
- 1.7 The Highway Asset Management Plan is used by all sections in the Directorate, as well as being used as a legal reference point during claims. A copy of the Plan is included with this report and changes to the previous plan are highlighted in red.
- 1.8 As referred to in paragraph 1.1, the Highway Asset Management Plan is usually used as a reference point during legal claims to determine whether the Council has a defence under section 58 of the Highways Act 1980. That defence requires the Council to prove that it had taken such care as in all the circumstances was reasonably required to secure that the part of the highway to which the action relates was not dangerous for traffic.
- 1.9 Historically the Council has met this test by referring to its inspection regime and reactive maintenance response times in accordance with previous national standards. The move to a first fix preventative approach is consistent with emerging national guidance. However it is also currently untested in the courts. The proposed changes to the HAMP have been passed on to the Council's Insurers. The Insurers have declined to comment but have not raised any objections to the proposed changes.

2. Conclusion

A decision needs to be made to select one of three options:

- 1) To approve the attached Highway Asset Management Plan and incorporated response times.
- 2) To continue with the previous policy with current resources. Meeting existing response times within current resources cannot be guaranteed.
- 3) To continue with the existing policy but increase resources to meet the response times laid out within it. The resources required to do this would be removed from those currently delivering our preventative maintenance strategy and may compromise our ability to demonstrate the adoption of an

Asset Management based approach to the service. In addition, it is not possible to obtain additional resources from the Council's budget because the Highways department is competing for funds with services such as Education, Adult Care and Childcare all of which are extremely stretched at present.

A report has been issued by the Executive Director to the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT for decision on 3rd June 2015 with a recommendation to adopt option 1 above.

Members of the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee are requested to consider the attached Highway Asset Management Plan and consider whether they support the recommendation of option 1 and any comments they wish to make to the Executive Councillor prior to the making of a decision.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Highway Asset Management Plan
Appendix B	Summary of changes from previous plan

5. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Well Maintained Highways - Code of Practice for Maintenance Management	Highways Department
Prevention and a Better Cure - Pothole Review	Highways Department

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