

Report to Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Transportation

Decision to be taken on or after 13 September 2017

**Decision can normally be implemented at least
3 working days after decision has been signed.**

Cabinet Member Report No. T20.17

Title: Highway Asset Management Policy

Date: 7 September 2017

Author: Mark Kemp

Contact officer: Keith Carpenter Tel: 01296 387454

Local members affected:

For press enquiries concerning this report, please contact the media office on 01296 382444

Summary

In November 2015 the County Council adopted its first Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy. The policy ensured that the activities undertaken by Transport for Buckinghamshire were aligned with and contributed to achieving the objectives outlined in the County's Strategic Plan 2015/17.

The policy has guided the development of plans and strategies designed to improve the service to take a systematic approach to deliver most efficiently and effectively over the long term, thereby offering best value to the authority. It covers all maintenance activities and informs decision making in the Business Planning Process and in the Medium Term Financial Plan budget setting.

In 2017 the County Council has revised and adopted a Strategic Plan to run from 2017 to 2020, setting out the Authority's key aims and priorities for the period. This revision ensures that the Highway Asset Management Policy aligns with the latest Strategic Plan.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Member for Transportation approves and adopts this revised Highway Asset Management Policy which sets the guiding principles for the management of the Authority's highway assets. This revision ensures that the policy remains current and aligns the policy with the recently adopted County Council Strategic Plan 2017-2020.

A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

1. The Policy continues to place our Highway Infrastructure assets at the heart of Council decision making – acknowledging their financial value and their value in support of transportation services provided for the residents and businesses of Buckinghamshire.
2. A revised Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Strategy is in development and will be submitted to the Cabinet Member for sign off. This overarching Policy is enabled by the Strategy and together they form part of the Authority's Asset Management Framework for its Highway Infrastructure.
3. The Asset Management Policy and Strategy maintain a clear line of site from the objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan to the works programmes implemented and delivered each year as part of the Business Planning and delivery processes.
4. This Policy enables TfB to comply with national best practice and reflects the guidance provided by Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) document 'Highway Infrastructure Asset Management' and the National Code of Practice 'Well-managed Highways'.
5. This Policy sets out the guiding principles for the Strategy that takes a systematic approach to deliver most efficiently and effectively over the long term, thereby offering best value to the authority. It covers all maintenance activities and informs decision making in the Business Planning Process and in the Medium Term Financial Plan budget setting.
6. The Department for Transport has been engaging with the industry for the last few years and has been keen to encourage all Highway Authorities to embrace the asset management principles. This has included the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP), which is a Government funded initiative to promote efficient working. The guidance is intended to promote good and consistent practice across the country and covers all aspects of highway maintenance from procurement and contract options to policies and communications.
7. As part of this, and to actively encourage take-up, the DfT continues to assess the efficiency of each highway authority by requiring them to complete a self-assessment questionnaire each year. The assessment is made against a range of questions and determines levels of funding for future years by placing authorities in one of three bands. The proportion of funding lost is increasing each year to around £1.5M per annum by 2020/21. TfB has made significant strides in improving their scoring in this assessment and are planning to achieve the highest banding in 2017.
8. Highway infrastructure asset management is an established and widely recommended approach both in the UK and internationally. Where it has been adopted for highways, savings of at least 5% on budget have been reported. It also supports decision-makers in reconciling short-term problems with long-term priorities. In other public services sectors such as the water industry, asset management has been well established for some years, and has produced savings of up to 15%.
9. The AM Framework, including the overarching Policy is an essential prerequisite for maximising Buckinghamshire's share of DfT funding

B. Other options available, and their pros and cons

10. The Highways Asset management Policy is already established and guiding TfB's activities. If we do not keep it current and up to date then this would have the following disadvantages:
- We will not align our activities to the priorities of the Authority.
 - We are unable to take an overview of our approach to highway assets leading to lack of forward planning and poor value for money.
 - We miss opportunities to exercise release of maximum value from our assets for our residents and businesses.
 - We expend more resource on poor value solutions such as reactive maintenance.
 - We miss the opportunity for collaborative working across our own activities and those of third parties, such as developers.
 - The true value of the asset is not understood, and the budget setting process is not sufficiently informed to protect that value.

C. Resource implications

- 11 The Highway Asset Management Policy is already in operation and there are no specific resource implications associated with this revision.

D. Value for Money (VfM) Self Assessment

12. The main benefit of continued adoption of this Policy will be that it will promote efficient use of the available budget and help to inform decision makers as to the best value from that budget by taking a long term, systematic approach. Notwithstanding the potential incentive element funding reductions from the DfT it should be recognised that this approach does represent good practice and is now supported by centrally published guidance. The intention of the strategy is to align delivery to the corporate objectives to ensure that what is important to the County Council's long term goals is best matched by the works programmes we deliver on the ground.

E. Legal implications

14. There are no legal implications in revising this Policy.

F. Property implications

15. There are no property implications in revising this Policy.

G. Other implications/issues

15. There are no other implications in revising this Policy.

H. Feedback from consultation, Local Area Forums and Local Member views

16. This is a corporate issue affecting all Divisions. Member engagement is enshrined in the Communications Strategy included within the Asset Management Framework. This revision aligns the policy to the latest Strategic Plan and does not change the underlying principles of the policy.

I. Communication issues

18. A Communications Strategy ensures relevant information is provided to key stakeholders to inform the setting of performance targets, budgets and in making key decisions. The strategy outlines how TfB promotes communication both in providing information to key stakeholders and receiving feedback. It covers communication inside the service, across the authority and with external stakeholders such as the public and parish councils. The plan lists the key Stakeholders, the channels of communication used, and contains an annual communications action plan.

J. Progress Monitoring

19. Progress in pursuing the implementation of the Policy and associated strategy will be monitored by providing updates to the Asset Strategy Board and separately to TfB's Strategic Board. In addition, regular Asset Management Boards take place which include the Cabinet Members for Transportation and Resources, Deputy Cabinet Member and Head of Service. These meetings guide activities addressing individual areas of interest or concern.

K. Review

20. It is anticipated that significant changes to the Policy will not need to be made even if major changes in available budget occur. The Policy should only need revising when significant external changes take place such as the adoption of the new Strategic Plan.

Background Papers

The TfB Highway Asset Management Policy Appendix A

Your questions and views

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.

If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Member Services Team by 5.00pm on 12 September 2017. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382343), or e-mail to democracy@buckscc.gov.uk