

Report to Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Transportation

Decision to be taken on or after 14 December 2018

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

Cabinet Member Report No. T26.18

Title: Highways Network Safety and Network Management
Policies

Date: 6 December 2018

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Local members affected: All

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

Summary

The Highways Network Safety and Network Management policies support the recently approved Highways Services Policy. This is a key document that sets out our approach to managing our highway infrastructure, in accordance with guidance given in the Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice (WMHI)

The purpose of these two policies is to describe how BCC delivers these specific elements of the Highways Service, and how successful implementation is measured and monitored

Recommendation

**That the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transportation approves the
adoption of these two policies**

A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

1. The Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice (WMHI) was published on 28 October 2016 by the UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG). It promotes an integrated asset management approach to highway infrastructure maintenance. This means establishing levels of service through evidence-led, risk-based assessments which reflect local needs and priorities. Authorities were given until October 2018 to adopt the WMHI's risk-based approach. The Highways Services Policy aims to benefit residents by targeting highway services to areas with the greatest need, having taken account of risk to all those using the highway, including those with mobility impairments.
2. The WMHI is guidance only and does not have statutory effect, but non-compliance with it could mean Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) is unable to successfully mount a defence under section 58 of the Highways Act 1980 in the event of a claim. The Service developed the overarching Highway Services Policy which adopts the guidance given in the WMHI, and sets out the approach for delivering Highway Services in support of the Council's aims as set out in the Strategic Plan 2017–20.
3. The Highway Services Policy was approved by Cabinet on 22 October 2018. This document details the background legislation and the need for a risk-based approach to managing our highways infrastructure.
4. The Cabinet Report setting out the rationale for the Highway Services Policy introduced the need for the Highways Network Safety and Network Management policies as key documents to describe how BCC delivers these specific elements of the Highways Service, and how successful implementation is measured and monitored
5. Buckinghamshire County Council's (BCC) 3,200km highway infrastructure asset provides a transportation network for both businesses and private users. Proper management of the Highway Network reduces congestion and ensures occupation is appropriately managed. A well-managed Highway Network will contribute towards the achievement of the following Asset Management Objectives:

AMO2: Manage Highways Effectively and Efficiently

AMO3: Maximise Network Availability

The way in which we ensure appropriate network management is achieved is detailed in the proposed Network Management Policy attached as Appendix One.

6. In providing that transportation network, BCC has a duty to provide safe passage along the highway for all users, be they motorists, users of public transport, cyclists, equestrians or pedestrians, thereby covering all transport modes. The Network Safety policy will contribute to the achievement of the Asset Management Objective:

AMO1: Maintain a Safe Network

How we ensure delivery of this objective is achieved is detailed in the proposed Network Safety Policy attached as Appendix Two.

7. The decision to adopt these policies was referred to in the October Cabinet report with the intention that the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transportation progress them as a key decision.

B. Other options available, and their pros and cons

8. The implication of failing to adopt these Policies is that the Council's policy base, which is required to support the risk-based approach to service delivery outlined in the Highway Service Policy, will be limited in these two key highway functions and the authority will therefore will be more vulnerable to third party claims.

C. Resource implications

9. There are no new resource implications in the adoption of these two policies as they are a formalisation of existing work areas that are agreed through the current business planning and Medium Term Financial Plan Processes.

D. Value for Money (VfM) Self-Assessment

10. The Service is taking steps to implement a risk-based approach for all aspects of highway infrastructure maintenance, including: setting levels of service, inspections, responses, resilience, priorities and programmes. The Service adopts this risk-based approach and takes account of local needs, priorities and affordability in order to:

- 10.1 Demonstrate benefits and value for money of the integrated delivery model, by identifying efficiencies through comparison of the contract with other similar contracts, benchmarking services, and undertaking reviews to promote continuous improvement.

- 10.2 Deliver best value by identifying efficiencies and revenue opportunities, complying with business processes, governance, and management systems to balance cost, risk and performance.

- 10.3 Undertaking independent service reviews by outside Bodies (i.e. the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme strategic review and the Future Highways Research Club service assessment)

E. Legal implications

11. These policies support the Highways Services Policy, which is likely to be a key piece of evidence used to demonstrate the risk based approach being adopted by the Council in the event of third party claims.

12. The courts will look to the Well Managed Highways Infrastructure as an example of good practice, and there will be an expectation on highway authorities to comply with the WMHI as a minimum requirement. A lack of resources is not justification for failing to take such care as was reasonably required to make the highway safe.

13. Under the Traffic Management Act 2004 Local Authorities have a "Network Management Duty" to manage the day to day running of the highway network in an efficient and effective manner.

F. Property implications

None

G. Other implications/issues

None

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

14. The implications of the WMHI have been discussed at length in the Service's Asset Management Board meetings, which are attended by the Cabinet Member for Transportation and his Deputy. Both have contributed towards the development of the Highways Service Policy in the full understanding of its aims and objectives as well as those of the supporting Policies for Network management and Network Safety.
15. Levels of service have been reviewed during workshops held at annual Stakeholder Conferences, and so the risk-based approach has been well tested with County, District and Parish Councillors. Workshops undertaken at the Stakeholder Conferences included: "Be a Highways Inspector for a day" where intervention thresholds and response times for a range of defects were evaluated, and "Be a Highway Authority for a day" where competing demands on services were evaluated against affordability. Feedback from these workshops influences the annual business planning process.
16. The Service holds regular Parish Focus Group meetings, chaired by the Deputy Cabinet Member for Transportation, and the group's views are fed into the annual business planning process

I. Communication issues

17. Our Communications Strategy ensures relevant information is provided to key stakeholders in order to inform the setting of performance targets, budgets and in making key decisions. The strategy outlines how the Service promotes two-way communication, both providing information to key stakeholders and receiving feedback. It covers communication inside the service, across the Service and with external parties such as the public and Parish and Town Councils. The strategy lists the key Stakeholders, the channels of communication used, and contains an annual communications action plan. Once these policies are approved, the communication strategy will be used to inform stakeholders.

J. Progress Monitoring

18. Progress is managed through the Performance Management Framework (PMF) that includes both output and outcome indicators to demonstrate the Service is meeting its activity targets (outputs) and its service levels (outcomes).
19. Progress will also be monitored through the Service's governance system that will escalate risks, as required, through the Operations Management Board and up into the Strategic Board.

K. Review

20. The policies that are the subject of this decision will be reviewed as part of our annual business planning process.

Background Papers

	Highways Services Policy
Appendix One:	Highways Network Management Policy
Appendix Two:	Highways Network Safety Policy.

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 Democratic Services Team by 5.00pm on 13 December 2018. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382343), or e-mail to democracy@buckscc.gov.uk