

## **Report for Cabinet – Executive Summary**

The Highways Service has produced a new Highway Services Policy, for Cabinet approval, to demonstrate that Buckinghamshire's highway services are in line with new national recommendations. These recommendations were made by the UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG) in the new *Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice* (WMHI) published in October 2016. The Council's new policy focuses on one of the most critical recommendations, that '*a risk-based approach should be adopted for all aspects of highway infrastructure maintenance*'.

### **Background on the WMHI**

The new guidance set out in the WMHI is based on an asset management approach to highway maintenance<sup>1</sup>, which contains 36 recommendations.

The objective of the update to the guidance is to change the way highway infrastructure is managed in the UK, through the adoption of a risk based approach.

The WMHI includes the development or revision of guidance and advice for routine and cyclical maintenance, inspections, climate change and resilience, with the aim of reducing the overall cost of the service while not compromising statutory duties. It provides guidance for authorities to consider their approach in accordance with local needs, priorities and affordability.

The major change that will impact on all highway authorities is that the WMHI removes prescriptive or minimum standards for local authorities to adhere to. It places the onus on individual authorities to set their own standards and adequately demonstrate and evidence that they have adopted this new code of practice before, or as of, October 2018. This means that authorities need to develop their own policies and set appropriate service levels to demonstrate compliance.

Whilst the Council has operated a risk based approach for many parts of its Highway service for a number of years the approval of this policy demonstrates a formal adoption of this approach at the highest level. The risk based approach is described in detail in Appendix B.

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<sup>1</sup> TfB's Asset Management strategy is based on a rigorous, data driven approach to understanding the condition and needs of the highways network, while working with Members to ensure a clear line of sight between the aims of the County Council's strategic plan and TfB's work. The whole Asset Management strategy can be found by searching 'asset management' on the County Council website.

It covers the wide range of highway services such as:

- Inspections and Defect Repairs
- Severe Weather and Resilience
- Emergency Planning
- Capital Maintenance Prioritisation
- Budget Allocation and the MTFP
- Asset Management Processes

### **The new Highways Services Policy**

The new Highways Services Policy (the Policy) serves to formalise the relationship between the individual service policies and the Council's corporate objectives. It is an overarching policy which lays out the principles of and reasons for a risk-based approach, rather than giving operational detail. It has been developed through work with local stakeholders, such as Parishes and focus groups, BCC insurers, the Cabinet Member and his Deputy, all of whom were either involved in the development of the policy or consulted on it and support its implementation.

The Policy focuses on recommendation number seven of the WMHI, which is: *“A risk-based approach should be adopted for all aspects of highway infrastructure maintenance, including setting levels of service, inspections, responses, resilience, priorities and programmes.”* This is one of the most critical recommendations in the WMHI, against which the Service is already largely compliant.

Two detailed, supporting policies on Network Safety & Management currently in preparation, and any future detailed policies sitting under this Highways Services Policy, can be progressed through key decisions by the Cabinet Member.

### **Assessing risk and liability for Safety Inspections**

The Service introduced a risk matrix to classify highway defects in 2014 in favour of the previous prescriptive intervention levels, i.e. size and position. The risk matrix takes into account all factors which contribute to a defect's risk – such as road classification, traffic levels, speed limits, and road conditions. This approach to inspections and repair is deemed best practice and in-keeping with a safe and serviceable road network. The policy adopted by Cabinet in April 2017 reinforced this risk assessment process altering response times to defects. These slightly longer response times allow for more efficient programming of repairs allowing more defects in the same road to be repaired at the same time, something which is very

popular with residents. It also allowed revenue budget pressures to be accommodated through the annual business planning process whilst still managing risk appropriately. At around the same time BCC approved a network hierarchy which better represented the importance of our roads to residents. This new hierarchy is now used to determine inspection frequencies and to inform the risk assessment of defects.

The change between the approach before 2014 and the approach now will be minimal. Very dangerous defects are still repaired within 2 hours. Defects which don't pose an immediate danger are now repaired within 2 or 5 days compared to the previous policy's timescale of 1 day.

Additionally, the approach outlined in the new policy includes for the recording and logging of information and action relating to inspections and repairs, as BCC could be left without the evidence it needs to maintain a Section 58 Defence<sup>2</sup> and therefore become vulnerable to third party claims.

### **Compliance with the rest of the WMHI**

The Service is already compliant with 28 of the 36 recommendations and the remaining recommendations have been prioritised to ensure the most critical are addressed first – for example, severe weather emergency planning has been ranked as more critical than minimising clutter.

The Service is currently working to adopt nine of the other recommendations and is on track to be compliant by October 2018. The remaining five recommendations are of no risk to the travelling public, and will be enacted as soon as is practicable.

### **Supporting Documents:**

- Appendix A, Highway Services Policy
- Appendix B, A Comprehensive Risk-based Approach to Highway Service Delivery
- Appendix C, full review of all WMHI recommendations

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<sup>2</sup> Section 58 of the Highways Act 1980 provides a statutory defence in an action against a highway authority, where it can be proven that the authority had taken such care as was reasonably required to secure that the section of the highway to which the action relates was not dangerous for traffic.

## Appendix C

	Risk	Current Position			Oct'18 F'cast	Status
		Dec 17	Apr 18	Jul 18		
1 Use of the Code	H	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Green	R
2 Asset management framework	M	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	G
3 Asset management policy and strategy	M	Green	Green	Green	Green	G
4 Engaging and communicating with stakeholders	M	Green	Green	Green	Green	G
5 Consistency with other Authorities	H	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	R
6 An integrated network	M	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Green	A
7 Risk based approach	H	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Green	R
8 Information management	M	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	G
9 Network inventory	M	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	G
10 Asset data management	M	Green	Green	Green	Green	G
11 Asset management systems	M	Green	Green	Green	Green	G
12 Network hierarchy	H	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	R
13 Whole life / designing for maintenance	M	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	R
14 Risk management	H	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	G
15 Competencies and training	H	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	G
16 Inspections	H	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	R
17 Condition surveys	M	Green	Green	Green	Green	G
18 Management systems and claims	M	Green	Green	Green	Green	G
19 Defect repair	H	Green	Green	Green	Green	G
20 Resilient network	M	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	A
21 Climate change adaptation	L	Red	Red	Red	Red	A
22 Drainage maintenance	M	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	A
23 Civil emergencies and severe weather emergencies plans	H	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	G
24 Communications	M	Green	Green	Green	Green	G
25 Learning from events	M	Green	Green	Green	Green	G
26 Performance management framework	H	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	G
27 Performance monitoring	H	Green	Green	Green	Green	G
28 Financial plans	H	Green	Green	Green	Green	G
29 Lifecycle plans	M	Green	Green	Green	Green	G
30 Cross asset priorities	L	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	G
31 Works programmes	M	Green	Green	Green	Green	G
32 Carbon	M	Red	Yellow	Green	Green	G
33 Consistency of character	L	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	A
34 Heritage assets	L	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	G
35 Environmental impact, nature conservation and	M	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	R
36 Minimising clutter	L	Red	Red	Red	Red	A

		Risk		
		L	M	H
Status	G	Green	Green	Green
	A	Green	Yellow	Red
	R	Yellow	Red	Red