

Report to Councillor Roger Elkins, Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

December 2020

Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy

Report by Director of Highways, Transport and Planning

Electoral division(s): All Divisions

Summary

The Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy communicates West Sussex County Council's approach to highways infrastructure asset management.

This report sets out the revised Policy and Strategy documents that form part of the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management framework and seeks approval for these documents. The full documents are available in Appendices 1 and 2.

Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure is recommended to approve:

- (1) the implementation of the revised West Sussex Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy (Appendix 1), and Strategy (Appendix 2) to take immediate effect; and
 - (2) the delegation of authority to the Director of Highways, Transport and Planning to approve the individual asset group lifecycle plans described in paragraph 2.4 of this report.
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Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 The highway infrastructure in West Sussex provides an important and vital contribution in creating a county of growth and opportunity whilst maintaining and improving the quality of life for all those who live, work and visit West Sussex. Good roads are a vital part of West Sussex's infrastructure and are essential for the County's economic progress and future prosperity.
- 1.2 Asset management is widely accepted as a means to effectively deliver efficiencies when managing highway infrastructure assets through longer term planning and ensuring that levels of service are defined and achievable for

available budgets. A coherent asset management approach helps to more accurately identify the level of investment required to maintain highway assets to a standard commensurate with council priorities and public demand.

- 1.3 The approach supports the case for investment and funding, and better communication with stakeholders. It facilitates a greater understanding of the contribution the highway infrastructure makes to economic growth and social well-being of local communities.
- 1.4 The cornerstone of an effective asset management approach is strong leadership and an asset management culture that runs throughout the authority. This has been recognised within key national guidance and codes of practice documents published by the UK Roads Liaison Group:

Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Guidance (May 2013)
Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Assets – Code of Practice (Oct. 2016)

- 1.5 As part of the Department of Transport Local Highway Maintenance Block Fund for the 5 years between 2016/17 to 2020/21, Local Authorities have been incentivised to demonstrate good practices and an asset management approach. The approved and published Asset Management Policy and Strategy documents have been a mandatory requirement to enable an authority to maximise the value of the Local Highway Maintenance Block Funding received.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 The Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy describes West Sussex County Council's commitment to highway infrastructure asset management. It demonstrates to senior decision makers, stakeholders and the public, how the highway service supports and delivers the authority's corporate vision, within the Highways Service.
- 2.2 The Strategy sets out how the long-term objectives for managing the highway infrastructure are met. It describes how the implementation of the strategic asset management framework is achieved, setting out a clear direction for the implementation of asset management. It provides the basis to adopt asset management principles supporting greater efficiency and value for money.
- 2.3 The Highways, Transport and Planning Directorate has set up an organisational structure that reflects the importance asset management plays in the delivery of highway and transport services. This structure enables the continual development, review and promotion of asset management best practice through asset leads, each with specialist knowledge and understanding of the highway infrastructure they manage.
- 2.4 Individual asset group Lifecycle Plans promote the operational delivery elements of the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management framework, support the long-term management of assets, and underpinning maintenance and funding strategies to deliver minimum whole life costs and identified maintenance priorities.
- 2.5 Delegation to the Director of Highways, Transport and Planning will enable the implementation and regular review of these plans to support the delivery of the Strategy, developing West Sussex's approach across all highway infrastructure asset groups.

3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 3.1 A Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy has been a mandatory requirement for the Incentive Fund element of the Local Highway Maintenance Block Funding from central government.
- 3.2 The approach to highway infrastructure maintenance service needs to be linked to the County Council priorities and vision.
- 3.3 Not reviewing and updating the Policy and Strategy could restrict the level of future Local Highway Maintenance Block Funding.

4 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 4.1 The draft Policy and Strategy have been circulated, reviewed and endorsed during their development by:
 - the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure
 - the Highways, Transport and Planning Senior Management Team
 - Senior Highway Asset Group Managers and lead officers
- 4.2 The approved Policy and Strategy will be published on the West Sussex County Council website

5 Finance

- 5.1 Revenue consequences

The development of the Policy and delivery of the Strategy has been implemented through existing resource and funding stream investments. No additional funding is requested to deliver this proposal.

- 5.2 Resource to enable delivery of highway infrastructure management across the individual asset groups is drawn from in-house teams within "business as usual" activities. Specialist additional supply chain support will be utilised as appropriate.
- 5.3 The management of individual highway infrastructure asset groups is led by the Director of Highways, Transport and Planning. Individual service teams with specialist capabilities within their asset area, alongside appropriate IT systems are funded from existing revenue budgets.
- 5.4 The effect of the proposal:

(a) **How the cost represents good value**

Asset management is widely accepted as a means to deliver a more efficient and effective approach to management of highway infrastructure assets.

(b) **Future savings/efficiencies being delivered**

The Strategy supports and identifies the case for future investment, better communications with stakeholders, and facilitates better understanding of the contribution highway infrastructure assets make to economic growth and social well-being of local communities.

(c) **Human Resources, IT and Assets Impact**

The Highways Transport and Planning organisational redesign has put in place resources and a structure that enables the continual development and delivery of the asset management approach promoted by the Policy and Strategy.

6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Corporate Risks	Local highway authorities are required to manage a variety of risks at strategic, tactical and operational levels. The likelihood and consequences of these risks can be used to inform their approach to asset management and support key decisions regarding performance, investment and implementation of works programmes.
Financial and Service Delivery	The individual asset group Lifecycle Plans evaluate and list strategic and tactical risks (including threats and opportunities) alongside their likelihood and impact on the levels of service defined for the highway service. These risks have been analysed in with senior decision-makers input.
Financial and Service Delivery	The risk management framework operated within the authority, and the HT&P services align with the Levels of Service considers risk categories for Planning, Management, Delivery and specific asset group dependencies.

7 Policy alignment and compliance

7.1 The Highway Infrastructure Policy and Strategy supports and aligns with the aims and objectives of the West Sussex Plan by ensuring the vision for West Sussex is embedded in the Highway, Transport and Planning's Directorates delivery approach.

7.2 Implementing the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy will assist with achieving the objectives detailed in the current West Sussex Plan, and looks forward to contributing to delivering services within the developing framework of resetting the organisation for a better future by focusing on the following four foundation priorities underpinned by the cross-cutting theme of climate change:

1. Keeping Vulnerable people safe
2. A sustainable and prosperous economy
3. Helping people and communities fulfil their potential
4. Making best use of resources

7.3 Legal Implications

West Sussex County Council is the Local Highway Authority and has a duty to maintain all highways (except trunk roads and motorways) within the county. The highway infrastructure in West Sussex provides an important and vital contribution in creating a county of growth and opportunity where everyone thrives. As well as meeting the needs of local communities and supporting the

requirements of businesses, the local highway network supports the three key economic sub-areas that make up the County.

7.4 Equality duty and human resources

An Equality Impact Report has been undertaken.

Decisions about the need for capital investment are based on the deterioration of the asset, optimum timing for maintenance, choice of treatment, and overall need to prevent deterioration or replace an asset. Considering the whole life of the asset to determine the timing of intervention enables decisions to be made based on the lowest whole life cost and provides good value.

Within this framework there is potential for there to be a perception of negative impact on protected groups, due to relative reductions in funding, changes in service or eligibility, or changes in how services are delivered.

The potential perception of a negative impact is mitigated by the development process of effective delivery programmes integrated across the infrastructure asset groups. Maintenance need and scheme selection is informed by initial criteria used to prioritise and optimise the delivery programme. It takes account of the condition and serviceability of the asset, alongside safety issues and local transport priorities.

Social, economic and environmental benefits, local community or user demands, and political priorities are also factors used to differentiate between which schemes are prioritised for delivery within the budget limitations. These "soft" influences are identified using Value Management criteria. The level of influence, or weighting, each criterion has within individual asset group programmes will be periodically reviewed with the stakeholders and are communicated within the Lifecycle Plans for the relevant asset group.

7.5 Climate Change

West Sussex County Council has acknowledged the threat posed to the county and its residents by climate change and are committed to reinforce and build on our efforts to reduce our impact on the environment.

Integral to adapting to climate change is the need to think sustainably. Considering the actions and decisions we take today need to be balanced with how they will affect generations to come. Taking a sustainable approach means balancing different, and often competing, needs against an awareness of the economic, social and environmental limitations that we face as a society.

The management and maintenance of highway infrastructure will have a significant impact on the Councils sustainable approach and contributes towards enabling us to:

- Deliver the ambitions of the West Sussex Plan
- Achieve efficiency savings by reducing our operating costs, and reducing the amount of natural resources we consume and purchase
- Increase the resilience of highway infrastructure assets, ensuring they are fit to deliver the expected level of service into the future
- Improve the sustainability of the supply chain, thereby reducing risk and cost
- Make the County Council's highway services as good as they can be

7.6 **Crime and Disorder**

The implications of the Crime and Disorder Act are considered in the social, economic and environmental prioritisation when maintenance or improvement needs for the highway infrastructure elements are identified. It is also considered within the investment and funding provision for future works programme, alongside the design of each maintenance or improvement scheme within the Delivery Programme.

7.7 **Public health**

The highway infrastructure provides West Sussex residents, communities and businesses safe and convenient access for a range of essential user journeys to access work, shops, schools and leisure activities. In both the urban areas and in rural locations highway infrastructure including footways and cycle facilities are critical in providing safe access to key services and linking villages and communities. Key assets in the sustainable active travel agenda enable people to choose modes of transport that have positive health impact and minimal carbon impact.

7.8 **Social value**

The proposed policy and approaches set out in the Strategy fully supports the realisation of social, economic or environmental benefits to the county. Outcomes from implementing the Policy and Strategy align with the aims of the County Council and the Highways Transport and Planning Directorate themes of:

- The right services and infrastructure are delivered in the right place at the right time
- The roads, pavements and paths are safe and well managed
- Transport choices are provided for all

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy
Appendix 2 – Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Strategy
Appendix 3 – Equality Statement - Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy

Background papers

None