WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL   **AGENDA ITEM NO. 8**

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
15th JANUARY 2009

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR WILTSHIRE

Purpose of Report

1.   To inform the Committee of the development of the 'Network Management Plan for Wiltshire' and its associated detailed Action Plan, as requested at the 12th June 2008 meeting.

Background

2.   Following consideration of a report on the Implementation of the Traffic Management Act (TMA) at the 12th June 2008 meeting of this Committee, further information was requested on the emerging 'Network Management Plan for Wiltshire'.

3.   The Traffic Management Act has seven parts, which are:

   (i)   Traffic management on trunk roads

   (ii)   Network management on local roads

   (iii)   Road works by utilities and highway authorities

   (iv)   Street works

   (iv)   London and highway matters

   (v)   Civil enforcement of traffic contraventions

   (vii)   Miscellaneous and general (parking surpluses and blue badge inspection powers)

Main Considerations

   Network Management Duty

4.   In many respects, the Network Management Duty (NMD) is the most significant and important change introduced by the TMA.

   Section 16(1) of the Act states that:

   "It is the duty of a local traffic authority to manage their road network with a view to achieving, so far as may be reasonably practicable having regard to their other obligations, policies and objectives, the following objectives:

   (a)   securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network; and

   (b)   facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority."

5.   To help authorities perform the duty, the Department for Transport (DfT) published its 'Network Management Duty Guidance' in November 2004. This sets out the requirements of the NMD and offers good practice advice on techniques and approach. More recently, the Government published 'The Traffic Management (Guidance on Intervention Criteria) (England) Order 2007' which sets out the criteria under which the Secretary of State for Transport will decide whether to give an intervention notice to a local traffic authority.

Network Management Plan

6.   Whilst the publication of a Network Management Plan is not a statutory requirement, it is considered that such a plan will help to show, in a transparent and clear way, how the County Council is meeting the requirements of the NMD. In doing so, it will also show how the Council will achieve a better managed, safer and more efficient highway network for all road users.

7.   The 'Network Management Plan for Wiltshire' (**see Appendix A**) contains the following chapters, appendices and information:

- **Chapter 1** provides an introduction to traffic and network management.

- **Chapter 2** summarises the Government's policy background to the TMA and provides details of the seven parts of the Act, including the NMD.

- **Chapter 3** sets out the aims of the 'Sustainable Community Strategy for Wiltshire', the Local Area Agreement and the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan (LTP). It also proposes the overall objectives for Wiltshire's Network Management Plan.

- **Chapter 4** considers the issue of highway congestion and how the County Council currently measures and deals with it.

- **Chapter 5** outlines what arrangements are in place at the regional level to aid network management co-ordination and consistency.

- **Chapter 6** provides details of the Traffic Manager's role and responsibilities, and the Council's current liaison with stakeholders, the Highways Agency and neighbouring authorities.

- **Chapter 7** briefly describes what the County Council's currently does in terms of network management.

- **Chapter 8** sets out how the performance of the Council and its network function is currently monitored.

- **Appendix 1** sets out contact details for the County Council in terms of network management and other highway issues.

- **Appendix 2** shows the structure of the Council's Traffic Manager Group.

- **Appendix 3** highlights the main requirements of the DfT's 'Traffic Management Act 2004: Network Management Duty Guidance' (November 2004).

- **Appendix 4** shows the outcome of the County Council's compliance review of the NMD requirements undertaken during late 2007.

- **Appendix 5** details those sections of the Council's highway network with particular resilience issues.

8. In order to guide authorities in the planning and delivery of their NMD, the Government makes it clear that:

    ▪   The strategies and planning undertaken to meet the duty must be consistent with wider local, regional and national policies and guidance, and the overall policies of local authorities; and

    ▪   Network management is one element of an authority's transport activities and [it] should complement other policies and actions.

9. In view of the above, the proposed overall objectives of the 'Network Management Plan for Wiltshire' are to:

    (i)   Make the best use of the existing transport infrastructure through effective design, management and maintenance.

    (ii) Minimise delays and disruption, and improve journey time reliability on key routes.

    (iii) Facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods on the highway network in the most sustainable manner possible.

    (iv) Reduce the impact of traffic on people's quality of life and Wiltshire's built and natural environment.

10. To inform the development of the 'Network Management Plan for Wiltshire', a compliance analysis was undertaken in late 2007 to establish what is already done in Wiltshire in terms of network management and in doing so, establish what actions the Council and its partners need to take in order to fulfil the requirements of the NMD. The compliance analysis was based on the requirements set out in the DfT's guidance. Officers consider that the Council is meeting the arrangements set out in the Intervention Order 2007.

11. Hilary Neal (Deputy Regional Director, Government Office for the South West) supports the above assertion. In her recent letter commenting on the LTP 2008 Progress Report (which includes details of the emerging 'Network Management Plan for Wiltshire') she stated that:

    "I am pleased to see that you have made considerable progress in your area in relation to…Tackling Congestion and the Network Management Duty. I would like to congratulate you on these improvements, which will help to enhance the lives of residents of Wiltshire.

    I was pleased to see the progress you have made in developing your Network Management Plan, including the comprehensive gap analysis…We look forward to seeing a finalised Network Management Plan in the next year or so".

12. As stated earlier, where the compliance analysis established that further work is necessary to meet the requirements of the NMD, the Council has developed a detailed Action Plan (**see Appendix B**). Officers are currently working, with partners where appropriate, to complete these actions. However, it should be noted that the need to undertake other work commitments has unfortunately meant that some of the actions have not been progressed as far or as quickly as first envisaged. The 'Network Management Plan for Wiltshire' and its associated detailed Action Plan will be updated on a regular basis to reflect completed actions and any subsequent new actions.

13. It is envisaged that the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Economic Development will be asked to formally approve the 'Network Management Plan for Wiltshire' for adoption by the Council in March 2009.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

14.   None.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

15.   None.

Risk Assessment

16.   Under the TMA Intervention Order 2007, the Secretary of State for Transport has the power to intervene in a local traffic authority if it is considered that the authority may be, or is, failing to perform any of its NMD. It is considered that the development of a 'Network Management Plan for Wiltshire' provides the necessary evidence to demonstrate the Council's fulfilment of its NMD.

Financial Implications

17.   There are no financial implications arising directly from the proposal.

Legal Implications

18.   None.

Options Considered

19.   There is no statutory requirement for a local traffic authority to develop and publish a Network Management Plan. Nevertheless, it is considered the only realistic way of providing a transparent and clear demonstration of how the Council is meeting its requirements under the NMD.

Reason for Proposal

20.   To fulfil the following Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee resolution made at its meeting on 12th June 2008:

"To ask that the Network Management action plan is submitted to the Management Committee when available".

Proposal

21.   That the development of the emerging 'Network Management Plan for Wiltshire' is noted.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

Draft Network Management Plan for Wiltshire.