

Subject: Highways Annual Review of Service

Cabinet Member: Councillor Caroline Thomas - Transport, Waste, Street Scene and Flooding

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary

The local highway network is vital for businesses and communities, and effective maintenance to ensure its availability is essential to the economic development of the County. An annual review of the highway service for 2022 has been prepared (see **Appendix 1**), together with summary of the schemes delivered during the year (see **Appendix 2**).

The Council, as local highway authority, is assisted by a number of specialist contractors and suppliers. The highways term maintenance contract with Ringway continued to work well. Following assessment through the Key Performance Indicators included within the contract, the duration was been extended to March 2023, the maximum possible under the contract terms. During 2022 a procurement exercise was undertaken for the next term maintenance contract and new contract was awarded to Milestone Infrastructure Ltd in November. Council officers are now working alongside Milestone during the contract mobilisation period to ensure a smooth transition before the contract goes live in April 2023.

The performance of the Council's highway consultant, Atkins, continues to be good during 2022.

The operation of the highways service is monitored through the Performance Management Framework, which was first reported to this committee in October 2016 and is updated annually. An updated version for 2022 has been prepared (see **Appendix 3**).

Reducing the environmental impact of highway maintenance operations is of increasing importance. The highway service already recycles a considerable volume of waste material generated.

There has been an increase in the number Killed and Seriously Injured on the County's roads in 2022 but this remains lower than the historic averages. The number in 2020 was drastically reduced and was likely attributable to the quieter roads due to the Covid-19 response. The number of potholes has increased slightly but the number of more serious safety defect potholes has decreased. Some of the public satisfaction scores have dropped but remain close to the national averages.

Proposal

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) endorse the Highways Annual Review of Service and confirm that the performance of the Council's highways contractors has been good during 2022.
- (ii) welcome the results summarised in the Highways Performance Management Framework
- (iii) request a report on the highways service and the Performance Management Framework in a year's time.

Reason for Proposals

The highway network forms the Council's largest asset, and it is important that it is maintained in the most cost-effective way that demonstrates value for money. This includes the use of asset management and whole life costing approaches to inform investment decisions, taking into account the environmental implications.

The performance of the Council's contractors and their supply chains are important in maintaining the condition of the highway assets and ensuring an efficient and effective highways service. Their performance is continuously monitored and is reviewed and reported annually to this committee.

Samantha Howell

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Purpose of Report

1. To provide a review of the performance of the highways service during 2022 and give an update on performance of the contractors and suppliers involved in delivering the service.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The Wiltshire Council Business Plan 2017 – 2027 sets out the vision to create strong communities, with priorities for growing the economy, strong communities and protecting the vulnerable. As part of growing the economy it is necessary to bring the county's roads up to an acceptable state. The goal is that road infrastructure is improved and to:
 - improve asset management and the use of investment to improve the condition of Wiltshire roads (implementing our Highways Asset Management Strategy);
 - promote and further development the HIAMS system and our digital approach to ensure good and robust decision making.

Background

3. The local highway network is vital for businesses and communities; effective maintenance to ensure its availability is essential to the economic development of the County. Wiltshire Council recognises the importance of maintaining and managing its highway network efficiently and continues to make significant investment in improving the condition of its highway assets.
4. At its meeting in November 2018 this committee requested an annual report on the performance of the highway service and the contractors involved in maintaining the highway network.
5. The Council employs a number of specialist contractors to carry out work on the highway network. The use of smaller specialized contractors has been found to work better than previous arrangements that bundled all specialisms into one large contract.
6. The Highways Asset Management Guidance recommended that a Performance Management Framework should be developed that is clear and accessible to stakeholders as appropriate and supports the asset management strategy.
7. In order to encourage the adoption of good asset management practice the Department for Transport (DfT) introduced Incentive Funding for part of the

highways maintenance block funding. The Council must complete a DfT self assessment form annually in connection with its performance on highways asset management and the Performance Management Framework helps demonstrate how we manage the service and the application of good practice as required by the DfT.

Main Considerations for the Council

Annual Review of Service

8. The Council's highways service is delivered by a number of contractors managed by the Council's highways staff, with the support of the Council's highways consultant. A report on the delivery of the highways service during 2022 is included at **Appendix 1**.
9. The review indicates that the service has adapted well to the continuing challenges around resource, budgets, and inflation. The schemes completed in 2022 included road surfacing, repairs, road safety improvements and structures work, and are included at **Appendix 2**.
10. In summary, during 2022 the highways service has:
 - Resurfaced 17 km of road and 2 km of footway
 - Retextured 19 km of road to improve skid resistance
 - Surface dressed 70 km of road
 - Filled 11,361 potholes
 - Completed localised road repairs at 75 sites totaling 10,860 sqm
 - Carried out 475 bridge inspections
11. Contractor performance has been assessed against the contract objectives using a mixture of satisfaction scoring by staff managing the contract, and Key Performance Indicators set out in the contract. Overall performance has been rated as "good".
12. The environmental impact of highway maintenance operations can be considerable. The Council and its contractors reduce the adverse effects by recycling waste, using recycled materials and adopting procedures that reduce the environment impact.
13. This committee has previously been advised of the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management System (HIAMS) software used by the highways service, introduced in April 2018. In 2022, HIAMS was rolled out as an asset management system for Street Scene activity and work is now underway to provide an asset management system for Public Rights of Way.

Ringway Infrastructure Service

14. Following an assessment of the Ringway contract's Key Performance Indicators, the contract duration was extended to March 2023, the maximum possible under the contract terms.
15. This contract provided a range of highway services, including dealing with potholes, gully emptying, road and footway repairs, the provision of Parish Stewards, bridgeworks, street lighting maintenance, winter maintenance, out of

hours emergency response, traffic engineering, active travel and delivery of Local Highway and Footway Infrastructure Group (LHFIG) schemes. Ringway worked in partnership with the Council to deliver these services through its Service Delivery Teams.

16. Ringway employed the Parish Stewards under a scheme introduced in 2005 and relaunched in 2016 to provide a steward for each area board. They respond to requests for minor highway works from Town and Parish Councils. The scheme continues to be successful and very popular with local communities and has received good feedback from the local Councils.

Other Highways Contractors' Performance

17. Other Highways contracts currently in place are:
 - Machine Surfacing Contract – Tarmac Ltd
 - Surface Dressing and Micro Asphalt Contract – Kiely Bros Ltd
 - Arborist Services Contract – Upton Specialised Tree Services Ltd
 - Traffic Signal Maintenance – Telent Technology Services Ltd
18. The Tarmac contract undertakes the major surfacing works which can involve the removal and replacement of damaged road construction or the overlaying of an existing road with a new structural surfacing layer. Performance under the new contract has been good with a number of both large and smaller surfacing schemes completed to program. The contract started in June 2020 and is for 5 years with an option for a further 2 years based on performance.
19. The Kiely Bros contract undertakes surface dressing and micro asphalt works. This involves the overlaying of roads with a thin layer of surfacing to provide essential skid resistance which increases the life of the road. As this type of surfacing has no structural strength, it is applied to roads that are still structurally sound, avoiding the need to unnecessarily remove and replace a road. Performance under this contract has been good and a large number of sites completed to program. The contract started in July 2020 and is for 5 years.
20. The Uptons Specialised Tree Services contract allows the maintenance and planting of highway trees. The contractor is also responsible for managing Ash Dieback. There are around 125,000 Ash Trees on or adjacent to Wiltshire's highways. Ash dieback is a fungal disease that can quickly cause the death of an Ash tree, which if left unattended will fall. As ash trees can grow to over 30m, this can present a hazard on the highway. Performance under this contract has been good with around 4800 dead Ash trees removed from near our highways. This contract started in December 2020 and is for 12 years.
21. The Telent contract covers the maintenance, refurbishment of existing and installation of new traffic signals. The current signal asset comprises 136 pedestrian crossings and 80 signal controlled junctions. Performance of this contract in terms of response times to reported breakdowns in the middle of the year was a concern but this has been addressed and performance is now satisfactory. This contract started in July 2019 and is for 5 years with the option to extend by 2 years.
22. A framework Contract for Specialist Surfacing and Associated Highway Works is also in place to provide a list of suitable contractors to bid for smaller specialist

highway works at short notice which reduces procurement costs.

New Highways Term contract

23. A procurement exercise was undertaken in 2022 for the next term maintenance contract. The contract was awarded to Milestone Infrastructure Ltd in November and Council officers are working with Milestone during the contract mobilisation period to ensure a smooth transition before it goes live in April 2023.
24. In parallel, Ringway started demobilisation activities and committed to work alongside the Council and Milestone to achieve a managed close down of their contract.

Highways Consultancy Contract

25. The current Highways Consultancy contract with Atkins started in December 2019. It is for five years with a potential two year extension subject to performance. Atkins provides a range of services and support to the highway's teams, including the design and supervision of highway, transport and drainage schemes.

Performance Management Framework

26. The Performance Management Framework was prepared for this committee in 2016 and is updated annually (see **Appendix 3**). It contains a suite of performance measures across the themes of:
 - Network Safety Condition and Resilience
 - Planned Maintenance
 - Maintenance for Sustainable Transport
 - Infrastructure to Support Economic Growth
 - Environmental Sustainability
 - Customer
27. Six key indicators have been identified for each theme, which are a mixture of outcome, output and input measures designed to provide an overall view of performance without being too complex or difficult to collect or understand.
28. Each indicator is measured as:
 - poor – does not meet minimum standards,
 - fair – meets minimum standards or
 - good – exceeds minimum standards.

Long term performance aims have been developed for each indicator, and a red, amber and green colour coding is used to aid understanding of progress.

29. The framework enables performance to be tracked on a year by year basis and includes several National or previously Best Value Performance Indicators. It also includes performance indicators for National Highways and Transportation (NHT) public satisfaction.
30. The Framework indicates that overall progress and performance of the Highways

service has been good. It is particularly pleasing to note that the number of people killed or seriously injured on the county's roads reduced significantly in 2020/21 to 102 accepting this may be attributable to quieter roads during the Covid-19 response. The figure for 2021/22 is 138, above 2020/21 but lower than preceding years. The measure is assessed as Fair and will continue to be monitored. The number of slight casualties reduced from 742 in 2020/21 to 675 in 2021/22

31. Performance in most aspects of the service was rated as good. Road Surface Skidding Resistance, however, continues to be of concern and will require an increase in the total area requiring treatment. The number of potholes increased slightly but the more serious safety defect potholes have decreased. Traffic signal condition has improved due to additional funding. Some of the public satisfaction scores have dropped but remain close to national averages which have trended down over recent years.
32. Overall, public satisfaction with most aspects of the highway service in Wiltshire is close to the national average.
33. All indicators will continue to be reviewed regularly and performance reported to the Environment Select Committee.

Local Highway and Footway Improvement Groups

34. The LHFIGs were introduced in April 2022 to take over from the long running Community Area Transport Groups (CATGs) to support local decision making across a wider remit with double the budget, supported by additional staff, in response to a review by the Environmental Select Committee
35. The wider remit has led to an increase in the number of requests made to over 380 during the year. Unfortunately, recruitment of additional staff has as yet not been possible leading to delays in delivering some schemes and concerns being raised by the groups. Those staff supporting the LHFIGs are aware of this and continue to work hard to support the groups.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

36. The review of the highways service, including an update on the Highways Performance Management Framework is reported annually to the Environment Select Committee. The committee has also been kept informed about the development of HIAMS and the procurement of key contracts through regular updates.

Safeguarding Implications

37. None.

Public Health Implications

38. The condition of roads, their surface and related infrastructure can have serious safety implications, especially with regard to skid resistance. The good maintenance and improvement of the highways network can make a significant contribution to reducing collisions particularly those resulting in death and seriously injury. Roads, bridges, highway structures, signs and street lighting

must be kept in good condition in order to protect the public and those maintaining the assets.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

39. The effects of climate change could be significant for the highway network. There was considerable damage to the roads, footways and drainage systems during the flooding in 2013/14, and 2018, and in 2022 road surfaces were damaged by very high temperatures during the summer and freezing conditions in December. Such events could be repeated and having robust maintenance strategies to improve the condition of the network, and experienced maintenance contractors, helps build resilience into the highway network and the infrastructure.
40. The highway service recycles a large proportion of the waste material generated by its highway operations and takes specific measures to protect the environment when carrying out maintenance and construction work.
41. The carbon footprint of the highways service has been reduced considerably by the introduction of energy efficient LED street lighting.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

42. Good maintenance of the highway network, should benefit all road users, including those using public transport, and particularly vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians.
43. The employment policies of the Council's contractors are considered when considering the award of contracts. They are required to conform to the Council's Identity, and the contracts are closely monitored and managed through monthly satisfaction performance indicators.

Risk Assessment

44. There are considerable risks associated with the highway network, particularly in terms of safety, environmental, financial and reputational risks. The highways contracts and Council staff provide skilled resources to ensure the successful delivery of the highways service and reduce the risks to the Council.
45. There are risk management processes in place to manage the risks associated with the highways service, which include regular liaison with service suppliers and the effective management of resources. A risk-based approach has been adopted in line with the Well managed highway infrastructure code of practice and is incorporated in the Wiltshire Highways Safety Inspection manual.
46. The effects of inflation have had a material impact on delivery. Price adjustments across all Highways Contracts, in accordance with agreed national indices, has resulted in increases of between 4.21% and 16.75%. As the Capital budget is fixed, less work has, therefore, been undertaken. In the longer term this risks having an impact on the condition of the network, increasing the backlog of road repairs and raising levels of public dissatisfaction. This has been mitigated to some extent by the choice of treatments included in the works programme with more emphasis on thin surfacing as opposed to full surfacing and reconstruction activities.
47. Throughout 2022, staffing levels, recruitment and retention has been a growing

concern. The Highways service has been carrying a high number of vacant posts with recruitment activities failing to attract suitable candidates. Pressures on existing staff have therefore remained very high. Research has identified a general skills shortage across the construction industry with shortages affecting Local Authorities, consultants and contractors in equal measure.

48. To help address these issues, as well as investing in the Apprenticeship programme, a more targeted recruitment approach in specialist Construction publications has been adopted and websites with a bespoke landing page for Highways have been created on the Council's website.
49. Further recruitment campaigns and events are planned for 2023.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

50. No specific decision is required, but it should be noted that there is a risk of increased accidents, claims and public dissatisfaction if the programme of highway maintenance and related services are not delivered effectively or are delayed. Future DfT funding is dependent on demonstrating the application of good practice and asset management principles. Failure to do so could reduce funding in future years.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

51. No decision is required.

Financial Implications

52. There are no financial decisions required. However, it should be noted that the highway network and related infrastructure forms the Council's largest asset and has a replacement value of over £5 billion. It is important that the network is maintained in the most cost-effective way to keep it safe and ensure value for money. This includes the adoption of a whole life costing approach to inform investment decisions on highway maintenance.
53. There has been an increasing drive for improved asset management from the Department of Transport in recent years, and a failure to demonstrate the application of good asset management principles could result in reduced funding from central government in the future.
54. The award of the new Highways Term contract to Milestone has, as anticipated, brought about an increase in overall prices for works to be undertaken moving forward. This is due to the rising cost of raw materials, staffing resource, and general inflation and will have to be managed within existing budgets.

Legal Implications

55. The Council has a duty under the Highways Act to maintain the county's roads. The highway inspection procedures, policies and asset management plans help ensure that this duty is fulfilled. The investment and improved road conditions in recent years are helping the Council meet its responsibilities regarding road maintenance and keeping the network safe.

Options Considered

56. There is a need to continue to apply asset management principles to the highway network and to ensure that the performance of the contractors involved in delivering the service is appropriate to keep the network in a safe condition and to ensure value for money.

Conclusions

57. The highway network forms the Council's largest asset and effective maintenance to ensure its availability is essential to the economic development of the County and safety of its users. The use of whole life costing approaches and effective asset management procedures are important to inform investment decisions.
58. The performance of the contractors delivering the Council's highway service is key in ensuring that the Council can meet its responsibilities as the Highway Authority. The current performance of the contractors is good and will continue to be monitored.

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

None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Annual Review of Highways Service 2022
Appendix 2 – Wiltshire Highways Schemes 2022
Appendix 3 – Highways Performance Management Framework 2022