

## Wiltshire Council

### Environment Select Committee

13 January 2021

---

**Subject:** Highways Annual Review of Service 2020

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Bridget Wayman - Highways, Transport and Waste

**Key Decision:** No

---

#### Executive summary

At its meeting on 5 November 2019 this committee requested an annual report on the performance of the highway service and the contractors involved in maintaining the highway network. Because of the Covid-19 restrictions the usual meetings did not take place in November, and instead as requested this interim report has been prepared.

The highways service and its suppliers adapted well to the challenges of Covid-19 and the associated restrictions. Changes to working practices and reprioritising of work meant that it was possible to complete a large programme of various types of maintenance and renewal on the highway network last year (see **Appendix 1**).

The essential maintenance and improvement work continued even during the lockdown with more potholes being filled in 2020 than in the previous year. Major road resurfacing work, drainage repairs and bridge maintenance were undertaken while traffic flows were reduced. Procurement of major new contracts for road resurfacing, surface dressing and tree maintenance were also successfully undertaken during the year.

The performance of the Council's existing key highway contractors has been good during 2020. The good collaboration between the partners was recognised in December when the Council's highways team, Atkins, Tarmac and Ringway won the Institute of Collaborative Working Public Sector award for 2020.

A Performance Management Framework for Wiltshire was originally prepared for this committee in 2016 and is updated annually and reported to this committee. A summary for 2019/20 has been prepared (see **Appendix 2**).

The number killed and seriously injured on the county's roads remains a major concern. Although the number Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) reduced in 2019, it was still above the Safety Strategy Aim.

Overall, public satisfaction with most aspects of the highway service improved slightly in the 2019 National Highways and Transportation survey, and they generally remain close to the national average. However, public satisfaction with road maintenance and walking and cycling remains slightly below the national average.

## **Proposal**

It is recommended to:

- (i) Welcome the Wiltshire Highways Annual Review of Service 2020 and acknowledge the considerable work being undertaken on the highway network in these difficult times;
- (ii) Thank the Council's highway contractors for the steps they have taken in ensuring that essential highway maintenance and improvements work in Wiltshire have continued safely despite Covid-19;
- (iii) Congratulate the Council's highways team, Atkins, Tarmac and Ringway on winning the Institute of Collaborative Working Public Sector award for 2020;
- (iv) Note the continuing concern that the numbers killed and seriously injured on the county's roads during 2019 were above the road safety target, and that there is a need to continue to prioritise road safety;
- (v) Request a report on the highways service and the Performance Management Framework in a year's time.

## **Reason for Proposal**

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.

**Parvis Khansari**  
**Director Highways and Environment**

## Wiltshire Council

### Environment Select Committee

13 January 2021

---

**Subject:** Highways Annual Review of Service 2020

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Bridget Wayman - Highways, Transport and Waste

**Key Decision:** No

---

#### Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on the highway service, including the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### Background

2. At its meeting on 5 November 2019 this committee requested an annual report on the performance of the highway service and the contractors involved in maintaining the highway network. Because of the Covid-19 restrictions the usual meetings did not take place, and instead an interim report has been requested.

#### Main Considerations for the Committee

##### Annual Review of Service

3. The Council's highways service is delivered by a number of specialist contractors managed by the Council's highways staff, with the support of the Council's highways consultant. A review of the delivery of the highways service during 2020 has been prepared (see **Appendix 1**).
4. The review indicates that the highways service and its suppliers adapted well to the challenges of Covid-19 and the associated restrictions. Changes to working practices and reprioritising meant that it was possible to complete a large programme of various types of work on the highway network last year.
5. The essential maintenance work on the highway network continued during the pandemic with more potholes being filled in 2020 than in 2019, and with major road resurfacing work, drainage repairs and bridge maintenance being undertaken while traffic flows were reduced. During 2020 the Highways Service:
  - a. Resurfaced 58.4 km of road (since March 2020)
  - b. Resurfaced 4.8 km of footway
  - c. Retextured 11.5 km of road to improve skid resistance
  - d. Filled 12,354 potholes (20% more than in 2019)
  - e. Completed localised road repairs at 81 sites totalling 25,000 sqm
  - f. Carried out 12 major bridge schemes
  - g. Installed over 17,000 energy efficient street lights

6. Procurement of major new contracts for road resurfacing, surface dressing and tree maintenance were successfully undertaken during the year.
7. The performance of the key highways contractors has been assessed against the contract objectives using a mixture of satisfaction scoring by staff managing the contract, and by measured Key Performance Indicators as set out in the contract documentation. Overall performance has been rated as good.

#### Collaborative Working

8. The Council has been working closely with its main highways service partners Atkins, Tarmac and Ringway with a view to establishing a more formal relationship to achieve ISO 44001 accreditation, which is being facilitated by Atkins. In recognition of this work on 10th December 2020, Wiltshire Highways Service won the Institute of Collaborative Working (ICW) Public Sector Award for 2020.
9. The award, which was sponsored by the British Standards Institute, recognised how the organisations in Wiltshire were working together and how the partnership is driving efficiencies, improving quality and programme certainty to deliver better outcomes for the end customer, the Wiltshire community, despite the Covid-19 challenges.

#### Performance Management Framework

10. The Highways Asset Management Guidance published by the Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) provided guidance on the approach to be followed in managing the highways network. It recommended that a Performance Management Framework should be developed that is clear and accessible to stakeholders as appropriate and supports the asset management strategy.
11. The Performance Management Framework for Wiltshire was originally prepared for this committee in 2016. It is updated annually and reported to this committee. A summary for 2019/20 has been prepared (see **Appendix 2**). It contains a suite of performance measures based on the themes of:
  - a. Network Safety Condition and Resilience
  - b. Planned Maintenance
  - c. Maintenance for Sustainable Transport
  - d. Infrastructure to Support Economic Growth
  - e. Environmental Sustainability
  - f. Customer
12. There are six key indicators 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. Each indicator is measured at a high level 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.

13. The framework enables performance to be tracked on a year by year basis. The measures include several indicators which are National Indicators or previously Best Value Performance Indicators. It also includes performance indicators using the National Highways and Transportation (NHT) public satisfaction results.
14. The Framework indicates that overall progress and performance was good in 2019/20. However, a serious concern is that although the number Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) on the county's roads reduced from 200 to 187 in 2019, the number was still above the Safety Strategy Aim of 141 for 2019. The number of slight casualties did increase slightly but is still on target.
15. For most aspects of the service the performance was rated as good. The overall condition of the road network has improved, but the number of potholes increased significantly in 2019/20 because of the exceptionally wet winter causing damage at those locations where the road construction was less resilient.
16. The wet winter in 2019/20 also affected other measures. With only five sweepers, sites had to be revisited where there were continuing issues with detritus, and consequently carriageway sweeping was not completed to target.
17. Overall public satisfaction with most aspects of the highway service improved slightly in the 2019 NHT survey, and generally remains close to the national average. However, public satisfaction with road maintenance and walking and cycling remains slightly below the national average.
18. It is proposed that the indicators should continue to be reviewed on an annual basis and performance reported to the Environment Select Committee.

### **Environmental impact of the proposal**

19. The effects of climate change could be significant for the highway network as there can be considerable damage to the roads, footways and drainage systems during flooding, and road surfaces can be damaged by high temperatures during the summer. 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.
20. 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. In recent years the Council has been using 'warm asphalt' which has a lower carbon impact and has been promoting its use within the industry.
21. The carbon footprint of the highways service has recently reduced considerably because of the ongoing introduction of energy efficient LED street lighting.

### **Equality and diversity impact of the proposal**

22. The improved maintenance of the highway network, its management using sound asset management principles, and good performance by the highway contractors, should benefit all road users, including public transport, and particularly vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians.

23. The employment policies of contractors are taken into account when considering the award of contracts by the Council. They are required to conform to the Council's Behaviour Framework, and the contracts are closely monitored and managed.

### **Risk assessment**

24. There are considerable risks associated with the highway network, particularly in terms of safety, environmental, financial and reputational risks. The Council's highways contracts provide resources to ensure the successful delivery of the highways service and reduce the risks to the Council.
25. 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 as required by the latest code of practice and is incorporated in the Wiltshire Highways Safety Inspection Manual.

### **Financial implications**

26. There are no financial decisions required as a result of this report. 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.
27. 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 this approach could result in reduced funding from central government in the future.
28. The current LED street lighting replacement scheme is being funded as an 'invest to save scheme' which is significantly reducing the energy costs which were becoming increasingly unaffordable.
29. There are no procurement implications at this stage. New road surfacing, surface dressing and tree maintenance contracts were procured during 2020.

### **Legal implications**

30. 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 increased 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**

31. No decisions are required in connection with this report.

## **Conclusion**

32. It is concluded that maintenance and improvement of the highway network continued successfully during 2020 despite the restrictions caused by Covid-19. The Council's highways staff, contractors and suppliers adapted to the new circumstances and adjusted working methods as required.
33. The success of the Council and its suppliers in working together was recognised by the Institute of Collaborative Working in December when the Wiltshire Highways Service won the Institute of Collaborative Working Public Sector Award for 2020, which was sponsored by the British Standards Institute.
34. The Performance Management Framework indicates that overall performance was good. However, although the number Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) on the county's roads reduced in 2019, the number was still above the Safety Strategy Aim.
35. Overall public satisfaction with most aspects of the highway service improved slightly in the 2019 NHT survey, and they generally remain close to the national average. However, public satisfaction with road maintenance and walking and cycling remains slightly below the national average.

## **Parvis Khansari Director Highways and Environment**

Report Author:  
**Peter Binley**  
Head of Major Highway Projects  
January 2021

---

## **Background papers**

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

None

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Wiltshire Highways Annual Review of Service 2020  
Appendix 2 – Wiltshire Highways Performance Management Framework