

**Wiltshire Council**

**Environment Select Committee  
14 April 2015**

**Cabinet  
19 May 2015**

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**Subject: Highways Asset Management Policy and Strategy**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Philip Whitehead – Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

**Key Decision: Yes**

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### **Executive Summary**

The 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020' provides the opportunity to address the long standing under investment in highways maintenance, which has been a problem nationally for many years. The significant investment of £21 million annually for six years by Wiltshire Council will see a substantial improvement in road and footway conditions.

The first year of the increased investment has been in 2014/15, and a good start has been made to improve the condition of the county's roads. It has been possible to deliver most of the 2014/15 road surfacing programme, with 85% of the schemes identified at the start of the year delivered. 15% of the initially proposed sites have had to be deferred to 2015/16 because of public utilities work and other difficulties, especially with regard to access to the sites and availability of diversion routes.

In addition to the 184 sites included in the initial 2014/15 programme, a further 53 sites were treated following flooding and winter damage, with another 4 sites currently being programmed for implementation.

The initial list of proposed sites to be treated in 2014/15 was issued to the Area Board early in 2014, and there was the opportunity to comment on the lists and to suggest amendments and substitutions. Generally, the lists of sites were approved by the Area Boards with only minor amendments being made to the programme.

In May 2013 the government funded Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) published new asset management guidance. The guidance provides advice on implementing asset management, and makes a series of recommendations to achieve the benefits of asset management.

The DfT is keen that authorities adopt an asset management approach and is encouraging adoption by including an incentive in the allocation of maintenance funding.

A draft Wiltshire Asset Management Policy and Strategy has been prepared for adoption. The details for the plans will be subject to further development in accordance with the policy and strategy.

## **Proposals**

It is recommended that:

- (i) The good progress on implementing the first year of the 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020' is noted, and the involvement of the Area Boards in identifying local priorities is welcomed.
- (ii) The Wiltshire Asset Management Policy and Strategy should be adopted to help guide the delivery of asset management principles with regard to highway infrastructure.
- (iii) Authority should be delegated to Philip Whitehead, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and Parvis Khansari, Associate Director for Highways and Transport to approve revisions of the Highways Asset Management Policy and Strategy and the emerging detailed plans.

## **Reason for Proposal**

The condition of the county's roads is important to the public. This is demonstrated by the results of the Council's People's Voice and the National Highways and Transportation (NHT) surveys, which both indicate low levels of public satisfaction with road conditions. In the Council's consultations on budget setting, expenditure on roads is the service where the public consistently wish to see more spent.

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

The use of asset management principles has been applied for many years in Wiltshire to ensure appropriate investment with longer term planning. The adoption of the proposed policy and strategy will help formalise that process.

**Dr. Carlton Brand**  
**Corporate Director**

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### Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on progress of implementing the ‘Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020’, and to adopt the Wiltshire Highways Asset Management Policy and Strategy.

### Relevance to the Council’s Business Plan

2. The proposals meet three priorities of the Council’s Business Plan:
  - Outcome 2 – People in Wiltshire work together to solve problems locally and participate in decisions that affect them
  - Outcome 3 – People in Wiltshire have a high quality environment
  - Outcome 6 – People are as protected from harm as possible and feel safe

### Background

3. The highway network in Wiltshire comprises 4,400 kilometres of road, 3.9 million square metres of footway, 981 bridges and over 40,000 street lights. The replacement value of the roads alone is £4.5 billion, and it would cost over £330 million to resurface all of the roads, with additional costs to repair structural damage.
4. The condition of the county’s roads is important to the public. This is demonstrated by the results of the Council’s People’s Voice and the National Highways and Transportation (NHT) surveys, which indicate low levels of public satisfaction with road conditions. In the Council’s consultations on budget setting, expenditure on roads is the service where the public consistently wish to see more spent. The public also expect Wiltshire’s transport system to continue to meet the needs of local residents and businesses and promote sustainable transport in the larger settlements and along Wiltshire’s main commuting corridors.
5. On 22 October 2013 Cabinet considered a report on options to increase investment in highways maintenance. It was agreed to increase highway maintenance funding to £21 million for six years, starting in 2014/15. This was

subsequently included in the Council's future budget, and forms the basis of the 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020'.

6. The Council has applied the principles of asset management to the maintenance of the highway network for many years. This involves taking into account the lifecycle of the assets and monitoring performance of the intervention and investment strategies, with the objective of minimising expenditure while providing the required performance. There is a need to formalise this approach and adopt a policy and strategy in accordance with the latest code of practice on asset management.

## **Main Considerations for the Council**

### Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020

7. The 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020' provides the opportunity to address the long standing under investment in highways maintenance, which has been a problem nationally for many years. The significant investment of £21 million annually for six years by this Council will see a substantial improvement in road and footway conditions.
8. The first year of the increased investment has been in 2014/15, and a good start has been made to improve the condition of the county's roads. The increase in funding has required additional resources to be mobilised by the Council's contractor Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) and the Council's consultant, Atkins, who carry out the design and supervision of the works.
9. It has been possible to deliver nearly the entire 2014/15 programme, with 85% of the schemes identified at the start of the year delivered already. 15% of the sites had to be deferred to 2015/16 because of public utilities work and other difficulties with regard to access to the sites and availability of diversion routes.
10. In addition to the 184 sites included in the initial programme a further 53 sites have been treated because of flooding and winter damage, with a further 4 being programmed. The list of additional sites is included as **Appendix 1** of this report.

### Resource and delivery implications

11. Expenditure on highway maintenance is increasing nationally, with funding increases from DfT through the maintenance block, and specific funding for repairs especially in the south west following the flooding in early 2014. Capital expenditure on new roads and development has also increased with the improving economy.
12. All this work is increased demand for limited resources. Quarry capacity, vehicle and plant availability, and obtaining a skilled workforce are becoming a challenge. The Council has an established supply chain through its long-term contracts, which have the benefit of being flexible enough to meet the demand, but in some cases it has been difficult to meet the ambitious programme of work.
13. The Highways Agency and public utilities have also had large programmes of work this year, which in some cases have had serious implications for the

- programming of proposed resurfacing, resulting in schemes having to be reprogrammed or curtailed. In general, where schemes have had to be delayed, they are being reprogrammed for the next year.
14. The scale of the Council's proposed programme of works and its complexity has lead to some issues with regard to advance signing, diversion routes, and advance notification to residents and businesses. The contractor has worked hard to address these issues and improve delivery. As the year has progressed delivery has improved as more resources are deployed. More work has been carried out later in the year than is desirable, but fortunately the weather has been generally favourable.
  15. The extensive damage to the road network because of the flooding resulted in £3 million additional funding from DfT repairs. The funding was welcome but did not reflect the full cost of damage to the county's roads. Additional repair and resurfacing work has had to be programmed into the already extensive programme of works.

#### Area Board Involvement

16. The initial list of sites to be treated in 2014/15 was issued to the Area Board in early 2014, and an opportunity was provided to comment on the lists and suggest amendments and substitutions. The initial list was based on the road condition using technical survey data and local knowledge of the staff to identify the priority sites. An indication of potential sites for the remaining five years of the investment programme was also provided to aid consideration of sites.
17. Where sites were suggested to be added to the list it was indicated that these would be considered, but with the budget fully committed it would depend on other sites being delayed, and there could be no guarantee that additional sites could be added in the current year. Where schemes were suggested as substitutions for schemes on the list, it was possible to accommodate these requests.
18. Generally, the lists of sites were approved by the Area Boards with only minor amendments. Individual members, town and parish councils often had their own priorities, but it was important that they identify those which the Area Board as whole considered the priorities. In the 2014/15 programme there were six changes requested. Two were for additional sites to be included, which because of the particular circumstances it was possible to bring forward, and four were for changes to identified sites, with substitutions suggested. There were also a number of comments about sites for future treatment which were considered for the 2015/16 programme.
19. The Area Boards had some slightly different approaches to the review of potential sites, with most involving the Community Area Transport Groups (CATGs) in the process, and others considering the matter at the Area Board meetings. As the process continues through the remaining years of the investment programme, the Boards will be encouraged to take a longer term view and consider in advance what the local priorities are so that these can be developed with the Local Highways teams.

### Future Years Major Maintenance Site Lists

20. The intention is to continue to issue the proposed list of sites to the Area Boards for review annually. The identification of sites for skid resistance treatment in accordance with the Council's Skid Resistance Policy has to remain the priority for safety reasons, but there is still scope to address local priorities within the programme.
21. The carriageway condition and skid resistance survey results are usually available towards the end of the summer, and there then has to be a detailed assessment of sites. This means that scheme lists cannot be prepared in detail until December or January, giving little time before work starts on the next year's programme in April.
22. It would therefore be helpful for members, town and parish councils to consider any local priorities or sites of concern at the earliest opportunity so that these can be considered as necessary. The information can be provided to the local Highway Engineer for early assessment for potential inclusion in future programmes.

### Timing and Programming of Work

23. The programming of works is left as far as possible to the contractor to determine the most efficient way to do the works. In some cases local events, availability of diversion routes and other works on the network may dictate when particular works can be carried out. In the case of major works in particularly traffic sensitive areas, consultations are undertaken in advance with the local communities and businesses to identify the appropriate timing and phasing of works.
24. The scale of the works being undertaken and the large number of sites being treated means that some changes to the programme of works are inevitable, but the intention is to give as much warning of proposed works as possible. Consideration is being given to methods of providing better advanced information on proposed works, but this is likely to be a challenge in view of the continuous changes resulting from weather and other factors affecting delivery.
25. The Wiltshire Council website Roadworks page provides the best up-to-date information on roadworks in the county as it also includes public utilities and other work on the network. An interactive map can be viewed at:  
<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/parkingtransportandstreets/roadshighwaysstreetcare/roadsandtraffic/roadworks.htm>

### Potholes and Defect Repairs

26. The repair of potholes and carriageway defects proved to be a particular challenge during 2014. The flooding and continuing wet weather caused extensive damage to already weak areas of carriageway. Additional resources were committed to addressing the problem, but with widespread damage it was necessary to prioritise those sites with serious safety issues, and some of the other sites took significantly longer to repair than would otherwise have been the case.

27. The backlog of repairs has reduced significantly in recent months, and the programming of work by the contractor is improving. The processes for identifying defects, inspecting and repairing are the subject of a systems thinking review, and improvements are being developed on the basis of the success of the My Wiltshire website and app. However, there will be a need to continue to deploy considerable resources to deal with defects in the short term. In the longer term the significant investment programme will improve the resilience of the network and should reduce the need for reactive works.

#### Asset Management Policy and Strategy

28. In 2005 the then Wiltshire County Council (WCC) developed a Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP) in order to improve the management of its transport infrastructure, including the county's roads, bridges, street lighting and transport related assets. The Council was assisted by its consulting engineers Mouchel and their specialist sub-consultants.
29. The TAMP summarised the current position with regard to asset management, and followed a gap analysis of asset information and management procedures. It was prepared in accordance the then current Codes of Practice, particularly 'Well-Maintained Highways, July 2005'. For some assets such as carriageways there was good information available on the scale of the asset and its conditions as a result of many years of technical surveys. However, for some assets, such as drainage, there was less information on the extent of the asset and its condition.
30. The information collected in connection with the preparation of the TAMP has proved helpful over the years in understanding the assets and the investment needed in order to keep them in appropriate condition. The review of processes has informed decision making on roads, bridges and related infrastructure, including the development of the 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020'.
31. In May 2013 the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) published new asset management guidance. The guidance provides advice on implementing asset management, and makes a series of recommendations to achieve the benefits of asset management. The DfT is keen that authorities adopt an asset management approach and are encouraging adoption by including an incentive in the allocation of maintenance funding.
32. Draft Highways Asset Management Policy and Strategy (**Appendices 2 and 3**) have been developed in accordance with the current guidance. Further work will be required to prepare detailed plans for the various asset types, but there would be benefits in adopting the policy and strategy at the earliest stage in order to demonstrate the adaptation of these principles.
33. The policy and strategy are relevant for the highways and related infrastructure, including carriageways, footways and cycleways, structures, drainage, street lighting and traffic signals.

34. The DFT is expecting to see increased adaptation of asset management principles by local highway authorities, and future funding is likely to become dependent on demonstrating progress in this area. Therefore, it is important that this Council is seen to adopt this approach. These will be living documents which will be developed as knowledge and understanding of the assets increases.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

35. None.

### **Public Health Implications**

36. The condition of roads and related infrastructure can have serious safety implications, especially with regard to skid resistance and condition of highways and the contribution they can make to reducing accidents. Structures, signs and street lighting needs to be kept in good condition in order to protect the public and those maintaining the assets.
37. The investment through the 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020' will provide a highway network in better condition and with potentially improved safety. Having a strategy to appropriately maintain the highway assets should help reduce traffic accidents and vehicle collisions.

### **Corporate Procurement Implications**

38. There are no procurement implications at this stage.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

39. The improved maintenance of the highway network and its management using sound asset management principles should benefit all road users, including public transport, cyclists and pedestrians.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

40. The effects of climate change are likely to have significant effects on the highway network as was seen in the flooding of 2014, and the consequent damage to the roads, footways and drainage systems. Having robust maintenance strategies to improve the condition of the network will help build resilience into the infrastructure.
41. Where possible, suitable materials arising from road resurfacing schemes are recycled. Large quantities of road planings are used on rights of way to repair damage, and is also used on county farms or provided to community groups.
42. The presence of tar bound materials in older carriageways is causing problems as it has to be disposed of as contaminated waste, with consequent cost implications. Options for in-situ and other recycling options are being examined in order to make better use of this material.



## **Risk Assessment**

43. The investment in planned maintenance of the highway infrastructure and the establishment of formalised asset management policies will help reduce the risk of incidents and claims.
44. There is a risk that the current increase in construction activity in both the public and private sectors will result in insufficient resources being available to deliver the extensive road surfacing and asset management strategies currently proposed. This could delay delivery or reduce the volume of work it will be feasible to deliver. Processes are currently in place to deliver the maintenance programme and the situation will continue to be monitored.

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

45. There is a risk of increased accidents, claims and public dissatisfaction if the programme of highway maintenance is not delivered, or is delayed. The principles of asset management have been followed by this Council for many years, but there would be benefits in adopting the policy and strategy in order to demonstrate best practise.
46. There is a serious risk that DfT funding will become increasingly dependent on demonstrating the application of good practise and asset management principles. Failure to do so is likely to result in reduced funding in future years.

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

47. There are no significant risks associated with adopting the proposed highway asset management policy and strategy, but it will be important to ensure that they are implemented effectively. Processes are currently in place with Service Delivery Teams covering the various highway services, and these are the appropriate groups to continue to manage the process. They include representatives from the Council, consultants and contractors involved in delivering the services, and report to the Contract Management Meeting comprising senior managers from those organisations.

## **Financial Implications**

48. The highway network forms the Council's largest asset, and it is important that it is maintained in the most cost-effective way in order to show value for money. This included the use of whole life costing approach to inform investment decisions.
49. The use of asset management principles has been applied for many years in Wiltshire to ensure appropriate investment with longer term planning. The adoption of the proposed policy and strategy will help formalise that process.

50. The increasing drive for asset management from DfT will mean that failure to demonstrate the application of this approach will result in reduced funding from central government. An increasing proportion of available funding will be potentially withheld as an incentive. It is therefore important to have a formalised adoption of the policy and strategy.

### **Legal Implications**

51. There are a number of duties imposed on the Council as a highways authority. There is the common law duty to maintain the highway network including related infrastructure. The duty to maintain includes a duty to maintain the highway drainage system in order to keep the highway free from flooding. Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 ('the 1980 Act') imposes a statutory duty on the highway authority to take such care in all the circumstances as is reasonably required to ensure the highway is not dangerous for traffic. Section 130 of the 1980 Act imposes a general statutory duty for a highway authority to assert and protect the rights of the public to use and enjoy the highway. To fulfil this duty the highway authority has a responsibility to remove encroachments and obstructions (which would include flooding) of the highway. The current investment programme and proposed policy and strategy will help the Council to meet its duties.

### **Options Considered**

52. There is a need to continue to apply asset management principles to the highway network in order to keep the network in good condition and to ensure value for money from maintenance work. Not formally adopting a policy and strategy would result in reduced funding from DfT in future years.

### **Conclusions**

53. The 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020' provides the opportunity to address the long standing under investment in highways maintenance, which has been a problem nationally for many years. The significant investment of £21 million annually for six years by Wiltshire Council will see a substantial improvement in road and footway conditions.
54. Good progress has been made in delivering the 2014/15 programme of highway maintenance and has included the involvement of the Area Boards to help set local priorities. It is intended that this process should continue in future years.
55. The highway network forms the Council's largest asset, and it is important that it is maintained in the most cost-effective way in order to show value for money. This includes the use of whole life costing approaches to inform investment decisions. The use of asset management principles has been applied for many years in Wiltshire to ensure appropriate investment with longer term planning. The adoption of the proposed policy and strategy will help formalise that process.

**Parvis Khansari**  
**Associate Director Highways and Transport**

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April 2015

### **Background Papers**

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

None

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – List of additional road surfacing sites 2015/16

Appendix 2 – Wiltshire Highways Asset Management Policy

Appendix 3 – Wiltshire Highways Asset Management Strategy