

**Wiltshire Council**

**Environment Select Committee**

**12 January 2022**

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**Subject: Highways Annual Review of Service**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Mark McClelland - 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. The Council, as local highway authority, is assisted by a number of specialist contractors and suppliers. An annual review of the highway service for 2021 has been prepared (see **Appendix 1**), together with summary of the schemes delivered during the year (see **Appendix 2**).

Reducing the environmental impact of highway maintenance operations is of increasing importance. The highway service already recycles a considerable volume of the waste material generated. The service is also taking measures to reduce the carbon footprint of its operations, with the substantive completion of the energy efficient LED street lighting project bringing substantive benefits.

The highways term maintenance contract with Ringway continues to work well. Following assessment through the Key Performance Indicators included within the contract, the duration has been extended to March 2023, the maximum possible under the contract terms. Currently a procurement exercise is underway for the next term maintenance contract. It is anticipated that the award of this contract will be made in October / November 2022 ready for commencement in April 2023.

The performance of the Council's highway consultant, Atkins, continues to be good during 2021.

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 2021 has been prepared (see **Appendix 3**). There has been a decrease in the number Killed and Seriously Injured on the County's roads, which may be attributable to quieter roads due to the Covid-19 response. The number of potholes and the more serious safety defect potholes both decreased. However the condition of the traffic signal stock is a concern. Some of the public satisfaction scores have dropped which is also a concern.

## **Proposal**

It is recommended:

- (i) To endorse the Highways Annual Review of Service and confirm that the performance of the Council's highways contractors has been good during 2021.
- (ii) To welcome the results summarised in the Highways Performance Management Framework noting the overall reduction in those killed and seriously injured on the county's roads which may be attributable to quieter roads due to the Covid-19 response.
- (iii) To welcome the substantive completion of the Council's LED street lighting project which will reduce energy costs and significantly reduce the Council's carbon footprint.
- (iv) To 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.

**Parvis Khansari**

**Subject: Highways Annual Review of Service**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Mark McClelland - Transport ,Waste, Street Scene and Flooding**

**Key Decision: No**

### **Purpose of Report**

1. To provide a review of the performance of the highways service during 2021 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 acknowledged that 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 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.

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 has to complete a DfT self assessment form annually in connection with its performance on highways asset management. It is important to have a Performance Management Framework to help manage the service and to demonstrate 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 2021 is included at **Appendix 1**.
9. The review indicates that the highways service and its suppliers have adapted well to the continuing challenges of Covid-19 and reductions in the available budgets. The schemes completed in 2021 included road surfacing, repairs, road safety improvements and structures work are included at **Appendix 2**.
10. During 2021 the Highways Service:
  - Resurfaced 21.2 km of road
  - Resurfaced 4.2 km of footway
  - Retextured 19 km of road to improve skid resistance
  - Surface dressed 92.5 km of road
  - Filled 10,904 potholes from January to November
  - Completed localised road repairs at 47 sites totaling 10,860 sqm
  - Carried out 15 major bridge schemes
11. 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.
12. The environmental impact of highway maintenance operations can potentially 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, which was introduced in April 2018. In 2020 the HIAMS project has been extended to cover real-time programming and recording of defect repairs using the map based mobile software. Work has commenced to move the Street lighting service to HIAMS with a likely 'go live' in summer 2022.

### Ringway Infrastructure Service

14. The highways term maintenance contract with Ringway continues to work well. Following assessment through the Key Performance Indicators included within the contract, the duration has been extended to March 2023, the maximum

possible under the contract terms. Currently a procurement exercise is underway for the next term maintenance contract. It is anticipated that the award of this contract will be made in October / November 2022 ready for commencement in April 2023.

15. The Ringway contract provides a range of highway services, including dealing with potholes, gully emptying, road and footway repairs, Parish Stewards, bridge works, street lighting maintenance, winter maintenance, out of hours emergency response, integrated transport and Community Area Transport Group (CATG) schemes. Ringway works in partnership with the Council to deliver these services through the Service Delivery Teams established to manage the service.
16. Ringway employs the Parish Stewards. This scheme was originally introduced with the earlier highways contract awarded to Ringway in 2005. It provides a steward for each area board to respond to requests for minor highway works from Town and Parish Councils. The scheme was re-launched in October 2016 and continues to be successful and very popular with local communities and has received good feedback from Town and Parish Councils.

#### Other Highways Contractors' performance

17. Following the conclusion of a number of contracts novated to Wiltshire from the Balfour Beatty Living Places contract, new highway contracts were awarded in 2020 for:  
Machine Surfacing Contract – Tarmac Ltd  
Surface Dressing and Micro Asphalt Contract – Kiely Bros Ltd  
Arborist Services Contract – Upton Specialised Tree Services Ltd
18. The Tarmac contract undertakes the major surfacing works on Wiltshire's highways. This 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.
19. The Kiely Bros contract undertakes the surface dressing and micro asphalt works. This involves the overlaying of roads with a thin layer of surfacing to provide essential skid resistance and increase the life of the road. As this type of surfacing has no structural strength it is applied to roads that are still structurally sound, thus 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.
20. The Uptons Specialised Tree Services contract allows the maintenance and planting of highway trees. The contractor is also responsible for the inspection and where necessary, removal of trees infected with Ash Dieback. This service is particularly important as 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. Ash trees can grow to a height in excess of 30m, so this can present a hazard on the highway. Ash dieback is increasing in Wiltshire. The Performance under this contract has been good with a number of dead Ash trees removed from the highway.
21. A framework Contract for Specialist Surfacing and Associated Highway Works has also recently been awarded to provide a list of suitable contractors to bid for

smaller specialist highway works at short notice and so reducing procurement costs.

### Highways Consultancy Contract

22. 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 highways teams, including the design and supervision of highway, transportation and drainage schemes.

### Performance Management Framework

23. The Performance Management Framework was originally prepared for this committee in 2016 and is updated annually (see **Appendix 3**). It contains a suite of performance measures based on the themes of:
- Network Safety Condition and Resilience
  - Planned Maintenance
  - Maintenance for Sustainable Transport
  - Infrastructure to Support Economic Growth
  - Environmental Sustainability
  - Customer
24. 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.
25. Each indicator is measured at a high level as: poor – does not meet minimum standards, fair – meets minimum standards, 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.
26. 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.
27. The Framework indicates that overall progress and performance has been good. The number killed and seriously injured on the county's roads reduced significantly in 2020/21 which may be attributable to quieter roads due to the Covid-19 response. The measure is assessed as Good but will need to continue to be monitored as recovery from Covid takes place. The number of slight casualties also reduced. Overall road safety has improved in 2020/21.
28. For most aspects of the service the performance was rated as good. Road Surface Skidding Resistance however continues to be an area of concern. The number of potholes and the more serious safety defect potholes both decreased. However the condition of the traffic signal stock is a concern. Some of the public satisfaction scores have dropped which is also a concern.
29. Overall, public satisfaction with most aspects of the highway service in Wiltshire

is close to the national average.

30. It is proposed that the indicators should continue to be reviewed on an annual basis and performance reported to the Environment Select Committee.

#### Wiltshire LED Street Lighting Project

31. The roll out of the LED Street lighting project is now close to completion with the installation of heritage style units being the only significant area left. Overall the project has run smoothly but there were some delays in obtaining the LED lanterns during the Covid lockdown periods.
32. Approximately 95% of the streetlights have been converted so far, with the remaining units being heritage and special units which should be converted in the next few months. Energy consumption per year is reducing by about 64% from 12,771,626 kWh to 4,597,785kWh, which will provide significant cost savings for the council in future years as well a reduced maintenance costs.

#### Network Management Permit Scheme

33. Wiltshire Council became a Permit Authority on 1st June 2020 following formal guidance from the Department for Transport (DfT). The introduction of the scheme was planned for 1st April 2020, however due to the Covid pandemic, this was delayed until 1st June 2020 to coincide with the launch of DfT's Street Manager platform to manage the transactions of all permit applications.
34. The DfT require all Permitting Authorities to produce an annual report for the first three years of the scheme, covering the overall performance to ensure that Permitting Schemes are meeting the initial objectives. The report aims to understand the volume and type of permits being submitted for works on the highway network and the performance and standard of both Works Promoters and our own Permitting Team in analysing and challenging the permit application submissions to effectively manage our Network Management Duty in order to minimise disruption on the highway network.
35. This first year has been very challenging, working with new legislative requirements and technology, establishing a new team structure, recruiting new staff and training and coaching all staff on the new legislation, whilst having to work remotely during the national lockdown period. Works volumes from Statutory Undertakers (Utility Companies) fluctuated during the initial period of this first year due to redirection of works whilst operating during the national lockdowns and Permitting for our own internal works experienced a significant step change in the Regulatory requirements.
36. The report outcomes demonstrate that the introduction of this scheme has provided a better understanding and visibility of the works that are taking place on the network and the ability to analyse, challenge and apply conditions to permit applications that benefit all road users in Wiltshire.
37. The summary of year one shows that the introduction of the Permitting Scheme been a success. There are some areas of the report which identify areas for improvement and lessons learnt from the first year that will be taken forward to further enhance the delivery of the permit scheme.

38. Key findings in Year 1

26,557 applications to process  
19,293 works undertaken across Wiltshire  
74,140 days of highway occupation  
53 works start every day  
Average cost impact of £310 per day of work

### **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

39. The review of the highways service is reported annually to the Environment Select Committee. The report also includes an update on the Highways Performance Management Framework, which it is proposed to continue to make annually. The committee has been kept informed about the development of HIAMS and the procurement of the various contracts through regular updates.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

40. None.

### **Public Health Implications**

41. The condition of roads and related infrastructure can have serious safety implications, especially with regard to skid resistance and road surfaces. The good maintenance and improvement of the highway network can make a significant contribution to reducing collisions, especially those resulting in killed and seriously injured. Roads, bridges, highway structures, signs and street lighting all need to be kept in good condition in order to protect the public and those maintaining the assets.

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

42. 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 in 2018 road surfaces were damaged by high temperatures during the summer. 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.
43. 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.
44. 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**

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

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

### **Risk Assessment**

47. There are considerable risks associated with the highway network, particularly in terms of safety, environmental, financial and reputational risks. The highways contracts provide resources to ensure the successful delivery of the highways service and reduce the risks to the Council.
48. 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.

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

49. No specific decision is required at this time, but it should be noted that there is a risk of increased accidents, claims and public dissatisfaction if the programme of highway maintenance and the 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 will potentially 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**

50. No decision is required. Processes are currently in place to reduce risks, with Service Delivery Teams managing the various aspects of the highway services, and these are the appropriate groups to continue to manage the associated risks. The teams include representatives from the Council, consultants and contractors involved in delivering the services, and they report to the Contract Management Meeting comprising senior managers from those organisations.

### **Financial Implications**

51. 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.
52. 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 if good asset management principles are not followed.
53. A procurement exercise is currently underway considering the options for replacing the current highways term maintenance contract with Ringway when it ends in March 2023. It is likely that future costs for the highway's maintenance service will

increase when this contract is replaced. This is due to the rising cost of raw materials, and the limited number of delivery drivers, as well as the effects of Covid and Brexit.

### **Legal Implications**

54. 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**

55. 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 in order to keep the network in a safe condition and to ensure value for money.

### **Conclusions**

56. The highway network forms the Council's largest asset and needs to be maintained in a cost-effective way in order to show value for money and keep it safe. This requires the use of whole life costing approaches and effective asset management procedures to inform investment decisions.
57. The performance of the contractors delivering the Council's highway service is important in ensuring that the Council can meet its responsibilities as Highway Authority. The current performance of the contractors is good and will continue to be monitored.

### **Parvis Khansari Director Highways and Waste**

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**David Thomas**

Head of Highways Asset Management and Commissioning

November 2021

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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 2021

Appendix 2 – Wiltshire Highways Schemes 2021

Appendix 3 – Highways Performance Management Framework 2021