

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 12 May 2021
Report Subject	Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP)
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside
Report Author	Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation).
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The highway network is the highest valued infrastructure asset owned by the Council, with the carriageway and footway asset alone valued in excess of £1 billion. The safe and usable condition of the network is essential in maintaining economic and social connectivity, both within Flintshire and with the wider region and the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) framework provides the principles for managing the network, recognising the importance of the highway infrastructure in supporting a number of the Council's key objectives.

This report provides Scrutiny with an update on the development of Council's HAMP and provides an explanation on how the Council utilises the principles of the HAMP to guide the strategy for managing and maintaining the highway infrastructure.

The report also provides the Committee with an update on the trial use of recycled material in highway resurfacing material.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	That Scrutiny notes the content of this report and the purpose of the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP).
2.	That Scrutiny notes the current arrangements and actions of the portfolio to maintain the highway network in accordance with the statutory requirement.
3.	That Scrutiny approves the revised policy for Highway and Car Park Safety Inspections, Intervention Criteria and Response Times to include a revised approach to Highway Structures inspections.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT
1.01	<p>The highway network is the highest valued infrastructure asset owned by the Council, with the carriageway and footway asset alone valued in excess of £1 billion. The safe and usable condition of the network is essential in maintaining economic and social connectivity, both within Flintshire and with the wider region. The HAMP framework provides the principles for managing the network, recognising the importance of the highway infrastructure in supporting a number of the Council's key objectives.</p>
1.02	<p>Flintshire County Council as 'Highway Authority' has a statutory duty to maintain all adopted highways, including highway structures within the County (Trunk Roads not included). This is carried out whilst recognising following increasing pressures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited budgets• Limited staff resources• An ageing network with a backlog of maintenance requirements• Increasing public expectations in respect of highway condition.
1.03	<p>In February 2012 the Council's Executive approved the Council's HAMP. The plan set out how the Council would respond to its statutory duty in the face of these pressures, whilst considering asset management principles which would be applied to the management of the individual assets that collectively make up the highway network across Flintshire.</p>
1.04	<p>In June 2015 an update was provided to Cabinet on the progress made on the HAMP Improvement Plan and to seek approval for the targeted allocation of both revenue and capital funding to the most appropriate asset on the network, utilising the principles of the HAMP to guide the outcome and these principles are still being followed by the service.</p>
1.05	<p>The Council's HAMP sets out how Asset Management principles will be applied to the management the highway network in Flintshire.</p> <p>These principles are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A systematic approach to maintenance that takes a long term maintenance approach.• Maximising benefits by balancing competing demands across individual asset types.• Allocation of resources based on assessed need and a risk based approach to funding allocation.• Explicit consideration of public expectations.
1.06	<p>The UK Road Liaison Group (UKRLG) publish a Code of Practice for Highway Authorities to following in respect of highway maintenance (the Code). Whilst this Code does not place a statutory requirement on the Council, it provides Highway Authorities with guidance on highways management arrangements. Adoption of the recommendations within the Code is a matter for each Highway Authority, based on their own legal interpretation, risks, needs and priorities.</p>

	<p>The code advocates a risk based approach to highway management which is followed in the Council's HAMP, which recognises resource availability and prioritises areas in the greatest need, in order to provide the maximum benefit from the available investment.</p>
1.07	<p>Asset management is a strategic approach to highway maintenance that identifies the optimal allocation of resources for the management, operation, preservation and enhancement of the highway infrastructure to meet the needs of current and future customers. However, it needs to be recognised that the condition of the highway network will naturally continue to deteriorate each year and without sufficient annual investment, the overall condition of the network will decline.</p>
1.08	<p>Residents, businesses and visitors of Flintshire rely on the local highway infrastructure and the principle of applying an Asset Management strategy is to improve the management of the highway asset in respect of those components that are maintainable at public expense in the most cost effective way possible with the available funding. Our aim is to ensure effective and efficient proactive maintenance of the asset to both a safe and serviceable condition in support of the Council's key objectives.</p>
1.09	<p>Currently the Council allocates the following financial resources to be made available for investment through HAMP which are recognised in the Council's MTFS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Investment - £600k • Revenue Allocation - £225k <p>We have also benefited from Welsh Government investment in road maintenance as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020/21 Highway refurbishment Grant - £950k • Additional Revenue Grant (issued March 2021) - £571k <p>This additional funding from WG has been critical in maintaining the network and the Council has made WG aware of the importance of protecting this funding source in future years.</p>
1.10	<p>Ideally the authority would like to achieve a continuance of the current condition level – this is known as “Steady State”. The level of capital investment required to achieve this position was calculated in 2016 as £2,745,680 per year, and this figure is now in excess of £3.2m per year. This level of investment would simply maintain the condition of the carriageways alone and the required investment level does not take into account the deteriorating condition of other highway assets such as footways, structures and the street lighting network.</p> <p>Given the deteriorating condition of the carriageway, the majority of the available funding is therefore allocated to this particular asset, with minimal budget allocation to the other asset types other than to deal with emergency and critical issues. The Council operates an approved inspection regime for all assets which ensures that the funding allocated to each element is sufficient to ensure the asset is safe and fit for purpose</p>

	and thus ensures we comply with our statutory requirement to maintain the network.
1.11	Welsh Government funding for road maintenance schemes together with the Council's capital and revenue allocations need therefore to be carefully allocated to provide maximum benefits. All roads are surveyed to develop programmes for each year's resurfacing, surface dressing and patching programmes, ensuring the most effective use of funds are allocated to those areas in most need of corrective or preventative maintenance.
1.12	Regular safety inspections are carried out on all assets of the network which involve Streetscene Area Coordinators visiting each section of the highway infrastructure at the approved scheduled frequency. During the visit any defects present are noted and the required maintenance repair work arranged. Safety inspections are carried out on all carriageways (roads), footways and cycle-ways and on all publically accessible car parks operated by the Council.
1.13	<p><u>Highway Structures</u></p> <p>A recent review of the highway structure asset management and inspection process has identified some improvements to the County's approach, and subsequently requires an update of the "Policy for Highway & Car Park Safety Inspections, Intervention Criteria and Response Times", previously approved by Cabinet in November 2018. The revision has developed upon the previous Structure Inspection section within the document and this is included for approval within Appendix 1.</p>
1.14	This revision looks to provide clarity to the categorisation of Flintshire's highway structure assets, along with the frequency and type of inspections allocated for each asset category. The proposals all align with the national guidelines and maintenance advice stated in the Code.
1.15	<p><u>Use of Plastic Waste in Resurfacing Works</u></p> <p>Flintshire have been working with a specialist supplier who are developing proposals to use recycled kerbside plastic in road surfacing material. The scheme provides approximately 6% partial binder replacement which results in a direct bitumen reduction and CO2 savings.</p>
1.16	<p>A trial patching programme using recycled plastics was undertaken in January 2020, which is understood to be the first of its kind in Wales.</p> <p>Approximately 150kg of waste material was added to the resurfacing material as part of roadworks carried out at the junction of Hall Lane and Normanby Drive in Connah's Quay.</p>
1.17	These works have proved to be a success in terms of the suitability of the material, at least over the short term, and the trial supports the concept of using plastic waste as a bitumen replacement to provide a suitable resurfacing material.

1.18	The Council needs now to consider whether investment in this aspect of technology is appropriate, particularly when we consider that plastics are being removed or at least reduced in many areas of day to day use. In the future, this will hopefully result in less material being collected by the waste crews, but would also mean less material would be available for this particular use, putting at risk any investment in the production process.
1.19	Further work is also needed to assess the impact of the material released as the road surface naturally degrades, to ensure that plastic material does not cause unintentional damage to the natural environment.
1.20	It is recommended that further trials are undertaken at various locations across the County to provide some further evidence to support a wider investment in the process

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The new revised policy has no detrimental impact on operations or costs.
2.02	Capital Budgets for Planned Maintenance - £600k Revenue Allocation - £225k Additional Welsh Government Funding support in 2018 - £1.427m
2.03	The process will ensure that available funding is targeted at those assets with the greatest economic and environmental benefit.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	The service operates on a fixed budget each year.
3.02	The highways maintenance service has undertaken risk assessments on the procedures involving highway inspection which are outlined within the HAMP.
3.03	Safety defects identified during Highway Safety Inspections should be repaired within the specified timelines. Failure to comply with this could result in the Council being liable to claims from road users. The annual programme of preventative maintenance (resurfacing, surface dressing and patching) should reduce the occurrence of safety defects on the network.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
4.01	With Cabinet Member
4.02	Neighbouring authorities, including County Surveyors Society Wales (CSSW)

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Council Policy on Highway Safety Inspections, intervention levels and response times – revised April 2021.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	UKRLG Code of Practice – “Well Managed Highway Infrastructure” - http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org/en/codes/ Highway Act 1980

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Stephen O Jones Telephone: 01352 704700 E-mail: stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	(1) HAMP: Highway Asset Management Plan (2) Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: An industry developed approach that sets out guidance and advice for the management and maintenance of highway infrastructure and assets (3) General Inspection – visual inspection of every structure to assess condition and maintenance requirement (4) Principal Inspection – Specialist inspection of highway structures carried out every 6 years (5) CO2e - Carbon dioxide equivalent