

Cabinet – 19 November 2008

Highway Asset Management Plan 2006-2011

Portfolio: Councillor Anthony Harris, Transport

Service: Engineering & Transportation

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Summary of report

The report seeks cabinet endorsement of Walsall Council's Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP). The Department for Transport is encouraging highway authorities to develop HAMPs that will set a national standard of good practice for the management of highway network maintenance.

A paper copy of the Highway Asset Management Plan will be available in the Members' Group Rooms prior to Cabinet. A copy is also available on the Council's committee information website and can be obtained direct from the following link: <http://cmis/cmiswebpublic/>

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the HAMP.
- 2.2 That the Head of Engineering & Transportation is specifically authorised to update the plan and make amendments, as necessary, in the light of any changes in legislation, national codes of practice or corporate policy.

3. Background information

- 3.1 Walsall's highway network is the largest and most visible community asset for which the authority is responsible. It is in constant use by both the public and commerce and is fundamental to the economic, social and environmental vitality of the borough. In order to serve the needs of our highway users it is crucial that the highway network is properly maintained and managed.
- 3.2 The Highway Authority is responsible for a road network of 532 miles (i.e. 856km) as well as footways, footpaths, public rights of way and cycle ways together with associated highway infrastructure elements such as bridges, traffic signals, drainage systems, street lighting, road signs etc. Walsall Council

recognises the importance of the highway network and the vital service that these combined assets provide.

- 3.3 Central Government increasingly promotes a more structured approach to managing assets and since 2001, it has been a requirement that all local authorities have a Corporate Asset Management Plan. Highway assets have so far been excluded from any specific requirement, but various government led initiatives are positively seeking to extend an asset management approach to include the highway infrastructure.
- 3.4 Walsall's HAMP has benefited from collaborative working between all seven West Midlands' authorities, this has been supported with guidance from OPUS International asset management consultants. A series of joint workshops together with regular formal meetings have played a major part in achieving a coordinated approach across the West Midlands. This co-ordination will enable individual HAMPs of similar format to be brought together into the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP), to which all seven authorities have contributed.
- 3.5 A number of specific drivers make the establishment of a highway asset management regime essential. In November 2007, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) completed a review of accounting, management and finance mechanisms for local authority transport infrastructure assets. The review was commissioned by HM Treasury and the Department for Transport. Driven by the progressive introduction of Whole of Government Accounts, the Treasury now requires authorities to explicitly value their highway assets and report this value for the first time in 2010 - 2011.
- 3.6 The document 'Full Guidance on Local Transport Plans – Second Edition' published by the Department for Transport states that "evidence about the quality of asset management will form a key component of the Department's LTP assessment". In addition, it will be necessary to demonstrate that an asset management plan has informed the development of the LTP and that asset inventories are being exploited to their full potential and in a way that manages future maintenance liabilities efficiently.
- 3.7 In October 2006, the government published its local government white paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities, in which it stated "Managing assets effectively is vital to achieving cost savings for local authorities and helping them to deliver better outcomes for citizens."
- 3.8 The Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management, 'Well Maintained Highways', recommends that highway authorities prepare asset management plans to demonstrate a systematic and logical approach to the management of their highway network.
- 3.9 Walsall's highway network has an estimated gross replacement cost in the region of £800 million. The specific benefits of adopting an asset management approach are summarised as follows:
 - Optimisation of Council resources.
 - Reduced lifecycle costs.
 - Defined levels of service.
 - The ability to track performance against agreed levels of service.

- Better management of financial, operational and legal risk.
- Improved audit trail and transparency of decision making.
- The ability to predict the consequences of funding decisions and the future impact on asset condition and levels of service.
- Ability to discharge the Council's statutory valuation and financial reporting responsibilities.

3.10 The first priorities of the HAMP will be as follows:

- Set out the Council's approach to managing the highway network and associated assets.
- Ensure that highway management and maintenance has clear linkage with the Council's strategic priorities and pledges.
- Draw together current Council policies and processes.
- Establish current levels of service for each asset group.
- Compile a register of existing asset inventory data.
- Develop a strategy for gathering data for unrecorded assets.
- Review data management systems.
- Review current maintenance practices.
- Identify gaps and recommend actions.
- Provide evidence for funding requirements.
- Demonstrate best practice.

3.11 The following asset groups fall within the scope of the HAMP.

- Carriageways.
- Footways and cycle ways.
- Footpaths, bridleways, public rights of way.
- Street lighting and road signs.
- Bridges and highway structures.
- Highway drainage systems.
- Highway verges, shrub beds and trees.
- Traffic signals and pedestrian controlled crossings.
- Traffic calming measures.
- Traffic safety barriers and pedestrian guardrails.
- Street furniture.
- Highway land.

3.12 The HAMP has been produced in accordance with guidance contained in documents produced by the County Surveyors Society and CIPFA. The highway asset groups included in the Plan have been determined from specific guidance contained in these documents.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 **Financial:** The adoption of the HAMP does not in itself commit the Council to any additional expenditure. However, for the reasons previously described, adoption of this plan is considered to represent sound financial practice as it will provide a strategic overview from which robust and effective resource management and financial decision making should follow.

Progressive introduction of Whole of Government Accounting requires local authorities to align their accounting policies to those of central government. One of the main differences will be the valuation method for highway infrastructure assets, Highway Authorities will be expected to explicitly value their highway assets and report a benchmark valuation for the first time in 2010 – 2011. This information will be used, in part, to assess future funding allocations under the Local Transport Planning process (LTP).

There is a West Midlands commitment through the Chief Engineers and Planning Officers Group (CEPOG) to offer financial assistance to the seven West Midlands authorities; this is primarily in recognition of the high costs involved with delivering HAMPs to programme. Approval has been obtained for a total of £537,000 for all to 'share' and further contributions shall be made available over a three-year period. Through a gap analysis of inventory data and inventory systems, Walsall will identify what financial support it requires from the West Midlands to progress the HAMP.

- 4.2 **Legal:** The Council, in its capacity as Highway Authority, has a statutory duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain highways for which it has responsibility and to keep them available and safe for the passage of the travelling public.

The Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management, 'Well Maintained Highways', recommends that asset management plans are prepared in a way that demonstrates a systematic and logical approach to the delivery of highway maintenance services. Such an approach reduces risk in relation to third party loss or injury claims against the Council in connection with the highway network.

- 4.3 **Staffing:** Responsibility for the HAMP and the progressive introduction of asset management practice will be driven from existing resources within the Highway Maintenance Group. Daily management and control of highway assets will remain the duty of those officers who have direct management responsibility for each of the highway asset categories listed in the Plan. As such, there are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.

5. Citizen impact

- 5.1 The Corporate Plan identified that the Citizens Panel ranked improving the condition of the boroughs roads as their second highest priority. All road users depend on a good reliable service from our highway network to sustain economic and transportation needs and support the buoyant economy that exists in Walsall. The HAMP will bring an integrated framework for the delivery of highway maintenance across the boroughs highway network. Through a strategic approach, it will identify the optimal allocation of approved resources in a way that takes a long term view, aimed at meeting the current and future needs of highway users.

6. Community safety

- 6.1 The introduction of asset management principles and practices will bring improvements to the way the Council manages the highway network. Improvements to our roads, footways, cycle ways, Public Rights of Way and lighting can have a positive impact on crime prevention. By maintaining a pleasant, clean and well-kept appearance, highway users will generally feel more safe and secure and be encouraged to make better use of the network facilities available to them.

7. Environmental impact

- 7.1 The HAMP has a section dedicated to 'Recycling and Sustainability' which has been produced in consultation with the Council's officer for climate change. It highlights the need to consider issues that affect the environment, such as noise pollution, light pollution, waste management and recycling of highway construction materials when designing, planning and undertaking maintenance activities. Environmental obligations dictate a greater need to focus in detail on local and national initiatives and policies that target sustainability issues. The Plan promotes the following priority areas whenever practical or economically viable:

- Sustainability in the consumption and production of resources.
- The effects of climate change and energy efficiency.
- Natural resource protection and environmental impact.
- Sustainable and maintainable community objectives.

The Sustainable Community Strategy promotes better use of our existing roads and supports investment in the road network.

- 7.2 The Plan positively encourages officers to consider environmental issues and provides signposts to environmental publications such as:

- 'Securing the Future' Government strategy for sustainable development.
- 'Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan for Civil Engineering' published by the Institute of Civil Engineers.
- 'Sustainable Development Action Plan' released by the Highways Agency.
- Walsall Council's 'Climate Change Strategy'
- Black Country Core Strategy

- 7.3 A climate change risk assessment is being carried out across the full range of highway assets, the work is being conducted under the guidance of Walsall's climate change officer and the completed risk assessments shall be recorded in the appendices of the HAMP.

8. Performance and risk management issues

- 8.1 Risk:** The HAMP has a section dedicated to 'Risk Management' which has been produced in consultation with the Council's Risk and Insurance officers. It notes that risk management practices across the country have significantly sharpened in response to what has become an increasingly litigious society, significant sums have been paid out by authorities for public liability claims, and the frequency of corporate manslaughter claims have become more common. The role of the highway authority carries with it significant responsibilities and consequently significant risks. If highways are not inspected according to predetermined regimes and kept in a reasonable state of repair, damages may be payable to third parties who allege they have suffered loss or injury as a consequence of failure to maintain. The key objective of the HAMP is to coordinate and deliver a well maintained highway network which is essential if we are to control and minimise risk to the Council.

The Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance, 'Well Maintained Highways', recommends how highway authorities should properly maintain their highway network. It is not mandatory, but is often used as a benchmark in any legal action arising from alleged failure to maintain the highway. Risk managers usually recommend that local highway authorities publish a strategy, which sets out how policies, procedures and locally adopted standards may differ from the Codes of Practice. The Risk Management appendices of the HAMP will act as a central repository for any such departures from codes of practice or specification.

- 8.2 Performance management:** The HAMP has a section dedicated to 'Performance Monitoring' which has been produced in consultation with the Council's Corporate Performance Team. Actual performance against individual asset groups will be measured through a combination of National Indicators, Local Indicators, comparisons and targets, in line with Walsall's Corporate Integrated Planning and Performance Framework (CIPPF). There is a fundamental requirement for all authorities to secure continuous improvement in the way they exercise their functions and the CIPPF sets out how the Council's planning processes interlink, demonstrating how resources and services should be managed. It identifies the minimum 'must do' within which the Council should operate, the HAMP aligns with these principles when setting levels of service by identifying the asset categories for which a statutory minimum level of service will be required.

The recently awarded Highways Repair and Maintenance Contract 2008 will bring collaborative working practices and fresh opportunities to monitor and record performance. The appendices contained in the HAMP will act as a centralised data store from which performance and trends can be tracked, analysed and reported.

9. Equality implications

- 9.1 The HAMP supports the Council's equal opportunities policies by providing a well managed transportation network that benefits all members of the community and improves accessibility, particularly for those with disabilities. The way the highway network is managed and maintained can have a significant bearing on improving social inclusion, this has been acknowledged in the section titled 'Levels of Service' contained in the Plan.

10. Consultation

- 10.1 To reduce the environmental impact of the HAMP consultation exercise only a limited number of paper copies of the document have been produced. The majority of consultation has been carried out electronically via email and through a specific Highway Asset Management web page on the Council's website. The HAMP has also featured on the Council's corporate consultation web page 'Walsall Viewfinder'. The process has been supported with a presentation to Council officers from Engineering, Planning and Regeneration. Widespread consultation has taken place which has included Council officers, elected members and our partners.

The list of partner organisations invited to participate in the consultation exercise includes:

Birmingham City Council, Wolverhampton City Council, Sandwell Council, Solihull Council, Coventry City Council, Dudley Council, Police, AA and RAC, Centro, Ambulance Service, Fire Service, Freight Transport Association, Black Country Chamber of Commerce, CEPOG Core Support Team, WHG, WATMOS, Walsall Regeneration Company, Walsall Partnership (formerly WBSP), Local Neighbourhood Partnerships, Walsall Disability Forum, Walsall Primary Care Trust, religious and significant minority interest groups

Background papers

'Framework for Highway Asset Management'

Published by the County Surveyors Society. April 2004

'Maintaining a Vital Asset'

Published by the UK Roads Liaison Group. November 2005

'Guidance Document for Highway Infrastructure Asset Valuation'

Published by the UK Roads Liaison Group. July 2005.

'Well Maintained Highways'

Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management. July 2005.

'Well Lit Highways'

Code of Practice for Highway Lighting. November 2004

'Management of Highway Structures'
Code of Practice. September 2005

'Guidance on the Requirements for the Production of Highways Asset Management Plans'
Transport Research Laboratory Limited. Prepublication V.2.

'West Midlands Local Transport Plan'. March 2006

'Financial Reporting Standard 15'
Accounting Standards Board. February 1999

Review of Accounting, Management and Finance Mechanisms
Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants.

Walsall Council 'Highway Maintenance Strategy 2005-2008.

Walsall Council 'Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2008-2012.

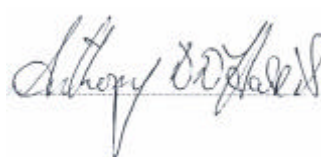
Draft Black Country Core Strategy
Walsall Council, Dudley Council, Sandwell Council, Wolverhampton City Council

Author

Richard Pohribnyj
Highway Asset Manager
Highways Maintenance Group
☎ 01922 652304
✉ pohribnyjr@walsall.gov.uk



Jamie Morris
Executive Director
11 November 2008



Councillor Anthony Harris
Portfolio Holder
November 2008