



Cabinet Report
13th February 2019

Item

Public

Managing Highway Risk

Responsible Officer **Steve Brown Interim Head of Infrastructure and Communities**

e-mail: Steven.brown@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257802

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request Cabinet approval of the recommendations as presented in the report and, in particular, the revised Skidding resistance policy and Highways Inspection Manual To enable Shropshire Council to comply with the requirements of the new Code of Practice 'Well Managed Highway Infrastructure' Document which applies across the United Kingdom requiring Highways Authorities to develop a risk based approach.
- 1.2 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure' supersedes the previous codes 'Well-maintained Highways', 'Well-lit Highways' and 'Management of Highway Structures' and the new Code provides guidance and direction for highways authorities.
- 1.3 This report builds upon previously approved reports presented to Cabinet, such as Winter Maintenance and implementing a Risk Based approach, last calendar year.
- 1.4 The Council's Skidding Resistance Policy was last updated in 2010. Since then the publication of the new Code of Practice and industry improvements and national best practice have prompted a refresh of the Policy, predominantly at a technical level. This refresh does not constitute a fundamental change of approach in the Policy which continues to provide a robust approach to the management of risk, however it does allow for the current best practice to be incorporated along with minor issues to be addressed and the document references to be updated, none the less a change to the existing policy.
- 1.5 Shropshire Council's current Highways Inspection Manual was approved by Cabinet in September 2018. As part of a continued review and improvement process, an update to the document is proposed which promotes a more

consistent approach with other authorities as part of the ongoing risk improvement process.

- 1.6 Shropshire's highway network encompasses more than 5,100 km. It is an extensive and diverse network comprising busy urban roads to lightly trafficked rural lanes which form the majority of the network and requires our approach to be constantly reviewed.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet approve the revised Skidding Resistance Policy, attached at Appendix A.
- 2.2 Cabinet approve the updated Highway Safety Inspection Manual, attached at Appendix B.

3.0 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal.

- 3.1 The key highway policies and documents contained in the appendices of this report, specify the technical inspection and investigatory levels details for Highways Asset Management purposes. All changes are consistent with the current national Code of Practice.
- 3.2 The advice of our Insurers has been adopted into this report and appendices
- 3.3 An Equality and Social Impact Inclusion Assessment (ESIIA) has been completed for this report and is in Appendix C, which although neutral, recognised that improvements to information on the Highways and Transport website would be beneficial. This process is underway.
- 3.4 The report and attached documentation have been consulted internally with stakeholders in:
 - Finance
 - Insurance Team Shropshire Council and our external insurance provider's legal team,
 - Highways Maintenance Managers
 - WSP
 - Kier
- 3.5 It is important to state that all comments from the above stakeholders are contained within the report and associated appendices, and that there are no outstanding concerns or divergence from the professional advice and guidance provided.

4.0 Financial Overview

- 4.1 The adoption of these policies is considered to be cost neutral as this is ostensibly a policy approach, no additional resources are required over and above those already provided from existing resources.

4.2 It should be noted that this report follows the advice of the Council's insurers.

5.0 Background

5.1 In October 2016 a new national Code of Practice, 'Well Managed Highway Infrastructure' ("the Code") was published by the UK Roads Liaison Group and endorsed by the Department for Transport. Local authorities should adopt the recommendations of this Code by October 2018. Please refer to the link below link.

<http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org/en/codes/>

5.2 The Code allows authorities to set levels of service which best fit local needs and resources rather than forcing authorities to meet set national standards. A key recommendation of the Code is that "a risk based approach should be adopted for all aspects of highway infrastructure maintenance, including setting levels of service, inspections, responses, resilience, priorities and programmes."

5.3 The specific recommendation within the code is: Recommendation 7 – Risk Based Approach "*A risk based approach should be adopted for all aspects of highway infrastructure maintenance, including setting levels of service, inspections, responses, resilience, priorities and programmes*".

5.4 A risk-based approach can represent a clear, co-ordinated response to the identification of risks from a given set of circumstances. It also involves a process of continuous evaluation, as new information becomes available. Thus the process, is continuous and supports the Incentivised Funding requirement in which an annual self-assessment is submitted to the Department of Transport from Shropshire Councils Highways and Transport Service.

5.5 Following an assessment of risk, there may be changes required to the way that we manage highways maintenance, such as changing the frequency of safety inspections due to a local increase in claims. Some changes affect agreed Council policy requiring update to existing policies.

5.6 This report is an example of the continuous evaluation and improvement affecting existing policy.

6.0 Skidding Resistance Policy

6.1 The objective of Shropshire's Skidding Resistance Policy is to control the risk of skidding incidents on a defined network of major roads by the provision of a level of (wet-road) skid resistance that is appropriate for each location. The Policy sets out every aspect of how (wet road) skid resistance is managed.

6.2 Well Managed Highways Infrastructure Code of Practice includes guidance for highway authorities on setting a strategy for the Skidding Resistance Surveys. The proposed skidding resistance policy will be the Council's strategy and this complies with the Code.

- 6.3 The current version of Highways England's skidding resistance policy, HD28, was published in 2015. This policy does not apply to local roads in Shropshire however, it is supported by substantial research and therefore constitutes best practice on the strategic road network. Elements of HD28 are relevant to the management of skidding resistance on local roads and hence relevant good practice contained within HD28 has been included in the Council's proposed skidding resistance policy.
- 6.4 The changes are summarised below:
- All references to external documents have been updated to ensure that they are current.
 - Roles and responsibilities have been clarified and aligned with the roles in the Highways Safety Inspection Policy. This strengthens the competency requirements in line with the risk-based approach adopted by the Council.
 - Improvements in the specification of data collection.
 - Removal of a now redundant site category, X. This was introduced in 2010 but it is currently providing no additional value to the approach.
 - A minor update of the Site Investigation Process to accommodate the latest developments in technology.
- 6.5 Adoption of the proposed skidding resistance Policy sets a consistent level of risk of wet road skid accidents across the major roads in Shropshire. The revised policy is attached in Appendix A.

7.0 Highways Inspection Manual.

- 7.1 The current Highway Safety Inspection Manual was approved in September 2018.
- 7.2 Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice includes a recommendation for consistency with other highway authorities, specifically that the Council needs to consider "the approach of other local and strategic highway and transport authorities should be considered when developing highway infrastructure maintenance policies and relevant data as appropriate – i.e. cross boundary roads etc."
- 7.3 The current Inspection Manual includes a minimum investigatory level of 25mm for defects on the carriageways. A review of investigation or intervention levels used in a sample of other authorities showed the following:
- A minimum depth of 25 mm was in use in only one other inspection policy by a local authority...
 - 18 policies adopted by local authorities used a minimum depth of 40 mm
 - 8 policies adopted by local authorities used a minimum depth of 50 mm
- 7.4 Advice and feedback from our Insurers identified that an investigatory level of 25 mm as set out in the current highway safety inspection policy may be difficult to discern from a slow moving vehicle leading to a failure to record some defects. Such failures could expose the Council to additional risk. Furthermore,

by the alignment of the minimum investigatory level for carriageway defects with the minimum level used by the majority of highway authorities would comply with our external insurance advice thus further managing risk for the Council.

- 7.5 For reasons of consistency and managing risk appropriately, it is proposed to change the minimum investigatory level for a defect on a carriageway to 40mm. This amendment will harmonise the council's investigatory level with the majority of other Highways Authorities, and better align our risk policies with external advice, resources and risk management.
- 7.6 Stakeholders, Insurance and Kier have been consulted and are supportive.
- 7.7 There are no other changes or amendments to the Highways Inspection Manual.
- 7.8 The documents which are proposed as policy are:
 - **Draft Skidding Resistance Policy** – A document which sets out our strategy for skidding resistance surveys as recommended by the Code of Practice.
 - **Draft Highway Safety Inspection Manual** – An updated highway safety inspection manual with revised minimum investigatory criteria on carriageways.

8.0 Consultation

- 8.1 A consultation was undertaken for 28 November 2018 - 22 January 2019, to seek views of the proposed technical change to the Skidding Resistance Policy and Highways Inspection Manual. An explanation, context and supporting documents was posted on the consultation portal for the duration of the consultation.
- 8.2 To publicise the consultation two press releases were issued on 30th November and 17th January 2019. Also the Shropshire Star ran a story on the consultation on 5th December 2018, updates via the Shropshire Council "twitter" account were also released on December 3rd 2018, and January 17th 2019.
- 8.3 Only 9 responses were received on the consultation portal. However, to ensure the most rounded consultation possible comments on the Shropshire Star story have been considered and key stakeholders have been engaged in the consultation. Of the 9 responses to the consultation document all had read and understood the changes to the policy.
- 8.4 Only one respondent stated they either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposed changes to the Skidding Resistance Policy, this equates to 11.11%, 2 either strongly agreed or agreed to the policy this equates to 22.22% and the remaining 6 did not answer the question.
- 8.5 One response stated they disagreed with the changes to the intervention levels from 25mm to 40mm and provided further comment regarding this "Where is the evidence it should now be set to 40mm for example why not 30mm?"

- 8.6 Shropshire Council is proposing to align our intervention levels with industry standards, harmonise with the majority of other Highways Authorities and in accordance with the recommendation of its external insurer.
- 8.7 Officers have reviewed the comments on the Shropshire Star story. There were 5 comments from 4 individuals and the concerns were
- Risk to cyclists – the approval of the new polices will harmonise the Council’s standards with the majority of other Highways Authorities, also the advice of our insurers has been sought in order to review our approach.
 - Outdated methods used in the service - the Council’s methods and techniques are industry recognised, indeed Shropshire Highway and Transport has been assessed as a Level 3 Highways Authority for two consecutive years.
- 8.8 Combining these responses provides 13 consultation responses to consider.
- 2 were in support or 15.38%
 - 5 were against or 38%
 - 6 did not state their opinion or 46.15%

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 As detailed within this report, the council is recommended within the new national code of practice to implement a risk based approach, this has been previously agreed by Cabinet. A proposed set of amendments and changes to the previously existing policies have been consulted upon, and work with the council’s staff, Insurers, contractors has been undertaken to ensure that the revised skidding resistance policy and Highways Inspection Manual reflects the national requirements.

<p>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information):</p> <p>Highways Inspection Manual - Cabinet Report - September 2018. Highways Risked Approach-Spetember2018 Highways Inspection Manual - Cabinet Report – July 2016</p> <p>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Councillor Steve Davenport, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport</p> <p>Local Members – All local members affected.</p>
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Appendices

Appendix A: Revised Skidding Resistance Policy

Appendix B: Revised Highway Safety Inspection Manual.

Appendix C: Equality and Social Impact Inclusion Assessment (ESIIA)