

## EXECUTIVE

### 16<sup>th</sup> January 2025

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy</b>
<b>Lead Member</b>	Cllr Matthew Binley - Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets
<b>Report Author</b>	Graeme Kane, Assistant Director – Highways & Waste  Jonathan Pearson, Head of Highways Delivery

<b>Key Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Are there public sector equality duty implications?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972</b>	N/A
<b>Which Corporate Plan priority does the report most closely align with?</b>	Safe and thriving places

#### List of Appendices

- Appendix A** - NNC Highway Asset Management Policy
- Appendix B** - NNC Highway Asset Management Strategy
- Appendix C** - CCIA Input Data
- Appendix D** - Equality Screening Assessment

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

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- 1.1. To present to Executive, the Council's new Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy. The documents set out how the Council will best manage the Highway Network - taking into consideration customer needs, local priorities, asset condition and best use of available resources, and the impact this will have on the future delivery of highway maintenance.
- 1.2. The report requests approval from Executive to adopt the Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy.

## **2. Executive Summary**

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2.1. This report presents two high level documents which outline the Council's approach to highway asset management, copies of which are included as appendices:

- Highway Asset Management Policy
- Highway Asset Management Strategy

### **2.2. Highway Asset Management Policy**

The Highway Asset Management Policy is a concise, 'high level' document. It sets out the Council's commitment to adopt and maintain an Asset Management approach in the delivery of Highway maintenance services. It demonstrates how effective Highway Asset Management supports the achievement of the Council's strategic vision, objectives and commitments.

### **2.3. Highway Asset Management Strategy**

The Strategy details the way in which the Highway Asset Management Policy will be achieved to maximise available funding. It outlines the overall long term aims, explaining how North Northamptonshire's highway network will be maintained and what the expected outcomes will be.

2.4. Following on from the Strategy, will be the development of a set of Highway Asset Management Plans (HAMP's) for each key asset, that will detail how the Asset Management Strategy is applied. These plans will set out agreed levels of service, performance targets and detail the mechanisms for putting together forward programmes. The long-term planned programmes will take the form of a 3-year rolling Annual Plan.

## **3. Recommendations**

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3.1 It is recommended that the Executive approve the Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy.

3.2 Reasons for Recommendations – The updates to these documents are the first step in refreshing the wide suite of documents that govern how the Council manages and maintains its highway network. By adopting these new documents the Council will:

- Establish a clear strategic position that supports ongoing operational requirements and the Council's duties under the Highways Act 1980.
- Enact a rebrand of key documents under the North Northamptonshire Council banner
- Set the basis for the cost effective management of highway assets
- Improve its decision making in terms of budget disaggregation and future investment.

- Provide a framework that gives clarity to service users as to what its priorities and service standards are.
- 3.3 Alternative Options Considered – The alternative option is not to adopt the revised Policy and Strategy. The Council would continue to deliver its highway services through its contract with Kier and the overarching guidance governing these activities would continue to be the 2019 Northamptonshire County Council documents. However, the previous guidance does not reflect the specific needs of North Northamptonshire, nor does it present a credible approach to the way the Council makes decisions on how it prioritises the funds available for highway maintenance across its highway network. For these reasons, this option is not recommended.

#### **4. Report Background**

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- 4.1. Following the creation of North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) in 2021, the Council continued to use a range of guidance documents and policies created by Northamptonshire County Council to help support the delivery of its highway services.
- 4.2. Whilst these documents followed best practice at the time, they are not aligned specifically to the objectives of NNC, nor to the specific requirements of North Northamptonshire's Highway network.
- 4.3. This report presents updated documents for NNC which supersedes the old County Council documents. They also set out a more focused, intelligence-based approach to highway maintenance, centred around a preventative maintenance strategy for the Council's carriageway assets.
- 4.4. In comparison to the previous documents, the new policy and strategy are, by design, more focussed strategic documents. This will ensure that annual reviews can be carried out in an agile way and the Council's approach can be more easily flexed without the need for a wholesale review of detailed delivery plans. Primarily, the annual review process will consider changes to the Council's priorities, the available funding and changes to the overall condition of the highway network.
- 4.5. These new documents reflect current, national best practice provided by the 2013 Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) guidance document 'Highway Infrastructure Asset Management' and the 2016 Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance 'Well Managed Highway Infrastructure'.
- 4.6. Asset Management Professional Service functions are currently carried out by the Council's highways maintenance contractor. Since the start of the contract, work has been undertaken to develop a data and intelligence led approach in the management of the highway network, utilising new and emerging technologies and techniques. Continuous improvements to asset data and the way it is collected, along with overall asset management practices, is an ongoing activity and this will be managed through a Highway Asset Management Improvement Plan.

- 4.8. The documents have been reviewed and drafted to ensure they align with the Council's requirements. A review of Highway Asset Management Plans for each main asset group (which cascade from the Strategy document), is underway. These documents will start to come forward for approval in the Spring.

## **5. Issues and Choices**

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- 5.1. Producing updated Asset Management documents and following an asset-led approach, allows the authority to demonstrate best practice. In recent years the Government has provided additional incentive funding to those authorities who have adopted an asset management approach. Previously, NNC has been awarded this funding and invested it in maintaining the highways network. It is important to ensure the Council is best positioned to continue to receive this funding in the future, should it be available from the Government.
- 5.2. The adoption of a clear strategy will allow the Council to improve its planning in relation to highway maintenance activities.

## **6. Next Steps**

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- 6.1. Following approval by Executive, these documents will be published on the Council's website.
- 6.2. Work to develop the individual Highway Asset Management Plans for key asset groups is already underway and will be completed in line with the timetable outlined in 4.8.

## **7. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation**

- 7.1.1. Funding is provided through the Department for Transport's Highway Maintenance Block funding, Local Transport Plan allocations and other grants / third party funding streams.
- 7.1.2. The strategy allows for the distribution of available funds using network intelligence, by targeting those areas where certain assets are considered of 'higher' priority by the Council. Available budgets can then be adjusted and allocated to different asset groups in the relevant Highway Asset Management Plan and delivered through the Highways Maintenance Annual Plan.
- 7.1.3. Effective Highway Asset Management will maximise the life of assets by facilitating a sustainable longer-term approach by ensuring the most effective maintenance interventions are made.
- 7.1.4. The strategy will help provide greater visibility of capital maintenance programmes. Furthermore, through improved planning and targeting of maintenance activities, a long-term reduction in revenue spending can be expected.

7.1.5. Improved planning will also help provide a more even distribution of work overtime, reducing the impact maintenance work has on the network whilst also benefitting delivery teams and their supply chains.

7.1.6. The Strategy is driven by the need to use network intelligence and condition data to identify the most appropriate schemes to best deliver the Council's preferred outcomes and to make the most effective use of our resources. Whilst selection of these schemes will be driven predominantly by condition data and the use of the multicriteria analysis tool (HEAT), the role of local members to put forward the priorities of their communities is vital to ensuring that local priorities are incorporated into the Council's Annual Plans.

7.1.7 Road condition is a major factor for the public and businesses. Increased investment in Capital Maintenance programmes continues to deliver an improved road network to support economic growth.

## 7.2. **Legal and Governance**

7.2.1. As the local Highway Authority for North Northamptonshire, the Council is fulfilling its statutory duties under the Highways Act 1980.

## 7.3. **Relevant Policies and Plans**

7.3.1. As outlined in the Highway Asset Management Policy document, this proposal will assist the Council in meeting the priorities in the Corporate Plan around:

- Safe and Thriving Places
  - Enable people to travel across North Northamptonshire and beyond
  - Maintain our highways infrastructure to keep people moving safely around North Northamptonshire
- Green, sustainable environment
  - Promote sustainable, active travel
- Connected Communities
  - Inform and listen to our communities, giving them a greater say in their future
- Modern public services
  - Provide good quality and efficient services valued by our customers
  - Use our assets, skills, - knowledge and technology most effectively

7.3.2. These proposals will assist the Council in developing and delivering its Local Plan and Local Transport Plan which the Council has a statutory duty to deliver.

7.3.3. Adopting an Asset Management approach will ensure that highway infrastructure assets support the delivery of services and the local economy, taking into account the long-term performance of the asset. It will support initiatives to deliver the optimum community infrastructure for new and existing communities within available resources.

#### **7.4. Risk**

- 7.4.1. The Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy support the Council's role as the Highway Authority for North Northamptonshire in meeting its statutory duty for maintenance, under the Highways Act 1980.
- 7.4.2. By establishing a robust approach to Highway Asset Management, the Council will be in a better position to be able to make informed decisions about investment in its highway's infrastructure and on its future spending plans.
- 7.4.3. Having the necessary funding to maintain the Council's highways network is a continued risk, as highlighted in the service risk register. The Policy and Strategy seek to prioritise the available funding to address defects that present the highest risk to the travelling public.

#### **7.5. Consultation**

- 7.5.1. In updating the suite of documents no formal consultation has been completed outside of the Highways Service.

#### **7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel**

- 7.6.1. A presentation was made to a Prosperous Communities EAP on 8th May 2024, which outlined to Members present, the principles of Asset Management within the Highways Service along with proposals to update the Policy and Strategy documents.

#### **7.7 Consideration by Scrutiny**

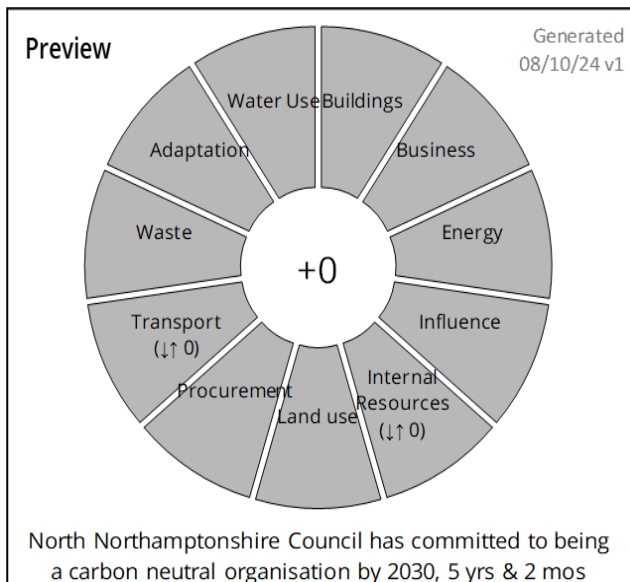
- 7.7.1. Draft versions of the Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy were reviewed by the Place & Environment Scrutiny Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2024, with minor amendments made to both documents.

#### **7.8. Equality Implications**

- 7.8.1 An Equalities Screening Assessment has been completed for this update and this has not identified any adverse impact on individuals with protected characteristics.

#### **7.9. Climate Impact**

- 7.9.1 The climate impact has been assessed as neutral as this report is only concerned with updating existing policies rather than any fundamental change to the way the highways service operates. The Policy supports the Council's commitment to creating and protecting a green, sustainable environment.



7.9.2. Internal resources to be used are existing, business as usual resources and whilst the policies are concerned with maintaining a safe highway network there are no operational changes proposed in the way highway maintenance is delivered.

#### 7.10. **Community Impact**

7.10.1 By prioritising asset maintenance to reflect the Council's priorities, the Policy and Strategy seek to support our communities.

#### 7.11. **Crime and Disorder Impact**

7.11.1 There are no obvious crime and disorder objectives of this report.

### 8.1. **Background Papers**

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8.1. None