

## CABINET– 28 NOVEMBER 2017

### REVIEW OF HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE POLICIES

#### Report by Director for Infrastructure Delivery

#### Introduction

1. The County Council's current Highway Maintenance Policy and Strategy are based on the old National Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance (Well Maintained Highways) which has now been superseded by the new Code of Practice, 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure', commissioned by Department for Transport (DfT) and published in late 2016.
2. Refreshing the policies and supporting principles will underpin improvements in the effectiveness of highway maintenance delivery, and assist in meeting planned savings in the delivery of frontline services. It is also one of the key steps towards satisfying criteria required by the DfT to achieve the highest level of maintenance funding available through the Incentive Fund process. The draft Highway Infrastructure Management Policy document is attached as **Annex 1**.

#### Key Issues

3. The policy includes a framework (section 2) showing how other documents connect to it. Many of these documents already exist in some form – reflecting the reality that highway infrastructure management has been undertaken for many decades – but require updating to comply with the new Code of Practice and to provide consistency, assisting both staff and the public. The aim is to complete this work by the end of March 2018.
4. It is proposed that sign-off of these documents should be via reports to Cabinet Member Decisions Meeting (if the effect is likely to result in a reduction of service levels) or by the relevant Director (if the effect is likely to result in no change or an improvement to service levels).
5. To assist with this it is further proposed to establish a Cabinet Advisory Group (CAG) chaired by the Cabinet Member for Environment to explore relevant options and issues. It is proposed that the group comprises around 6 Councillors, based on political proportionality and representing a range of urban and rural areas across the County. If agreed, nominations will be sought from Group Leaders. Recognising the importance of engaging with Oxfordshire's residents we will explore with the CAG ways in which residents can assist in setting the priorities for highway repair and improvement work done in their area, for example through parish councils.

6. In addition, the outline Highway Infrastructure Asset Programme will be approved by Cabinet and Council as part of the annual budget process.
7. It is important that the new document aligns with the Council strategic aims, as set out in the Corporate Plan. Rather than referring to the current version the document (in section 6) reflects the themes of the new Corporate Plan currently being developed; if these change when the new Plan is agreed it will be necessary to amend the Highway Policy document accordingly.
8. The new Code of Practice moves away from reliance on specific guidance and recommendations of the previous Codes to a risk-based approach determined by each Highway Authority. Whilst this method of working has already been adopted in many areas of this Council's highway operations, the new document makes this much clearer (HIMP3 and SP3 in section 5).

### **Financial and Staff Implications**

9. There are no direct financial implications arising from this review; staffing changes have already been undertaken which align to this policy change and savings delivered as part of the MTFP. As noted above the new policy document will assist in bidding for additional funding from DfT. Staff resource to carry out this review is available from within Infrastructure Delivery.

### **Equalities Implications**

10. The implementation of the new policies and supporting principles will include a review of existing infrastructure maintenance hierarchies which will better reflect local needs (eg by increasing the frequency of inspections in areas most used by those with mobility problems, leading to more speedy repairs of footway defects).

### **RECOMMENDATION**

11. **Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**
  - (a) Approve the draft Highway Infrastructure Management Policy;
  - (b) Agree to the arrangements for sign-off of other documents as set out in the report; and
  - (c) Establish an Advisory Group as set out in the report.

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### **Appendix 1- Draft Highway Infrastructure Management Policy v5 (002)**

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