

Highways and Transport Committee

Date of Meeting:	26 January 2023
Report Title:	Highway Asset Management Policy, Plan and Strategies
Report of:	Tom Moody, Director of Highways and Infrastructure
Report Reference No:	HT/62/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** The purpose of this report is to bring forward the following new and updated documents for adoption into formal Council practice:

Updated - The Cheshire East Speed Highway Asset Management Policy (Appendix 1)

Updated -The Cheshire East Highway Asset Management Strategy (Appendix 2)

New - The Cheshire East Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (Appendix 3)

Updated - The Cheshire East Resilient Highway Network Plan (Appendix 4)

Updated – The Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice (Appendix 5)

- 1.2.** The implementation of these strategies and plans will enable the further application of high-quality asset management principles and the promotion of safety in the stewardship of the Borough's highway network.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The strategies and plans presented in this report are intended to contribute to the Council's core policy outcomes by being:

Open – Updating the policy, strategy, plan and code of practice documents along with introducing the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan shows a clear vision for the management of the highway asset.

Fair – The application of asset management principles ensures that risks to highway users are reduced and that budgets are spent in a way that delivers the best outcomes for all highway users.

Green – Ensuring that our approach to asset management contributes fully to the wider ambitions of the Council to promote sustainability and carbon reduction.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That the Highways and Transport Committee resolve that the updated Highway Asset Management Policy 2023 is adopted as policy and subsequently implemented operationally.
- 3.2. That the Highways and Transport Committee resolve that the updated Highway Asset Management Strategy 2023 is adopted as policy and subsequently implemented operationally.
- 3.3. That the Highways and Transport Committee resolve that the new Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan 2023 is adopted as policy and subsequently implemented operationally.
- 3.4. That the Highways and Transport Committee resolve that the updated Cheshire East Resilient Highway Network Plan 2023 is adopted as policy and subsequently implemented operationally.
- 3.5. That the Highways and Transport Committee resolve that the updated Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice is adopted as policy and subsequently implemented operationally.
- 3.6. Authority is delegated to the Director of Highways and Infrastructure to make technical amendments to the Highway Asset Management Policy, the Highway Asset Management Strategy, Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan, Resilient Highway Network Plan and the Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice as required and to update the Highways and Transport Committee on any significant changes at a future meeting.
- 3.7. Authority is delegated to the Head of Highways to make and approve amendments to the Asset life cycle plans and life cycle plan summaries.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1.** The adoption of these documents aligns with the Cheshire East Corporate Plan 2021-2025 aim of being 'A thriving and sustainable place' under the priorities of:
- 'A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel'.
 - 'Reduce impact on the environment'.
 - 'Be a carbon neutral council by 2025'.
- 4.2.** Maintaining the highway network in accordance with asset management principles ensures that the available funding is spent in the most efficient manner to achieve the best possible network condition with the funding available. The application of asset management principles also ensures that risks on the network are known, monitored and reduced to a minimum within the available budgets.
- 4.3.** Current DfT funding through the 'Local Highways Maintenance Incentive Fund' is awarded to the Council based on our ability to demonstrate that our management and custodianship of the local highway network in Cheshire East is in accordance with Asset Management Principles. Not operating to these principles would risk C.£1.45m of funding.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1.** The Council could choose not to manage the highway network in accordance with asset management principles, undertaking a worst first approach; however, this would see the overall condition of the highway network deteriorate and risks on the network unmitigated. Furthermore, in terms of the Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice, it is unlikely that the Council would address its statutory duties under the Highways Act 1980.
- 5.2.** Not managing the highway network in accordance with asset management principles would see a reduction in funding from the Department for Transport (DfT).

6. Background

- 6.1.** A well-managed highway network is key in enabling the Council to deliver its corporate priorities, a reliable highway network helps to connect communities, enable business prosperity and facilitate a lower carbon Borough.
- 6.2.** The Highway Network is the largest most visible publicly owned asset in Cheshire East. Consisting of numerous assets including over:
- 2,700km of carriageways with supporting drainage assets

- 2,000km of footways
 - 1,700 structures
 - 40,000 streetlights
- 6.3.** This complex asset is valued at C.£6 billion and requires an annual investment of C.£27.4m to maintain the asset in a steady state; carriageways alone are valued at over £3.3B.
- 6.4.** Asset management principles are key in providing timely preventative maintenance which extends asset life spans, reduces overall cost to the public purse and reduces the carbon footprint of maintaining the asset. As an example, the timely application of preventive maintenance treatments offers a 7 fold reduction in costs over full carriageway construction and drastically reduces the number of potholes.
- 6.5.** Nationally a challenge existing for local authorities, given the pressures on budgets both locally and from central government, the timely application of preventative maintenance across all highway assets cannot be achieved and therefore the asset management documents are key in managing the risk to the Council that this presents.
- 6.6.** For the financial year 2022/23 the Council chose to invest £10.986m revenue and £22.793m capital funding. The capital funding comprises £15.551m of Government funding and £7.242m of additional Council investment. The Government funding is via the DfT Local transport Plan block grants, Pothole Fund and Traffic Signal Maintenance awards and the Council investment is part of the Council's commitment to an additional investment of £19m of its own money over the next 3 years to help improved the network's condition across the Borough.
- 6.7.** The management of the highway network is a key challenge for the Council, it is an area of high public expectation which is coupled to an aging asset and limited funding.
- 6.8.** The aging nature of the highway network also presents further challenges when considering resilience. Climate change is already having an adverse impact upon the highway network and communities in the Borough, this was demonstrated in 2019 with the extreme flooding experienced in Poynton.
- 6.9.** Each year the highway network grows typically by 7 km due to both Council and developer-led schemes as part of new developments that can industrial, residential or mixed used. The developer-led schemes alone will add an additional 9,000 house to the Borough over the next 5 years. In addition, the Council's own infrastructure programme which delivered schemes such as Congleton Bypass and under construction Poynton Relief Road and North-West Crewe will add further assets to the highway network. Growth is also expected as HS2 is constructed through the Borough. This network growth adds a further burden on the Council's finances.

- 6.10. The issues of limited funding, high public expectation, an aging asset and climate change highlight the need for an asset management approach to the highway network in order to ensure that the available funding best mitigates the risks that are present.
- 6.11. Figure 1 below shows the how the documents included in this report fit into the corporate document structure.

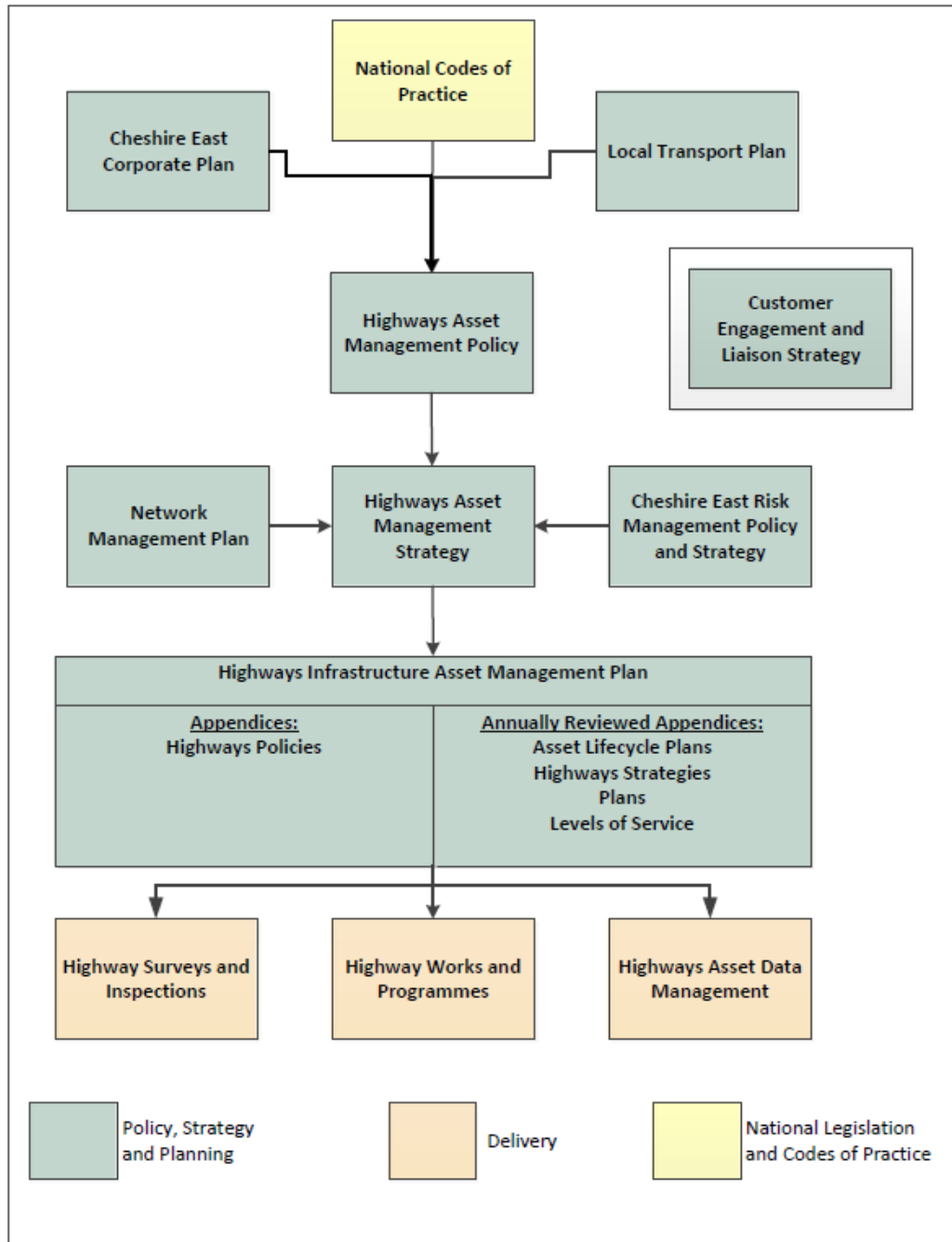


Figure 1 – Asset Management Policy

Highway Asset Management Policy

- 6.12.** The Highway Asset Management Policy is a high-level statement of intent that demonstrates the Council's commitment to delivering highway infrastructure maintenance in accordance with asset management principles.
- 6.13.** The Asset Management Policy sets out how the management of the highway network in accordance with asset management principles aligns with the Corporate Priorities of being:
- A Council which empowers and cares about people.
 - An open and enabling organisation.
 - A thriving and sustainable place.
- 6.14.** The presence of a developed asset management policy is best practice and is a key requirement of the DfT's Local Highways Maintenance Capital Funding Self-Assessment Questionnaire. This is a key element to the Council's annual funding of highway maintenance and management activities.
- 6.15.** As part of this funding award there is a requirement that the document is revised and published every two years and signed off by senior decision makers within the Council, in this case being the Highways and Transport Committee.
- 6.16.** A review of the Highway Asset Management Policy has been undertaken and the document updated to align with the Council's 2021-2025 Corporate Plan.

Highway Asset Management Strategy

- 6.17.** The Highway Asset Management Strategy dovetails to the Highway Asset Management Policy.
- 6.18.** The Strategy sets out the general direction for highway asset management in the Borough, allowing for the uncertainties of an aging asset and varying funding.
- 6.19.** The Strategy sets strategic objectives and provides guidance to support the delivery of the service, establishing a clear line of sight, outlining at a high level how the objectives of the Strategy will be achieved. Key to this is the delivery of the highway service aligned with the principles of ISO 55001:2014 – Asset Management.
- 6.20.** As with the Highway Asset Management Policy, the developed Asset Management Strategy is a key requirement of the DfT's Local Highways Maintenance Capital Funding Self-Assessment Questionnaire and must be signed off by senior decision makers within the Council together with being revised and published every two years.
- 6.21.** The latest revision of the Strategy has been updated to set the strategic direction for the HIAMP and show the updated document structure.

Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan

- 6.22.** The Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) is a new document, it leads on from the Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy, these documents together forming the framework for asset life cycle plans and the maintenance policies that the department operates to.
- 6.23.** In 2014 the UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG) released The Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Guidance Document which outlined how asset management should be delivered in relation to local highways. The Cheshire East HIAMP links to the 14 recommendations in this document further helping the Council to adopt a risk-based approach to asset management.
- 6.24.** In Cheshire East over the last few years, we have significantly developed our approach to asset management and have worked towards implementing the recommendations of the industry guidance document Well Managed Highway Infrastructure; In the process this has helped us attain the highest achievable level of funding through the DfT's Local Highways Maintenance Capital Funding Self-Assessment Questionnaire.
- 6.25.** The HIAMP:
- Outlines our statutory obligations and stakeholder needs in relation to the overall performance of the highway network.
 - Outlines the implementation of asset management principles to effectively manage the highway network in-line with available budgets.
 - Encompass the Council's long-term goals and objectives into the management of the highway network.
 - Forms a framework to guide the development and evolution of highway policies, strategies, performance measures and priorities.
 - Fulfils the objectives set out in the Asset Management Strategy.
- 6.26.** The HIAMP and in particular its appendix documents are live documents and will be subject to on-going review and development, as new national and local policies, strategies and priorities emerge.

Resilient Highway Network Plan

- 6.27.** Following the severe weather of 2013/14, the Government commissioned the Transport Resilience Review which was published in July 2014. A key finding of the review was the need for local councils to identify a resilient network to which they give priority, in order to maintain economic activity in times of extreme weather or during disruptive events.
- 6.28.** In February 2020 the Council's then Cabinet approved the Borough's first Resilient Network Plan, the 2023 version of this document is a refresh of that original strategy.

- 6.29.** To accord with the requirements of the DfT Highways Maintenance Capital Funding Self-Assessment Questionnaire, the Council undertakes an annual review of the Resilient Network plan and where appropriate introduces amendments.
- 6.30.** This year's review has seen additional information added to the document, together with the addition of Congleton Link Road and a dedicated route into Macclesfield hospital.

Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice

- 6.31.** In February 2020 the Council's then Cabinet approved the introduction of a new Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice (HSICoP). In line with the review of other related policy documents a recent review has been undertaken which has specifically focussed around ensuring the HSICoP remains fit for purpose. The conclusion is that the current HSICoP remains robust.
- 6.32.** This review has at the same time identified that by amending the out of hours emergency response time in HSICoP from 1.5hrs to 2hrs C.£67,000 can be saved which can be better deployed in other areas of the highway service.
- 6.33.** It is considered that this reduction can be undertaken without any noticeable impact to the travelling public and the Council's statutory duties under the Highways Act 1980. The proposed 2hr out of hours emergency response time is operated by other highway authorities in the region, such as Cheshire West. The amended response time will also help the service to respond more flexibly during times of high workload outside of normal business hours.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1.** Given the operational nature of the documents no consultation has been undertaken.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.2.** The Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to carry out highway maintenance and maintain highway structures. The adoption of the asset management documents will ensure that there is a consistent approach to the management of assets across the Borough and in line with the available funds, ensuring that the Council is able to meet its statutory duties in accordance with the relevant legislation and in accordance with the Council's adopted policies.

8.3. Finance

- 8.3.1.** The application of sound asset management principles ensures that the limited Council Revenue and Capital Budgets are managed and allocated

in an efficient manner which ensure the best asset condition for the available funding.

8.3.2. The proposed amendment to the HSICOP response times will provide revenue funding to the value of £67,000 which can be reallocated to address pressures within the highway service.

8.4. Policy

8.5. The operation of the service in accordance with the asset management documents included in this report aligns with the Council's Corporate Plan.

8.6. Equality

8.6.1. There are no equality implications of this report.

8.7. Human Resources

8.7.1. There are no human resource implication of this report.

8.8. Risk Management

8.8.1. The application of asset management principles ensures that risks are prioritised and addressed within the available budgets.

8.9. Rural Communities

8.9.1. There are no rural community impacts of this report

8.10. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.10.1. There are no children and young people/cared for children impacts of this report.

8.11. Public Health

8.11.1. There are no public health implication to this report.

8.12. Climate Change

8.12.1. The application of asset management principles will help to ensure that low carbon solutions are selected where appropriate.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Michael Barnett - Head of Highways mike.barnett@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 - The Cheshire East Speed Highway Asset Management Policy Appendix 2 - The Cheshire East Highway Asset Management Strategy Appendix 3 - The Cheshire East Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan

	Appendix 4 - The Cheshire East Resilient Highway Network Plan Appendix 5 - The Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice
Background Papers:	