

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Relevant Officer:</b>	John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	31 March 2016

## ROAD ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

### 1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the Road Asset Management Strategy.

### 2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To consider and scrutinise the proposed Road Asset Management Strategy and to make any recommendations to the Executive as appropriate.

### 3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 The Road Asset Management Strategy provides a commitment to achieving benefits in the management of Blackpool's highway network that can be delivered through asset management and describes the principles that it is proposed to adopt in applying asset management to help achieve the authority's strategic objectives. The Road Asset Management Strategy documents need to be agreed by the Executive and published on the Council's website as part of the Department for Transport's self-assessment process.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None

#### **4.0 Council Priority:**

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is “The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool”

#### **5.0 Background Information**

5.1 The Roads Asset Management Strategy is intended to set out the aims, objectives and processes involved in managing Blackpool’s highway network. The Road Asset Management Strategy assists the Council in:

- Managing limited funding and resources and directing them to the areas of greatest need;
- Understanding the condition of the network in order to make sound decisions on investment;
- Ensuring that the decision making process is open to scrutiny, ensuring that the ‘rules’ for investment meet the needs and aspirations of the Council; and
- Enabling decisions on highway maintenance to be consistent with delivering sustainable objectives for the community.

5.2 The strategy is now a statutory requirement placed on every local highway authority and forms part of their new funding model.

5.3 In 2014, the Department for Transport undertook a review of capital funding for highways maintenance and as a result there will be a move towards incentivising local authorities to adopt long term strategic planning via their respective Highways Asset Management Plans. From 2016/2017, these plans and strategies will be scored by the local authority itself, and signed off by the Section 151 Officer before being returned to the Department for Transport’s, and categorised into Bands, 1,2,3 (3 being the best score) denoting the assessment of the quality of each plan. Based on this scoring incentive funding will be calculated and allocated.

5.4 Councils that achieve a Band 3 assessment will be allocated the full allocation of funding, whilst those in Bands 1 and 2 will eventually have their funding capped.

5.5 The incentive funding awarded to each authority will be based on their overall score in the questionnaire. Over the coming years the share of the fund authorities will receive is based on their overall performance.

5.6 Blackpool currently scores itself as a Band 2 authority which means we can evidence a band 2 score in at least 15 of 22 questions. However, this score is dependent on achieving at least Band 2 in questions 1, 2 and 5 of the Self-Assessment questionnaire and to achieve Band 2 in question 1 the Council is required to adopt an asset management strategy. Therefore, the Road Asset Management Strategy documents

need to be agreed by the Council's Executive and published on the Council's website.

- 5.7 To ensure that Blackpool council is assessed as Band 3 and obtains full funding in the future, it is imperative for the council to continue to build on its reputation as a leader in Highways Asset Management and develop the Centre of Excellence approach.
- 5.8 The current tough economic climate poses big challenges in order to make the best use of limited resources in providing an acceptable highway service to the public, yet critically to maintain the integrity of our highways for future generations. A recent national public opinion survey (NHT) 2014, reported that Blackpool was the only local authority with increased public satisfaction in road condition in the UK. Further to this, in 2015 Blackpool Council was awarded the NHT Best performance award for a range of transportation themes including road condition. This shows the importance of local road condition to the residents.
- 5.9 Public pressure can sometimes push the Council towards a worst-first strategy (reactive service). Certainly all the safety defects noted on the routine safety inspections are repaired on a reactive basis. But giving a higher priority to what appears to the public to be a road in a poor state of repair, will limit funds for preventive work on roads which already have precedence and will result in lower value for money and sustainability of the network going forward.
- 5.10 The Road Asset Management Strategy aims to encourage all stakeholders to strike a balance between the need for immediate pothole repairs to ensure the safety of road users and 'right first time' solutions that provide better value for money. Additionally a return to the 'social network' whereby the most socially important roads in each ward could be used in prioritising limited funding for better social outcomes in these austere financial climates.
- 5.11 It is also key that we use our limited funding to maintain assets which have safety implications. For example, zebra crossings, mini roundabouts and essential road markings and these should be prioritised over and above other assets. It costs almost four times as much to reconstruct a typical road that has failed than to maintain it following a preventive strategy. The recommended option of the Road Asset Management Strategy is to achieve the right balance in terms of budgetary expenditure, between reactive safety repairs to areas with lower claims history and safety and preventative works to areas with higher claims history.
- 5.12 By holding firm with this policy/ approach (this means continuing with the targeting of the residual funding in areas with the highest tripping claims thus reducing the number and cost of claims) and improving the condition and maintenance of Blackpool's road network the council can significantly reduce the amount paid out in third party tripping claims. These savings are required to contribute towards the

repayment of the prudential capital borrowing (Project 30), with any further savings put back into highway maintenance budgets and therefore used to treat the strategic roads which require ongoing investment.

5.13 The Executive is due to consider the Road Asset Management Strategy at its meeting on Monday, 4 April 2016 and is being recommended to:

1. **Use available funding and resources to ensure that the ‘safety’ assets (for example zebra crossings, essential road markings, mini roundabouts) are maintained;**
2. **Residential streets not in high claim areas will be maintained to the best standard that can be achieved by safety repairs only (pothole repairs);**
3. **Residential streets in high claims areas will be targeted with intervention re-surfacing treatments to prevent failure demand, thus preventing future claims;**
4. **The savings made from 1,2 and 3 above to be re-invested into the strategic road network for the good of all users;**
5. **Bid for future funding opportunities such as the Department for Transport’s Challenge fund; and**
6. **Work with Councillors and other stakeholders to understand their local community demands in road condition and spend any additional funding in line with the social road network.**

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

**List of Appendices:**

Appendix 7a – Road Asset Management Executive Summary

**6.0 Legal considerations:**

6.1 None

**7.0 Human Resources considerations:**

7.1 None

**8.0 Equalities considerations:**

8.1 Improvements in the road network will benefit all sections of the community equally and will help to sustain the economy for the benefit of both local residents and visitors.

**9.0 Financial considerations:**

9.1 Failure to ratify a Road Asset Management Strategy has implications for the Department for Transport's self-assessment and will lead to reduced grant funding.

**10.0 Risk management considerations:**

10.1 Risks associated with document are contained within the Road Asset Management Strategy.

**11.0 Ethical considerations:**

11.1 None

**12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:**

12.1 Consultation has taken place with Council members and with Highway Consultative Forum.

**13.0 Background papers:**

13.1 The Road Asset Management Strategy, which includes the following documents:

- Introduction
- Policy
- Core Strategy
- Asset Investment Strategies
- Prioritisation framework