

Report to:	TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Will Britain, Head of Highways and Traffic Management
Date of Meeting:	2 February 2022

HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a high-level narrative that describes the current and future approach by the Highway Service to managing the Council's road network and related groups of road infrastructure assets. Further detail is provided in the lead documents Executive Summary, Asset Management Strategy and Future of Blackpool's Roads Report.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To note the contents of the current Road Asset Management Strategy and Future of Blackpool's Roads Report and consider if further scrutiny is required.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To continue Highways strong linkages to the wider Council objectives as set out in the Blackpool Town Prospectus Headline Outcomes by 2030.

Blackpool Council needs its highway network to be delivering a high level of service to users. Given the excellent work done over the last 21 years to improve and maintain this network, and looking ahead to the ambitious programme of regeneration and enhancement across the Borough over the next 10 years it is vital that the highway service benefits from strong leadership and investment to facilitate these exciting opportunities.

- 3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No
- 3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

- 4.1 Not to proceed with recommendations in the strategy thus allowing the roads and associated infrastructure assets falling into disrepair and becoming unusable to the public with increased public dissatisfaction and concern.

5.0 Council priority:

- 5.1 The relevant Council priority is
- “The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool”
 - “Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience”

6.0 Background information

6.1 KEY Messages for the council

Since the late 2000’s Blackpool Council Highway Services have adopted a proactive approach to arresting the decline in road network condition and performance. This has been done by identifying and collecting greater levels of useful asset data and utilising that data to support investment decisions that minimise greatest areas of risk and provide higher levels of efficiency and benefits to the road users. However, despite significant advances in use of asset information and deployment of good practice asset management processes across the town, a number of significant challenges remain. The key messages underpin the revised Asset Management Framework & Strategy, and provide narrative of the journey that Blackpool has undertaken. This is further emphasised in the current Future of Blackpool’s Roads Report.

6.2 Project 30 & Department for Transport (DfT) Engagement & Relationship has stood Blackpool on a strong footing in Road Asset Management leadership

In 2009, following a DfT initiative to seek our best practice Blackpool Council were awarded the highest grant for any local council of £600,000. Using this grant funding and from identification of innovation data collection for asset condition, Blackpool built a strong business case for major investment in local roads to arrest deterioration and re-establish higher levels of service in deprived areas leading to reduced claims. Project 30 was the direct outcome using increased knowledge from road asset data to target the worst roads with £30M of Council borrowings in a four-year capital investment programme, fully-costed and paid for by future savings. The ongoing adoption of this approach has led Blackpool to be regarded as a regional and national leader of innovative asset management practices. Blackpool has along its journey won many accolades and to this day is regarded as one of the exemplar councils in highway asset management.

6.3 Highways funding provided from the Department for Transport (DfT) currently does not reflect the Needs of the Network – increased need to identify and manage Risks

Based on current levels of funding set out by the DfT for Road Maintenance Works:

DfT Potholes 2021/2022:	= £667,000
DfT needs element:	= £667,000
<u>Incentive element 2021/2022:</u>	<u>= £167,000</u>
<u>TOTAL:</u>	<u>= £1,501,000 (£1.5m)</u>

Considering the deteriorating asset base set out in the Future of Blackpool's Roads Report, the overall assessed need for undertaking adequate levels of maintenance to achieve service levels is **@£5.2M per annum**.

This requires more effective risk management to prevent higher costs from liability claims, use of preventive maintenance treatments where possible, and building stronger cost/benefit cases for additional investment. The current asset management strategy seeks to address and prioritise these aspects.

- 6.4
- The recommendation is to continue work based on the existing strategy authorised in 2015. In July 2021, Blackpool undertook a full review and update of this Roads Asset Management Framework and Strategy, along with detailed reviews and updates of supporting plans and policies contained within the Framework. The revised documents have been simplified and are presented for review and approval and address the following commitments and proposed actions:
 - Utilisation of key management information related to ALL major asset groups (incl Carriageways, Footways, Bridges, Structures, Coastal Defense, Road Furniture) to be included and integrated within a service-wide programme (including Tramway infrastructure)
 - Adoption of ISO55000 Asset Management Standard as guiding principles for documentation development within the Framework (as shown below)
 - Review and implementation of Performance Management within the Framework across key asset groups Strategic Objectives reinforce the previous Strategy (published in 2015) as set out below:
 - 1. To manage and operate a Safe, Accessible & Efficient Highways Network**
 - 2. To optimise investment and funding outcomes for our Highways Network to arrest deterioration**
 - 3. To continue to drive down claims and deprivation issues**
 - 4. To ensure our highways provide key links to optimise Blackpool's social networks and communities**

These objectives continue Highways strong linkages to the wider Council objectives as set out in the Blackpool Town Prospectus Headline Outcomes by 2030

6.5 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

- 7.1 Appendix 10(a) - Executive Summary
- Appendix 10(b) - Road Asset Management Strategy
- Appendix 10(c) - The Future of Blackpool's Roads Report

8.0 Financial considerations:

- 8.1 Appropriate financial information is detailed above in 6.3 of the report.

9.0 Legal considerations:

- 9.1 There are a number of legislative requirements that have a direct and mandatory impact on the way highway operations are undertaken, governed by various Acts of Parliament. The main Acts are as follows:

- **The Highways Act 1980:** This Act sets out the main powers and duties of highway authorities in England and Wales. In particular **Section 41** imposes a duty to maintain highways maintainable at public expense, and almost all claims against authorities relating to highway functions arise from the alleged breach of this Section. In contrast **Section 58** provides for a defence against action relating to alleged failure to maintain on grounds that the authority has taken such care as in all circumstances was reasonably required to secure that the part of the highway in question was not dangerous for traffic. Under **Section 97** it is not mandatory for authorities to install street lighting, but once installed on adopted highways there is a responsibility for maintenance.
- **The Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003:** This Act adds a duty 'to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice'.
- **New Roads and Street Works Act 1991:** This Act sets out the duties of authorities to co-ordinate and regulate works carried out in the highway by any streetworks organisation.
- **Traffic Management Act 2004:** The TMA 2004 places a network management duty on local authorities to keep traffic flowing. When fully implemented it will supersede the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991. The most important feature of the TMA is Section 16(1) which establishes a duty for local traffic authorities to manage their road network with a view to achieving where reasonably practicable with regard to their other obligations and policies the following objectives:
 - securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network
 - facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority

Section 31 of the TMA specifically states that the term 'traffic' includes pedestrians so the duty requires the authority to consider all road users.

The TMA also strengthens the regulatory regime with regard to the works of utilities

and others within the highway including permit schemes, new conditions, and fixed penalty notices.

- **Transport Act 2000:** This allows authorities to designate any road as a quiet lane or home zone and introduces a power for authorities to charge Utilities for the occupation of road space.
- **Road Traffic Regulation Act 1988 and Traffic Signs and General Directions 2002:** This Act specifies the requirements for traffic regulation orders and the use of approved signs.
- **Road Traffic Act 1988:** Provides a duty for highway authorities to promote road safety.
- **Flood and Water Management Act (2010):** This involves duties and powers including the duty to coordinate flood risk management across different flood risk agencies.
- **Health & Safety:** The Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM2015) aims to integrate health and safety with project management.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

- 10.1
- Without the continued strong and visible leadership set out through these recommendations, the Council may be unable to provide required levels of service across major assets that reflect the ambition of the wider Blackpool Council w.r.t regeneration and improvement in key city areas.
 - Revert to a 'worst first' approach with increasingly-limited funding to arrest asset deterioration. Worse still, only sufficient funding to adopt 'band-aid' maintenance treatment with predominantly reactive maintenance works – highly inefficient and expensive way to manage a road network over the longer term.
 - Not fully utilise the asset information already developed and collected. Through limited resources and prioritisation processes, Council systems and management reporting does not optimise network outcomes
 - By not following the recommendations the council could reduce its capability to defend tripping claims and liability claims will rise exponentially
 - Higher carbon emissions as a result of not following and using the latest innovative road repair products and methods

11.0 Equalities considerations:

- 11.1 After consideration of equalities there are no concerns on equality grounds as all strategies are fair to all backgrounds.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

- 12.1**
- Promoting sustainability practices through the regular utilisation of existing data across the borough
 - Project Amber carbon emission calculator and reporting dashboard – efficiency savings generated.
 - Economic benefits due to more efficient working. ‘More for Less’ initiatives, adopting preventive maintenance treatments to extend asset life and reduce need to revisit sites.
 - Enhanced reputation for Blackpool Council due to innovative methodology and collaborative culture deployed through Project Amber

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 Consultations have been made with the Highways Consultative Forum who accepted the strategies.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.