

Brighton & Hove City Council

Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

Agenda Item 74

Subject: Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy 2023 - 2025

Date of meeting: 17th January 2023

Report of: Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report presents the updated Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy for Brighton & Hove City Council, in line with the funding requirements of the Department for Transport (DfT). This document updates the previous Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy which was approved by committee in November 2016 and further supports the 'Strategy for Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure Strategy' which was approved by committee in March 2021.
- 1.2 The purpose of this document is to enable the Council to manage and maintain the City's highway network in a way that best meets the needs of the present without passing on unaffordable costs and environmental impacts to future generations. The city's highway is an important asset for all residents because it enables movement by multiple means.
- 1.3 The Council is required to have an updated and approved Highways Asset Management Policy and Strategy every two years to avoid financial grant funding reductions from Government that are worth £1.092m over the next 3 years (to 2025/26).
- 1.4 Brighton & Hove City Council's Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy reflects the national context for local roads and other highway assets. Funding for all local highway authorities has reduced over several years with a subsequent impact on the condition of these assets and the cost and environmental impact to repair them. The updated strategy also reflects the changing priorities for the City as set out in the City Council Plan, the Circular Economy Action Plan and the City's ambition to become Carbon Neutral by 2030.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Committee approve the updated Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy 2023-2025 which will enable the Council to maintain its DfT Incentive Fund banding and associated Local Transport Plan funding.
- 2.2 That Committee notes the need for further investment, including capital funding for preventative maintenance programmes, across all asset groups in order to support active, accessible and sustainable travel throughout the city and to reduce the future burden on the revenue and carbon cost of reactive maintenance including pothole repairs.
- 2.3 That Committee agrees that officers should identify an annual capital sum from within existing capital budgets to fund preventative maintenance for footways, carriageways and street lighting over the next 10 years to manage the rising revenue cost of providing highway safety maintenance.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council is responsible for maintaining 624km of highway road network with 1026km of pavements. This document covers the following infrastructure assets associated with the highway network:

- Carriageway and footway surfaces
- Surface water drainage infrastructure associated with highways
- Bridges, coast defense structures, cliffs and other highway retaining walls and subways
- Street lighting and illuminated highway signs
- Traffic Control and Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)
- Vehicle Restraint Systems (VRS)
- Bus stops and shelters
- Parking infrastructure including signs, lines and pay and display machines
- Cycle parking and covered cycle parking
- EV Charging points
- Non-illuminated highway signs and posts
- Line markings and road studs
- Public Rights of Way
- other street furniture

- 3.2 The total Asset Value is estimated to be £4billion¹. The biggest and most expensive assets are carriageways (£951m); structures (£478m); footways and cycleways (£176m).

- 3.3 According to the Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance Survey 2022 (ALARM), the total maintenance backlog for England and Wales is £12.6billion. This equates to an average maintenance backlog for carriageways in England in 2021/22 of £99million per local authority

¹ Figure is taken from the last Whole Government Accounts return for Brighton and Hove City Council in 2020 plus a 20% allowance for the increase in material costs since this time.

(excluding London). This figure has risen by 23% in the past year as a direct result of inflation and increased construction costs throughout the industry. The same survey also showed an average budget shortfall each year of £7.4m per local authority in England which indicates that the backlogs will only increase with time without significant financial investment.

- 3.4 Brighton & Hove is a busy, compact city with an extensive bus network as well as the highest bus usage per head of population outside of London. This means that some B and C roads are as heavily trafficked as our A roads. It also means that many of our local roads carry heavier bus traffic than equivalent roads in other Local Authority areas.

Sustainable Travel

- 3.5 Brighton and Hove has a 150km network of aging concrete roads. Whilst this network has served the city well over the last 70 years, it is now reaching the end of its serviceable life which is impacting on the viability of bus services in areas such as Bevendean, Coldean and Moulsecoomb. These areas have particularly high bus usage levels, which is demonstrated by the fact that bus usage in these areas has returned to pre-covid levels, unlike other areas of the City and across the UK. If we are to support sustainable mass travel in these areas, then further long-term investment in roads is needed.

Active and Accessible Travel

- 3.6 The Council has committed to supporting active and accessible travel through improved infrastructure as part of the City Council Plan, the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and as part of the emerging Local Transport Plan 5 and emerging Accessibility Strategy.
- 3.7 Key barriers to accessible movement on foot and on wheels include the condition of the footway as well as the choice of materials. Slabs can be easily damaged by pavement parking, heavy loading activities, weeds and tree roots which all increase the cost of reactive maintenance and increase the whole life carbon costs of the assets. Slabs also increase risks to users on the footway, particularly for those with restricted mobility or sight. Whilst this risk is managed by our extensive Highway Inspection regime, reactive maintenance is not a long-term solution to underfunding as it is both carbon and cost intensive. Appendix 2 includes an Equalities Impact Assessment which provides further details.

Carbon Reduction

- 3.8 European standards for Carbon Management in Infrastructure (PAS 2080:2016) provides a common framework for all infrastructure sectors on how to manage whole life carbon reduction when delivering infrastructure assets and programmes of work. This framework sets out a hierarchy for tackling carbon emissions which identifies prevention as the biggest opportunity for the radical reduction in carbon emissions within an infrastructure context. In Highway asset management terms, this means that we must either not build in the first place, or once we have, find ways to

increase resilience/longevity and drive down the need for maintenance activities.

- 3.9 For carriageways this means developing a preventative maintenance programme that includes surface extension treatments such as Reclamite and Rhinophalt. These products are relatively inexpensive compared to resurfacing and are quick and easy to implement with minimal disruption to road users. There is real life evidence to show that applying these types of treatments every 5 years on a new surface could extend the life of the assets by 5 years for every application and reduce the whole life cost of the asset by 40%. By managing the assets in this way we can potentially reduce the carbon cost by 90% over the whole life of the asset i.e. removing a surface renewal from the lifecycle.
- 3.10 For footways we need to ensure that we are using products that will last and that will be resilient and suitable for their environment. For example, paving slabs are affected by ground movement and may only last 10 years before requiring regular maintenance. This life span can be reduced further by the impact of weeds, tree roots and footway parking. By comparison, tarmac may last 35 years. The lifecycle of a tarmac footway can also be extended by a further 10-15 years if a slurry seal is applied as a surface extension treatment.
- 3.11 For street lighting, cast iron assets are expensive to install but have potential lifecycles of up to 75 years if well maintained. However, if we do not regularly paint and preserve these assets then the lifecycle dramatically reduces. There are 4600 cast iron lamp columns and 3800 cast iron brackets in the City. Reinstating a cyclical painting programme could extend the life of these assets by up to 10 years (less on the seafront) and avoid expensive replacements or the need to replace them with cheaper products with shorter lifecycles and higher carbon footprints.
- 3.12 In recent years, the available capital fund for the maintenance of carriageways and footways have been prioritised for surface renewals on the resilient network. This is in keeping with the Council's risk-based approach to asset management as agreed in our 'Strategy for Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure' (approved by ETS in 2021). However underfunding over a number of decades has resulted in a maintenance backlog of £75million² for carriageways alone. If the Council continues to invest in carriageways at the current rate then the latest Horizons modelling indicates that this backlog could increase to £150million within the next 7 years.
- 3.13 To support the Council's ambition to be Carbon Neutral by 2030 we need a renewed focus on extending the life of all our highway assets. This requires further capital investment to reduce the maintenance backlog and to support a preventative maintenance programme for footways, carriageways and street lighting. Further work and future funding will be needed to develop similar programmes across all the highway asset groups.

² Figures generated from Horizon condition modelling software that has been developed in partnership with a third party to verify the inputs and outputs.

- 3.14 In the short-term, funding has been secured from the Carbon Neutral Fund to explore asset lifecycle extension for our concrete road network, heritage lighting columns and traffic signals. However, going forward these programmes will require annual investment if we are to maximise the lifecycle of our key assets and therefore reduce carbon and costs in the long-term.

Highway Asset Management Policy

- 3.15 The City Council's Highway Asset Management Policy sets out the high-level principles by which the City Council will maintain the Highway network to ensure this approach aligns with the City Council Plan.

Highway Asset Management Strategy

- 3.16 This Highway Asset Management Strategy sets out how the Highway Asset Management Policy will be delivered within the City. The Strategy has been informed by the asset management framework promoted by the Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme.

Funding

- 3.17 For local authorities there are several different ways that the Highway service is funded.

Capital funding

- 3.18 Capital funding can be used for maintenance operations that either restore the performance of an asset or prolong the life in its current state. Capital Funding can come from several sources including allocation of the Council's capital resources by the authority or central government grants.

Revenue Funding

- 3.19 Revenue spending for Highways services covers reactive and emergency repairs to Highway infrastructure as well as street lighting energy costs, premises and depot costs, staff and salaries, repayments on borrowing and payments against third party claims. More specifically, revenue budgets also cover safety inspections which are vital to the Council's management of risk and defence against third party claims.

Local Growth Funding

- 3.20 The Local Growth Fund is government funding awarded to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) for projects that benefit the local area and economy. The City Council has received funding for several projects within transport which include:

- Upgrade and enhance existing Intelligent Transport Systems infrastructure
- Valley Gardens Development
- Sustainable Transport Package – Brighton Bike Share

3.21 All these projects will play a vital role to the local growth of the economy, will enhance the local area and offer the City's residents an improved journey throughout the city.

Department for Transport Funding

3.22 In October 2021, the Government announced a further £2.7 billion was being made available between 2022/23 to 2025/26 for local highways maintenance capital funding. This includes the remainder of the pothole funding package announced in the 2020 budget.

- **Local Highways Maintenance Funding – Needs Element**
This funding is allocated based on a formula using data provided by the local authority. The Council currently receives £1.455m/year from this fund.
- **Local Highways Maintenance Incentive/Efficiency Element Funding**
This scheme aims to reward councils who demonstrate, through self-assessment, that they are delivering value for money across their Highway service by implementing asset management principles. The Council currently receives £364k/year from this fund.
- **Pothole Action Fund**
This programme funds the repair of potholes as well as the prevention of potholes through surface renewals within the local authority. This is again allocated based on a formula shared by local authorities. The Council currently receives £1.455m/year from this fund.
- **Local Highways Maintenance Challenge Fund**
This fund enables local authorities to bid for major maintenance projects that are otherwise difficult to fund through the normal budgets they receive. In recent years the Council has received £8.9m towards the restoration of Shelter Hall and £1.5m towards the upcoming improvements to Western Road.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

4.1 The council could decide not to endorse a Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy. However, this would mean that there was no long-term planning for highway infrastructure, making it harder to obtain best value within available budgets as well as losing capital funds year on year from the Department for Transport.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The Council participates in the annual National Highway and Transportation (NHT) survey. In comparison with other Unitary Authorities the Council fares well with good levels of satisfaction for the condition of carriageway surfaces and speed/quality of repair. In particular, the survey revealed that residents in Brighton & Hove believe that maintenance of roads and pavements should be the top priority when protecting Council budgets within transport and highways services. Table 1 summarises some of the key outcomes of the survey and how this compares to last year's results and the national average.

Question topic	% Satisfied	Comparison with previous year	Comparison with national average
Condition of Highway (Overall)	40%	4% higher	6% higher
Condition of road surface	30%	1% higher	6% higher
Speed of repair of damaged roads	33%	3% higher	5% higher
Condition of pavements and footways (overall)	44%	2% lower	8% lower
Speed of repair of damaged pavements	33%	2% lower	4% lower
Weeds removal on footways	31%	3% lower	9% lower

Table 1 – NHT Survey Summary 2022

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 If the Council is to support active, accessible and sustainable travel and the movement towards being carbon neutral by 2030 then significant capital investment in the key highway assets is required. Without this investment the deterioration of these assets will impact on the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the city. It would also result in an environmental and financial burden on future generations.
- 6.2 The case for adopting a positive approach to Highway Asset Management has been identified by DfT as the most efficient means of work planning over the longer term. DfT have provided an inducement to adopt asset management practices by introducing an Incentive Fund to be awarded to Councils following this approach.
- 6.3 It is proposed that the Council aims to manage the deterioration in the current condition of its key assets by continuing with the existing risk-based approach. However, in parallel, it actively seeks opportunities to secure additional funding to reduce the maintenance backlog and to establish preventative maintenance programmes to extend the life its footways, carriageways and street lighting networks.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The report identifies that the Council has a highways asset worth approximately £4bn. And, in common with many highways authorities, a highways maintenance backlog estimated to be on average £99m per authority, following a prolonged period of underfunding. The Highways Team estimates that this backlog will increase if no positive action is taken. The highways network supports the delivery of Council priorities such as active travel and carbon neutral goals.
- 7.2 The report proposes establishing a Highways Asset Management Policy and Strategy, as required by the Department for Transport, in order to avoid losing government financial contributions to the value of £ 1.092m over the next three years. It also requests the identification of further investment into highways maintenance.
- 7.3 The Council's challenging financial position both this year and next, as reported to Policy and Resources Committee on 1st December, means that there are limited resources available for capital investment. The timing and cost of funding the capital programme has a significant impact on our revenue account, through the cashflows and investment returns, the amount the Council needs to set aside to cover repayment of debt and the cost of new borrowing required. The existing capital investment programme is being reviewed to identify slippage, reprofiling options and possibilities for releasing capital budgets, for redeployment to higher priority capital schemes. The recommendation, that officers should identify an annual capital sum from within existing budgets to fund preventative and capital maintenance for footways, carriageways and street lighting over the next 10 years to manage the rising revenue cost of providing highway safety maintenance aligns with the capital programme review. Any recommendation to reallocate existing capital budgets to Highways Maintenance would be subject to approval by the Policy and Resources Committee.

Name of finance officer consulted: Jill Scarfield Date consulted (15/12/22):

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 This policy will support the Council as a Highway Authority to deliver its statutory duties to maintain its highways and traffic signals.

Name of lawyer consulted: Alice Rowland Date consulted: (6/12/22)

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 An equalities impact assessment has been carried out and is attached in Appendix 2. This process has been used to inform the development of the policy and strategy and the document will be finalised and published through the usual channels once the policy and strategy have been approved.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 A well-maintained Highway network offers a wide range of benefits for the environment. This includes:
- Energy savings from replacing old incandescent bulbs with LEDS in 20,000 lamp columns as part of the Spend to Save programme and upcoming energy savings of 87% by applying the same approach to Traffic Signal heads across the City as part of the Carbon Neutral Fund programme.
 - Supporting active and accessible travel through the provision of well-maintained footways that are free from trips and hazards.
 - Supporting sustainable travel through the provision of well-maintained carriageways that provide smooth surfaces that are suitable for cycling and provide a quality ride for bus passengers.
 - Support for sustainable fuel alternatives through the maintenance of 350 EV charging points throughout the City.
 - Supporting carbon reduction using innovative materials and construction methods via a recently procured NEC Highways Contract Framework. The framework has embedded Key Performance Indicators relating to Carbon Reduction, Innovation, Social Value and Collaboration. These KPIs will be monitored monthly and offer financial incentives for compliance.
 - Supporting carbon reduction by introducing preventative maintenance programmes that will maximise the lifecycle of our key assets and therefore reduce the use of new materials and heavy construction.
 - Supporting collaboration with other local authorities, contractors and suppliers to explore new innovations in sustainable materials and methods for maintaining our key assets whilst reducing carbon.

11. Social Value and procurement implications

- 11.1 Not applicable.

12. Crime & disorder implications

- 12.1 Well maintained lighting assets add to a sense of safety for residents travelling at night. Well-maintained carriageways support bus services and ensure that they remain accessible to all. They also ensure good access for emergency services around the City for the safety and security of the whole community.

13. Public health implications

- 13.1 Adopting the Highways Asset Management Policy and Strategy will help the Council to support active and accessible movement throughout the City for all residents and visitors. Well maintained footways provide surfaces that are free from trips and hazards and therefore suitable for walking and wheeling (where appropriate).

- 13.2 Well maintained carriageways support active travel by cycle and all forms of wheeling. They also support sustainable travel by bus by providing a smooth ride that is comfortable and safe for all passengers and drivers. They also prevent damage to buses that that would otherwise increase maintenance costs and reduce safety.
- 13.3 Well maintained street lighting ensures everyone can move around the City at night safely and with a reduced fear of crime. Well-maintained structures keep us safe and ensure everyone can continue to access all parts of the City.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy 2023 - 2025
2. Equality Impact Assessment

2. Background documents

None