

SCRUTINY PANEL

9 February 2017

HIGHWAY INSPECTION POLICY REVIEW

Report of the Director for Places (Environment, Planning & Transport)

Strategic Aim:	Safeguarding	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Mr T Mathias, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Places (Highways, Transport and Market Towns)	
Contact Officer(s):	Neil Tomlinson, Senior Highways Manager	01572 758342 ntomlinson@rutland.gov.uk
	Dave Brown, Director for Places (Environment, Planning & Transport)	01572 758461 dbrown@rutland.gov.uk
Ward Councillors	n/a	

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel:

1. Considers the draft policy and provides feedback to the Director for Places (Environment, Planning & Transport) and the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Places (Highways, Transport and Market Towns)

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider a revised Highway Inspection Policy attached as Appendix 1

2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 Under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 Rutland County Council has a statutory duty to maintain the public highway. The Council receives an average of 20 claims per year for damages resulting from alleged failures to maintain the highway. Under Section 58 of the 1980 Highways Act, the highway authority has a "special defence" in respect of such claims if it can demonstrate that it has a reasonable inspection regime and the defect was not present when the highway was last inspected.
- 2.2 The Council and its insurer have been very successful in defending claims over the last 5 years. However, the current highway inspection policy was approved in 2012 to bring it into line with the latest code of practice for highway maintenance (Well Maintained Highways - 2005). This document has now been superseded by Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice, published in October

2016. Well-managed highway infrastructure' supersedes the previous Codes 'Well-maintained Highways', 'Well-lit Highways' and 'Management of Highway Structures'.

2.3 The Council is already working towards the recommendations in this document and the latest Highways Asset Management Plan was adopted by Cabinet on 15th Nov 2016 (report no 160/2016). The adoption of the revised Highway Inspection Policy will address the following further recommendations:

- INSPECTIONS - A risk-based inspection regime, including regular safety inspections, should be developed and implemented for all highway assets.
- MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND CLAIMS - Records should be kept of all activities, particularly safety and other inspections, including the time and nature of any response, and procedures established to ensure efficient management of claims whilst protecting the authority from unjustified or fraudulent claims.
- DEFECT REPAIR - A risk-based defect repair regime should be developed and implemented for all highway assets.

3 MAIN CHANGES

3.1 Inspection Frequencies:

- Local access roads will be inspected every 12 months, instead of every 6 months
- Local access footways will be inspected every 12 months instead of every 6 months

3.2 Response Times:

- Category 1 response increased from 24hours to 7 days
- Category 2 defects increased from 28 days to 3 months

3.3 Intervention Levels:

- Diameter of Category 1 defect defined as 275mm
- Depth of Category 1 defect increased from 40mm to 50mm for carriageway
- Depth of Category 1 defect increased from 20mm to 30mm for footways

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The proposed changes to the inspection policy will improve efficiency. This will

result in current standards being maintained at a lower cost or higher standards being achieved within existing budgets. Given that our roads are in relatively good condition it is expected that there will be contribution towards the savings targets in the MTFP; however budget setting is outside the scope of this report.

- 4.2 The proposed intervention levels and response times have been trialled since November 2015. During the trial, expenditure on the temporary filling of potholes has reduced by over 50%. This has seen monthly costs for temporary pothole repairs drop from an average of £12k per month in early 2015 to an average of around £5k per month in 2016/17. These reductions have allowed the budget to be spent on permanent repairs, as well as contributing towards £35k savings to 2016/17 budgets.

5 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That the highway inspection policy attached as Appendix 1 be recommended to Cabinet for approval
- 5.2 To deliver the Council's strategic aims to 'Safeguard the most vulnerable and support the health & well-being needs of our community', by providing a safe highway network, and to fulfil the Council's statutory duties with regard to highway maintenance and road safety.

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 There are no background papers

7 APPENDICES

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – Highway Inspection Policy

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.