

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

26TH SEPTEMBER 2011

SUBJECT:	CORPORATE GOAL “HAVE A SAFE AND WELL-MAINTAINED HIGHWAY NETWORK FOR ALL USERS” PROGRESS REPORT
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	CLLR HARRY SMITH, STREETSCENE AND TRANSPORT SERVICES
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a progress update on delivering services and plans which will provide assurance that, as prioritised within the Corporate Plan, all aspects of Wirral's highway network are safe and well maintained, including an update on the performance measures in place for condition of the highway and casualty reduction.
- 1.2 The maintenance of all aspects of the highway infrastructure is a statutory duty imposed on the Council as Highway Authority. The Highway Authority has a duty to prepare and undertake measures to improve road safety.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1 Note the progress made to date in achieving this Corporate Plan goal.

3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 3.1 The Committee's scrutiny of the progress of this Corporate Plan aim is an important factor in developing and improving the services provided for the safety and maintenance of highways, and ensuring that service objectives are achieved.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 As part of the 'Your Neighbourhood' theme within the Corporate Plan 2011 - 2014, one of the Council's goals is 'Have a safe and well-maintained highway network for all users.' There are two strands to this particular goal: maintenance and road safety, and this report addresses these related activities.

4.1 Highway Maintenance

4.1.1 The highway network and other transport infrastructure assets together represent by far the largest capital asset the Council holds, and the value of replacing those assets is estimated to be £1.65 billion. The highway network for which Wirral Council is responsible comprises approximately 1,185 kilometres of road.

4.1.2 Inspection and maintenance of the highway network is carried out in accordance with policy adopted in 2005, and is broadly in line with published national guidance *Well Maintained Highways*, *Well Lit Highways* and *Management of Highway Structures*. The duty to maintain the highway, and to provide a robust defence against claims against the Council for slips, trips and falls is at the core of the management of the highways service.

4.1.3 The condition of the highway network carriageways is subject to objective annual assessment through condition surveys carried in accordance with national guidance, and has traditionally been measured through Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) and more recently National Indicators (NI). The measurement of carriageway condition indicators is still considered to be the most objective and appropriate means of assessing the deterioration of the network and the impact of maintenance investment; particularly in the light of well-documented deterioration caused through successive severe winters.

4.1.4 Accordingly, the success in achieving well-maintained highways within the Corporate Plan is measured through the annual assessment of three carriageway condition indicators, which have been adopted by the Merseyside Authorities within the Local Transport Plan 2011 to 2015 (LTP3):

- The length of principal classified roads requiring maintenance treatment (NI 168);
- The length of non-principal classified roads requiring maintenance treatment (NI 169); and
- The length of unclassified roads requiring maintenance treatment (BVPI 224b).

All of these are measured as a percentage of the network length.

4.1.5 Given that investment in highway maintenance was likely to be constrained, along with other public investment; due to economic conditions and compounded by the impact of severe winters; the Merseyside authorities agreed that the targets set for these three measures should aim to ensure that there was no further deterioration of the network during the period covered by LTP3. The Corporate Plan incorporates those targets for the three measures, requiring that the service should prevent any increase in the length requiring maintenance over the Plan period.

4.1.6 The levels of funding for highway maintenance in 2010/11 and 2011/12 have enabled the service to address some of the worst sections of carriageway,

with the Structural Maintenance Programme including schemes to repair a combination of both carriageways in need of maintenance intervention now (condition 'red') and carriageways in need of preventative maintenance to ensure that their deterioration is halted (condition 'amber'). The number of maintenance scheme on unclassified roads is significantly higher in 2011/12, than in the previous two years, and it is expected that BVPI 224b will improve.

4.1.7 The annual condition survey results have recently been compiled and they demonstrate that the level of investment and types of treatment utilised are successfully addressing the deterioration of the network. Table 1 below sets out the three indicator scores for the year to date, with last year's data for comparison, and show that the condition of the network has improved for all three measures. 'Green' provides a measure of the percentage of the network not requiring structural maintenance at this time, 'Amber' requiring investigation now and 'Red' requiring maintenance now. The success against the Corporate Plan goal for 2011 to 2014 will be assessed at the corresponding time in 2012 to 2014; when the annual condition survey is completed again.

Indicator	2010/11 (%)			2011/12 (%)		
	Green	Amber	Red	Green	Amber	Red
NI168	75.2	20.7	4.1	80.8	17.3	1.9
NI169	74.6	21.5	3.9	82.0	16.0	2.0
BVPI 224b	95.0		5.0	94.0		6.0

Table 1 – Annual Carriageway Condition Survey Results

4.1.8 Another potential measure of successfully maintaining a safe highway network would be the continuous reduction in cost to the Council in meeting claims against the Council for slips, trips and falls. However, there is often an inconstant time lag between receiving claims and any final legal agreement or court decision, which would prevent it being an effective annual measure, and so is not used in the Corporate Plan. Nonetheless, an indication over a period of years can be assessed, and there is a clear trend of improvement, with the percentage of closed claims successfully repudiated by the Council showing a year on year improvement, demonstrating that the Council has a strongly defensible approach to highways inspection and maintenance, and demonstrably meets the requirements of its policy.

4. 1.9 There are a range of further aspects of the highways service, all of which are subject to strategies and plans to bring about further improvement and efficiency, to ensure that the network is both safe and serviceable:

- Co-ordination of road works, particularly in respect of the utilities' operations;
- Maintenance of footways, drainage, lighting, bridges and retaining walls;
- Enforcement of highway powers to keep the highway free of obstruction;
- Ensuring customers are well-informed, and their feedback is addressed;
- Provision of the Winter Maintenance Service
- Management of on-street parking, and the Council's car parks;

- Development of Highway Asset Management to provide integrated works programmes and optimal maintenance choices.

4.2 Casualty Reduction

4.2.1 The number of road casualties nationally has been reducing and road safety on the nation's road network is perhaps regarded as the best in Europe. The cost of casualties amounts to some £16bn nationally and there is also major cost associated with the disruption caused by collisions on congestion, reliability and resilience of the network.

4.2.2 The Department for Transport (DfT) published, in May this year, its national Strategic Framework for Road Safety which sets out its approach and policies to reducing the numbers of casualties on the road network and improving the safety of the nation's roads. The DfT is no longer setting out national targets that local authorities must work towards but is providing freedom for authorities to determine the overall priority attached to road safety. Authorities are then able to set local targets based on local road safety issues and circumstances. The DfT has made a commitment to monitor a number of road safety indicators relating to the total number of deaths and the numbers of deaths involving car drivers under 25 years of age. The rate of deaths by miles travelled for a range of groups (cyclists, car, car occupants, motorcyclists) and rate of pedestrian deaths by distance walked will also be monitored.

4.2.3 Enforcement is still stressed as a key activity to improve road safety and DfT intends to introduce new offences on careless driving. DfT will also provide a national facility so that local authorities can compare their performance on roads safety. A best practice portal will also be established so that authorities can share and learn from the road safety programmes and policies that are implemented across the country.

4.2.4 The continuing importance to improve road safety across the Borough has been reflected in the Merseyside LTP and is recognised in the Corporate Plan. The success in improving road safety will be measured in the LTP target :

- By 2020, reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured by 50% compared with the average for 2004-8.

The Corporate Plan target for 2011 is :-

Year	Target (Killed or Seriously Casualties)
2011	106

Table 2 – Corporate Plan Target for Road Safety

4.2.5 Road casualty data for Wirral has shown a downward trend in a number of areas, namely all pedestrian Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI), child KSI, in-car KSI and motorcycle KSI but significant challenges remain. Whilst pedal cycle

KSI casualties show an upward trend, actual numbers remain lower than the average for 1994-1998.

- 4.2.6 In order to achieve the road safety target a Casualty Reduction Partnership operates in Wirral. The Partnership consists of a number of agencies working together (Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire and Rescue, NHS Wirral and Wirral Council) and a Road Safety Action Plan has been developed, consisting of a number of themes covering enforcement, education, training and promotion, engineering schemes and marketing and publicity. Different agencies lead on different elements within the Road Safety Action Plan and performance of the plan is monitored every two months by senior managers from each agency at partnership meetings.
- 4.2.7 Provisional Police data for the six month period to the end of June 2011 indicates that there had been 62 KSI against a target of 53. Council officers are continuing to work with the Police to analyse and verify the information and in some instances the reporting could change for a number of reasons (change in severity, location, etc). The overall success of the Corporate Plan goal and target for road safety will be determined after the DfT publishes final KSI figures for 2011.
- 4.2.8 The Road Safety Action Plan has 5% of activities that are considered to be “amber” and these relate to two main areas of activity : enforcement and delivery of schemes. The Police are currently reviewing their enforcement operations and assessing whether this needs to be strengthened. The programme for some engineering schemes is slightly behind schedule but these are planned to be delivered within the current financial year.
- 4.2.9 To reflect the ongoing challenges and ensure future activities deliver the road safety target, the Partnership is due to undertake a review of mid year performance and determine if any activities in the Road Safety Action Plan need to be modified or if new actions need to be added. Such a review would determine if there are any changing or emerging trends in road casualties and identify measures to address them.
- 4.2.10 The LTP settlement for the Transport Block, which is used to fund transport measures including road safety engineering improvements, reduced significantly in 2011-12 compared to other financial settlement periods in the LTP. Locally the Council has approved additional capital expenditure of £600,000 in 2011/12 to be invested in road safety engineering schemes. Engineering measures have been shown to be an effective way to address known road safety problems and whilst in 2012-13 and 2013-14 the LTP Transport Block settlements increase marginally there may still be a need to identify funding to enable continued emphasis on ensuring effective prioritisation of road safety improvements.
- 4.2.11 The Corporate Plan has an action to implement statutory 20mph speed limits in residential areas and outside schools. Council has made a sum of £1.1 million available for a rolling programme to reduce traffic speeds in both residential areas and outside schools, where there are higher numbers of vulnerable road users like pedestrians and cyclists. Initial work has focused

on the feasibility of phasing in statutory 20mph speed restrictions on non-major routes in residential areas and also variable time specific 20mph speed signs outside schools on through routes where vulnerable road user casualties have occurred.

4.2.12 Officers identified a number of locations outside schools where casualties to vulnerable road users had occurred and DfT were approached over the introduction of specific variable speed limits. During this process the DfT indicated that there were some difficulties with this but that further guidance on setting local speed limits and also relaxations on speed limit signing were imminent. The recently published Strategic Framework for Road Safety from the DfT indicates that new tools for speed limits will be introduced and, in recent months, DfT has issued some information but the final definitive guidance on signing of speed limits is still awaited. These anticipated changes should reduce not only the initial introduction costs but also ongoing maintenance costs.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 Highway maintenance is a statutory requirement and failure to deliver the service in accordance with the Council's policies will impact on the Council's reputation, the condition of the network and claims against the Council for slips, trips and falls.

5.2 Changes in investment in highway maintenance will have a consequence in meeting the performance targets set in the Corporate Plan.

5.3 As described at 4.2.10 above, the Council has added funding to a diminishing LTP settlement for the Transport Block for 2011/12. In order to maintain progress in delivering the casualty reduction target, funding requirements will need to be addressed.

5.4 For highway maintenance and casualty reduction targets, the case for funding from the Council's Capital Programme in future years will be made through the Capital Programme Business Case bid process.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 This report provides an update on progress only.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 Preventative maintenance of highways was considered to be a high priority following the Council's extensive consultation exercise in 2010 *Wirral's Future – Be Part Of It* and resulted in a recommendation by the Living in Wirral Task Force that the Council should "Continue to undertake preventative maintenance on Wirral's roads" which was adopted by Cabinet at its meeting on 9 December 2010 [minutes 242 and 248 refer] and approved by the Council at its meeting on 13 December 2010 [minutes 65 (iii) and 66 refer].

7.2 The Area Forums are consulted for their views on carriageway and footway maintenance schemes which they consider should be included in the annual Structural Maintenance Programme

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 There are no specific implications arising from this progress report.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 There are no specific implications arising from this progress report, other than as described at Section 5 above.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Highway maintenance and the clearance of ice and snow are both duties placed on the Council by statute

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no specific implications arising from this progress report.

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no specific implications arising from this progress report.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no specific implications arising from this progress report

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APPENDICES

None.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
None	