

Wokingham Borough Council

Highway Asset Management Strategy

2016 - 2019

Corporate Vision:

"A great place to live, an even better place to do business"

The borough is recognised as a desirable place to live, having been considered the 2nd least deprived local authority by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015. We aim to maintain this, whilst improving the quality of life for our residents to ensure that the benefits of living within the borough are felt by all. (Council Plan Update April 2016)

Introduction

Asset management planning is an increasingly important part of how we maintain highways assets in the borough. Effective asset management is a key factor in upholding Wokingham Borough Council's (WBC) vision; it is a common-sense approach to the maintenance and future investment decisions for all the component parts that make up the highway.

Highway asset management is about investing the appropriate amount of money at the most appropriate time to keep our assets working properly and meet the needs of our customers, now and in the future. It is important to the decisions we make about maintenance priorities, levels of service and investment in communities and to support businesses.

The government has set out a clear plan for identifying what constitutes excellent highways asset management through the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP), and a number of asset-specific documents have been released to help local authorities to attain excellence status. The benefits to the borough of implementing an asset management approach are:

- It facilitates the delivery of services that are shaped by the needs of our customers now and in the future.
- It facilitates the delivery of services to meet our statutory obligations.
- It promotes a focus on the best use of resources and maximises efficiency to meet our legal requirements.
- It enables us to be more resilient and better able to respond to changes and financial challenges.

We have been on a journey since 2008 defining what our assets are, finding out their condition and how best to maintain them.

The lead up to this strategy statement has initiated the work required for setting out a road map to attain accredited excellence status in highway asset management by 2019.

As with other local authorities, we are challenged by managing the maintenance of aging assets with ever decreasing revenue maintenance budgets, and our strategy is to make our money work harder and to identify by consensus what the money should be spent on. We are adopting asset management best practice processes identified through discussions with members and local stakeholders, professional guidance, case studies and workshops. One key process is the Asset Management Framework set out in the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Guidance document produced by HMEP.

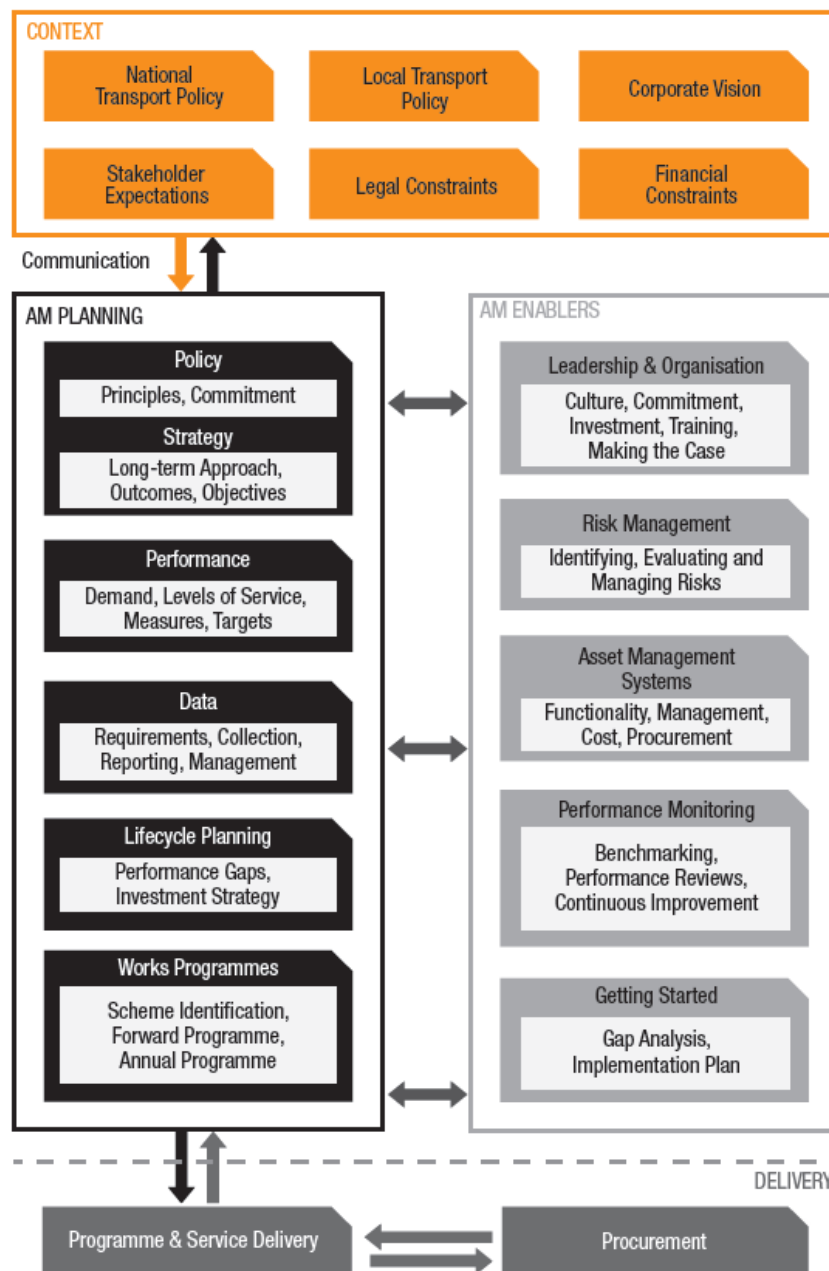


Figure 1: The Asset Management Framework from Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Guidance (HMEP/UKRLG, 2013)

A HMEP document providing an introduction to highway asset management and its terminology is attached in Appendix A, entitled "Highways - Maintaining a Vital Asset. What Should Councillors Know About Asset Management?".

Wokingham Borough Council's Highway Assets

Our highway network assets are high value, and to replace them with new assets at today's construction prices would cost in the region of £1.3 billion. This is reported in the Whole of Government Accounts for Wokingham Borough Council as the Gross Replacement Cost (GRC), plus a further £2.7 billion of associated land. It comprises the following assets:

Table 1: Whole of Government Accounts valuation 2016

Asset Group	Quantity	Estimated Value (cost of a like-for-like replacement)
Roads and footways	736 km of roads (including 8 km of motorway) 764 km of roadside footways 5 km of linking footpaths 53 km of off-road cycleways 9 km of on-road cycleways 322 traffic-sensitive streets	£1,100M
Drainage	29,879 road gullies Sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) Critical drainage assets, including ditches and other structures	
Structures	249 structures (including 166 bridges)	£175M
Street lighting	16,113 columns	£25M
Traffic management	40 junctions, 61 pedestrian crossings	£5.5M
Street furniture	Signs, fencing, bins, bollards, benches, street name plates, cycle stands, etc.	£10.6M
Land	Carriageway and footway land area, soft landscaping, grass verges, etc.	£2,700M

The total estimated value of Wokingham Borough Council highway assets is £4.0 billion.

More detailed information will be provided in carefully tailored Asset Management Plans for each of the asset groups; these are to be developed.

Asset Management Strategy

We have consulted with residents and stakeholders to identify what parts of the network are important, which they are most satisfied with and which parts of the network are critical; our

strategy will continue with a structured consultation plan to help us stay focused on the important outcomes.

We will identify a clear Asset Ownership Framework and assign asset owners, develop lifecycle plans for each asset group, document our critical infrastructure management and develop contingency planning. We will communicate progress, including lessons learned through the ongoing process.

Appropriate core competencies are central to the Highway Asset Management Strategy, and as far as possible we will ensure that staff with the right skillset are available to deliver the best value service to our residents.

Process management is an integral part of knowing what our assets are and how we are recording and managing them. Process mapping will establish a robust approach to service delivery.

Data management is also an integral part of understanding our assets, and appropriate systems will be developed to identify assets, the condition of those assets, and the cost of maintaining them to identified levels of service. These will be audited to establish robust understanding. Performance will be measured to identify whether our strategy is producing the right results and to identify when and where change is needed.

Focus Groups

In preparation for developing our Highway Asset Management Framework we conducted our first 360 degree focus group. A cross section of stakeholders were canvassed for opinion, including members of the public through the annual National Highways and Transportation Survey conducted by IPSOS MORI (NHT), Council Members (Member), the Council's Highways and Transport Alliance professionals (H&T) and the Council's wider Corporate Leadership Teams (ECLT).

Via workshop questionnaires data was captured from each focus group on the "importance" of the various asset classes, which the focus groups were most "satisfied" with, and which parts of the network were considered most "critical". The results were as follows on a scale of 0-100% with 100% being the highest positive score:

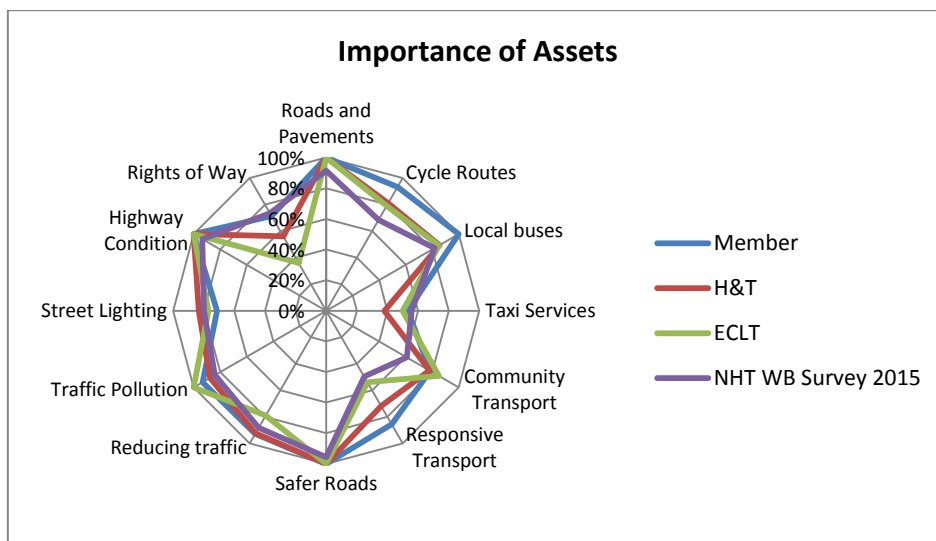


Figure 2: Importance to different stakeholders of highways assets 2016

The focus groups responded most positively to the importance of safer roads, highway condition, and roads and pavements. The most mixed response was to the importance of rights of way and responsive transport as shown in Figure 2. Figure 3 provides data on levels of satisfaction with the same asset groups that had been scored by importance in Figure 2; broadly the trends are again similar, however the level of satisfaction is much lower than the importance scoring.

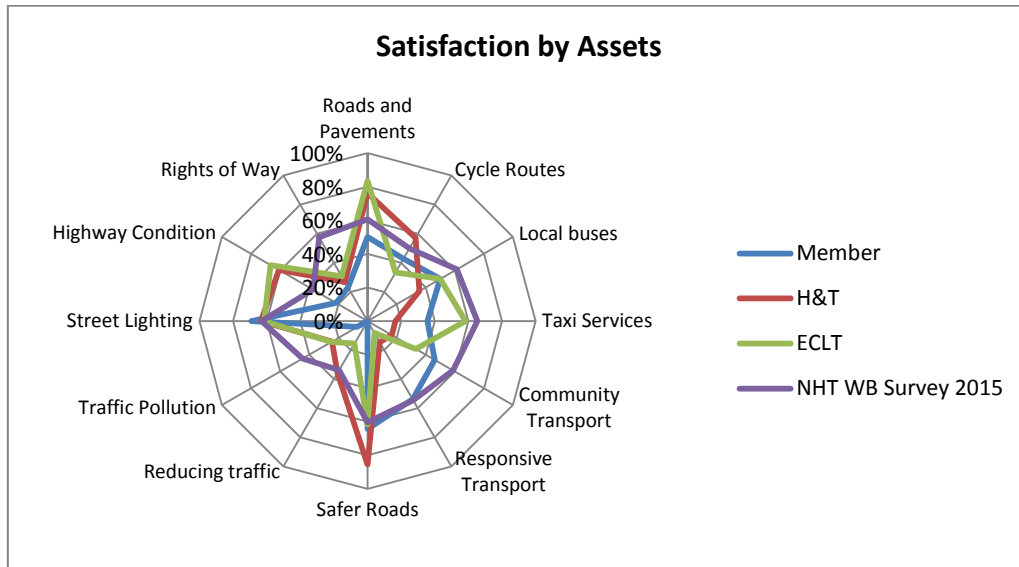


Figure 3: Focus group satisfaction with highway assets 2016

The focus groups in Figure 3 responded most positively to safer roads and street lighting. There was a mixed response to highway condition, responsive transport and taxi services. Data was also captured from the focus groups relating to which parts of the network were seen as most critical, and the focus groups were asked to undertake this thinking strategically, as captured in Figure 4 below. NHT surveys do not capture the critical nature of assets.

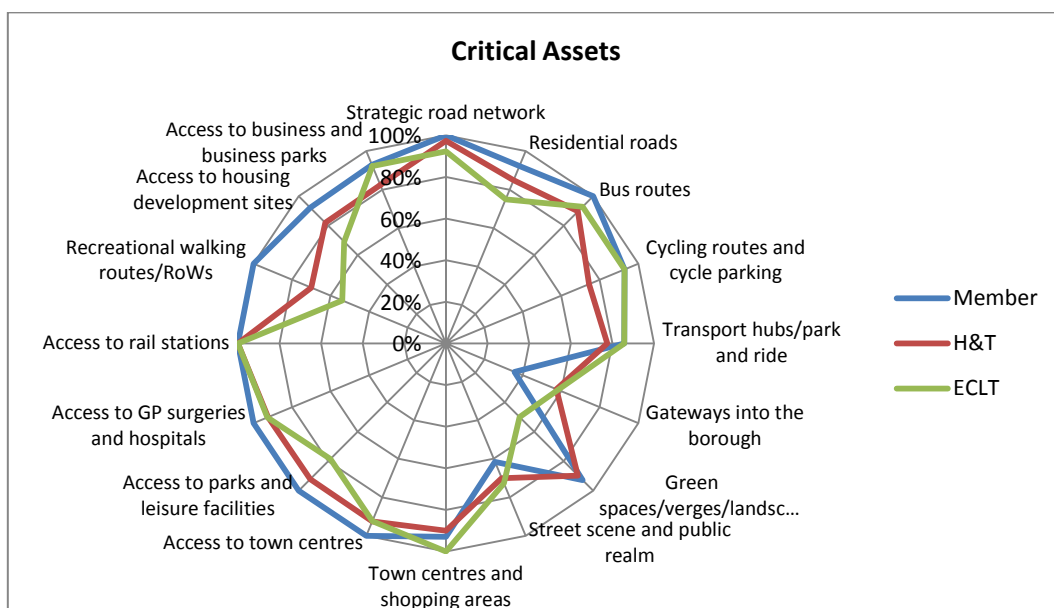


Figure 4: Focus groups defining critical parts of the highway assets 2016

The responses gained from focus groups and customer surveys will inform highway asset management planning, investment strategy, levels of service, performance measurement, forward programming, reporting and the approach to communication strategy and customer service.

Network resilience to extreme weather events

The impact of extreme weather on our network can be considerable, and detailed investigation carried out by the Department for Transport (DfT) following the extreme weather experienced during the winter of 2013/14 resulted in the Transport Resilience Review. The main extreme weather problems for road users in winter 2013/14 came from various types of flooding and water damage, and problems with falling trees during the high winds. Further documents produced by DfT are the Pothole Review providing guidance for carriageway maintenance, and guidance on the management of highway drainage.

The development of a resilient network strategy will build on the findings of these documents and identify the critical highway network, focusing on risk management with networks defined, and aligning strategic maintenance in the areas of winter maintenance, highway drainage and carriageway maintenance. A sister document, the WBC Flood Strategy, focuses on flood management in the borough.

Customer focus

We undertook a Strategic Peer Review in January 2015 with HMEP, which supports sector-led improvement; this identified a progression map for developing an Asset Management Improvement Strategy for Wokingham. The communication of customer survey results will include how they have fed into action plans, and the insights gained from these activities. Feedback from stakeholders will inform future planned maintenance and development programmes and the methods of communication with partners and stakeholders.

Benchmarking and efficiency

The Strategic Peer Review identified the need to develop a performance culture. Part of this involves developing a performance management framework, with the right structures, processes and people to develop a quality-measurement tool for policy development and decision making.

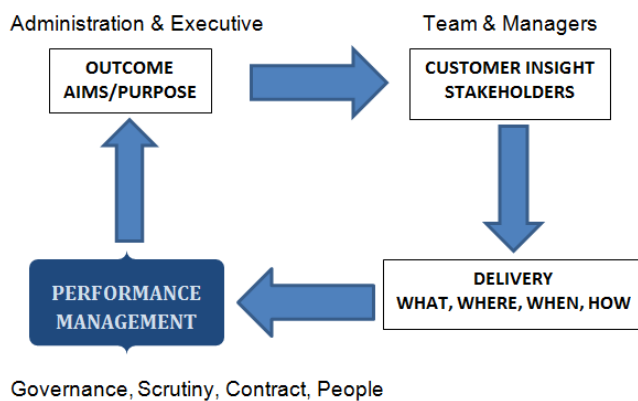


Figure 5: Performance culture (Peer Review, 2015)

We are involved in the CIPFA Highways Asset Management Planning Network series of workshops to collaborate and exchange information with participating authorities. In order to initiate a learning cycle and culture the Council will join recognised benchmarking groups of local and similar unitary authorities to measure success and progress. We will initiate the active use of benchmarking data to improve service delivery on a regular basis and to support investment decision-making.

Operational Service Delivery

An Asset Management Support Project completed by WSP in 2016 provides recommendations that will be taken forward during the period of this strategy, including data management processes for more accurate reporting that is reliable and repeatable. Processes will include the systematic recording of inventory assets and the regular recording of the condition of assets. This approach will facilitate condition analysis for financial reporting and lifecycle maintenance planning. A review of service delivery contracts and mechanisms is underway.

Collaboration with the supply chain is evolving, with a "supplier day" currently being organised for the highway maintenance service. A formalisation of this process is one aim of this strategy period.

We have embarked on identifying 3-year forward programmes for structural maintenance and these will be made available to the public through the development of communication channels.

Reactive maintenance, customer and member queries will feed into this process to identify projects prioritised on asset condition, efficiency of service and value for money. This will include developing methods for early engagement with planning processes, and identifying and collaborating with utility companies' (e.g. gas, electric, water) forward programmes. Motto: "*do it once, do it right*".

Process Review

Progress will be reviewed at each significant development of the asset management process. The next key stages to review will be the development of Highway Asset Group Management Plans. The plans will reflect the DfT's new Highways Codes of Practice, due for release in December 2016. Each plan will include: levels of service; risk management and critical network assessment; data collection plans based on gap analysis; lifecycle plans based on asset valuations and performance monitoring. From these documents, process management, improvement plans and 3-year programmes will be developed and reported upon annually.

Wokingham Borough Council is committed to a culture of continual improvement, learning from both the public and private sector, and adopting new ways of working aligned with best practice. We will ensure highways asset management is reviewed as it evolves and is embedded across the organisation, with partners and stakeholders engaged and informed throughout the journey.

Appendix A: HMEP Highways - Maintaining a Vital Asset. What Should Councillors Know About Asset Management?

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