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**WELL MANAGED HIGHWAYS INFRASTRUCTURE – A CODE OF PRACTICE**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Nick Wallis, Portfolio Holder for  
Leisure and Local Environment**

**Responsible Director - Ian Williams  
Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To advise Members of a new national code of practice for managing all highway assets. The Well Managed Highways Infrastructure Code of Practice (CoP) replaces existing codes and promotes a risk based approach. It also requires consideration of specific recommendations to be adopted when managing the Council's highway network.

**Summary**

2. Well- Managed Highway Infrastructure (CoP) replaces three previous codes of practice, Well Maintained Highways, Management of Highway Structures and Well-lit Highways. The CoP is designed to promote the adoption of an integrated asset management approach to highway infrastructure based on the establishment of local levels of service through risk-based assessment.
3. As well as providing guidance on maintenance activities, the CoP has 36 specific Recommendations which have been used to develop a number of operational documents that will evidence how the Council have incorporated the recommendations in to every day highway asset management operations.
4. The CoP is not a statutory document, and there have been no amendments to legislation. However, it does provide Highway Authorities with national guidance and good practice on highways management, which will be recognised when defending claims and undertaking our duties as highway authority. Adoption of the recommendations within the CoP is a matter for each Highway Authority, based on their own legal interpretation, risks, needs and priorities.
5. The new CoP comes into effect in October 2018 and operational documents are being reviewed to reflect the new approach and the specific recommendations.
6. The Department for Transport (DfT) expect continued improvement in terms of Highway Asset Management and each year the Council is required to complete a

self-assessment demonstrating improvement. This is linked to the amount of funding received from Government and failure to improve can result in less funding. As part of this assessment DfT expect evidence that matters such as the introduction of the new code of practice are considered by Cabinet.

## **Recommendation**

7. It is recommended that :-
  - (a) Cabinet note the adoption of the principles set out in the Well Managed Highway Infrastructure (CoP), the requirement to progress the specific recommendations and that operational highway asset management policies and procedures will be introduced or amended to reflect the new CoP.
  - (b) Cabinet confirms delegated authority for the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, or nominated officers, to develop, update, bring into operation and review the policies and procedures that follow principles in the CoP.

## **Reasons**

8. The recommendations are supported to facilitate the efficient and effective management of the Council's highway infrastructure by incorporating recommendations and principles within the CoP.

**Ian Williams**  
**Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services**

## **Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

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| S17 Crime and Disorder                           | Crime and disorder implications will be taken into account in the preparation of the various documents and policies.   |
| Health and Well Being                            | Health and wellbeing implications will be taken into account in the preparation of the various documents and policies. Good standards of maintenance will provide a safe environment and encourage people to use the highway and to keep people active and independent.                          |
| Carbon Impact                                    | Carbon emissions and their impact will be taken into account in the preparation of the various documents and policies. Where possible cost effective methods, materials and processes will be adopted to reduce their carbon impact.   |
| Diversity  | Equalities and Disability Impact Assessments will be undertaken in the preparation of the various documents and policies.<br>As highway schemes have an impact on the built environment disability groups in particular will be consulted to ensure the needs of disabled people are considered. |
| Wards Affected                                   | All  |
| Groups Affected                                  | All  |
| Budget and Policy Framework                      | It is not anticipated that there will be a pressure on existing budgets. When developing the policies to the new CoP if there are financial implications these will be brought back to Cabinet under a separate report.  |
| Key Decision                                     | Yes  |
| Urgent Decision                                  | No   |
| One Darlington: Perfectly Placed                 | One Darlington: Perfectly Placed set the wider context for the development of the various documents produced to evidence compliance with the Code of Practice.   |
| Efficiency                                       | The various documents and policies will demonstrate an evidence based approach to identify schemes and reactive maintenance that reduce maintenance liabilities and/or seek to reduce revenue costs.   |
| Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers | This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers   |

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

9. As Highway Authority, Darlington Borough Council is responsible for ensuring the local highway network is managed and maintained to an appropriate standard so that the general public can undertake their journeys in a safe and efficient manner.
10. The extent of the highway network which the Council manages is shown below.

| Road Classification | Road Network Length |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| A (principal roads) | 57                  |
| B                   | 29                  |
| C                   | 109                 |
| Unclassified        | 356                 |
| Total               | 551                 |

11. In addition there are approximately 610km of footways, approximately 13,400 street lights and 105 bridges which form part of the adopted highway network maintained at public expense. A full inventory of all highway assets, including carriageways, footways, cycleways, bridges, retaining walls, public rights of way, safety fences, traffic signals, street lighting and verges, has been compiled and maintained on the Council's Highway Asset Management system. This asset data has facilitated better management of the highway and is used to estimate the value of the highway network, in monetary terms, in line with Government requirements.
12. The importance and value which the highway network contributes to the national and local economy and the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the local community should not be under estimated.
13. In order to deliver highway maintenance in an effective, efficient and structured way the Council has developed a series of policies and procedures which it follows, based on previous National Codes of Good Practice. These are in the process of being reviewed and expanded to ensure that they follow the recommendations in Well Managed Highways Infrastructure – A Code of Practice. The CoP states that the CoP should be adopted by October 2018 or alternative practices and standards put in place.
14. A hierarchy of documents has been developed showing the relationship between national guidance, legislation and local practices and standards (**Appendix A**). Areas where new documents are required or existing documents require review have been identified and work is currently being undertaken to complete the review by October 2018, although it is not essential for all documents to be in place at this time.
15. The Code of Practice the Council currently works to in relation to roads and footways is the "Well Maintained Highways" which was published in July 2005. This made recommendations as to hierarchy and frequency of safety inspections. The Council broadly followed this Code although the frequency of safety inspections of some carriageway and footways exceeded the recommendations. This approach has resulted in the Council achieving a repudiation rate of 93% of

those insurance claims settled during 2010 to 2018. The new CoP does not specify frequencies of safety inspections and these will be determined having regard to the carriageway and footway hierarchy. It will be necessary to ensure that the network hierarchy is regularly reviewed to ensure that the category for each asset is updated as the network changes. The hierarchy category for each of the asset groups will be delegated to a group of officers chaired by the Head of Highway Asset Management taking account of the recommendations of the Code.

16. The Tees Valley authorities have worked together to produce a common set hierarchies for carriageways, footways, cycle ways, street lighting, structures and public right of ways (**Appendix B**). The hierarchies will be used to prioritise maintenance, including inspections, taking in to account minimum levels of service. Although each of the authorities are responsible for detail within their own documents the inclusion of a Tees Valley set of hierarchies demonstrates a common approach with neighbouring authorities which is encouraged by the CoP.
17. Neighbouring authorities are being consulted with regard to network priorities and response times to ensure that there are not major differentials in the condition of highway assets at authority boundaries. Other agencies, stakeholders and Councils services have been consulted in the development of procedures and policies.
18. There are 36 specific recommendations within the new CoP which have been reviewed and an Action Plan is in place to ensure these are fully considered in the implementation of the new CoP. The recommendations and progress against these is included at **Appendix C** for information. Although there are some recommendations that existing practices and standards follow, it is important that the risk based approach is reflected and recorded in them. This will evidence that we are following the CoP and will enable defence from third party claims.

### **Financial Implications**

19. There are no financial implications at this stage of implementation of the new code of practice. Any financial implications that cannot be accommodated within existing budgets would be subject to separate Cabinet report.

### **Legal Implications**

20. Consultation will take place with our Legal team and Council insurers when the draft Highway Safety Inspection Manual has been completed.

### **HR Implications**

21. Training on the new code is being delivered to relevant staff in the service areas.

### **Equalities Considerations**

22. Equalities considerations will be considered as each procedure is developed.

## Consultation

23. Consultation has been undertaken with neighbouring authorities and stakeholders. It is not intended that technical policies and procedures be the subject of public consultation. However, it is proposed that the full suite of documents is available on the web site so that users and the community have access to them.