

# Service and Community Impact Assessment (SCIA)

## Front Sheet:

### Directorate and Service Area:

Environment & Economy – Network & Asset Management

### What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change):

Highway Maintenance

This assessment considers all proposed savings which form part of a holistic package of savings in the highway maintenance activity that the council undertakes.

E&E1 - Patching works  
E&E2 - Highway drainage  
E&E5 - Incident response  
E&E8 - Maintenance of streetlighting  
E&E11 - Traffic signals maintenance  
E&E19 - Safety fence repair & maintenance  
E&E22 - Public Rights of Way  
E&E24 - Survey & other works  
E&E25 - Area Stewardship  
E&E26 - Gully emptying

### Responsible owner / senior officer:

Steve Smith

### Date of assessment:

17<sup>th</sup> December 2015

### Summary of judgement:

The proposal will reduce the level of highway maintenance undertaken however the full extent of the impact will be dependent on whether the Council is able to achieve Band 3 status of the DfT Incentive Fund. At present only one authority in the country is deemed to be operating at band 3 and therefore to achieve this status will need investment into developing new initiatives and therefore Band 3 status cannot be guaranteed at this stage.

An assessment of the impacts of this proposal demonstrates that whilst in broad terms everybody will be impacted by this proposal, those living in more rural areas and those less mobile (such as the elderly and those with a disability) would likely be impacted to a greater extent. Defects in the vicinity of doctors' surgeries, day care

centres etc., will still be categorised as requiring particular attention and any urgent repairs will be addressed as priority.

## Detail of Assessment:

### Purpose of assessment:

The assessment has been undertaken to consider the impacts of a reduction in service arising from the need to meet budgetary pressure.

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 (“the 2010 Act”) imposes a duty on the Council to give due regard to three needs in exercising its functions. This proposal is such a function. The three needs are:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic, and those who do not.

Complying with section 149 may involve treating some people more favourably than others, but only to the extent that that does not amount to conduct which is otherwise unlawful under the new Act.

The need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages which are connected to a relevant protected characteristic and which are suffered by persons who share that characteristic,
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and which are different from the needs other people, and
- encourage those who share a relevant characteristic to take part in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.
- take steps to meet the needs of disabled people which are different from the needs of people who are not disabled and include steps to take account of a person’s disabilities.

The need to foster good relations between different groups involves having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

These protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

- marriage and civil partnership

### **Social Value**

Under the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012 the Council also has an obligation to consider how the procurement of services contracts with a life value of more than £173,934<sup>1</sup> might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the area affected by the proposed contract, and how it might act to secure this improvement. However, it is best practice to consider social value for all types of contracts, service delivery decisions and new/updated policies. In this context, 'policy' is a general term that could include a strategy, project or contract.

This proposal does not propose and service procurement and therefore does not fall under the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012.

### **Context / Background:**

As the highway authority the county council has a duty to maintain the highway, there is however no set criteria on how this should be achieved. In the past the Council has invested its budgets in a reactive manner and repairing those highway assets in the worst condition first or reacting to all pot holes as and when they appear. As budgets have diminished this has become an unsustainable approach and the condition of the highway network has been deteriorating at a rate beyond which the councils budgets are able to address.

In September 2014, Cabinet approved a new Highway Asset Management Plan that demonstrated that investing budgets into more preventative treatments before assets showed signs of deterioration would realise significant benefits to the overall highway network and would prevent an additional 400km of carriageway becoming in need of repair over a ten year period.

The Department for Transport has similarly recognised the benefit of this approach and from next year is investing more money into capital grants and linking funding mechanisms to reward those authorities who demonstrate a best practice approach to Highway Asset Management.

This proposal therefore seeks to reconcile the councils budgets to the Highway Asset Management Plan to ensure that the service is better placed to meet the budgetary pressures and enable the authority to be better positioned to attract further DfT funding.

### **Proposals:**

We propose to review service levels and how we use our resources in order to get the best possible value from the smaller budget and reduce the effect of any potential impacts. We will undertake this work in three ways:

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<sup>11</sup> [EC Procurement Threshold for Services](#)

1) Undertake more proactive works out of capital budgets by transferring appropriate works from revenue funding. The Department for Transport is investing more money in local authority grant allocations for highway maintenance and, subject to the authority satisfying band 3 criteria for the Department for Transport's Incentive Fund and implementation of a LEAN review, some of this transfer of works could be undertaken within the additional monies and therefore would not see a full reduction in activity currently undertaken on the highway network in those areas. The County Council is currently managing a network in decline however and as such an overall reduction in maintenance would potentially lead to more accelerated deterioration and the potential for increased flooding. Failure to achieve band 3 status within the DfT Challenge Fund would have significant ramifications on the authorities ability to maintain a safe network.

This approach would apply to patching works (E&E1), Carrier drain jetting (E&E2) Streetlighting replacements (E&E8) Traffic Signal Refurbishment (E&E11)

2) Reduction in staffing resource by

Further to a reduction of services delivered over the last few budget periods, and with a LEAN review to be undertaken to enable the service to be delivered more efficiently, it is recognised that the service will need fewer staff to deliver works. A reduction of staff will enable a greater proportion of budgets to be spent on maintenance activity. This approach will apply to Area Stewards (E&E25) although will be delivered through a broader restructuring to reflect the outcomes of a LEAN review.

3) Service Reductions

Where current levels of service can be reviewed without significantly impacting on safety or asset condition reductions in current standards will be considered. Areas for consideration will include;

Incident response (E&E5) to address only the more urgent issues where there is an impact on safety.

Safety Fence repair & maintenance (E&E 19) where we will seek to remove barriers where no longer considered necessary and also be more rigorous in seeking to recover costs of damage arising from accidents.

Public Rights of Way (E&E22) where we will seek other forms of funding or reduce the level of service currently provided to prioritise those areas to maintain safety and the better used paths.

Survey & Other works (E&E24) which will reduce the level of ad-hoc works currently undertaken by the authority. We will also reduce the number of surveys currently undertaken which enable the Council to better target capital funds.

Gully Emptying (E&E26) which will increase the interval between which all gullies are cleansed from 3 years to 4 years although gullies in areas at higher risk of flooding will continue to be cleansed more frequently.

### **Evidence / Intelligence:**

The proposed approach towards a more preventative method of maintenance is endorsed by both the Department of Transport and Local Government Association through its Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme of which Oxfordshire is an active member.

This has been recognised in changes to the way the Department for Transport's funding mechanism rewards those authorities who can demonstrate a well managed preventative approach to highway maintenance. There is the potential that reducing budgets too much in some areas may impact on the Councils potential to meet the criteria within band 3 of the DfT Incentive Fund, which might otherwise help to mitigate the impact from some of the funding reductions.

### **Alternatives considered / rejected:**

A reduction of service or staff in other areas was considered but remaining areas of the service are either linked to a defined statutory duty or are activities where further reduction in service would have a significant detrimental impact on the highway network and increase the likelihood of a more costly reactive response to a dangerous situation.

### **Impact Assessment:**

We assess the impact of decisions on any relevant community, but with particular emphasis on:

- Groups that share the nine protected characteristics
  - age
  - disability
  - gender reassignment
  - pregnancy and maternity
  - race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
  - religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
  - sex
  - sexual orientation
  - marriage and civil partnership
- Rural communities
- Areas of deprivation

We also assess the impact on:

- Staff
- Other council services
- Other providers of council services
- Any other element which is relevant to the policy or proposed service change

- How it might improve the economic, social, and environmental of the area affected by the contract if the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies

**Impact on Individuals and Communities:**

The proposals above would be unlikely to be discriminate against many groups with the exception of the following;

Reduction in overall highway maintenance budgets would mean that the authority will be less likely to redress the current levels of decline and as such there will continue to be defects occurring within the footway and carriageway. Such defects typically impact on the elderly, blind and those with reduced mobility as they are less able to negotiate uneven footways or likely to be discomfoted by vehicles travelling over an uneven surface.

C class and unclassified roads are in a poorer condition than the rest of the network and this predominantly impacts more rural areas of the county. Reductions in gully cleansing and other drainage activity will similarly impact those areas that suffer minor localised flooding.

The reduction of funding for Public Rights of Way is likely to impact on rural areas more predominantly as this is where a majority of the network lies. There are several volunteers who support the authority in maintaining an attractive network of paths across the County. It is likely that a reduction in resource in the area will mean a reduction in the support available to volunteers and would potentially reduce the number of volunteers willing to engage.

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
The condition of many rural roads are already in poor condition and could potentially deteriorate further.	The service will continue to treat potholes that present a significant safety issue and undertake preventative treatments where appropriate. It is unlikely however that the budgets available will be able to redress the deterioration of the network.
Reduction in drainage maintenance will increase the risk of localised flooding.	The service maintains a record of waste removed from each gully and also of flooding incidents. The service is therefore is able to target those areas most in need to enable a risk based approach to be taken towards maintenance.
Reduction in resources within Public Rights of Way may reduce the number of volunteers supporting the service and therefore have a disproportionate impact to service delivery above and beyond the level of direct saving.	The service will continue to provide support to volunteers, albeit to a reduced level, and will seek to find alternative opportunities for funding.

**Impact on Staff:**

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
The Council will stop maintaining its assets to a level which it previously has and as such it is likely that staff will be required to reject requests for service that it would have delivered in the past. This is likely to lead to a higher number of complaints and abuse of staff.	The service will seek to make its service levels as public as possible to provide clarity however it is recognised that the service is unlikely to be able to meet public expectation.
The reduction in works being undertaken will mean less staff required to deliver the service.	The service will seek to take advantage of staff leaving through natural turnover of staff as far as practicable to reduce the number of redundancies required. A LEAN review will seek to make the service more efficient and reduce the likelihood for remaining staff to take on unsustainable workloads.

**Impact on other Council services:**

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
The condition of the highway is such that additional damage arises to council vehicles (or staff vehicles leading to delays in delivery of activity) creating revenue pressures on other services.	The service will continue to prioritise those routes most heavily used to minimise the impact on the majority of people.
Localised flooding closes part of the highway network and leads to delays in service delivery.	The service will continue to prioritise those areas most vulnerable to flooding.
Increased risk to those less mobile as a result of a deteriorating footway and carriageways may increase demand on Social & Community Services	The councils policy currently prioritises footways where the risk is highest (i.e. GP centres, Day Centres etc.) and this will continue. It is unlikely however that the budgets available will be able to redress the deterioration of the network and therefore this risk cannot be completely mitigated.

**Impact on providers:**

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
The condition of the highway is such that additional damage arises to provider vehicles leading to higher delivery costs in the future.	The service will continue to prioritise those routes most heavily used to minimise the impact on the majority of people.

The level of funding available reduces turnover within contracts to a level which is unsustainable leading to termination of contracts.	The council will liaise closely with service providers to ensure that any unforeseen impacts can be considered at an early stage.
There is the potential for workloads on a reduced staffing level to be such that there are delays in managing and servicing contracts leading to a deterioration in relationships with providers.	The council will liaise closely with service providers to ensure that any unforeseen impacts can be considered at an early stage.

**Action plan:**

Action	By When	Person responsible
Review of Asset Management Policies to align with reduced levels of service	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2016	David Bullock
Reduce service levels to match available budgets	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2016	Steve Smith
Undertake a LEAN review and implement agreed outcomes	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2017	Steve Smith

**Monitoring and review:**

Try to be as specific as possible about when the assessment will be reviewed and updated, linking to key dates (for example when consultation outcomes will be available, before a Cabinet decision, at a key milestone in implementation)

**Person responsible for assessment:**

Version	Date	Notes (e.g. Initial draft, amended following consultation)
01	January 2016	Initial draft
02	February 2016	Review following Council budget decisions
03	April 2016	Review following Cabinet decisions of Highway Policies
04	April 2017	Review following implementation of LEAN review.