

REPORT TO GARIOCH AREA COMMITTEE- 17th SEPTEMBER 2019

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL ROAD INSPECTION POLICY UPDATE REPORT

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to note that the year one review of the policy in line with Council's Policy Framework procedures has been completed.

2 Background / Discussion

- 2.1 Aberdeenshire Council is deemed to be a Local Roads Authority as prescribed by the terms of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. Section 1 of the Act states that "...a local roads authority shall manage and maintain all such roads in their area as are for the time being entered in a list (in this Act referred to as their "list of public roads") prepared and kept by them under this section..."
- 2.2 There are currently around 3,425 miles of carriageway and 1,035 miles of footway on the List of Public Roads for which the Roads Service is tasked with maintaining in a serviceable and safe condition.
- 2.3 A fundamental aspect of delivering this function is having a detailed Road Inspection Policy. A new Code of Practice: "Well-managed Highway Infrastructure" was published in October 2016 and Roads Authorities were expected to achieve compliance with the new Code of Practice by October 2018. Aberdeenshire Council Road Inspection Policy was approved by Infrastructure Service Committee (ISC) on 25th January 2018 Item No.13 to ensure we met these guidelines.
- 2.4 The new Policy introduced a risk-based approach to categorising the road network, carrying out inspections, and assessing and prioritising defects.
- 2.5 This Policy seeks to ensure consistency across Aberdeenshire for the management of inspections and road defects on our road network.
- 2.6 Garioch Area Committee on 21st November 2017 requested that a further report be brought back to Committee to give an update on how the policy had been working.
The corporate policy framework process, as detailed in Part 4B of the Scheme of Governance: Policy Development and Review Framework, was followed and the one year review report was recently approved by the Director. This process is summarised below.
- 2.7 Review Process Summary
- 2.7.1 Feedback was sought through a survey issued to policy users including Road Managers, Engineers, Inspectors and Insurance Officers. Analysis of this survey data highlights the following key points:

- Users are currently using the policy for road inspections and defect categorisation
- Users are clear on how the new policy establishes a risk based approach
- Majority of users are able to access the policy, however some further clarification and promotion of where it is stored on SharePoint is required
- Users' feedback on policy definition and content is in general positive, some comments on procedural issues were provided which will be looked at in separate tasks to this review as outlined below in 'Future Works'.
- One minor wording amendment was suggested for the Policy Scope.

2.8 The minor policy wording amendment changes would see the Scope application changing from '*All carriageways on Aberdeenshire's existing road network*' and '*All footways on Aberdeenshire's existing road network*' change to '*Aberdeenshire's adopted road network*'. This minor change removes the ambiguity surrounding items such as street lighting apparatus, road signage etc.

2.9 Future Works

2.9.1 Aberdeenshire Council works with the other 31 Roads Authorities, under the auspices of the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) to produce guidance for Local Authorities in how to comply with the Code of Practice. This guidance document seeks to ensure a consistent approach to road inspections and defect classification across Scotland and our current procedure was developed in line with this guidance document. The SCOTS guidance has been amended since its first issue in 2017 (when our policy and procedures were introduced), the current version was issued in late 2018.

2.9.2 There is nothing in the SCOTS guidance update that impacts on our current policy, therefore no changes to our policy were proposed apart from minor wording listed above. There are however changes identified in the SCOTS guidance which will require us to update our operational procedure.

2.9.3 The introduction of the wholly electronic system for recording and actioning defects allows the Service to have better performance monitoring capability. Regular reports are produced on the number of inspections carried out within the planned timescale, the number and type of defects, and the number of repairs carried out within the planned timescale.

2.9.4 The first year of what is now a very transparent process has highlighted some issues which the Service has addressed. One of these was the number of defects apparently not repaired. This was chiefly a housekeeping issue where planned work such as a surface dressing scheme addressed the defect but as no reactive job instruction was issued it remained "live". Additional training and guidance has been delivered and planned works are now being logged on the maintenance system.

The procedure is a living document and subject to amendment as improvements are identified. Proposed procedural changes include:

- Refining our defect scoring mechanisms to reduce any risk scoring anomalies. This will ensure better comparability of risk across the various defect types. For example a lack of understanding in terminology resulted in *any* gully defect being recorded as a potential flooding issue.
- Minor amendments to our inspections intervals.
- Clarifying the status of Council owned, but not adopted roads and footways (e.g. Housing paths and parking areas) in terms of Code of Practice compliance.
- Improving how utility company apparatus defects are handled.

2.10 Summary

2.10.1 The Policy in its current form requires minor wording amendment as shown in paragraph 2.8 as agreed by Director.

2.11 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

3 **Scheme of Governance**

3.1 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section B 11.2 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance to review the effectiveness of Council policy implementation and Council service delivery within the Area

4 **Implications and Risk**

4.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because the review did not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.

4.2 There are no staffing and financial implications in regards to the policy review.

4.3 No Corporate or Strategic Level risks identified in policy review process

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