

## PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

## Environment, Enterprise and Infrastructure Committee

6 September 2017

## Road Safety Inspection and Defect Categorisation Policy

## Report by Director (Environment)

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This new Policy replaces a guidance document that has been in use since the late 1990s. In association with the Road Maintenance Strategy, it will provide a consistent methodology for the management of the road network. It focuses on delivering an efficient and effective reactive response to defect repairs to maintain the safety of the road network.

The implementation of this new Policy will also allow performance to be monitored and reviewed, implementing any necessary improvements identified through its use.

The approval of the Policy also satisfies an outstanding internal audit action.

**1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES**

- 1.1 The Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 states that a local roads authority shall manage and maintain all such roads in their area that are included in the list of public roads held by the authority. These are commonly referred to as “adopted roads” and this inspection policy applies only to these. It will also ensure compliance with this Statutory requirement.
- 1.2 Council officers have been using a guidance document which was agreed in the late 1990s. However, the new Well-managed Highway Infrastructure - A Code of Practice (October 2016) recommends a risk based approach to managing all aspects of the road network which includes inspection and repair. This is a major move away from prescriptive descriptions of defects in previous codes.
- 1.3 The Society of Chief Officers for Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) in November 2016 developed draft inspection guidelines with the aim of achieving a consistent approach across Scotland. This policy is based on the draft guidance.
- 1.4 In addition, officers in Dundee City, Angus and Perth & Kinross Councils are working on a collaborative approach to many aspects of service delivery. This Policy will enable future potential sharing of resources and allow for common performance and specifications to be followed. An “Operational Addendum and Training Manual” will be developed to assist road supervisors and others involved in the activity to ensure a consistent approach across this Council area, along with Dundee City and Angus Councils.

- 1.5 The Council is responsible for the maintenance of 2,500km of carriageways and over 1253km of footways/footpaths. It has finite resources for managing and maintaining these. The implementation of this policy will increase best value by improving the longevity/durability/service life of pothole repairs and other road safety defect repairs.
- 1.6 In 2016/17, the Council repaired 10207 defects across all repair categories. Approximately 5% of defects require a repeat visit to effect a second make safe repair, although exact numbers cannot be ascertained as the potholes are not currently recorded via a GPS system. The opportunity to better programme an appropriate repair, utilising hot material in suitable weather conditions, will significantly reduce this need for a second visit. While it will never be possible to totally eliminate repeat visits, the estimated cost of £26,775 per year will be significantly reduced, as well as frustration/inconvenience to the road user.

## **2. Safety Inspections**

- 2.1 Safety inspections are designed to identify and repair defects to minimise the exposure of danger or serious inconvenience to users of the road network or the wider community. Such defects include those that require immediate attention, as well as those where the locations and sizes are such that longer periods of response are possible.
- 2.2 The safety inspection regime forms a key aspect of the council's strategy for managing liability and risk, mitigates the Council's exposure and enables a robust defence against claims for loss. Inspection frequencies are based on the importance and level of use a road receives. As such, a hierarchy of roads was put in place in the late 1990s. This has been reviewed for this policy document and inspection frequencies ranging from 1 month to annually have been put in place across the network.
- 2.3 The new policy focusses on the higher risk areas and, as such, a number of low use footways and suburban car parks will not be formally inspected. Reported defects will, however, be treated in accordance with the principals of this policy and records kept on an electronic system (RMS).
- 2.4 All carriageway inspections will be carried out from a slow moving vehicle and on A Class roads these require to be double manned. Records will be kept on the same electronic system (RMS).
- 2.5 Footway inspections are also carried out by driving, but the policy introduces a new requirement for all urban footways to receive one walked inspection per annum. Records will be kept on the same electronic system (RMS).

2.6 Many defects are notified to the Council that are the responsibility of other organisations such as utility companies. The Council have a duty of care to the public to ensure the network is safe and will often make these defects safe. This policy does, however, set out a process of how to treat recurring defects on assets owned by others. This will both protect the Council liability and enable the Council to recoup costs associated with the defect.

### Defects repair periods

2.7 In order to make the best use of our budget allocations, the new policy has given consideration to our current repair periods.

2.8 Current defect repair targets as documented within our current Roads Inspection Manual are:

Defect category	Safety defect type	Make safe / repair target time
1	Immediate and critical hazard to road users	Make safe immediately / repair within four hours
2	Urgent or immediate risk of rapid deterioration into a category 1 defect	Make safe or repair by the end of the following working day
3	Moderate level of hazard or risk of structural deterioration and meets safety defect intervention level criteria	Repair within seven days
4	Defects not presenting imminent hazard to road users but likely to deteriorate and require attention prior to next inspection.	Intention to complete wherever possible within 28 days and in all circumstances prior to the next inspection.

2.9 The following table details the numbers of defects in each category recorded over the last 5 years. The effect of the new categorisation will be monitored against this historic data moving forward.

Defect category	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15*	2015/16**	2016/17
1	41	47	64	84	26
2	211	297	498	461	164
3	5738	6832	16101	16252	10017
4	339	382	784	1155	1551

Note: \* In 2014/15, a more detailed recording regime of “clusters of potholes” was implemented. Previously an inspector would state “repair all potholes” which was recorded as 1. However, the Service moved to stating the number, or estimated number, within a cluster or short length of carriageway.

\*\* 2015/16 was the very wet winter, with a number of storms that caused widespread damage to the road network.

### 3. Road Safety Inspection and Defect Categorisation Policy - proposals

3.1 The new policy (Appendix 1) proposes to change our repair targets to:

#### New defect repair targets

Defect category	Safety defect type	Make safe / repair target time
1	Immediate and critical hazard to road users	Make safe immediately and/or repair within four hours
2	Medium level of hazard or risk of rapid deterioration into a category 1 defect	Make safe or repair within five working days
3	Low risk of structural deterioration and meets safety defect intervention level criteria	Repair within thirty working days
4	Not classed as a safety defect as very low / no risk, often inspected following 3 <sup>rd</sup> party reporting	Record for insurance purposes and include in future maintenance project as resources permit

3.2 Through changing the defect repair target times, the following benefits will be possible

- Facilitate more effective planning for first time permanent repairs to potholes and other road safety defects. A 1<sup>st</sup> time permanent repair consists of cutting a regular shape around the pothole, painting edges with bitumen, laying hot material (transported/stored in a hotbox) and compacting it with appropriate plant.
- Ensures better use of public funding by improving the longevity/durability/ service life of pothole repairs and other road safety defect repairs
- Improves production, decreases waste material costs and drives down the average cost of safety defect repairs
- Allows roads maintenance officers more flexibility to plan works on the road network
- Improves budget allocation to ensure first time permanent repairs to potholes

3.3 Category 1 defects remain unchanged so any imminent risk of loss or injury will still be mitigated against. However, lesser defects which were “close of play next day” will default to 5 working days. This will enable officers to improve the longevity/durability/service life of pothole and other road safety defect repairs by carrying out the most appropriate repair in appropriate conditions, and reducing return visits. This, in turn, will enable more effective use of budget allocations.

3.4 For both category 2 and 3 defects, it will remain possible to repair more urgently within the repair window. The Service will endeavour to do so as resources permit, while monitoring and managing performance.

## Defect Reporting

- 3.5 Defects which are reported through the Council Contact Centre are automatically (through the electronic system - RMS) allocated to the appropriate assistant road maintenance officer (5 staff covering specific geographical areas). Many of these do not meet the criteria for repair but all will be inspected within 5 working days and records kept on RMS. Where the reported defect is found not to meet the repair criteria, it will be recorded as Category 4 to assist the process of determining where planned maintenance work is required in future.
- 3.6 Performance against set standards for repairing defects is currently reported to Committee in the Roads Asset Annual Status Report (Report No 16/499 refers). This will continue after the implementation of this policy.
- 3.7 It is proposed this policy be implemented from 1 October 2017.

## 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 Work has been undertaken to revise the road safety inspection and defect categorisation policy, in line with the new national Code of Practice, and the draft inspection guidelines issued by SCOTS. It is anticipated that this will
- (i) minimise the exposure of danger or serious inconvenience to users of the network or the wider community
  - (ii) mitigate the Council's exposure to risk and enable a robust defence to claims of loss
  - (iii) ensure compliance with Statutory requirements
  - (iv) increase best value by improving the longevity / durability / service life of pothole repairs and other road safety defect repairs
- 4.2 It is recommended that the Committee:-
- (i) approves the Road Safety Inspection and Defect Categorisation Policy as set out in Appendix 1 and;
  - (ii) requests the Director (Environment) to ensure the development of a system of GPS recording within the RMS system to detail the exact location of defects and incidences of repeat repairs and support enhanced monitoring

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### Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Barbara Renton	Director (Environment)	19 July 2017

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## 1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

<b>Strategic Implications</b>	<b>Yes / None</b>
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	<b>Yes</b>
Corporate Plan	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Resource Implications</b>	
Financial	<b>Yes</b>
Workforce	<b>None</b>
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	<b>None</b>
<b>Assessments</b>	
Equality Impact Assessment	<b>Yes</b>
Strategic Environmental Assessment	<b>Yes</b>
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	<b>None</b>
Legal and Governance	<b>None</b>
Risk	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	
Internal	<b>None</b>
External	<b>None</b>
<b>Communication</b>	
Communications Plan	<b>None</b>

### 1. Strategic Implications

#### Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2013 – 2018 lays out five outcome focussed strategic objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. They are as follows:

- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations – this Policy will ensure the road asset is maintained in a safe condition for current and future generations

#### Corporate Plan

1.2 (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations – this Policy will ensure the road asset is maintained in a safe condition for current and future generations

### 2. Resource Implications

#### Financial

2.1 It is anticipated that this new Policy will be cost neutral but defect repair costs will be monitored after implementation and compared against historic costs.

### Workforce

- 2.2 There are no workforce implications arising from this report.

### Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 There are no asset management implications arising from this report.

## **3. Assessments**

### Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties. The Equality Impact Assessment undertaken in relation to this report can be viewed clicking [here](#).
- 3.2 This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:
- (i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

### Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.3 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.
- 3.4 No further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

### Sustainability

- 3.5 N/A.

### Legal and Governance

- 3.6 N/A.

### Risk

- 3.7 There is a risk that claims for loss or damage will be presented to the Council for a perceived failure to carry out its statutory duties. The Council does have very good record of defending claims with the process currently in place.
- 3.8 The implementation of this Policy will mitigate the risk further and enhance the defence of any such claim.



#### **4. Consultation**

##### Internal

- 4.1 The Head of Legal and Governance, the Head of Democratic Services and the Head of Finance have been consulted in the development of this report.

##### External

- 4.2 N/A.

#### **5. Communication**

- 5.1 N/A.

#### **2. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 2.1 Internal Audit Report 13-05 – July 2013
- 2.2 Well-managed Highway Infrastructure - A Code of Practice (October 2016)
- 2.2 Society of Chief Officers for Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) – Draft Inspection Guidelines
- 2.3 Perth and Kinross Council – Road Inspection Manual 2007

#### **3. APPENDICES**

- 3.1 Appendix 1 - Road Safety Inspection and Defect Categorisation Policy