

Forward Plan reference number: FP/005/01/24

Report title: New ECC Highways Maintenance and Inspections Strategies, and subsequent revision to current Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP)	
Report to: Councillor Tom Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport	
Report author: Peter Massie, Head of Essex Highways Commissioning	
Date: 30 April 2024	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Deana James, Business Planning Manager, deana.james2@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1 Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 In April 2023, The Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) was implemented to set out how Essex manages its highways network infrastructure assets to support 'Levelling Up' the county.
- 1.2 Effective asset management of highway assets ensures they remain safe, accessible, serviceable, and sustainable. Together with efficient traffic management systems, this promotes reliable journey times to key national and international destinations, which creates the right environment to attract investment to the County. This creates employment opportunities for everyone and promotes growth, which brings the prosperity needed to address socio-economic inequality.
- 1.3 The HIAMP aligns with 'Everyone's Essex' by promoting the ECC vision and aim for 'Safer, Greener and Healthier Travel for current and future users of the transport network'. The proposed amendments for the current HIAMP including adopting the supplementary strategies set out in this report, which is the subject of this CMA, will enhance the drive towards the 'Safer, Greener and Healthier Travel' vision.
- 1.4 The five new Strategies, detailed in section 2.1, will address two key priorities within 'Everyone's Essex':

Environment, through setting out a Strategy for decarbonisation which supports the Council's ambition for Net Zero by 2050; and through supporting the growth of green infrastructure, promoting biodiversity and local nature recovery, and improving flood alleviation as well as promoting better management of water resources.

Safety, through improving the management of key areas of risk across the road network, thereby complying with the requirements of the updated' Code of Practice: Well Managed Highway Infrastructure which was released in October 2016'.

- 1.5 A safe, accessible, serviceable, and sustainable highway network affords opportunities for active travel, exercise, sport, leisure, entertainment, and access to green spaces, all of which promote physical and mental wellbeing. The highway network also provides access to social services and other health care services and provides vital communication links between communities which helps ensure social inclusiveness and independent living.
- 1.6 The highway network also provides access to services which address vulnerability and family resilience. The HIAMP acknowledges the importance of the family unit through its ongoing work with the Local Highway Panels where there is a focus of localism and the development of community.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree to adopt the following strategies, supplementary to the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan, in the form appended to this report with effect from 1 April 2024:
 - 2.1.1 Essex County Council Essex Highways Decarbonisation Strategy (Appendix 1)
 - 2.1.2 Essex County Council Essex Highways Strategy for managing its Green Estate (Appendix 2).
 - 2.1.3 Essex County Council Essex Highways Skid Resistance Strategy (Appendix 3).
 - 2.1.4 Essex County Council Essex Highways Vehicle Restraint Systems Strategy (Appendix 4).
 - 2.1.5 Essex County Council Essex Highways Road, Rail Incursion Risk Strategy (Appendix 5).
- 2.2 Agree to amend the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan as set out in Appendix 6 to implement the supplementary strategies set out in paragraph 2.1.

3 Background and Proposal

- 3.1 ECC is the Highway Authority for Essex and under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 it has a duty to maintain the highway. ECC has existing policy and strategy documents which set out how Essex highways infrastructure assets are managed and maintained. Following a decision taken in April 2023, a Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan was adopted, which at the same time approved the inclusion of the following supplementary strategic documents as

part of the HIAMP, which had been updated to promote environmental sustainability in keeping with the environmental priorities within 'Everyone's Essex':

- The Highways and Transportation Asset Management Policy
- The Highways and Transportation Asset Management Strategy
- The Highways and Transportation Summary Communications Strategy.

3.2 The implementation of the HIAMP was in direct response to a requirement from the Department for Transport (DfT) for HIAMPs to be in place for local highway authorities that receive local highways incentive funding, to demonstrate effective asset management. The need for Highway Authorities to evidence sound asset management practice had context for the Incentive Fund. This was a DfT initiative to allocate maintenance funding levels based on the assessment of a Highway Authority's asset management competence, with those Authorities who could evidence sound asset management practice receiving all potential funding for this incentivised element.

3.3 The creation of a HIAMP was viewed by ECC as sustaining the established assessment of Essex as being of the highest standard of asset management competence, thereby safeguarding the maximum allocation for this element of incentivised funding.

3.4 The HIAMP is not a standalone document but comprises a suite of documents that together provides information on:

- how the asset management process is applied to meet the priorities of ECC as the Highway Authority over the short, medium, and long term.
- how standards of service are agreed through informed decisions which reference data led lifecycle planning, risk management and engagement with highway users.
- inspection frequencies and performance standards for both localised repair requirements as well as broader scoped asset replacement.
- how funding and resources are allocated and how current and future works programmes are identified and delivered.
- how the 'Safer, Greener and Healthier Travel' vision will be realised.
- how service levels comply with the requirements of the updated 'Code of Practice: Well Managed Highway Infrastructure' which was released in October 2016.

3.5 Having a suite of documents rather than one standalone document as the HIAMP, facilitates the flexibility needed to respond quickly to the dynamic environment of Local Authority and the highways maintenance industry. This not only makes us adaptive to change but positions us well to pursue value for money through a culture of continuous asset management improvement.

Proposal

- 3.6 To enhance the HIAMP, five new Strategies have been developed for which a request is now made under this report to approve their inclusion within the current HIAMP (Appendix 6) as additional supplementary strategic documents, and to implement the five new Strategies from 1 April 2024. The five new Strategies are:
- 3.6.1 Essex County Council Essex Highways Decarbonisation Strategy (Appendix 1). *This document is at the heart of the Council's environmental planning for its Highway assets, supporting the Council's ambition for Net Zero by 2050.* This document sets out how Essex Highways will identify opportunities for carbon emissions reduction in its activities and implement them where practicable and affordable.
- 3.6.2 Essex County Council Essex Highways Strategy for managing its Green Estate (Appendix 2). *This Strategy sets out how actions may be identified and implemented to improve green infrastructure and biodiversity, help restore local nature, alleviate flood risk, and manage water resources better.* This Strategy sets out opportunities for Essex Highways to manage its green estate to support biodiversity, help restore nature, alleviate flood risk, manage water resources better, enhance social value, and contribute to carbon emissions absorption, where these activities are practicable and affordable.
- 3.6.3 Essex County Council Essex Highways Skid Resistance Strategy (Appendix 3). *This document sets out and describes the Council's risk-based approach to managing skid resistance on the road network.* This Strategy sets out how Essex Highways will manage skid resistance on its road network, which will address road safety through identifying areas where the skid resistance is below the required standard and determining treatment to restore skid resistance to the required level.
- 3.6.4 Essex County Council Essex Highways Vehicle Restraint Systems Strategy (Appendix 4). *This document sets out and describes the Council's approach to assessing the requirements for Vehicle Restraints, as well as the Council's approach to designing, installing, inspecting, and maintaining Vehicle Restraints.* This Strategy sets out how Essex Highways will manage its vehicle restraints systems, which will address road safety by setting out inspection frequencies, defect identification processes and the prioritisation of works to restore or replace assets that are defective.
- 3.6.5 Essex County Council Essex Highways Road, Rail Incursion Risk Strategy (Appendix 5). *This document sets out and describes the Council's approach to assessing and mitigating the risk of the accidental incursion of road vehicles*

onto the railway. This Strategy sets out how Essex Highways will manage the risks associated with the accidental incursion of a vehicle onto a railway line, through the identification of risk sites and the undertaking of risk assessments and risk reviews for these sites. This strategy also outlines the process for engagement with network rail regarding site risk assessment as well as the prioritisation of works to mitigate risk of incursion.

- 3.7 The five new Strategies will contribute to Social Value and to aspirations for achieving sustainable development in the county through creating reliable journey times that attract investment and corresponding employment opportunities.
- 3.8 Approving Essex County Council Essex Highways Skid Resistance Strategy (Appendix 3), Vehicle Restraint Systems Strategy (Appendix 4), and Rail Incursion Risk Strategy (Appendix 5) will contribute to the safety, sustainability, serviceability, and accessibility of the highways network, which will enable sustainable communication links with the more remote communities within Essex as well as with national and international ports and destinations.
- 3.9 The Essex County Council Highways and Transportation Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) (Appendix 6) is not a standalone document but is the overarching document, which is comprised of supplementary strategic document which includes the five new Strategies under Appendices 1 -5 inclusive. Approval to the proposed amendment to the HIAMP will include the five strategies as additional, supplementary strategic documents of the HIAMP.

4 Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision:
- Develop our County sustainably
 - Connect us to each other and the world.
- 4.2 Approving ECC Essex Highways Decarbonisation Strategy and Strategy for Managing its Green Estate will improve access to green spaces, as well as create a sense of place that will promote social interaction and a feeling of social inclusion. These strategies will also support all of the Council's net zero ambitions, through enabling the identification and implementation of carbon emissions reduction opportunities in its activities, and through the identification and implementation of improvements to nature and management of water which will enable carbon emission absorption. They will provide ever developing opportunities for active travel such as walking and cycling, thereby reducing traffic congestion and carbon emissions, and improving air quality.

4.3 This report links to the following strategic priorities in the emerging Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex':

- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
- A high quality environment.

5 Options

5.1 Option 1: (Recommended)

5.1.1 Approve the five new Strategies so that they are part of the HIAMP suite of supplementary strategic documents, and approve the implementation of the five new Strategies from 1 April 2024, and approve the updated HIAMP document which reflects the inclusion of these new Strategies:

1. Essex County Council Essex Highways Decarbonisation Strategy (Appendix 1).
2. Essex County Council Essex Highways Strategy for managing its Green Estate (Appendix 2).
3. Essex County Council Essex Highways Skid Resistance Strategy (Appendix 3).
4. Essex County Council Essex Highways Vehicle Restraint Systems Strategy (Appendix 4).
5. Essex County Council Essex Highways Road, Rail Incursion Risk Strategy (Appendix 5).
6. Essex County Council Highways and Transportation Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) (Appendix 6).

5.1.2 Approval of the Essex County Council Essex Highways Decarbonisation Strategy (Appendix 1), and approval of the Essex County Council Essex Highways Strategy for managing its Green Estate (Appendix 2), will help develop a culture of environmental awareness as well as promote measures to address climate change.

5.1.3 Approval of the Essex County Council Essex Highways Skid Resistance Strategy (Appendix 3), and approval of the Essex County Council Essex Highways Vehicle Restraint Systems Strategy (Appendix 4), and approval of the Essex County Council Essex Highways Road, Rail Incursion Risk Strategy (Appendix 5), will evidence compliance with the updated '*Code of Practice: Well Managed Highway Infrastructure*' which was published in October 2016 by the United Kingdom Roads Leadership Group, formerly the United Kingdom Roads Liaison Group. It will also contribute to better management of these key areas of risk on the network, thereby contributing to road safety.

5.2 Option 2: (Not Recommended)

5.2.1 Continue with the current HIAMP—and not approve the five new Strategies. This would mean that the Council is:

- not promoting measures which could address the urgent need for climate change,
- Our highway management service levels will not comply with the requirements of the updated 'Code of Practice: Well Managed Highway Infrastructure' which was released in October 2016.

5.2.2 Not approving the implementation of the two new Strategies relating to environmental sustainability, ECC Essex Highways Decarbonisation Strategy and ECC Essex Highways Strategy for Managing its Green Estate, would mean not promoting measures which could address the urgent need for climate change. This would result in less support for achieving the Council's net zero ambitions, as well as less support for improving biodiversity, local nature recovery, flood alleviation, and better management of water resources. This would have a negative impact on delivering the 'Safer, Greener and Healthier Travel' vision.

5.2.3 Not approving the three new Strategies relating to improving key areas of risk on the road network - ECC Essex Highways Skid Resistance Strategy; ECC Essex Highways Vehicle Restraint Systems Strategy; ECC Essex Highways Road, Rail Incursion Risk Strategy, would reflect noncompliance with the requirements of the updated 'Code of Practice: Well Managed Highway Infrastructure' which was released in October 2016. This would have a negative impact on road safety, and it would also increase the risk of a claim relating to a financial compensation event not being defended, which may place a financial burden upon the Authority.

6 Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 There is no requirement for capital and revenue funding over and above current financial allocations within the MTRS, for approving and implementing each of the strategies. These Strategies do not commit the Authority to an increase in capital and or revenue funding at any time in the future.

6.1.2 The service will ensure all costs are contained within the existing budget provisions.

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 ECC is the Highway Authority for Essex and has duty under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highway and its infrastructure assets. Having a published

policy for doing this and keeping this policy updated reduces the risk of facing claims for loss caused by the highway or part of it being in disrepair. ECC is required to comply with its published policies.

7 Equality and Diversity Considerations

7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.3 The Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

8 List of Appendices

1. Essex County Council Essex Highways Decarbonisation Strategy (Appendix 1).
2. Essex County Council Essex Highways Strategy for managing its Green Estate. (Appendix 2).
3. Essex County Council Essex Highways Skid Resistance Strategy (Appendix 3).
4. Essex County Council Essex Highways Vehicle Restraint Systems Strategy (Appendix 4).
5. Essex County Council Essex Highways Road, Rail Incursion Risk Strategy (Appendix 5).
6. Essex County Council Highways and Transportation Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) (Appendix 6).
7. Equalities Impact Assessment

9 List of Background papers

None

<p>I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.</p>	<p>Date 31/05/2024</p>
<p>Councillor Tom Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport</p>	

In consultation with:

<p>Role</p>	<p>Date</p>
<p>Insert name and title of Executive Director consulted:</p> <p>Mark Ash Executive Director for Climate, Environment & Customer Services</p>	<p>17/05/2024</p>
<p>Executive Director, Corporate Services (S151 Officer)</p> <p>Stephanie Mitchener on behalf of Nicole Wood</p>	<p>08/04/2024</p>
<p>Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)</p> <p>Susan Moussa on behalf of Paul Turner</p>	<p>30/04/2024</p>