
Meeting: Traffic Management Meeting
Date: 1st March 2011
Subject: Adoption of proposed Bridge Management Procedure

Report of: Basil Jackson

Summary: The purpose of this report is to seek adoption by Central Bedfordshire Council of a proposed Bridge Management Procedure compliant with the Approved Code of Practice for the Management of Highway Structures that will improve the management of the Council's Structure assets in future years.

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Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: all

Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Financial:

A minimum of £2.5k would be required to produce the initial gap analysis in accordance with the proposed procedure. This can be accommodated within the existing revenue budget.

In 2011/12 a revenue allocation of a further £5k will be required to undertake the Implementation Plan.

Legal:

None as a result of this report.

Risk Management:

The Approved Code of Practice (ACoP) is not a legal document and there is no statutory requirement to comply with it. However the non compliance with the ACoP can be used in legal proceedings to demonstrate negligence by the authority. Improved Asset management will reduce risk to the public and the authority.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None as a result of this report.

Equalities/Human Rights:

None as a result of this report.

Community Safety:

Improved Asset Management will improve community safety.

Sustainability:

Improved asset management and planning will result in better value management and whole life costing and will deliver improvements in sustainability.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1.

- (a) The portfolio holder for safer communities and healthier lifestyles is requested to adopt the proposed Bridge Management Procedure as policy and agree to proceed with the initial gap analysis and that allowance is made in future years revenue programmes for the implementation of improved asset management.

Background and Information.

1. The Code of Practice for the Management of Highway Structures (CoP) came into being in September 2005.
2. The document was supported by all the main agencies dealing with roads and bridges throughout the UK and was funded by the DfT. The aim of the CoP was to provide a robust and detailed framework against which all highway authorities and any other bodies managing structures on the highway could manage those structures. Structures are a key asset on the network and any structural failure can be costly in terms of loss of asset, repair or replacement of asset and even loss of life in extreme circumstances.
3. It was originally envisaged by the UK Roads Liaison Group – Bridges Board that the implementation would take authorities 3 to 4 years to complete. Central Bedfordshire Council has not formally adopted the CoP and therefore although a regular programme of inspections is carried out the CoP goes much further in taking an holistic approach to management in that it takes into account all of the aspects and includes the preparation of an overall programme for all aspects of the process.
4. Central Bedfordshire Council currently owns and maintains approximately 400 structures and of these up to 40 have been identified as requiring strengthening or major maintenance and 20 require further assessment to confirm their load carrying capacity. The CoP includes requirements for long term asset management planning so implementing the recommended regimes would improve the management of the existing structures stock.
5. Gaps are known to exist between Good Management Practice advised in the CoP and the current way that Central Bedfordshire Council's authorities structures are managed. The detailed gap analysis will identify and quantify all of

those gaps and provide an indication of the potential financial implications of closing the gaps.

6. The recent collapses of several bridges in Cumbria during the flooding in November 2009 has highlighted the issues over good management practice. A Transport Select Committee (TSC) report into these collapses was due to be published, however the TSC was dissolved prior to the May 2010 election.
7. There have been two other collapses of railway bridges in the last 2 years one of which resulted in the derailment and ignition of a train of flammable chemicals. Both of these have been identified as instances where improved inspection procedures and management of the structures could have avoided the incidents.
8. Section 41 of the Highways Act places Highways Authorities under a duty to maintain the highway. Regular bridge inspections ensure that any serious maintenance issues are dealt with but potential structural failure under load would not be picked up during an inspection. There have been 3 separate major bridge collapses in the United States in the last 10 years. Failure to assess a structure which subsequently collapsed under a 40 tonne load would place the Authority and its staff at risk under Health and Safety legislation in the event that someone is injured as a result of structural failure.
9. Implementation of improved asset management and value engineering as required by the CoP will provide better value for money for all planned works in future years.
10. The aspiration is to complete all of the remaining outstanding bridge assessments in the next two financial years which should be possible with the proposed continuing level of funding. This will provide the opportunity to plan to utilise the surplus funding to improve the asset management and future works planning which could then result in a reduction in future revenue requirements

Conclusion and The way Forward

11. The Management of Highway Structures is a revenue funded function.
12. The portfolio holder is requested to approve the adoption of the Bridge Management Procedure that incorporates the principles of Code of Practice for Management of Highway Structures.
13. The Code of Practice is a lengthy document and not therefore contained within the report. It is available as a background document if required.
14. The Bridge management Procedure is attached as Appendix A.
15. Subject to the adoption of the procedure by Central Bedfordshire Council the proposed course of action is therefore:
 - 2010/11. Carry out a gap analysis between current practices and those required to meet the CoP

- 2011/12. Prepare a detailed compliant Structures Management Implementation plan that will inform the future prioritisation and management of structures budget.
16. The portfolio holder is asked to note that the cost in the current financial year of adopting the proposed procedure and producing the initial gap analysis will be approximately £2.5k. This can be accommodated within the 2010/11 revenue budget. In 2011/12 a further revenue allocation of £5k will be required to complete the Implementation Plan that will then inform future programmes.
 17. The implementation plan will then also be used to assist with bids for additional funding in future years as necessary to support the proposed Bridge Management Procedure.

