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## **MAINTENANCE OF ROADS - A REVIEW BY 'SCRUTINY'**

**Report by Service Director Neighbourhood Services & Service Director  
Commercial Services**

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### **SCRUTINY**

**28 January 2016**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to respond to a question raised by Ettrick and Yarrow Community Council who have submitted the following request to Scrutiny Committee:-

*Review the extent to which the SBC budget for road repairs and maintenance is sufficient to meet need and the not unreasonable expectation that roads will be maintained in a safe condition. Within this context, to particularly examine how the allocation of budget for rural roads is arrived at and whether more should be allocated.*

- 1.2 The report will explain how funds are allocated.
- 1.3 The report will give the latest position on road conditions & Capital investment options.
- 1.4 The report will indicate where Capital funds for 2015/16 are allocated across the different road classifications.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **We recommend to the Scrutiny Committee that it notes :**
- a) the way in which funds are allocated,**
  - b) the current condition of the road network and investment options,**
  - c) the current allocation of funds for carriageways per road classifications.**

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 In responding to the question raised it is important to give background to how resources are allocated and how the standards and levels of service are determined across the Scottish Borders
- 3.2 The Council faces significant budget pressures and it is critical that there is a clear understanding of the links between levels of service, delivery and funding.  
Providing the highest levels of service against shrinking public service budgets is a challenge and the Road Asset Management Plan (RAMP) provides a framework and approach to move forward.
- 3.3 Road asset management is a way of running the 'business' of operating and maintaining a road network. The RAMP identifies the current network assets and develops a framework to enhance existing good practice and improve the effectiveness of the operation of the network. The RAMP is designed to provide the technical detail and operational standards for helping the Council deliver road services.
- 3.4 Levels of Service describe the standard of services provided. We measure and monitor performance against the service standards in order to determine if the levels of service being provided match up with the customer expectations and are in line with both national and local goals and objectives
- 3.5 The Council produced an Annual Status & Options report which presents a summary of the council's road assets as at October 2015, and
- Describes the current condition of the asset
  - Details the asset and the budgets that are available
  - Presents the options available for the future linked to Project Business Cases (PBC's)

The report complements the (RAMP). It provides information that will enable choices to be made about future levels of investment in the road asset.

- 3.6 The report presents a variety of options for the different asset groups of carriageways, street lighting and bridges. These options have been presented to SBC Senior Management through the PBC process and to be considered as part of the Councils Capital Plan.

### **4 ALLOCATION OF FUNDS & ROAD CONDITIONS**

- 4.1 The roads asset is made up of a number of key asset groups, carriageway, footway, bridges, lighting, structures, drainage, road signs and markings and street furniture.
- 4.2 In determining appropriate levels of investment for these asset groups it has been proven that the carriageway asset for a rural authority accounts for around 80% of the investment

Therefore in responding to the question to Ettrick & Yarrow Community Council, it is appropriate to focus on the treatment of carriageways.

4.3 The table below shows the breakdown of road lengths per classification of road.

The council's carriageways assets total 2968km made up of:

Classification	Urban (km)	Rural (km)
A	32	426
B	35	565
C	25	744
U	285	856

4.4 From the table above the road length per Area Forum is shown as follows:

Area Forum	% Length of road
Tweeddale	14
Eildon	22
Teviot & Liddesdale	16
Cheviot	19
Berwickshire	29

4.5 However, allocation of funds is NOT based on road length, BUT rather than need. If there is a need to invest in one area more than another then the appropriate allocation is made on that basis. What is determined is that, priority is given to our A & B Class road network, in particular rural routes which carry the majority of our traffic and form the key links between communities. These routes whilst carrying the bulk of traffic are generally high speed, covering large topographical areas and can be the subject of serious accident sites.

4.6 Road Condition Indicator (RCI) is a survey which collects condition measures including, longitudinal profile, lane rutting, texture of surface and cracking. Data is collected through a machine based survey on:

- A Class roads in both directions every 2 years
- B & C Class roads in both directions every 4 years
- U Class roads – 10% sample in one direction each year.

Lengths of road are classified as

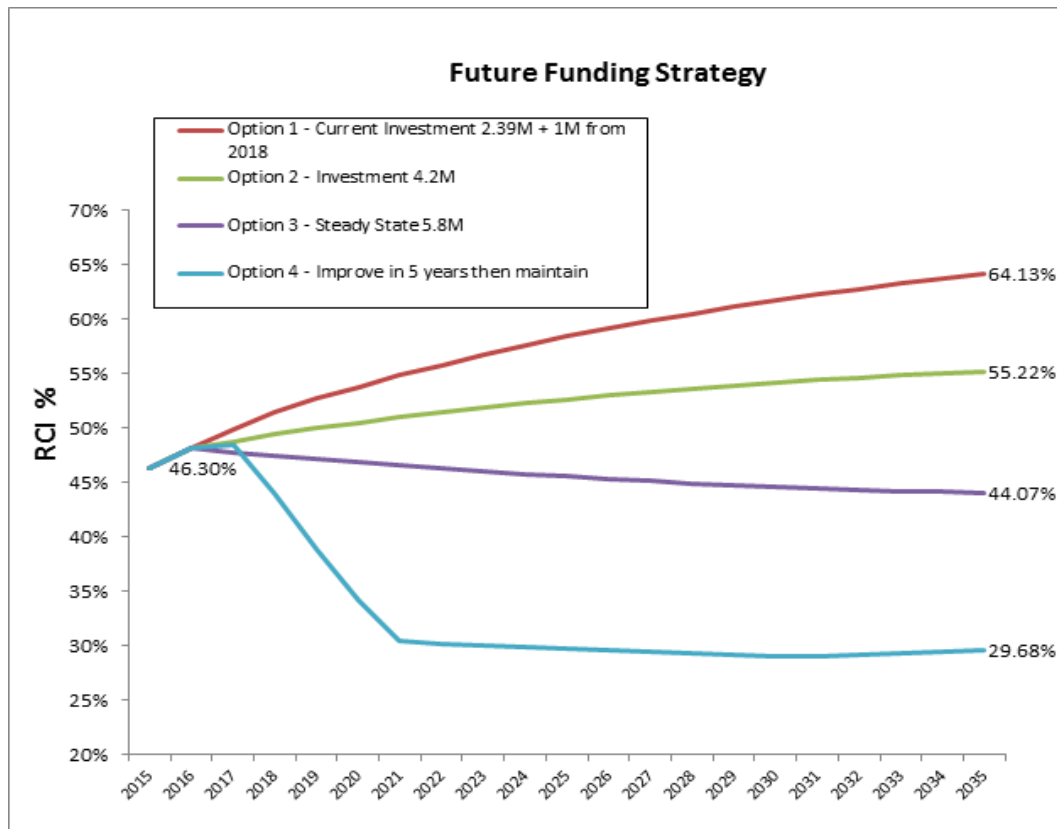
- **RED** – maintenance is required
- **AMBER** – requires further investigation
- **GREEN** - satisfactory condition

RCI is the sum of the Red & Amber classification expressed as a percentage of the total road length.

4.7 Annual surveys are carried throughout Scotland’s road network and Scottish Borders participates in this survey, allowing us to benchmark against similar authorities. The table below is the current road condition indicator (RCI) for each category of road in Scottish Borders area – the overall RCI is 46.3%. Generally, the RCI figure is increasing year on year at a rate of between 1.5% and 2%

Road Condition Index (RCI) Results 2014-16									
	Class A		Class B		Class C		Class U (D)		Network
<b>RCI = 46.3</b>	Length (Km)	%	Length (Km)	%	Length (Km)	%	Length (Km)	%	%
>=10 0	19	4	40	7	54	7	177	16	10
>=40	130	28	208	35	271	35	474	41	36
<40	309	68	351	58	443	58	490	43	54

4.8 Current spending plans indicate that there will be a gradual increase in the (RCI) over the next 10 years and that any attempt to recover the position to existing levels will require major investment. Work will continue to ensure that the network will remain safe to support the economic development of the region. Recent trends have also shown an increase in the number of potholes reported, whilst these can also result in insurance claims against the council, the majority still remain to be successfully defended. The table below shows the change in carriageway condition over a 20 year period with different annualised capital funding strategies in place.



These most recent figures build on the information previously brought forward to the Council on the 27 March 2014.

- 4.9 In recognition of this trend a full review of the roads service is currently being carried out to examine what options are available to ensure we get the most from the budgets available, ensuring we maximise productivity, performance and an overall improvement to the condition of roads within the Scottish Borders area.
- 4.10 The current Capital funding of roads which includes patching, surface dressing and overlays across the Scottish Borders for 2015/16 is shown in the Table below, however it should be noted that only surface dressing and overlays contribute towards the potential improvement in RCI.

Treatment	Class A		Class B		Class C		Class U (D)	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Patching	£0	£0	£0	£251,731	£0	£205,530	£8,765	£107,974
Surface Dressing	£0	£312,000	£0	£350,000	£0	£400,000	£0	£245,000
Overlays	£90,000	£318,000	£40,000	£200,000	£150,000	£35,000	£200,000	£50,000
TOTALS	£90,000	£630,000	£40,000	£801,731	£150,000	£640,530	£208,765	£402,974

This table indicates that £2.5M will be allocated to the Rural road network and £0.5M is allocated to the Urban road network.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 In coming to a conclusion on the original question:

*Review the extent to which the SBC budget for road repairs and maintenance is sufficient to meet need and the not unreasonable expectation that roads will be maintained in a safe condition. Within this context, to particularly examine how the allocation of budget for rural roads is arrived at and whether more should be allocated.*

- 5.2 Officers would comment that in the context of the current financial restrictions placed on this Council we are of the view that roads remain to be managed to ensure they are in a safe condition, whilst accepting that there is evidence that overall condition of roads are deteriorating. Pothole numbers are increasing, which results in minor incidents of tyre damage etc. however the overall, 'safe' condition of roads is still at an acceptable level.
- 5.3 The major investment in roads is through Capital funds and officers continue to direct funds on a needs basis, wherever possible ensuring that road surfaces remain to be kept in a reasonable condition, prioritised to routes which have high levels of traffic use, volumes and speeds.

- 5.4 Distribution of funds is determined on a needs basis, Scottish Borders Council is a rural authority by definition , 87% of the road network is rural. Officers are comfortable that a substantial amount of budget is already allocated to the rural road network and that an appropriate balance exists between maintaining levels of service on the rural and urban road network.

## **6 IMPLICATIONS**

### **6.1 Financial**

The 'report' represents the agreed Capital Plan of the Council.

### **6.2 Risk and Mitigations**

There is a risk that, by not implementing a RAMP, the investment will not deliver the maximum benefits over the long term or will address the needs of local communities. The RAMP will identify any specific risks and mitigation measures that are required in managing road assets.

### **6.3 Equalities**

It is anticipated that there will be no equalities issues as a result of this report.

### **6.4 Acting Sustainably**

The implementation of the RAMP review will consider any economic, social or environmental effects of potential investments made in the road asset.

### **6.5 Carbon Management**

There are no direct carbon management impacts as a result of this report.

### **6.6 Rural Proofing**

The implementation of the RAMP, will consider the impact on rural communities.

### **6.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes which are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in the report.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR, and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated into the final report.

**Approved by**

Jenni Craig

**Service Director Neighbourhood Services Signature .....**

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**Service Director Commercial Services Signature .....**

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**Background Papers: None**

**Previous Minute Reference: None**

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