

REPORT TO: PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE – 13 MARCH 2006

REPORT ON: ROAD MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION

REPORT NO: 164-2006

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise on the recommendations arising from the Audit Scotland publication, Maintaining Scotland's Roads and to report on actions being taken to address the key recommendations contained within this report.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that committee notes the contents of this report and agrees to:
- the Director of Planning & Transportation's support for the Efficient Government Fund bid for the development of a common roads asset management system across Scotland;
 - take account of the backlog of £50m in the setting of future capital programmes; and
 - continue to promote through COSLA the need for increased funding of road maintenance to tackle the growing backlog.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Efficient and effective maintenance of the overall road network will ensure that resources are used efficiently and waste minimised. In addition this will contribute to the Council's Local Transport Strategy by maintaining accessibility for all modes of transport throughout the City.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Implementation of these recommendations will assist in providing a barrier free city for all members of society.

6 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 In November 2004, Audit Scotland conducted a study and published a report entitled 'Maintaining Scotland's Roads' that reviewed the steps being taken by the Scottish Executive and Local Authorities in managing and maintaining the road network in Scotland. This report made several recommendations for the Scottish Executive and Councils as the roads authorities, which fall into three broad categories:

Maintenance Backlog – Authorities should use the Scottish road maintenance condition survey to calculate the size of the structural maintenance backlog and report annually on the size of the overall backlog;

Management of Road Maintenance – Authorities should review their performance against the latest Code of Practice for the management of road maintenance and develop asset management systems including the greater use of performance indicators taking account of the views of road users and the wider community; and

Maintenance Costs – Authorities should seek to review their costs and budget setting processes and ensure value for money in its procurement processes making greater use of consortia and partnerships where applicable.

6.2 Maintenance Backlog

- a Within the Audit Scotland report, an overall maintenance backlog of £1.7 billion was identified for the whole of Scotland. This included a backlog of approximately £50m for Dundee City Council. These backlog amounts were based on an exercise undertaken through the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS), which sought to establish a consistent basis on which to calculate the backlog. However, it was recognised within the report that the method of calculating the backlog was being developed and refined.

- b The overall backlog for Dundee included within this report is broken down as follows:

Carriageways	£18m
Footways	£5.8m
Bridge and Structures	£12.3m
Street Lighting	£8.1m
Miscellaneous	£6.1m
Total	£50.3m

- c The above backlog figure is a snapshot of the position at that time and takes no account of the inevitable ongoing deterioration of the asset whilst this backlog is being tackled. For example, the number of lighting columns in excess of 40 years old will increase from 7,158 to 11,279 over the next 10 years resulting in an increase in the lighting backlog from £8.1m to £12.8m in that period.
- d The element of the above backlog for carriageways was calculated using information gathered from the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS). The SRMCS is used as a means of determining a performance indicator for the condition of local roads in Scotland and for generating a backlog figure for carriageways.
- e The results of the 2004/05 SRMCS have been recently published as follows:

Road Classification	Total Length (Km)	PI (%) 2004	PI (%) 2005	PI (%) Scotland - 2005
A Class	48	25	21	31
B Class	15	38	25	43
C Class	120	23	19	32
Unclassified	361	58	62	49
Total	544	47	48	42

- f The Performance Indicator gives an indication of the percentage of the road network where consideration for intervention is required. The results indicate that there has been an improvement in the condition of the A, B and C class roads in the city. In addition, the PI for Dundee is seen to be significantly better than the Scottish average for each of these categories of the network. This is due to a targeting of the available funding towards these more important routes.
- g The unclassified network appears to have deteriorated over the last year, however it should be noted that because of access difficulties for the survey machine in an urban environment, only 12% of the unclassified network was actually surveyed. There is

therefore some doubt as to the validity of the results on the unclassified network and this is an issue that is being considered at a national level.

- h Notwithstanding, it is clear that the city has a latent problem associated with the extent of the backlog associated with the unclassified road network and further work is required to more accurately identify the scale of the problem.

6.3 Management of Road Maintenance

- a The Audit Scotland report identifies the need for authorities to develop asset management systems to provide a systematic approach to maintaining, operating and upgrading the road asset. Such a system would provide a mechanism for developing a long-term strategy for road maintenance. Dundee City Council recognises the importance of developing such a structured management system and this is reflected within the Planning and Transportation Department's current service plan.
- b The new Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management entitled 'Well-maintained Highways' was launched in July 2005. This code was published by the UK Roads Board and is currently being reviewed with a view to updating current road maintenance and management practices within Dundee City Council. This will require the production and publication of a Road Asset Management Plan that, amongst other things, will address how best to deal with the current maintenance backlog.
- c Resourcing for the implementation of a comprehensive Asset Management System and protocol is a significant undertaking. The Society for Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS), recognises that there is a great deal of potential in developing common systems and the procurement of services, including IT, on a Scottish wide basis. A stage 1 bid under the Efficient Government Fund (EGF) on behalf of SCOTS members, to assist in developing common asset management systems, has recently been approved. Funding of £50,000 has been provided to assist in developing the bid to stage 2 and this will be submitted in August 2006. The majority of Scottish roads' authorities, including the Scottish Executive who are responsible for the trunk road network, have expressed support for this initiative.
- d With the current resources available to Dundee City Council, it is likely to take many years to develop an Asset Management Plan that fully complies with all of the guidance within the "Well Maintained Highways" document. Indeed there are few, if any, authorities in the UK who are as far developed as this with asset management systems. However in the meantime, it is proposed to develop and implement a basic Asset Management system for the maintenance of the key road assets including carriageways, footways, lighting and bridges. This basic Asset Management system is likely to be operational by 2007. In the event that funding through the EGF bid is confirmed, it is anticipated that a fully developed Asset Management Plan could be prepared and implemented within 2-3 years of the bid being approved.

6.4 Maintenance Costs

- a The Audit Scotland report recommends that Councils review their budget setting processes for road maintenance to ensure that an appropriate and cost effective balance of expenditure between routine, winter emergency, and structural maintenance is achieved.
- b With the current levels of budget available, it is not possible to achieve the proper balance between structural maintenance, which reduces future deterioration of the network and the routine maintenance activities. This is being addressed by reviewing the level of routine maintenance undertaken including the level of winter service. However it is clear that this in itself will not provide sufficient additional resource to undertake the required level of structural maintenance.

- c The report also notes that in the case of Dundee, the spending on road maintenance was in excess of the GAE allocation from central government. However it is also recognised in the report that in the last ten years, the % GAE allocation for road maintenance from central government has fallen well behind the overall council GAE allocation. From the extent of the backlog and given that Dundee is spending more than its allocation on road maintenance, it is apparent that the GAE allocation for road maintenance is insufficient to meet the overall maintenance requirements. This problem is not unique to Dundee and the report highlights that Council expenditure on road maintenance is 50% higher in England than in Scotland.
- d The report notes that the method of delivering the road maintenance service varies across Scottish Authorities and encourages authorities to consider entering into consortia to achieve economies of scale. The report cites the Tayside Contracts model as an example of good practice in achieving economies of scale across authorities.
- e It should be noted that the partnering arrangement between Dundee City Council and Tayside Contracts on the delivery of street lighting maintenance has demonstrated cost savings. In the last year the average cost of a street lighting repair has been reduced by 11%. As a consequence of this success, the extension of such a partnering arrangement into the wider road maintenance has been approved by committee and is in the process of being established on a trial basis.
- f The Audit Scotland report highlights a number of areas where the unit costs of service delivery vary significantly across Scotland. These will be examined through the partnership with Tayside Contracts, to establish whether there are opportunities to reduce areas of higher than average unit costs.
- g Finally, Dundee City Council is currently part of a number of consortia including the procurement of street lighting electricity supply and winter maintenance forecasting services. Other opportunities to enter into consortia with adjoining authorities, which may result in cost savings to the service, are actively being pursued.

6.5 Conclusions

- a The report by Audit Scotland provides a comprehensive review of the current position with regard to the maintenance of Scotland's roads and makes a number of key recommendations. These recommendations are noted and are being acted upon.
- b The latest SRMCS survey for 2004/05 demonstrates that the condition of the main A, B and C class roads in the city have improved significantly in the last year. Overall the survey indicates that the % of the road network in Dundee that should be considered for maintenance intervention works has nominally increased from 47% to 48% in the last year. This apparent deterioration has occurred in the unclassified network however there is some doubt as to the accuracy of these statistics due to the significant element of the unclassified network that remains un-surveyed.
- c The condition of the network is in spite of Dundee City Council spending more than its GAE allocation on maintenance works. It is clear that the current level of funding for road maintenance is insufficient to maintain the network in a steady state and protect what is a vital asset. This is not a problem unique to Dundee. With funding for road maintenance by local authorities approximately 50% higher in England than in Scotland.
- d The overall backlog of maintenance works for Dundee is estimated to be £50m. It is clear that with the existing level of funding for maintenance works this backlog figure is likely to increase with time. It is therefore recommended that this maintenance backlog be taken into account in the setting of future capital programme and that the Scottish Executive is lobbied for additional funding to assist in addressing this backlog.

- e Work is currently ongoing to develop a basic integrated Asset Management system to address the maintenance of the key elements of the network including carriageways, footways, lighting and bridges. Through SCOTS, a stage 2 EGF bid is being prepared to develop and procure a more comprehensive highways asset management system which will be capable of being utilised by all Scottish roads authorities, including the Scottish Executive. It is recommended that the Director of Planning and Transportation be authorised to participate in the development of this bid.

7 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None.

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