

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Audit Committee – 16 June 2026

Report Title

Highway Structures Audit Report Update

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Andrew Bramidge, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide assurance to the Audit Committee in relation to the actions taken and implementation of the recommendations made with regard to the partial assurance Internal Audit report on Highway Structures

Recommendations

That the Audit Committee note the contents of the report.

List of Appendices Included

N/A

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Highway Structures Audit Report Update

1. Background

- 1.1 Rotherham has responsibility for highway structures including bridges, underpasses, large culverts, gantries and retaining walls.
- 1.2 RMBC's statutory duty as part of its highway authority functions is to undertake regular inspections to ensure the structures are in good condition and do not pose risks to the users of the highway.
- 1.3 Under the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) the Highway Authority is to carry out General Inspections (GI) every two years and Principal Inspections (PI) every 6 years. PIs can be risk assessed to reduce the frequency up to 12 years.
- 1.4 In 2024 it was acknowledged that there was a significant backlog of inspections, and a range of actions were determined to manage reduce the risk profile.
- RMBC resourced a new structures team to undertake the statutory duties and reduce the backlog of the inspections into a cyclical inspection regime and deliver the capital programme.
 - A service review was undertaken into the state of asset management, with deficiencies identified with record keeping and systems.
 - The risk register was reviewed to highlight and track mitigations.
 - Service invited Internal Audit to undertake a further detailed review.
 - Commenced procurement of industry standard asset management software.
 - Commenced an intensive programme GI's and then PI's.

2.	Key Issues
2.1	Recommendation one: Risk Reporting
2.1.1	This recommendation noted that the Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) may not be aware of the potential Health and Safety risks arising from the backlog in Highways Structures inspections.
2.1.2	Root Cause: The Highways Structures risks may not have been completely assessed and disclosed by previous staff responsible for structures inspections.
2.1.3	The agreed action was to ensure that the SLT are made aware of the potential Health and Safety risks arising from current weaknesses in the backlog in Highways Structures inspections.
2.1.4	This action was completed prior to the final audit report being circulated in December 2025.
2.1.5	The project's risk register is monitored on an ongoing basis in the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• at monthly meeting of Rotherham's Transportation Capital Board• at monthly reviews of RMBCs corporate risk registers

2.2	Recommendation two: Risk Appetite
2.2.1	The recommendation noted there is no documented risk appetite for inherent weaknesses in Highways Structures inspection records. This weakness impacts on the level of resources to be employed to manage the inspection approach.
2.2.2	Root Cause: The Highways Structures risks may not have been completely assessed and disclosed by previous staff responsible for the oversight of this work.
2.2.3	The agreed action is to determine and document the risk appetite arising from highways structures that are the Council's responsibility but not in its records or cannot be inspected according to statutory timescales.
2.2.4	This action was completed prior to the final audit report being circulated in December 2025.
2.2.5	The team allocated categories, such as (but not limited to) road classification, structure type, duration since last PI and access requirement. These categories were RAG rated with the highest rating structures prioritised for the future PI programme.
2.2.6	This action was completed prior to the final audit report being circulated in December 2025.
2.3	Recommendation three: Mine Workings
2.3.1	The recommendation noted that there is no evidence of any risk assessment of the potential for weaknesses to the foundations of highways structures from historic mine workings.
2.3.2	Root Cause: The previous agency staff may not have the local awareness of the mine workings risks. Historic records may not be complete and accurate.
2.3.2	The agreed action was to document the risks of mine workings to critical highway structures as part of pre-construction information (PCI) packs for any future works on projects. Mine workings wouldn't be recorded as part of the asset, as under Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), only the properties of the structures are to be documented. Mine workings wouldn't affect the nature of the structure, but they will affect the proposed working methods when a project occurs.
2.3.3	As the action is for future works, there is no deadline to this. However, as this is part of preconstruction information, a section for mine working has been highlighted in the PCI packs to be completed in the future.
2.4	Recommendation Four: Weakness in inspection data
2.4.1	The recommendation noted that the Highways structures records are incomplete, including gaps in previously recorded inspections.
2.4.2	Root Cause: Historic inspection records may not be complete and accurate.

2.4.3	The agreed action was to ensure the impact of the gaps in current Highways Structures records are assessed and any further changes are made to the planned risk mitigation actions.
2.4.4	This action was completed prior to the final audit report being circulated in December 2025.
2.4.5	The asset register has been streamlined to confirm which walls are owned by RMBC, and assets which are not classed as highway structures. Any previous structures that were listed that do not support the highway, e.g. garden or boundary walls, have been removed from the asset list as these are not the responsibility of the Highway Authority. This is in line with national highway standards (under DMRB – CS451) and these entries have been removed from the asset register. No assets removed pose a risk to highway users.
2.4.6	All assets are logged into AMX, RMBC's online highway structures asset register system, including third party structures which are classed as structures as per CS451. This allows RMBC to collate data for all structures affecting the highway.
2.4.7	Any ambiguity in responsibility will be on a case-by-case basis.
2.5	Recommendation Five: Safety Inspections
2.5.1	The recommendation noted that due to historic record keeping inaccuracy, some general inspections were carried out on highways structures not owned by RMBC. A safety inspection only is required for these structures, and no such records were found to exist.
2.5.2	Root Cause: Inaccuracies and incompleteness
2.5.3	The agreed action was to ensure safety inspection records are maintained for relevant Highways Structures in the AMX software.
2.5.4	Safety inspections are carried out on third party owned assets to ensure they do not have an adverse effect on the highway. All third-party assets are logged on AMX to inform RMBC to carry out safety inspections. These are carried out on a regular basis, and any findings are reported to the asset owner.
2.5.5	This action had started prior to the final report being circulated in December 2025; however this is an ongoing activity.
2.6	Recommendation Six: Ownership of Highways Structure Assets
2.6.1	The recommendation noted that Legal Services assistance has not been requested to assist with asset ownership.
2.6.2	The agreed action was to formulate and agree a project with Legal Services to resolve any anomalies in highways structure ownership as they are identified.
2.6.3	This is an ongoing action. It was agreed that this will be managed on a case-by-case basis where there is ambiguity in records of the asset ownership. In the event where there is an asset where the ownership is in question, Highway Structures will liaise with the Council's Legal Team to determine land registry plans and deeds.

2.7	Recommendation Seven: Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP) disclosure
2.7.1	The recommendation noted that the HAMP may include inaccurate and incomplete information on Highways Structures due to the inspection backlog.
2.7.2	The agreed action was to review the previous year's HAMP and add appropriate caveats for structures information until a point where the asset inventory is totally accurate.
2.7.3	This action was completed prior to the final audit report being circulated in December 2025, as the HAMP update was in November 2025.
2.8	Recommendation Six: Continuing Professional Development
2.8.1	The recommendation noted that RMBC Management do not ensure that all agency staff have up to date CPD records.
2.8.2	The agreed action was for RMBC managers to apply suitable checks to ensure agency staff and contractors have completed all relevant CPD.
2.8.3	This is an ongoing action. It was agreed at the time of appointment of staff (permanent or temporary) that suitable checks will be carried out as part of the onboarding process. For contract staff, suitable checks will be carried out annually at a point where purchase orders need to be extended or renewed.
2.9	Recommendation Nine: Follow Up Inspections
2.9.1	The recommendation noted that the recently completed and ongoing general inspections are generating additional principal inspections/follow up inspections.
2.9.2	The action was to ensure a fully resourced action plan is established for follow up inspections that have been identified.
2.9.3	This is an ongoing activity. All GIs are produced in house and adequate resource has been allocated to this. PIs are carried out both internally and externally depending on the complexity of the structure and access requirements. Utilising external resource allows RMBC to control deliverables and programme requirements to ensure a steady flow of work throughout the year.
2.10	Overall summary of progress
2.10.1	In 2025, RMBC had 365 structures listed on their highway asset register. Of those 365, only 9 structures had a GI within the 2-year validation period and 43 PIs within the 6-year validation period.
2.10.2	As of June 2026, all the structure have an up to date GI, all carried out within the 2 year timeframe.
2.10.3	The approach on PI's is to commission external contractors for the inspections which cannot be carried out in house due to third parties (Network Rail, Canal and River Trust, etc.) and more complex access requirements. In the last year, 40 PIs have been commissioned and a further 50 PIs have been carried out in

2.10.4	house. 81 structures now have a valid PI within the timeframe with a further 31 to be reviewed and approved. The service continue to manage the programme of inspections very closely, with all actions aimed at reducing the risk profile and bringing the full asset database into compliance in the shortest practicable timeframe.
3.	Options considered and recommended proposal
3.1	No further options considered.
4.	Consultation on proposal
4.1	Not applicable.
5.	Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision
5.1	The Service Director for Planning, Regeneration and Transport is accountable for the actions in the audit report, and the Head of Service for Transportation and Infrastructure is responsible for implementation. All actions are now complete.
6.	Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications
6.1	The report provides an update on previously agreed actions and therefore there are no direct Financial & Procurement implications arising from the report.
7.	Legal Advice and Implications
7.1	The report provides an update on previously agreed actions and therefore there are no direct Legal implications arising from the report.
8.	Human Resources Advice and Implications
8.1	The report provides an update on previously agreed actions and therefore there are no direct Human Resources implications arising from the report.
9.	Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults
9.1	The report provides an update on previously agreed actions and therefore there are no direct implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults arising from the report.
10.	Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications
10.1	The report provides an update on previously agreed actions and therefore there are no direct Equalities and Human Rights implications arising from the report.
11.	Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change
11.1	The report provides an update on previously agreed actions and therefore there are no direct Climate Change implications arising from the report.

12.	Implications for Partners
12.1	The report provides an update on previously agreed actions and therefore there are no direct implications for Partners arising from the report.
13.	Risks and Mitigation
13.1	Implementation of the actions agreed during the audit will help to mitigate the risks it identified.
	Accountable Officer(s) Simon Moss, Service Director Planning, Regeneration and Transport Lucy Hudson, Head of Service for Transportation Infrastructure Tom Morley, Service Manager for Infrastructure Delivery
	Approvals obtained on behalf of:

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