

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

26 April 2022

Subject: Proposed change from CATGs to LHFIGs

Cabinet Member: Cllr Dr Mark McClelland Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste, Street Scene and Flooding

Key Decision: Non Key

Executive Summary

Cabinet has expressed a desire to increase the remit of the Community Area Transport Groups (CATGs) and has approved additional funding to allow this to progress. In order to reflect the changed remit, it is proposed to rename the groups as Local Highway & Footway Improvement Groups (LHFIGs).

The CATGs have been operating since 2011 and have been involved in the delivery of over 1,000 schemes across the County. They have successfully delivered a large range of scheme types to improve road safety and encourage walking and cycling.

The Environment Select Committee undertook a review of the operation of the Groups, including a survey of members of the CATGs and those involved in them in 2019.

The survey results indicated that the majority thought that the CATGs were an effective way of attracting and prioritising highways and transport investment. The majority thought that CATGs were effective because they have delivered improvements to the highways in a local area.

There were suggestions in some of the survey responses that the funding for the CATGs should be increased and that if the CATGs had more support resources available then they would be able to deliver an even better service.

It is proposed that the remit of the Groups be extended to cover additional areas of infrastructure improvement. This would include, for example, waiting restrictions, footway and footpath improvements, and some drainage works.

Proposal(s)

- It is recommended that the proposed creation of the LHFIGs should be considered for approval by Cabinet.
- That the revised Terms of Reference and Guidance Notes be adopted.

Reason for Proposal(s)

The CATGs have clearly been an effective way of attracting and prioritising local highways and transport investment. They have facilitated community engagement and helped communities understand the potential for safety improvements on the highway network and the limitations because of legal, funding or other factors.

Increasing the remit and the budget provision is seen as a way of continuing the development of the Groups and furthering local involvement in Highway matters.

Terence Herbert
Chief Executive

Wiltshire Council

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Key Decision: Non Key

Purpose of Report

1. Cabinet has expressed a desire to increase the remit of the Community Area Transport Groups (CATGs) and has approved additional funding to allow this to progress. In order to reflect the changed remit, it is proposed to rename the groups as Local Highway & Footway Improvement Groups (LHFIGs).

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The Business Plan 2017 - 2027 sets out Wiltshire Council's priorities for the next ten years:
 - Growing the local economy
 - Strong communities
 - Climate Emergency
3. One of the Business Plan's missions is to make Wiltshire a place where We have vibrant, well-connected communities which includes 'being able to get around easily' and 'options for different modes of transport'.
4. The CATGs have helped implement schemes that deliver the priorities in the Business Plan and the Council's Local Transport Plan. The proposed change to LHFIG's is considered to further enhance this ability and enable the Business Plan priorities to be met.

Background

5. The Community Area Transport Groups (CATGs) were formed as sub-groups of the Area Boards to consider transport issues in more detail and report back to the Area Boards with recommendations for schemes and initiatives which support the transport aims of the Council.
6. The CATGs have been operating since 2011 and have been involved in the delivery of over 1,000 schemes across the County. They have successfully delivered a large range of scheme types to improve road safety and encourage walking and cycling.

7. A discretionary highways budget has been allocated to each Area Board by the Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste, Streetscene and Flooding which is based on the geographical size and population of each community area. The funding is capital funding and can only be used to provide new and improved highway infrastructure.
8. The funding has allowed the delivery of small scale schemes that improve safety, increase accessibility and sustainability by promoting walking; cycling and public transport and improve traffic management. It cannot be used to fund revenue functions such as maintenance schemes or the provision of passenger transport services.
9. If the estimated cost of an identified CATG scheme is found to be excess of the total discretionary amount available, the groups can consider submitting a bid for funding from the centrally held funds for larger substantive schemes. Bids from the respective groups are considered annually. Each bid for a substantive scheme is subject to a full assessment appraisal and scored against set criteria before funding is allocated.

Operation of the CATGs

10. The Environment Select Committee undertook a review of the operation of the Groups, including a survey of members of the CATGs and those involved in them in 2019. This provided the opportunity to consider whether their remit and function are still relevant.
11. The survey results indicated that the majority thought that the CATGs were an effective way of attracting and prioritising highways and transport investment. The majority thought that CATGs were effective because they have delivered improvements to the highways in a local area.
12. The governance arrangements, with the CATGs as sub-groups of the Area Boards, were considered appropriate by most respondents and most thought that the frequency of meetings was about right.
13. It was considered that the CATGs had helped members, the public and town and parish councils to raise concerns that have been progressed more quickly than through the more traditional processes.
14. There were suggestions in some of the survey responses that the funding for the CATGs should be increased and that if the CATGs had more support resources available then they would be able to deliver an even better service.

Main Considerations for the Council

15. It is proposed that the remit of the Groups be extended to cover additional areas of infrastructure improvement. This would include, for example, waiting restrictions, footway and footpath improvements, and some drainage works. A full list of the type of works that can and cannot be undertaken is included in the revised Terms of Reference included at **Appendix 1**.

16. In order to facilitate the change to LHFigs Cabinet has previously approved an additional £400,000 of the Council's own capital funding of which £250,000 will be made available to the Groups with £150,000 used to provide additional officer resource. In addition, the Substantive fund is to be increased to £250,000 using an allocation from the DfT Integrated Transport Block Grant funding.

Terms of Reference

17. To reflect the additional remit of the LHFigs the previous CATG Terms of Reference have been redrafted. This is supported by a new Guidance Note that sets out how the Groups are intended to operate moving forward and provides clarity of responsibilities. These are included at **Appendix 1**.

Risks and mitigation

18. The increased remit of the LHFigs will require additional officer support. This is allowed for, in part, in the funding that will allow recruitment of additional staff. Traditionally the CATGs have been predominantly supported by staff from the Traffic Engineering team. However, the LHFigs may require greater involvement from a number of the Council's other teams, including Local Highways, Transport Planning, Rights of Way and the Community Engagement team.
19. Financial control will continue to need careful monitoring and management and will be reported regularly.
20. There are risks regarding having sufficient resources to deliver all the requested schemes within the expected timescales, especially in view of the wider range of schemes being delivered by the LHFigs. The resource levels and scheme delivery will be monitored to determine whether changes to the operation of the groups would be required in the future. This review should be undertaken after 12 months of operation.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

21. The review of the CATGs was carried out at the request of the Environment Select Committee. The operation of the highways service and its contractors is reported annually to this Committee and includes information on the Integrated Transport schemes and the CATG schemes implemented each year. This will continue with LHFig schemes being reported in future.

Safeguarding Implications

22. None identified

Public Health Implications

23. The schemes implemented by the CATGs / LHFigs can make a significant contribution to reducing collisions, especially those resulting in killed and seriously injured. As the highway authority, Wiltshire Council is responsible for monitoring and reducing collisions and accident casualties on its roads, and the LTP provides funding to undertake engineering solutions at identified

collision cluster sites. The CATG / LHFIG schemes often also improve road safety.

24. One of the aims of Wiltshire's LTP is to improve air quality and reduce air and noise pollution caused by transport. The LTP contains policies that set out to reduce dependence on car-borne travel and increase cycling, walking and public transport. These policies aim to reduce the rate of traffic growth in the county and improve the environment by reducing air and noise pollution. The CATG / LHFIG schemes can support walking and cycling and contribute to helping communities adopt a healthy lifestyle.
25. Everyone benefits from active travel. For each individual, it boosts physical and mental health, for our health service it reduces the burden of treating preventable illnesses and of course businesses see the benefit of a healthier workforce.
26. Initiatives that make the most of local community assets, facilities and resources and build walking or cycling into daily routines can help increase physical activity as well as reducing harms associated with road transport such as:
 - road traffic collisions and injuries
 - air pollution
 - noise
 - reduced social cohesion and increased social isolation for many

Procurement Implications

27. There are no procurement implications. Most of the work for implementing LHFIG schemes will be undertaken by the Council's term consultant, Atkins, or term contractor, Ringway or other suppliers through existing specialist contracts. These contracts were all awarded in accordance with the corporate procurement strategy.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

28. The types of scheme implemented by the CATGs / LHFIGs usually benefit all road users, including users of public transport, and particularly vulnerable road users such as cyclists, pedestrians and the less able.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

29. The LTP was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment. One of the priority goals is to reduce carbon emissions from transport and the LTP sets out policies that aim to reduce dependence on travel by private car and promote cycling, walking and the use of public transport. The objective of these policies is to reduce the rate of traffic growth in the county and bring about an improved environment by reducing CO₂ emissions, as well as addressing community severance and air and noise pollution. The LHFIG schemes have potential to support this aim.
30. The highway service recycles a large proportion of the waste material generated by its highway operations and takes specific measures to protect the environment when carrying out maintenance and construction work. The

nature and small size of many of the CATG / LHFIG schemes can make recycling less efficient, but opportunities are taken to recycle waste material where feasible.

31. Schemes to encourage walking and cycling and the use of public transport are likely to have a central role in reducing the carbon footprint of the local communities in Wiltshire. The LHFIGs are likely to have a key role in promoting walking and cycling opportunities in the future.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

32. Should the decision be made not to proceed with the change to LHFIGs, the opportunity to allow further community engagement with the delivery of locally requested schemes in the county would be lost. Existing problems would remain and reputational damage to the council may occur.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

33. Should the decision be made to proceed with the change to LHFIGs, then there are risks around financial control and having sufficient resources to deliver all the requested schemes. The resource levels and scheme delivery will be monitored to determine whether further changes to the operation of the groups would be required

Financial Implications

34. To date funding has been provided from the Council's Integrated Transport block (ITB). This is a capital grant received on an annual basis from the Department for Transport. The funding for CATG's has been £250,000 annually which was divided across the 18 community areas based on population and road length. In addition, CATG's were able to bid into the Substantive Highways Scheme Fund which had a budget of £150,000 to help fund larger schemes.
35. Cabinet has approved an additional £400,000 budget of the Council's own capital funding and an additional £100,000 of ITB funding, increasing the total budget to £900,000. £150,000 will be used to provide additional officer resource. £500,000 will be divided across the 18 community areas and £250,000 will be available through bidding for larger schemes in the Substantive Highways Scheme Fund.
36. The LHFIGs standard budgets will therefore be more than double those available to the CATG's.
37. The CATGs have been encouraged to seek local funding to assist in scheme delivery. This has proved to be very successful with some schemes being funded entirely by town or parish councils. This is to continue with the LHFIGs with a minimum local contribution of 20% suggested.
38. It should be noted that the funding available to the LHFIGs provides no additional revenue funding to assist with the future maintenance of new

infrastructure and this will inevitably increase the Council's future maintenance liabilities.

Legal Implications

39. The Council has a duty under the Highways Act to maintain the county's roads and has powers to carry out improvements. There is various other legislation, including the traffic signs regulations, which are relevant to the types of schemes implemented by the LHFIGs. The correct procedures need to be followed to ensure that valid legal orders are in place when schemes are implemented.
40. The use of road signs and markings are governed by regulations and specific guidance which must be followed to ensure that the Council's actions are legal and do not create additional hazards and liabilities. The procedures and consultations to be followed may sometimes appear to be time consuming, and limit the options available to the LHFIGs, but it is important that they are complied with or the Council could be liable to claims or legal challenges.
41. The LHFIGs will be advised by officers who are very experienced in the delivery of these types of scheme and have access to specialist legal advice if required.

Workforce Implications

42. The need for additional resource to support the LHFIGs has, in part, been identified and allowed for within the increased funding. The resource levels and demands will be monitored to determine whether further resource changes will be required in the future

Options Considered

43. Three options have been considered
 - To not continue with the CATGs / LHFIGs
 - To continue with the CATGs in their current format
 - To move from CATGs to LHFIGs.
44. To abandon CATGs / LHFIGs completely is seen as a retrograde step that would remove local involvement and result in community issues not being addressed. Reputational damage to the Council is a likely consequence. Continuing with the CATGs in their current format would continue to allow local involvement and the delivery of community schemes. This has a proven track record and would as likely remain successful. The move to LHFIGs with the increased remit and the budget provision is seen as a way of continuing the development of the Groups, building upon the good work of the CATGs and furthering local involvement in Highway matters.

Conclusions

45. The CATGs have clearly been an effective way of attracting and prioritising local highways and transport investment. They have facilitated community engagement and helped communities understand the potential for safety

improvements on the highway network and the limitations because of legal, funding or other factors.

46. It is recommended that in view of the high level of interest there has been by members, town and parish councils regarding the previous CATGs. the proposed creation of the LHFIGs should be considered for approval by Cabinet and that the revised Terms of Reference and Guidance Notes be adopted.

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28/3/22

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference and Guidance Notes

Background Papers

The following documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

None