

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET CAPITAL ASSETS COMMITTEE

7 FEBRUARY 2011

Subject: Local Transport Plan and Highway Funding

Cabinet Member: Councillor Dick Tonge, Highways and Transport

Key Decision: No

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Committee on the current position regarding highway funding following the announcement of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) funding allocation for 2011/12 and consider bids for highways maintenance funding.

Background

2. The LTP allocation consists of two funding elements. The LTP Maintenance Block, which funds road and bridge major maintenance, and the LTP Integrated Transport Block, which funds schemes to improve road safety and stimulate local economies by reducing congestion.
3. In recent years the LTP funding has been augmented by the Council's own capital funding to enable additional works to reduce the road maintenance backlog and address particular highway issues.

Current Position

4. The LTP allocation was announced by DfT on 13 December 2010, and the settlement letter stated:

"With limited resources available, the Department believes that it is essential highways maintenance continues to be prioritised, reflecting the economic and social importance to local communities, the need to safeguard the largest single local public asset, and the liabilities for future years that can be created from short-term cuts in maintenance."

5. The funding allocations for 2011/12 and 2012/13 were announced and are shown below (in £,000), together with the indicative allocations for the following two years:

	2011/12 (£,000)	2012/13 3 (£,000)	2013/14 4 (£,000)	2014/15 5 (£,000)
Integrated Transport	2,501	2,668	2,668	3,752
Highways Maintenance	14,431	13,813	13,020	12,262

6. A comparison with Capital funding for integrated transport and highways maintenance in 2010/11 is shown below. The 2011/12 funding includes the capital bids for Wiltshire Council funding made in previous years.

	2010/11 (£,000)	2011/12 (£,000)
LTP Integrated Transport	3,282	2,501
LTP Highways Maintenance	12,349	14,431
LTP Grant for Bridges	264	
Carriageway Surface Dressing	500	500
Highway Structural Maintenance	250	
Additional Carriageway Surfacing	1,000	
Footways	250	250
Land Drainage	500	500
Repairs to verges (Invest to Save)	450	
	18,845	18,182

7. In addition to the above capital funding in 2010/11 the DfT also made available £1,465,000 for Wiltshire to address winter damage to the network. This increased the Council's investment in highways and related work to £20,310,000 in 2010/11.

Changes to LTP funding in 2011/12

8. A major change in the 2011/12 LTP funding allocation is that the funding will be provided as grant. In 2010/11 of the £15,895,000 LTP funding provided (after claw back of some elements), the grant element was only £625,000. The remaining £15,270,000 was provided as supported borrowing.
9. The change in funding mechanism significantly reduces the Council's need to borrow to support the LTP funding allocations in 2011/12.

Highway Maintenance Funding

10. There is a backlog of highway maintenance nationally. The additional capital funding provided by the Council over and above the LTP funding in recent years has allowed the backlog to be reduced. This has resulted in a long-term trend of overall improving road conditions in Wiltshire, with the estimated backlog reducing from £50,000,000 in 2005 to £42,000,000 today.
11. The highways maintenance elements of the budget for 2010/11 and the current proposals for 2011/12, including winter damage funding, are:

	2010/11 (£,000)	2011/12 (£,000)
LTP Highways Maintenance	9,091	10,931
Carriageway Surface Dressing	500	500

Highway Structural Maintenance	250	
Additional Carriageway Surfacing	1,000	
Repairs to Verges (Invest to Save)	450	
Footways	250	250
Winter Damage DfT	1,465	
	13,006	11,681

12. Although the network is showing localised signs of deterioration following the recent weather, there is no certainty that the Government will provide additional funding for winter damage to roads this year.
13. The Invest to Save project to strengthen highway verges in rural areas in 2010/11 targeted those areas where the most claims had been received in connection with vehicle damage. It enabled significant repairs to be carried out at 11 sites, but the funding was not sufficient to treat all of the sites identified.

Additional Highways Funding

14. The Council corporate capital funding made available in previous years enabled more carriageway resurfacing and strengthening work to be carried out, which has improved the condition of the network and reduced the backlog of maintenance on the network.
15. The priority for maintenance funding is to keep the roads safe, especially with regard to improving the skid resistance and making structural repairs to main roads. The additional funding has generally enabled programmes of work to be carried out on rural minor roads and in urban areas where safety may be less of an immediate issue, but where there is still considerable public dissatisfaction with road conditions.
16. The £250,000 funding for footways in 2010/11 allowed 17 sites to be included for surfacing and a further 14 sites to have more substantial reconstruction work. There are still footway sites in need of treatment which it was not possible to include in this years programme. Capital funding of £250,000 in 2011/12 would enable a similar number of schemes to be carried out in the next financial year.
17. The surface dressing of rural roads is an inexpensive process to seal the surface and maintain the structural integrity of rural roads. It needs to be renewed every six or seven years, and the annual surfacing programme usually includes an extensive programme of such work. £500,000 should enable an additional 150,000 square metres to be treated, which would be over 27 km of rural road.

Main Consideration for the Council

18. The change in providing LTP allocations as grant reduces the borrowing requirements for the Council in order to fund highway maintenance. In previous years the Council has funded additional highway maintenance to reduce the backlog on the highway network.

19. Funding footway maintenance and additional surface dressing programmes from corporate capital funding would allow additional work to be carried out to improve the condition of the county's roads and footways.
20. The People's Voice surveys and the surveys carried out at Area Board meetings have consistently shown that highways maintenance is the service that most people want more money spent on.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

21. No environmental impacts have been identified from this report. The improvement of the highway network will make it more resilient to climate change.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

22. No equality and diversity issues have been identified or arise from this report.

Legal Implications

23. None have been identified as arising directly from this report.

Risk Assessment

24. The increase in expenditure on highway maintenance would reduce the risk of accidents and claims against the Council. There are no appreciable risks in connection with the delivery of the project as contractors and processes are already in place to deliver highways maintenance projects.

Financial Implications

25. These have been examined and are implicit throughout the report.

Proposals

26. It is recommended that the capital programme for 2011/12 should include:
 - (i) £250,000 for footway reconstruction and surfacing.
 - (ii) £500,000 for additional carriageway surface dressing.

Reasons for Proposals

27. The additional funding will enable additional work to be carried out to improve the condition of footways and carriageways. It will reduce the backlog of maintenance required on the network, and will be in accordance with the views of the public expressed through People's Voice surveys and at Area Board meetings.

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

None