

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

12 July 2022

Subject: Enhanced Highways Maintenance Funding

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

Key Decision: Key

Executive Summary

The appearance of our roads and verges is important to the public and local communities, but with funding limitations it has not always been possible to deliver the desired levels of routine maintenance on the network as safety maintenance has had to take priority.

Road marking, gully emptying, and enforcement action on fly-tipping are areas where in recent years funding has been less than historical levels and consequently the condition and appearance of the network has suffered.

In order to address this issue it is proposed to increase funding on these three areas by £683,000 annually over the next three years to improve the safety and appearance of the highway network.

It is proposed to increase funding for road marking and lining by £200,000 annually to address the backlog and make an enormous difference to the appearance and safety of the network. The additional funding will be used to renew give way, roundabout markings and stop lines, predominantly using 'hand' gangs within the urban areas and a programme of machine lining on the inter-urban roads, especially the A roads. The programme will be focused on an area-by-area basis which will see the lining brought up to standard over the next three years.

The budget for gully emptying would be increased by £333,000 annually to pay for another specialist gully emptying machine with jetting facility, supporting traffic management and additional equipment to be deployed to improve drainage. The provision of this fourth machine will enable the frequency of gully emptying to be increased.

Litter enforcement would be improved by investment of £150,000 annually to provide monitoring cameras, three additional enforcement staff, and an advertising and awareness campaign.

This increased investment of over £2 million will see a substantial improvement in the safety and appearance of Wiltshire's highway network.

Proposals

It is recommended that for the years 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25:

- (i) The budget for road markings and lining should be increased by £200,000 annually.
- (ii) The budget for gully emptying should be increased by £333,000 annually.
- (iii) The budget for fly-tipping enforcement should be increased by £150,000 annually.

Reason for Proposals

The appearance of our roads and verges is important to the public and local communities and the proposed increase in investment of over £2 million will see a substantial improvement in the safety and appearance of Wiltshire's highway network.

Terence Herbert
Chief Executive

Wiltshire Council

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Purpose of Report

1. To consider increased investment in highway maintenance with a view to improving safety and the appearance of the highway network.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The Council Business plan acknowledges Wiltshire's natural beauty, its historic sites, villages, houses and unique habitats and wildlife which must be protected and nurtured.
3. It is a Council priority to reduce litter and fly tipping through rigorous media campaigns, enforcement and prosecutions, and help improve biodiversity and wildflowers on verges and maintained grounds.

Background

4. Wiltshire has an extensive highway network of over 4,400km of road. The overall condition of the network is fairly good, especially when compared to some other authorities. However, the appearance of our roads and verges is important to the public and local communities, and reduced expenditure in recent years has resulted in lower levels of routine maintenance on the network with safety maintenance having to take priority.
5. Road marking, gully emptying, and enforcement action on fly-tipping are areas where in recent years funding has been less than historical levels and consequently the condition and appearance of the network has suffered.

Main Considerations for the Council

Road Marking and Lining

6. The renewal of road markings is carried out by an annual programme targeting those in worst condition. It is mainly undertaken during the summer when conditions are more favourable for ensuring a durable product. In recent years budget limitations have restricted the volume of work undertaken, and consequently some of the lining and road marking is becoming faded and worn.

7. It is proposed to increase funding substantially over the next three years to enable a significant programme of road marking replacement and renewal. Funding in 2021/22 on road markings was £120,000, which was considerably less than it had been in most previous years. It was intended to increase the budget to £270,000 in 2022/23 to return it to the minimum level required. However, if a further £200,000 was provided it would increase it to £470,000, which would start to reduce the backlog and make an enormous difference to the appearance and safety of the network.
8. It is proposed that the additional funding would be used to renew give way lines, roundabout markings and stop lines, predominantly using 'hand' gangs within the urban areas and a programme of machine lining on the inter-urban roads, especially the A roads. The increased programme of work would involve a shift in priorities for Council staff to prioritise this programme during the summer months which is the best time for doing this type of work.
9. The programme would be focused on an area-by-area basis to bring the lining up to standard over the next three years. Advance warning will be given of the road marking and lining work, with work carried out at off peak periods on busier roads and locations to reduce disruption.

Gully Emptying

10. Gully emptying is primarily carried out on a fixed programme. There is annual emptying on the main roads, with emptying once every three years on other roads. In most cases this is adequate, but in some cases where there are higher levels of silt or debris there are gullies which can become blocked. The priority is to clear those gullies on high-speed roads or where properties could be at risk of flooding. However, at times there have not been adequate resources to keep all the gullies clear, especially on minor roads.
11. The budget for gully emptying is currently £1,274,000 annually. This provides for 3 gully tankers on routine gully emptying operations and a Vactor, which is a gully tanker with a jetting facility. The Vactor is used to clear those gullies where there are blockages and to investigate problem sites on an ad-hoc basis.
12. It is proposed to increase the budget for gully emptying by £333,000 annually for three years. The additional funding will pay for another Vactor with supporting traffic management and will provide funding to enable additional use of equipment as required.
13. The two Vactors will initially be targeted at those gullies where there are identified problems based on reports from the engineers and from the public. The existing gully tankers would continue the programmed emptying. The additional resources would represent an additional 20% in resources which will focus on the problem sites. This will reduce the number of blocked gullies and reduce the reports and complaints from the public.
14. The intention is that once the most serious problems have been addressed the schedule of gully emptying will be rotated to cover as many gullies as possible in the three-year programme.

Fly-Tipping-Enforcement

15. Fly-tipping is the illegal deposit of waste on land contrary to Section 33(1)(a) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. It is a significant blight on local environments, a source of pollution, a potential danger to public health and a hazard to wildlife. It also undermines legitimate waste businesses where unscrupulous operators undercut those operating within the law. It is a serious criminal offence punishable by an unlimited fine or 12-months imprisonment if convicted in a Magistrates' Court. The offence can also attract an unlimited fine and up to 5 years imprisonment if convicted in a Crown Court.
16. Enforcement is carried out by the Highways & Transport Directorate and has 6 full time equivalent (FTE) officers. Their primary role is to be responsible for the enforcement of environmental and highways legislation linked to statutory and non-statutory duties.
17. The clearance of small quantities of fly-tipping (under 3 cubic metres) is conducted by idverde as the council's Streetscene contractor, with larger quantities cleared by specialist contractors. The new contract due to start in December 2022 will see all fly tips cleared by the successful contractor following the timescales as detailed in the Code of Practice for Litter & Refuse (CoPLAR).
18. It is proposed to increase fly-tipping enforcement capabilities by increasing investment by £150,000 annually for 3 years. A range of options have been considered which would increase the number of wireless cloud-based cameras for longer term monitoring of sites with serious issues, increase monitoring using remote cameras for shorter term requirements, discourage fly-tipping using dummy cameras and signing, supported by a greater number of enforcement officers and an advertising campaign.
19. The proposal would provide 8 cameras, 8 trail cameras, 3 additional staff with advertising and other support to deliver enhanced fly-tipping enforcement. Consideration would be given to increasing the number of cameras should the additional enforcement prove successful and the cost of removing fly-tipping reduce. The enforcement and publicity will be adapted as necessary to address particular problems and sites.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

20. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of Environment Select Committee will receive a briefing regarding this report. Future progress on the lining, gully emptying, and fly-tipping improvements will be reported to the Environment Select Committee in connection with the annual report made on the highways service.

Safeguarding Implications

21. There are no safeguarding implications.

Public Health Implications

22. The provision of road marking and lining can help improve roads safety, by providing information to assist drivers and road users.

23. Improved gully emptying can improve road safety by reducing the risk of vehicles experiencing standing water on high-speed roads, and it can also reduce the risk of the flooding of properties with the potential adverse health implications that can have.
24. As well as being unsightly fly-tipping can be health risk, especially where hazardous materials are involved. The increased enforcement and associated advertising campaigns are expected to reduce fly-tipping and the consequent public health risks.

Procurement Implications

25. The road marking and gully emptying services are currently provided through the existing Highways Term Maintenance contract which was the subject of a report to Cabinet in January and is currently the subject of a procurement exercise. The existing contract is with Ringway Infrastructure Services, and the new contract will be awarded later this year and will start in April 2023. The new contract includes provision for the new supplier to provide these services.
26. The procurement of cameras and support equipment and services in connection with the enhanced fly-tipping enforcement will be carried out in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

27. It is not anticipated that there will be any equalities impacts as a result of this enhanced service provision. Improved road maintenance is likely to be beneficial for pedestrians, cyclists and vulnerable road users.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

28. Enhanced routine highway maintenance would have environmental benefits, especially in terms of reducing fly-tipping and pollution. It would improve the environment and the appearance of the highway network for all road users, potentially increasing people's pride in the county and its environment.
29. Improved gully emptying will help reduce the risk of flooding, which is expected to become an increasing problem with climate change and higher intensity rainfall events which can overwhelm poorly maintained drainage systems.
30. The vehicles for the lining and gully emptying would initially be provided under the existing term highway maintenance contract with Ringway Infrastructure Services. From April 2023 the service would be provided under the new term maintenance contract which is currently out to tender. Bidders will be including proposals to meet the council's carbon target as part of their submission which will be assessed as part of the award process.
31. Other vehicles required in connection with the enhanced service will conform to the Council's emerging fleet strategy, which requires all new contracts and service agreements to contain the requirement for fleet provision to meet the council's requirements to be carbon neutral by 2030.

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

32. There is a risk of increased public dissatisfaction with the condition of the highway network without increased investment in routine highway maintenance. The condition of road markings, the effectiveness of highways drainage and fly-tipping are all matters which are of concern to the public and road users.
33. Not tackling fly-tipping effectively has potential health implications, especially where hazardous waste is involved. The poor condition of road markings could result in reduced road safety,

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

34. There is a risk that the contractors will not have the capacity to deliver the increased road markings and gully emptying. However, initial indications from the existing contractor are that they will be able to meet this demand despite the increased demand on resources nationally. It should be noted that a new contract will be starting in April next year and arrangements will have to be made with supplier for the enhanced services.
35. Rising costs are becoming a problem in many areas and highway maintenance has been affected because of increased fuel and material costs, and this could affect the future delivery of these increased programmes.
36. The enhanced fly-tipping enforcement would require recruitment to the new posts and procurement of cameras and equipment. It is not envisaged that this will cause significant problems, but it is anticipated that it will take at least three months before the enhanced service can start.

Financial Implications

In order to improve the maintenance of the highway network it is proposed to make the following budget increases in the Highways and Transport service. This will be funded from the Business Plan Priority Reserve and has been included as a recommendation for approval as part of the Revenue Final Financial Year End Revenue Position report. Any potential capital spend will be reviewed and may be capitalised.

Item	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Road Markings and Lining	£200,000	£200,000	£200,000
Gully Emptying	£333,000	£333,000	£333,000
Fly-tipping Enforcement	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000
Total	£683,000	£683,000	£683,000

37. The proposals have been discussed with existing service suppliers where relevant and the indications are that resources will be available to deliver the enhanced service levels.

Legal Implications

38. The highway authority has a duty to keep the highway network safe, but this duty does not usually prescribe specific levels of maintenance. There is generally no legal requirement to provide road marking and lining, but these often help drivers and improve road safety. However, some lines such as double white lines and yellow waiting restriction lines are required in connection with Traffic Regulation Orders.
39. The Council has powers to enforce fly-tipping which is currently carried out by officers also involved in other highway enforcement. The increased investigations and enforcement resulting from the increased use of cameras and additional staff is likely to lead to increased prosecutions and legal action. An allowance has been made in the proposed budget for increased legal costs in connection with this.

Workforce Implications

40. The additional road marking and gully emptying will be carried out by contractors, and their management will be by existing local highways officers, and additional staff will not be required.
41. The increased fly-tipping enforcement would require three additional staff, and arrangements will be made for the necessary recruitment of these as soon as the additional funding has been approved.

Options Considered

42. Road marking, gully emptying and fly-tipping enforcement are considered to be the three service areas where increased investment would be particularly effective to improve the safety and appearance of the highway network. Other areas of the highway service have not experienced such significant reductions in budget over recent years with the consequent reduction in public satisfaction and increase in complaints.

Conclusions

43. The increased investment would result in better road markings, increased gully emptying and greater fly-tipping enforcement, which would lead to improved road safety and increased public satisfaction.
44. It is considered that the proposals are viable and can be delivered within a suitable timescale. Increasing the budget for three years will enable the backlog of work to be addressed and the condition and appearance of the highway network to be improved considerably.

Parvis Khansari (Corporate Director - Place)

Report Author:

Peter Binley

**Interim Director of Highways and Transport,
peter.binley@wiltshire.gov.uk, Tel: 01225 713412**

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

None

Appendices

None