

Wiltshire Council

Devizes Area Board

7 March 2017

Subject: Area Board Highways Information

Cabinet Member: Councillor Philip Whitehead – Highways and Transport

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary

The local highway network is vital to providing connectivity for businesses and communities, and effective maintenance to ensure its availability is essential to the economic development of the county. Wiltshire Council recognises the importance of maintaining and managing its highway network effectively.

The 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020' is addressing the long standing under investment in highways maintenance, which has been a problem nationally for many years.

The significant investment of £21 million annually for six years by Wiltshire Council has already seen a substantial improvement in the condition of the county's road network, with a 30% reduction in the carriageway maintenance backlog in the first two years of the investment.

Information has been prepared for each Area Board (see **Appendix 1**) showing the schemes completed in recent years, and a summary of road condition information.

An indicative list of priority sites for treatment in 2017/18 has been developed (see **Appendix 2**). The list includes surface dressing on the A342 to continue the surfacing carried out last year at Dunkirk Hill, and surface dressing on C roads.

Proposals

It is recommended that:

- (i) It is noted that good progress has been made on implementing the 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020', and there has been a substantial improvement in road conditions in Wiltshire.

- (ii) The list of proposals are reviewed and any amendments or potential future sites for treatment are forwarded to the Highways Asset Management Team for further investigation.

Reason for Proposals

The highway network forms the Council's largest asset, and it is important that it is maintained in the most cost-effective way in order to show value for money. This includes the use of asset management and whole life costing approaches to inform investment decisions.

Asset management principles have been applied for many years in Wiltshire to ensure appropriate investment with longer term planning. The list of proposed sites for treatment in 2017/18 should further improve the condition of the Council's roads.

Parvis Khansari
Associate Director Highways and Transport

Wiltshire Council

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Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on progress on the 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020', and to consider future road resurfacing sites.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The highways service supports three priorities of the Council's Business Plan:
 - Outcome 2 – People in Wiltshire work together to solve problems locally and participate in decisions that affect them
 - Outcome 3 – People in Wiltshire have a high quality environment
 - Outcome 6 – People are as protected from harm as possible and feel safe

Background

3. The local highway network is vital in providing connectivity for businesses and communities; effective maintenance to ensure its availability is essential to the economic development of the county. Wiltshire Council recognises the importance of maintaining and managing its highway network effectively.
4. The highway network in Wiltshire comprises 4,400 kilometres of road, 3.9 million square metres of footway, 981 bridges and over 50,000 street lights and illuminated signs. The replacement value of the assets is over £5 billion, and it would cost over £330 million to resurface all of the Council's roads.
5. The condition of the county's roads is important to the public. This is demonstrated by the results of the Council's People's Voice and the National Highways and Transportation (NHT) surveys, which indicate low levels of public satisfaction with road conditions nationally.
6. In October 2013 Cabinet agreed to increase highway maintenance funding to £21 million for six years. This was subsequently included in the Council's future budget, and forms the basis of the 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020'. The increased investment in highways maintenance has enabled a large

number of schemes to be progressed to improve the condition of the network and its infrastructure.

7. The Council has applied the principles of asset management to the maintenance of the highway network, which involves taking into account the lifecycle of the assets and monitoring performance of the intervention and investment strategies. The Highways Asset Management Policy and Strategy were reviewed by the Environment Select Committee in October 2015 and subsequently adopted by Cabinet.

Main Considerations for the Council

Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020

8. The 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020' is addressing the long standing under investment in highways maintenance and consequent backlog, which has been a problem nationally for many years. The proposed significant investment of £21 million annually for six years by this Council is delivering substantial improvements in the condition of the highway network in Wiltshire.
9. A range of investment options was initially considered, which ranged from spending the minimum necessary to keep road conditions unchanged to treating the whole of the network. It was intended that the investment should be used to improve approximately 664 kilometres of the network (about 15%), and that annually up to 238 Kilometres of road could be surfaced, depending on the treatment required and the deterioration of the network.
10. In the first two years of the investment there were a number of sites which needed substantial reconstruction work and, as expected, the lengths of road treated were consequently less than the indicative target. In 2016/17 a substantial programme of surface dressing has been undertaken and the total length of road resurfaced has increased considerably.

Year	Length treated (km)
2014/15	148
2015/16	182
2016/17	250

11. A total of 580 kilometres of road has been resurfaced to date, and the Council is currently on target to achieve the anticipated improvement by 2020, subject to funding continuing at current levels. There have also been a significant number of smaller sites treated with hand patching, which has addressed localised areas in poor condition.
12. The detailed calculation of the backlog carried out by the Council's specialist consultants WDM indicates that there has been a significant reduction in the highways maintenance backlog in the first two years of the investment:

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Calculated backlog	£69.4 million	£63.3 million	£48.2 million

13. The backlog has decreased by 30% since the 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020' started. Good progress has been made in reducing the backlog, but continuing investment, as originally planned, would be required to remove the remaining backlog.
14. A summary of road conditions and other highway information has been prepared for the Area Board (see **Appendix 1**). This information will form the basis of data to be made available on the Council's website, including regularly updated information on potholes and other reports through the My Wiltshire app, the website and by telephone. The website will also be developed to explain the Council's highway maintenance policies and strategies in greater detail.
15. The Council's highways maintenance investment strategy was developed using the Department for Transport funded Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) toolkit, which identified that timely investment in surface dressing of the minor rural roads would be cost-effective given the current condition of the local road network.
16. The individual sites for treatment were identified from the technical surveys of the road conditions, and were assessed and confirmed by the highway engineers. The lists of proposed sites for treatment have been reviewed by the Area Boards where representatives of the town and parish councils have been given the opportunity to consider local priorities.
17. Surface dressing work was carried out on a number of minor roads across the county last summer. This work sometimes known as 'tar and chippings' is preventative maintenance to seal the road construction and restore skid resistance. It is a cost effective way of extending the useful life of the roads.
18. Not carrying out any maintenance on these minor roads may initially appear attractive in order to save money, but in the longer term that would be a false economy as the repairs would be substantially more expensive if the roads were allowed to deteriorate, and there would be an increasing risk of claims as a result of accidents. The cost of injury compensation claims can be significantly higher than the repair costs, and the cost of doing repairs once a road is in bad condition would be much higher.
19. The overall condition of the road network in Wiltshire is now broadly similar to other authorities in the south west. However, based on the 2015 survey results, which are the latest available nationally, the condition of Wiltshire A roads is the same as the national average, but is below the south-west average. The B and C road conditions in Wiltshire are better than both the national and south west averages, but still not as good as in some of the other authorities in the south west.

20. The condition of the unclassified roads is more difficult to compare as the assessment methods are not necessarily consistent across authorities. In general terms the condition of the more important unclassified roads in Wiltshire compares well with similar authorities, but further assessment will be required to get a better understanding of conditions across the south west.
21. The National Highways and Transportation (NHT) surveys indicate that public satisfaction with road conditions in Wiltshire is below the national average, and for some years has been consistently lower than for similar authorities in the south west. It is anticipated that the effects of the current investment strategy will improve the results of future public satisfaction surveys.

Proposed Surfacing Programme 2017/18

22. Road safety is the top priority, and it is important to treat those sites identified as having reduced skid resistance in accordance with the Council's Skid Resistance Policy. It is necessary to have adequate skid resistance in order to reduce accidents and avoid claims against the Council.
23. There are a number of processes used to improve the road surface:
 - a. Retexturing- the surface is roughened by high pressure steel shot or water to abrade the surface to produce a rougher surface texture. This is cost-effective and avoids the substantially more expensive resurfacing which would otherwise be required.
 - b. Surface dressing – the traditional 'tar and chip' where the road is sprayed with hot bitumen and stone chippings are spread and rolled in. This is a cheap solution to seal the road surface and protect the underlying construction. This process should ideally be repeated every six or seven years.
 - c. Resurfacing – the existing road surface is usually milled off and a new layer of bituminous material is laid. In many cases stone chippings are rolled in to provide additional texture. This is the most durable surfacing but is expensive compared to the other treatments.
24. Careful consideration is given to which treatment to use, taking into account the condition of the existing road surface, volume and type of traffic. In some cases deeper reconstruction is required on sections of road to ensure there is a suitable foundation for the new surface.
25. There are a number of sites which were identified for treatment in previous years which for various reasons it has not yet been possible to complete yet. These have been included in the proposed programme for 2017/18, and will generally be programmed for the start of the programme.
26. There was an extensive programme of surface dressing of rural roads across the county this year. Within the villages and the more built up areas this treatment can be less robust, especially where there are significant vehicle turning

movements, and other surfacing materials can be more effective in these locations. It is intended to carry out surfacing in many of the built up areas adjacent to these recently surface dressed roads.

27. It has been some years since there has been surface dressing on many of the county's minor roads and this is a process which should ideally be repeated every six or seven years. It is proposed to continue the programme of surface dressing in 2017/18, with a large number of sites in the south of the county identified for treatment.
28. A list of priority sites for carriageway resurfacing work has been identified for the Area Board in 2017/18 (see **Appendix 2**). The list of sites will be reviewed and developed in more detail following consideration by the relevant Area Board.
29. The condition of many of the footways in residential areas has been a concern for some years. It has been possible to treat some of these in conjunction with adjacent carriageways when they have been resurfaced, but there are many footways which would benefit from treatment even though the road is in reasonable condition.
30. A survey of the condition of the county's footways is approaching completion and is being used to develop a list of sites for treatment. In view of the amount of footway in need of treatment it is proposed to prioritise the renewal or resurfacing of those areas identified as being in worst condition. The local Highways Engineers are reviewing the sites for treatment, taking into account the survey data.

Safeguarding Implications

31. None.

Public Health Implications

32. The condition of roads and related infrastructure can have serious safety implications. Improving the condition of highways contributes to reducing accidents, especially with regard to improving skid resistance. Roads, bridges, highway structures, signs and street lighting need to be kept in good condition in order to protect the public and those maintaining the assets.
33. The investment through the 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020' is improving the condition of the highway network and safety.

Corporate Procurement Implications

34. There are no procurement implications at this stage.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

35. The improved maintenance of the highway network, its management using sound asset management principles, and good performance by the highways

contractors, should benefit all road users, including public transport, and vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

36. The effects of climate change could be significant for the highway network as was seen in the flooding of 2014, and the consequent damage to the roads, footways and drainage systems. Having robust maintenance strategies to improve the condition of the network helps build resilience into the infrastructure.
37. Where possible, suitable materials arising from road resurfacing schemes are recycled. Large quantities of road planings are used to repair damage on rights of way and on county farms, or provided to community groups. The presence of tar bound materials in older carriageways has caused problems on some sites as it has to be disposed of as contaminated waste, with consequent cost implications. Options for in-situ and other recycling processes are being examined in order to increase the recycling of highway materials.

Risk Assessment

38. The application of good asset management principles, including the planned maintenance of the highway infrastructure and the establishment of formalised asset management policies, helps reduce the risk of incidents and claims.

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

39. There is a risk of increased accidents, claims and public dissatisfaction if the programme of highway maintenance is not delivered or delayed. The principles of asset management have been followed by this Council for many years, but as future DfT funding will be dependent on demonstrating the application of good practise and asset management principles. Failure to do so will result in reduced funding in future years.

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

40. It is important to ensure that highways asset management and service delivery are implemented effectively. Processes are currently in place with Service Delivery Teams established. These include representatives from the Council, consultants and contractors involved in delivering the services, and report to the Contract Management Meeting comprising senior managers from those organisations.

Financial Implications

41. The highway network and related infrastructure forms the Council's largest asset, and has a replacement value of over £5 billion. It is important that they are maintained in the most cost-effective way in order to achieve value for money. This includes the use of a whole life costing approach to inform investment decisions.

42. The increasing drive for asset management from DfT will mean that failure to demonstrate the application of this approach will result in reduced funding from central government. An increasing proportion of available funding will be potentially withheld as an incentive. By 2020/21 Wiltshire could lose out on £2,782,000 of DfT funding if good asset management is not followed.
43. The financial pressures on the Council are well understood, and it may be necessary to reduce investment in the future. This would reduce the scope for consultation with the Area Boards as resurfacing work would need to be concentrated on those sites with serious safety defects.

Legal Implications

44. The Council has a duty under the Highways Act to maintain the county's roads. The highway inspection procedures, policies and improvement plans ensure that this duty is fulfilled. The increased investment and improved road conditions is helping the Council meet its responsibilities with regard to road maintenance.

Options Considered

45. There is a need to continue to apply asset management principles to the highway network and to ensure the performance of the contractors involved in delivering the service is good in order to keep the network in good condition and to ensure value for money.

Conclusions

46. The highway network forms the Council's largest asset, and it is important that it is maintained in the most cost-effective way in order to show value for money. This includes the use of whole life costing approaches to inform investment decisions.
47. The 'Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020' has provided the opportunity to address the long standing under investment in highways maintenance, which has been a problem nationally for many years. The significant investment of £21 million annually by Wiltshire Council is seeing a substantial improvement in the condition of the highways network.
48. Good progress has been made in delivering the programme of highway maintenance and has included the involvement of the Area Boards to help set local priorities. It is intended that this process should continue in future years.

Parvis Khansari
Associate Director Highways and Transport

Report Author:
Peter Binley
Head of Highways Asset Management and Commissioning
January 2017

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

None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Local Highways Information

Appendix 2 – Proposed priority surfacing sites for 2017/18