

CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND WASTE – CLLR BRIDGET WAYMAN

HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND WASTE SERVICE

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REFERENCE: HTW-02-19

ADDITIONAL HIGHWAYS FUNDING

Purpose of Report

1. To approve the package of work to be undertaken, using the additional funding provided by the Department for Transport (DfT) and from the Council's own revenue budgets for 2019/20.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The Wiltshire Council Business Plan 2017 – 2027 sets out the vision to create strong communities, with priorities for growing the economy, strong communities and protecting the vulnerable. As part of growing the economy it is acknowledged that it is necessary to bring the county's roads up to an acceptable state. The goal is that road infrastructure is improved and to:
 - Improve asset management and the use of investment to improve the condition of Wiltshire roads (implementing our Highways Asset Management Strategy).
 - Promote and further development the MyWiltshire app to improve and increase the reporting of issues.
 - Growing the Economy (making our town centres and villages more attractive for visitor's businesses).
 - Strong Communities (creating community events and getting residents and businesses involved).

Background

3. The local highway network is vital 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, and is making a significant investment in improving the condition of its highway assets.
4. For many years there was under-investment in the highways network nationally, which resulted in poor road conditions and a backlog of maintenance required on the network. This has been addressed to some extent in recent years by increased capital funding, especially in Wiltshire with the Local Roads Investment fund, which saw increased funding from the Council on road resurfacing and related maintenance.
5. The recent increases in capital funding have not been matched by corresponding increases in revenue funding, which provides funding for routine maintenance, including gully emptying, street sweeping, grass cutting and litter picking. Pressure on Council finances has meant there have been reductions in revenue funding with consequent reductions in some routine highways maintenance operations.

Detail

6. The Chancellor of the Exchequer recently announced in the 2018 Budget that £420 million would be allocated in 2018/19 for local highways maintenance, including the repair of potholes, to keep local bridges and structures open and safe, as well as help to aid other minor highway works that may be needed. Wiltshire Council has received £7,358,000 of this additional capital funding.
7. It should be noted that the additional DfT funding is capital funding and that there are restrictions regarding what it can be spent on. This funding cannot be used to fund routine maintenance operations such as weed spraying and street sweeping.
8. However, it is proposed to increase the highways revenue budget by approximately £500,000 in 2019/20, subject to approval of the budget at the Council meeting in February. This will increase the total additional funding available for highway maintenance to about £8,000,000.

Main Considerations for the Council

9. The additional capital and revenue funding provides the opportunity to address some of the longstanding issues in connection with highways maintenance. A summary document describing the proposed priorities has been prepared (see **Appendix 1**).
10. The majority of the additional funding would be spent on road resurfacing to prevent potholes, the repair of potholes and damaged roads, and the resurfacing and repair of footways.
11. The opportunity would also be taken to carry out verge repairs, replace worn road markings in towns and at rural junctions, and to replace damaged and defective signs.
12. The additional revenue funding would be used to improve the cleanliness of our streets, especially in town centres, with additional weed removal, street sweeping, graffiti and chewing gum removal. There would also be additional gully emptying and ditch clearing to improve road drainage and reduce flood risk.
13. The priorities for spending £1,000,000 of this additional funding will be determined in due course in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste, once the impact of the rest of the investment is evaluated.
14. The proposed package of improvements is considered to represent the best balance of competing priorities within the funding limitations. It would not be possible to increase the revenue funded elements by using capital funding because of the restrictions on the use of capital funding. Whilst it would be possible to use all of the additional funding on potholes, this was not considered desirable because of the other competing demands, particularly for improving the appearance of our streets and improving drainage.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

15. There is none for this proposal. The results of the additional investment will be reported to the Environment Select Committee in the annual report on the highway service which is made in the autumn.

Safeguarding Implications

16. None.

Public Health Implications

17. The additional funding for potholes, footways and road surfacing will help keep the highway network safe for all users.

Procurement Implications

18. There is none in this proposal.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

19. The additional repairs and surfacing will help make the highway network more resilient to the effects of extreme weather. The increased gully emptying and ditch clearance will improve drainage and help to reduce flood risk, and help cope with the potential effects of climate change.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

20. There is none in this scheme.

Risk Assessment

21. There are serious risks associated with the highway network. The additional funding should help reduce the risks associated with roads and footways, particularly the safety risks. The Council already has suitable suppliers and management processes to deliver the proposed package of works and manage the associated risks.

Financial Implications

22. The capital funding for the additional work is being funded by grant from the DfT, with the revenue funding being provided from the Council's increased highways budget in 2019/20 which will be subject to approval by full Council in February.

Legal Implications

23. 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 will help the Council meet its responsibilities with regard to road maintenance.

Options Considered

24. To:
 - (i) Implement the proposals.
 - (ii) Not implement the proposals.
 - (iii) Implement the proposals with amendments.

Reason for Proposals

25. It is important to ensure that any additional funding for highways is spent in the most effective way, especially in view of the backlog of maintenance required on the highway network and its associated assets.

26. Public expectations about the standard of maintenance and cleanliness of the streets remain high. Budgets have been a constraint in recent years and the additional funding provides an opportunity to address many of these longstanding issues.

Proposals

27. That the package of additional highway works as described in 'Wiltshire Highways – Additional Funding' (see **Appendix 1**) be adopted for implementation, subject to final budget approvals for 2019/20.

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

None

