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HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SERVICE

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HIGHWAYS CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24

Purpose of Report

1. To agree the schemes to be included in the Council's 2023/24 Highways Capital Programme.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The [Business Plan 2017-2027](#) sets out Wiltshire Council's priorities for the next ten years:
 - The people of Wiltshire are empowered to live full, healthy and enriched lives.
 - Our communities continue to be beautiful and exciting places to live.
 - Our local economy thrives and is supported by a skilled workforce.
 - We lead the way in how councils and counties mitigate the climate challenges ahead.
3. The highway network and related infrastructure plays an important role in delivering these priorities. It is important for public safety and supporting the local economy, and the condition of the county's road network is important to the public.

Background

4. The LTP Integrated Transport capital settlement for the 2023/24 financial year is £2.198 million. The Highways Maintenance Block Needs Element is £9,212,000 and the Highways Maintenance Block Incentive Element is £2,303,000. The Pothole Fund is £9,212,000. The total capital allocation from the Department of Transport (DfT) therefore stands at £22,925,000.
5. The 2023/24 allocation is identical to that made in 2022/23 and reflects the three year settlement announced in 2022 and does not, therefore, reflect the impact of inflation.

Additional Pothole funding

6. In addition to the above, and in recognition of the deterioration of the highway network nationally through the 2022/23 winter period, the DfT has made available an additional grant of £3,684,800 to the Council to help address carriageway condition. At this time this appears to be a one-year allocation.

Main Considerations for the Council

7. The highway network in Wiltshire comprises 4,400 kilometres (2,700 miles) of road, 3.9 million square metres of footway, 981 bridges and over 45,000 streetlights. The replacement value of the roads alone is £4.5 billion, and it would cost over £330 million to resurface all of the roads, with additional costs to repair structural damage.
8. In May 2015 the Council adopted the Wiltshire Asset Management Policy and Strategy to help guide the delivery of asset management principles with regard to highway infrastructure.
9. 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. The Incentive funding from DfT is dependent on adopting appropriate asset management principles.
10. The highways capital funding provides the means to maintain the highway network and related infrastructure, and to implement improvements to meet the Council's transport objectives as set out in the LTP.
11. The effects of inflation will have a material impact on the amount of work that can be delivered. Price adjustments across all Highways Contracts, in accordance with agreed national indices, have resulted in increases of between 4.21% and 16.75% occurring. With the Capital budget in effect being fixed the result will be less work being undertaken. This is likely to have an impact on the condition of the network creating a larger backlog of road repairs and higher levels of public dissatisfaction. This has been mitigated to some extent by the choice of treatments included in the works programme with more emphasis on thin surfacing as opposed to full surfacing and reconstruction activities.

Integrated Transport

12. The LTP Integrated Transport Block Allocation is the primary source of capital funding that Wiltshire Council has available to finance integrated transport measures. This funding is aimed principally at stimulating economic development and combatting climate change, as well as improving safety, reducing road accident casualties, easing traffic congestion, increasing accessibility, managing the highway network effectively, and promoting active and sustainable travel.
13. Continued investment in these areas of transport is necessary to enable the Council to support economic growth, and to make progress towards meeting local and national objectives and targets in respect of transport, road safety and climate change.
14. Integrated transport funding is crucial in helping local authorities stimulate their economies by reducing congestion and providing new infrastructure, improving road safety and improving accessibility within local communities.
15. Wiltshire's LTP identifies transport strategies that embody the aspirations of local communities and aims to ensure that transport projects and services deliver benefits for local people, as well as contribute towards achieving local and national transport goals.

16. The Integrated Transport schemes that are recommended for funding in the Highways Capital Programme 2023/24 are split into four generic categories which align with the Council's LTP goals and objectives, and reflect the investment priorities contained within it:
- Local Safety Schemes
 - School travel plan improvements
 - Projects that support economic growth, promote accessibility and safety, and improve the environment
 - Traffic management
17. It is recommended that the LTP Integrated Transport Block Allocation (£2.198 million) be divided as outlined in **Tables A to D, and Table G in Appendix 1**. These projects will deliver transport schemes that will improve safety, improve accessibility, support economic development, reduce carbon emissions, and promote sustainable transport options in the county.

Maintenance of the Highways Infrastructure

18. The Council's Asset Management Policy and the Strategy set out the approach to be taken to maintaining the Council's highway infrastructure. The Council has applied the principles of asset management to the maintenance of its highway network for many years. This involves taking into account the lifecycle of the assets and monitoring performance of the intervention and investment strategies, with the objective of minimising expenditure while providing the required performance.
19. The adopted policy and strategy are relevant for highways and the related infrastructure, including carriageways, footways and cycleways, structures, drainage, street lighting and traffic signals.
20. Wiltshire Council maintains about 1,000 road bridges and a similar number of Rights of Way bridges. The Council undertakes general inspections and routine maintenance on these structures in accordance with the national codes of practice. Principal bridge inspections and strength assessments are undertaken to inform future maintenance work on highway bridges and structures.
21. A programme of work for 2023/24 to keep the bridge stock safe and in good condition is included as **Table E in Appendix 1**. The proposed work includes reconstruction, redecking, waterproofing and repairs. There is a wide range of bridges on the highway network, including old masonry bridges and newer concrete structures, and these all require various techniques in order to maintain them.
22. Carriageways represent the largest element of the highways asset. Their condition is assessed by means of various regular surveys, including the use of vehicle mounted lasers and visual inspections. This information is used to prioritise sites based on their condition and anticipated deterioration. A forward five-year programme of resurfacing work has been developed, which will be reviewed annually.
23. The proposed programme of surfacing for 2023/24 includes road surfacing using bituminous materials, surface dressing 'tar and chippings', and other specialist treatments where required.
24. The proposed surfacing schemes will be reported to the Area Boards, and their views sought. Potential sites, where there are safety concerns, can be raised for assessment and inclusion in the programme in future years.

25. The skid resistance of the main roads is surveyed annually. Where skid resistance levels are below the required level, taking into account the location and vehicle speeds, treatment is considered. This can take the form of resurfacing, signing or retexturing of the surface. Following assessment, these treatments have been included in the proposed programme where appropriate.
26. It is important that preventative work is undertaken as well as work to deal with the roads in worst condition. Timely intervention can often avoid more costly repairs later. Surface dressing undertaken regularly protects the road structure and improves skid resistance, and a significant programme is proposed in recognition of the rural nature of much of the county's road network.
27. Where major surfacing works are proposed, drainage CCTV surveys and repairs are carried out in order to address problems before the road is resurfaced. A rolling programme of survey and repair continues throughout the year and, in the event of serious flooding, resources are diverted to address particular issues.
28. The lists of sites proposed for surfacing treatment in 2023/24 are shown in **Table F of Appendix 1**. The lists also include the proposed sites for footway works. It should be noted that the list of sites may be subject to change if work has to be rearranged because of other work on the network, or if priorities have to change at short notice because of weather damage or other factors.
29. As well as the identified sites, funding has been included to enable reactive repairs to be undertaken on those sections of road which are not included in the current programme, or where damage suddenly occurs as a result of winter or summer damage. These additional sites may be identified and prioritised throughout the year.
30. Provision has also been made in the highways capital programme for the renewal of other aging infrastructure, including traffic signals and lighting columns where there are safety considerations. A summary of the proposed expenditure is included in **Table G of Appendix 1**.

Additional Pothole funding

31. Consideration has been given as to how to make best use of the additional £3,684,800 made available. It is proposed to spend £2 to £2.5 million directly on pothole treatment and prevention with the remainder being used for structural maintenance repairs. Through the HIAMS asset management system it is possible to identify the lengths of the network with the worst pothole history and it is proposed that these form the basis of a prioritised programme.
32. The programme would identify the type of treatment to be used and also where works to improve drainage are required to prevent standing water and other issues from occurring. The programme when developed will be made available on the Highways pages of the Wiltshire website along with the other Highways maintenance programmes.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

33. No engagement at this stage but the progress on implementing the highways capital maintenance programme is reported annually to the Environment Select Committee.

Safeguarding Considerations

34. None identified.

Public Health Implications

35. The condition of roads and related infrastructure can have serious safety implications, especially with regard to skid resistance. Keeping roads in good condition can contribute to reducing accidents and improving road safety. Structures, signs and street lighting needs to be kept in good condition in order to protect the public and those maintaining the assets. The investment through Highways Capital Programme will keep the highway network in better condition and with potentially improved safety.
36. As the highway authority, Wiltshire Council is responsible for monitoring and reducing collisions and accident casualties on its roads and the Highways Capital Programme provides funding to undertake engineering solutions at identified collision cluster sites.
37. 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. Furthermore, the LTP provides the funding to develop solutions to address the Air Quality Management Areas within the county.

Corporate Procurement Implications

38. The majority of the projects and expenditure outlined in the programme will be undertaken by our term consultant and through existing construction contracts. These term contractors were commissioned in accordance with the corporate procurement strategy.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

39. The LTP was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment. One of the priority goals is to reduce carbon emissions from transport and LTP3 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.
40. Where possible, suitable materials arising from road resurfacing schemes are recycled. Large quantities of road planings are used on rights of way to repair damage and are also used on county farms or provided to community groups.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

41. The LTP was the subject of a full Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA). The LTP financial settlement provides capital funding that is used to improve access and accessibility in the county for all people. Particular attention is paid to the needs of children, disabled people and those with mobility impairments, in order to meet their access and transport requirements.

Risk Assessment

42. The highways capital funding needs to be spent during 2023/24 to ensure that the Council's agreed programme of schemes is delivered. Failure to deliver the proposed investment programme would impair Wiltshire Council's ability to meet national and local objectives and targets and could have adverse repercussions on the settlement received in subsequent years, particularly in connection with the DfT Incentive funding. For that

reason, it is essential that decisions are taken that allow for a realistic programme of expenditure on schemes that will assist with progress towards meeting the Council's transport goals and objectives.

43. In order to provide a cost-effective and efficient service, it is essential that the delivery is co-ordinated with other work on the highway network. However, there are a number of uncertainties that have the potential to affect delivery of the proposed programme. These include the operations of the public utilities' companies, which may affect roads or limit diversion routes.
44. As set out at paragraph 11. the effects of inflation will have a material impact on the amount of work that can be delivered. Price adjustments across all Highways Contracts in accordance with agreed national indices has resulted in increases of between 4.21% and 16.75% occurring. With the Capital budget being fixed the result will be less work being undertaken and this is likely to have an impact on the condition of the network creating a larger backlog of road repairs and higher levels of public dissatisfaction.

Financial Implications

45. Whilst the Highways Capital Programme provides an important source of capital funding for transport projects in 2023/24, the Council also secures developer contributions for highways improvements where it is appropriate to do so. Every effort will be made to use the available developer funding to complement the Council funded projects in order to deliver further highway improvements in Wiltshire.
46. The capital programme provides funding for investment in transport infrastructure and facilities and enables improvements to be made to the Council's transport system. It should be noted that this is capital funding and cannot be used as revenue funding to assist with the routine maintenance of this infrastructure.
47. The award of the new Highways Term contract to Milestone has, as anticipated, brought about an increase in overall prices for works to be undertaken moving forward. This is due to the rising cost of raw materials, staffing resource, and general inflation.

Legal Implications

48. There are a number of duties imposed on the Council as a highway authority. There is the common law duty to maintain the highway network, including related infrastructure. The duty also includes the highway drainage system in order to keep the highway free from flooding. Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 ('the 1980 Act') imposes a statutory duty on the highway authority to take such care in all the circumstances as is reasonably required to ensure the highway is not dangerous for traffic. Section 130 of the 1980 Act imposes a general statutory duty for a highway authority to assert and protect the rights of the public to use and enjoy the highway. The proposed investment programme will help the Council to meet its duties.

Options Considered

49. The proposed schemes and expenditure included in the proposed Highways Capital Programme are considered to provide the best package of measures to meet the Council's objectives, to maintain the highway infrastructure efficiently, and to selectively improve it to deliver transport schemes to support community aspirations where these are consistent with the goals, objectives and transport strategies set out in the LTP.

Reason for Proposal

50. To ensure that the Highways Capital Programme is prioritised and targeted towards schemes that meet the Council's transport policies and goals.

Proposal

51. That:
- (i) The proposed funding allocations and scheme lists for 2023/24, as outlined in **Appendix 1** of this report, be approved.
 - (ii) The additional pothole funding and its use be noted.

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

None