

**Wiltshire Council**

**Royal Wootton Bassett & Cricklade Board**

**Date of meeting**

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**Subject: Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020**

**Report Author: Parvis Khansari, Associate Director Highways and Transport**

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### **Executive Summary**

Wiltshire Council has recently approved a major programme of investment in highway maintenance over the next six years which will see a significant improvement in the condition of the county's highway network.

The investment is being targeted at those roads in worst condition, and will include minor roads as well as the main roads. An initial assessment based on road safety information and road condition data has been used to prepare a list of priority sites for treatment in 2014/15 in each community area (see **Appendices 1 and 2**).

A provisional list of sites for potential treatment until 2020 has also been prepared for each community area (see **Appendices 3 and 4**). The site list is based on the existing condition of the roads and the anticipated deterioration in the future, but it will need to be reviewed annually as the rate of deterioration of individual roads may vary because of weather and local conditions.

### **Proposals**

Area Boards are asked to consider the list of proposed highway maintenance schemes in their areas for 2014/15, and agree the final list for implementation.

The list of potential schemes for future years could also be reviewed, and consideration given to priorities for treatment in 2015/16. A draft list of sites will be prepared for comment later this year, but an early indication of local priorities would be helpful.

### **Reason for Proposal**

Wiltshire Council has a major programme of investment in highway maintenance over the next six years, which will see a significant improvement in the condition of the county's highway network.

The views of the Area Board are important in helping identify local priorities for road maintenance, and future programmes of work.

Delays in finalising the list could result in non-delivery of sites, and your assistance to agree a final list for 2014-15 would be appreciated as we have a significant programme of works to deliver.

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#### Purpose of Report

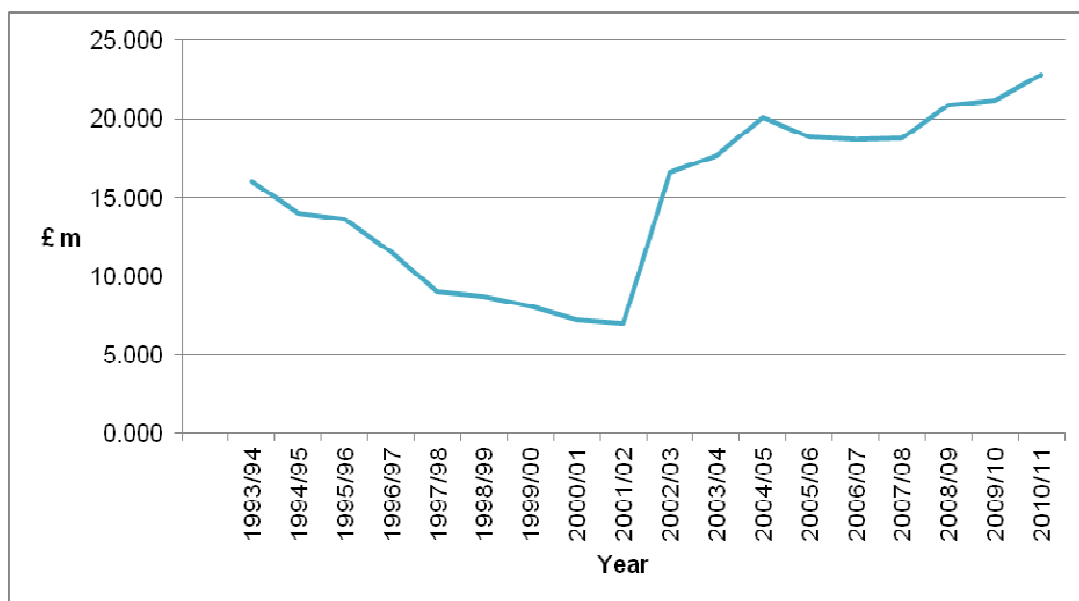
1. To advise the Area Board about Wiltshire Council's Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020, and to agree the local highway maintenance priorities for 2014/15.

#### Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The Council's Business Plan sets out the vision to create stronger and more resilient communities. It includes three key priorities and twelve actions that the Council will deliver over the next four years. One of the twelve actions is to 'invest additional money between 2014-17 to reduce the historic backlog in highways maintenance'. The recommendations of this report will facilitate the delivery of this action, which is an important part of the Business Plan.

#### Background

3. Expenditure on highways declined substantially during the 1990's, and there has been underinvestment in roads maintenance for years. It did increase from 2000/1 with the introduction of Local Transport Plan funding, but there is still a large backlog of maintenance required on the network.



5. Funding of highway major maintenance has continued to increase in Wiltshire in recent years, but with a series of bad winters and recent flooding the road network has been badly affected.
6. Wiltshire Council has recently approved a major programme of investment in highway maintenance over the next six years which will see a significant improvement in the condition of the county's highway network.

### **Main Considerations for the Council**

7. The investment is being targeted at those roads in worst condition, and will include minor roads as well as the main roads. An initial assessment based on road safety information and road condition data has been used to prepare a list of priority sites for treatment in 2014/15 in each community area (See **Appendices 1 and 2**). Any roads shown on the list highlighted in yellow need to be treated in order to address skid resistance and safety problems.
8. In addition to the larger sites, the Council will also be repairing localised sites which are suffering from deterioration or which need repairs. A programme of pothole and defect repairs will continue across the county in response to local damage identified through our regular inspections or reports from the public and road users.
9. A provisional list of roads for potential treatment until 2020 has been prepared for each community area (see **Appendices 3 and 4**). The site list is based on the existing condition of the roads and the anticipated deterioration in the future, but it will need to be reviewed annually as the rate of deterioration of individual roads may vary because of weather and local conditions.
10. As well as addressing the roads in worst condition, improvements will be made to the drainage and footways to bring them up to standard. Some roads will have to be treated as priorities because of the need to ensure there is adequate skid resistance and they are in safe condition.
11. It is the intention that the Area Boards should have the opportunity to help identify local priorities for treatment. The process has been delayed this year because of the need to focus on flooding, but this is likely to be an annual process in future.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

5. Does not apply.

### **Public Health Implications**

6. Increased investment in road maintenance will have benefits for public health. The improved road surfaces, better skid resistance and associated safety improvements will help reduce the numbers killed and injured on the road network. These improvements would complement the other

measures to improve road safety, such as traffic calming and speed limits, being introduced through the Local Transport Plan funding and the Community Area Traffic Groups.

12. The improved road surfaces, particularly on the minor urban roads, will be of benefit to cyclists and pedestrians, and with suitable publicity campaigns could be used to encourage these healthier means of transport. At present the condition of some of the urban roads may discourage cycling as cyclists are adversely affected by poor road conditions and uneven or damaged surfaces. The proposed investment would support the strategy to encourage cycling as set out in the Local Transport Plan.
13. Roads in poor condition in urban areas can result in disturbance and noise for residents, especially on busier routes carrying heavy goods vehicles at night. Better road surfaces could result in reduced background noise in residential areas, with potential mental and physical health benefits.
14. The Council monitors road collision data in order to focus safety improvements at those sites with the worst accident records. With the additional funding this process will continue, and where appropriate other alterations to signing, drainage, street lighting or road markings could be incorporated into resurfacing work to improve safety.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

15. The road network is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. In recent years we have seen the effects of a series of severe winters which have resulted in damage to the roads and an increase in the number of potholes. Last year was the second wettest on record and flooding damaged a number of roads in Wiltshire. In long periods of hot weather the surfaces can be damaged by melting, resulting in roads becoming slippery or deforming under traffic loads.
16. In the longer term a more robust highway network, with roads in better condition, would require less reactive maintenance and reduced travelling to respond to potholes and localised defects. A planned maintenance regime would enable the traffic disruption to be kept to a minimum. With unplanned maintenance the delays to traffic and associated fuel consumption could be considerable.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

17. The improvements in road safety anticipated with increased investment in road maintenance would be expected to benefit all road users, but especially the more vulnerable, including pedestrians, cyclists and other non vehicle users.
18. The highway network is important to local businesses, and to public transport operators. The delays due to un-programmed maintenance and road repairs have been identified as concerns by local businesses. The high profile programme of works to address road conditions will help send

the message that transport is important in Wiltshire and could help to promote inward investment and job creation.

### **Risk Assessment**

19. There are serious risks in connection with road maintenance. These include the safety and reputational aspects of those killed and seriously injured on the highway network. In order to reduce these risks the Council has approved highway inspection and skid resistance procedures in place, but in order to keep the network in safe condition it is important that the highway network has adequate investment.
20. The road condition data collected thorough the technical surveys is used to focus investment on those sites where there is most need and greatest risk. As well as the safety benefits this approach also ensures that best use is made of the limited available funding in order to keep the asset in optimum condition.

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

21. The risks to the Council from lack of road maintenance are in terms of claims against the Council as the result of accidents, or in extreme cases prosecution as a result of particular incidents. As well as the safety and cost aspects, there are also significant reputational implications of such events.
22. Not carrying out highway maintenance is likely to lead to declining public satisfaction in the future as road conditions remain the same and no progress is made on improving them.

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

23. There is a risk that the proposed investment will not deliver the improvements in road condition anticipated. This risk will be managed by using the technical data to focus the necessary investment on those sections of road where work is required to meet safety requirements, and on those places where it would improve road conditions the most. Effective asset management will reduce this risk and make sure the investment is effective.
24. There is a risk that the investment will not increase public satisfaction with the service. In view of the initial results from those authorities which have made a substantial investment it would appear that satisfaction levels will improve with the investment. However, a programme of publicity, branding and public involvement through the Area Boards will help raise awareness of the project, and will help to reduce this risk.

### **Financial Implications**

25. The Council's approved budget includes provision for the increased investment to deliver the Council's Business Plan with regard to road maintenance.

### **Legal Implications**

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

### **Options Considered**

27. The Council considered various options regarding funding levels for future highway maintenance, but it was concluded that an investment of £21 million annually would be realistic and would improve the condition of the county's roads. Less funding would result in not all roads in poor condition being treated, and higher levels of funding were not considered realistic in the present circumstances.

### **Conclusions**

28. The conditions of the road network are important to the public, and this is reflected through the People's Voice and NHT surveys. In order to improve carriageway conditions in Wiltshire, expenditure above anticipated LTP funding levels would be required for a number of years.
29. Increasing the funding to £21 million for six years would provide a significant improvement to the condition of the network, including improving the condition of the unclassified roads, and improving safety on the classified roads by improving 664 kilometres of road. There would be the opportunity to involve the Area Boards to help identify local priorities for treatment.

**Parvis Khansari**  
**Associate Director Highways and Transport**

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### **Background Papers**

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report: None

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 –RWBC Highways Major Maintenance 2014 – 15

Appendix 2 –RWBC Proposed Sites Map 2014 – 15

Appendix 3 –RWBC Possible Sites 2014 – 2020

Appendix 4 –RWBC Possible Sites Map 2014 - 2020