

Wiltshire Council

Royal Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Area Board

Date of meeting

Subject: Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020

Report Author: Parvis Khansari, Associate Director Highways and Transport

Executive Summary

Wiltshire Council has a major programme of investment in highway maintenance over the next six years which has started in 2014/15, and 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. The scheme list for 2014/15 was considered by the Area Board earlier this year, and is fixed. The work is either completed or currently underway on these sites (See **Appendix 1**). There are also road safety and Community Area Transport Group schemes being implemented (See **Appendix 2**).

A list of roads for resurfacing and treatment in 2015/16 has been prepared (See **Appendix 3**). The site list has been developed taking into account the existing condition of the roads, road safety considerations and the anticipated deterioration in condition. The Area Board is asked to review this list, and suggest any other sites, particularly for consideration for future years.

The level of funding for highway maintenance in Wiltshire is significantly above the level of funding provided by the Department of Transport, with a budget of £21 million for highway maintenance and £3 million for bridge maintenance in 2015/16. The DfT funding for roads and bridge maintenance in Wiltshire has been £12.262 million for 2014/15, and is in the region of £16.500 million for 2015/16.

The Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 -2020 represents a significant increase in investment in road maintenance in Wiltshire.

Proposals

The Area Board is requested to:

1. Note the progress made on implementing road resurfacing and safety schemes in 2014/15
2. Consider the list of proposed highway maintenance schemes in their areas for 2015/16, and agree the final list for implementation.
3. Suggest any sites for consideration for inclusion in future year's highway maintenance and resurfacing programmes.

Reason for Proposal

Wiltshire Council has a major programme of investment in highway maintenance, 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 to 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 in agreeing a final list for 2015-16 would be appreciated as there is a significant programme of works to deliver.

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Purpose of Report

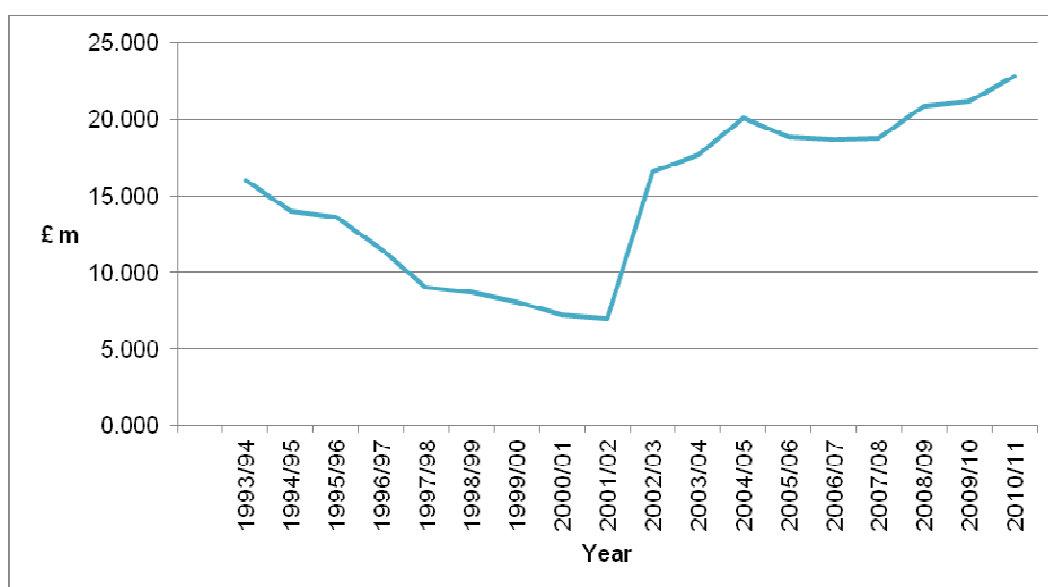
1. To advise the Area Board about progress made implementing the Wiltshire Council's Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020, and to agree the local highway maintenance priorities for 2015/16.

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'.

Background

3. Expenditure on highways declined substantially during the 1990's, and there has been under investment in roads maintenance for years. It has increased since 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 flooding earlier this year the road network has been badly affected.
6. Wiltshire Council has a major programme of investment in highway maintenance over the next six years, and this will see a significant improvement in the condition of the county's highway network.

Main Considerations

7. There is a substantial programme of road maintenance currently underway. The larger schemes in your area are shown in **Appendix 1**. Most of the surfacing across the county has already been completed, or is programmed for the coming months, subject to weather. The scheme list for 2014/15 is fixed and at this stage would only be changed in exceptional circumstances.
8. In a few cases schemes have had to be delayed because of public utilities work or other access difficulties, and these sites will generally be completed at the first available opportunity.
9. As well as those roads on the list of schemes circulated to Area Boards in 2014, additional sites have had to be treated because of damage caused by flooding. This additional work has been funded from additional funding provided by central government for winter damage and potholes.
10. There are ongoing programmes of local safety and Community Area Transport Group (CATG) schemes in the area, and recent larger projects are listed in **Appendix 2**.
11. The Local Highways Investment Fund 2014 – 2020 is being targeted at those roads in worst condition, and includes minor roads as well as the main roads. It is intended to produce a long term improvement in the condition of Wiltshire's roads by applying asset management principles. Road safety information and road condition data has been used to prepare a list of priority sites for treatment in 2015/16 in the community area as shown in **Appendix 3**.
12. In addition to the larger carriageway surfacing sites, the Council will also be repairing localised areas 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.
13. 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.
14. It is the intention that the Area Boards will have the opportunity to help identify local priorities for treatment for future years. Any sites which the

Area Board suggest will be inspected and considered for potential inclusion in the road maintenance programme for future years.

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, speed limits, and schemes being developed by the Community Area Traffic Groups.
15. The improved road surfaces, particularly on the minor urban roads, will be of benefit to cyclists and pedestrians. Urban roads in poor condition may discourage cycling as cyclists who can be adversely affected by road conditions and uneven or damaged surfaces. The investment supports the strategy to encourage cycling as set out in the Council's Local Transport Plan.
16. 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 should result in reduced background noise in residential areas, with potential mental and physical health benefits.
17. 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

18. 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 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.
19. In the longer term a more robust highway network, with roads in better condition, will require less reactive maintenance and reduced travelling to respond to potholes and localised defects. A planned maintenance regime enables traffic disruption to be kept to a minimum. With unplanned maintenance the delays to traffic and associated fuel consumption can be considerable.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

20. 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.
21. 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

22. 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.
23. The road condition data collected through 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

24. 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.
25. 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

26. There is a potential risk that the proposed investment will not deliver the improvements in road condition anticipated. This risk is being managed by using the technical data to focus the 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.

27. 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 in the longer term with the increased investment.

Financial Implications

28. Routine highway maintenance such as grass cutting, gully emptying and litter picking is paid for with Revenue funding. The majority of funding for major road maintenance and highway improvements is capital funding usually provided through the Maintenance Block Capital Grant from the Department for Transport (DfT). The allocation for Wiltshire for 2014/15 is £12.262 million, and for 2015/16 is expected to be in the region of £16.4 million.
29. The importance of highways investment has been recognised within the Wiltshire Council Business Plan 2013/17 and as a result an intention to invest additional Capital budget was factored into the financial plan based on assumed future grant levels. Highway maintenance funding in Wiltshire has been increased to £21 million for the six year period to 2020, with a budget for bridge maintenance of a further £3 million annually during this period.
30. It has been estimated that an annual expenditure of around £12.575 million would be required to maintain the highway network in its existing condition for the next 15 years. Spending less than this would result in road conditions deteriorating and public satisfaction reducing.
31. The funding of £21 million for highways maintenance for six years will result in a significant improvement to the condition of the network, including improving the condition of the unclassified roads, and improving safety on the classified roads

Legal Implications

32. 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

33. 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 significantly 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

34. 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, increased expenditure above the funding levels provided by the Department of Transport is being provided for highway maintenance.
35. The current funding of £21 million for six years will provide a significant improvement to the condition of the network, improving the condition of both unclassified and classified roads. As part of the scheme the opportunity is being provided to the Area Boards to help identify local priorities for treatment.

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Background Papers

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

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Royal Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Highways Major Maintenance 2014 – 15

Appendix 2 – Royal Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Integrated Transport Schemes 2014 – 15

Appendix 3 – Royal Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Highway Major Maintenance Sites 2015 – 2016