

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO COUNCIL

22ND OCTOBER 2014

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to consider the best use of additional resources that have been secured through government grant towards road maintenance activities and how resources can continually be targeted to support the most localised solutions which are currently able to be funded through the community participation budget which is due to end in March 2015. The report sets out the intention of a £9M investment in highway and footpath maintenance activities which includes small community participation projects over the next three years.

As part of the Council's 2014-15 budget setting process, Council agreed the allocation of £5.89M to support future investments. There are significant new developments coming forward across the Borough. A detailed Infrastructure Strategy in response to such developments, which is particularly relevant to South of the Borough is in production. An allocation of the above figure towards increased funding of roads and footpaths has been discussed however the Council has received external funding primarily towards investment in roads and footpaths and a scrutiny review of road and footpath maintenance is currently ongoing which will help identify areas to be targeted for further interventions over and above normal spending patterns.

The community participation budget has over a number of years provided a successful mechanism to carry out very localised solutions to problems with highway infrastructure and these can include car parking and fencing that aid pedestrian and traffic movements. This report considers with the additional resources for highway and footpath maintenance that are being considered by the Select Committee, what opportunities will exist to use this mechanism to continue to provide local selections on a ward by ward basis.

Cabinet RESOLVED that:-

1. The additional funding received from Government for additional highway and footpath maintenance be noted. The Council's Regeneration & Transport Scrutiny Committee are currently reviewing the priorities for this additional spend which would be reported to Cabinet separately.
2. It be noted that over the next three years £9M will be available from government grant and additional revenue support for the investment in highway and footpath maintenance and community participation budget project.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

3. The success of the community participation budget be noted and the use of £800K over the financial years 2015-16 and 2016-17 (£400K per year) be approved from the approved

Medium Term Financial Plan allocation for investment to use on local highway and environmental improvements using the community participation budget protocols and funding distribution mechanism.

DETAIL

Community Participation Budget

1. The Community Participation Budget started in 2007/08 under the name the Small Environmental Improvements Budget with a funding allocation of £400,000 per year. The name of this budget was changed to reflect the importance of community participation in the development of project ideas for the wards. During this period a total of 1208 projects have been completed in the programme at an average of 128 per year.
2. The budget is divided across the Borough on a ward-by-ward basis based on the ward populations. Any unspent funding from previous years would be carried forward and added to the following year's allocation.
3. The CPB can be used to fund a variety of projects ranging from small engineering schemes that improve the function of the space on or adjacent the highway or small projects that improve the local amenity space.
4. In 2012 changes were made to the list of eligible projects; due to the revenue budget pressures for the on-going maintenance, the siting of planter tubs/troughs, hanging baskets and other floral displays is no longer permitted on Council owned land (NB - the planting of trees and bulbs is still permitted). It is, however, eligible to use the CPB to contribute to schemes where a third party landowner is to take on the on-going maintenance of the scheme, e.g. Town and Parish Councils.
5. Providing match funding for the installation of Speed Indication Devices and Vehicle Activated Signs (SID's and VAS's) is now an eligible project for the CPB, along with environmental improvement projects carried out through the Town and Parish Councils are eligible to receive match funding from the CPB.
6. The CPB has proved to be a popular source of match funding to the Area Transport Strategy (ATS), with many of the schemes taken forward through this budget in recent years being allocated funding by the ward councillors. Without the CPB as match funding several of the schemes implemented through the ATS would not have been undertaken. During the period a total of 61 schemes have received support from the CPB budget.
7. Additional match funding for environmental improvements across several wards has been secured through the close working relationship with Thirteen, who also have a small budget to undertake small environmental improvements; with the objective of benefitting their tenants. Approximately £65,000 has been contributed by Thirteen to date.
8. The community participation programme is positively received by Elected Members and the communities they represent and the borough budget is currently set to cease in March 2015. The absence of this budget programme will place additional strain on existing mainstream budgets particularly around the highway maintenance agenda. This year the Council has received additional funding from government to help accelerate improvements to road and footpath maintenance which remains a clear priority for residents. In order not to lose momentum with this priority Cabinet are asked to recommend the use of funding from the previously approved £5.89M allocation to support future investments to support the principle of the community participation budget continuing for a further two years. As additional highway maintenance money is available during this period it is proposed that the annual allocation for the two year period is £400K.

Highway Infrastructure Investment and Maintenance

9. It is reported separately to Cabinet the changing trend and pressures on the borough's transport network and other key facilities. In particular the south of the borough has seen an exponential rise in housing numbers and economic growth and employment continue to develop borough wide. Large investments in the borough's transport network are either underway or planned to deal with this growth agenda and in the south of the borough alone there is in excess of £18M of transport infrastructure planned which will create capacity and relieve congestion. In addition to creating this new capacity, having a highway network that is well maintained will contribute towards effective movement of traffic on the network is absolutely essential and continued investment in highway maintenance activities remains crucial.
10. There are 836km of adopted highway within the Borough of Stockton, made up of a combination of A, B, C and unclassified roads and as the local highway authority Stockton Borough Council has the responsibility for designated roads within the area, including maintenance. Trunk Roads within the Borough (A19, A66) come under the remit of the Highways Agency.
11. Highway and footway condition is generally rated between 1 and 5, with 1 being brand new and 5 being the worst thus meaning they require some form of remedial treatment. The most recent investigations undertaken show that there are currently 457 highway and footways rated as 5 and this list is made up following inspections from the Councils Highway Inspectors and independent external condition surveys. There equates to approximately 65km of carriageways within the Borough that require surfacing works either in the near future or investigation for possible maintenance schemes.
12. This will be further exacerbated due to the more frequent extreme weather events that now seem to be occurring. In addition natural traffic growth and traffic associated with additional developments will further increase the rate of deterioration. Another concern in not having sufficient funding to maintain/improve the condition of the highway is the potential for an increase in third party claims being made against the Authority.
13. The most recent Whole Government Accounting figures (2012/13) show a total gross replacement cost of all carriageways and footpaths within the Borough to be approximately £1,123,838,000. Funding needed to bring defective carriageways up to an acceptable standard is approximately £49,000,000.
14. A variety of surveys have been undertaken over recent years including MORI, Resident and Viewpoint surveys have asked for views on highway maintenance. The most recent Resident Survey (2012) and Viewpoint Survey (2013) results showed that there is still a high level of dissatisfaction across all areas of the Borough which suggest that this issue is still high on the public's agenda and something they wish to see the Council improve upon. It is worth noting that a further survey is being undertaken during September 2014, with results expected to be shared with CMT early-mid October.
15. Local Transport Capital Block Funding allocation for Highway Maintenance within Stockton (2013/14) was £1,909,000 the majority of which is utilised to undertake resurfacing schemes across the different carriageway classifications previously mentioned. Revenue budgets for maintenance schemes for 2014/15 totalled approximately £730k.

16. Over recent months, additional funding mechanisms have become available. The first received was £197k which was the final payment of a 2-year additional maintenance funding grant from government. Following the extreme weather during winter 2013 a further grant of £258k was allocated and was to assist local highway authorities in repairing accelerated damage to the local road network. More recently a £168,000,000 'Pothole Fund' was made available nationally to assist local highway authorities in England repair damage to the local road network and following a robust bid process Stockton were successful in securing £327,974 from this fund. In total an additional £782K of funding has been secured from government grants.
17. In summary the funding from government grants and additional Council revenue will see an investment programme over the next three years of £9M. The further report will identify how that resource is targeted and Cabinet are recommended to note the process that is ongoing.
18. These additional funds whilst allowing us to increase the number of resurfacing/structural patching schemes with the Borough have also enabled other highway maintenance treatments to be increased / introduced / trailed. These include:
 - Increased white/yellow line maintenance.
 - Additional surface water drainage system cleaning and verge works.
 - Increased pot-hole repairs undertaken both internally and by external contractors.
 - Traffic Calming / Speed Hump mass action replacement.
 - Texture Blast treatments of roundabout with sub-standard skid resistance.
 - Joint and Crack Sealing maintenance programme.
 - Mass replacement of 'cats-eyes' in rural locations.
19. The Council's Regeneration & Transport Select Committee are currently looking at evidence that determines the priorities for additional funding should it be allocated for roads and footpaths with the aim of the Committee to consider:
 - Where the investment should be targeted.
 - What additional resource can potentially achieve.
 - Level of investment required in future years.
 - What else could be achieved?
20. It is likely the results from resident's surveys undertaken, together with a review of the list of potential highway maintenance scheme's, areas for development amongst other factors will help shape where any further investment should be targeted and this will be reported to Cabinet separately.
21. Cabinet considered the report at its meeting on 9th October 2014 and a copy of the relevant minute extract is attached to the report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

22. The resources identified in the report for road and footpath maintenance are currently funded within Council's agreed Medium Term Financial Plan or have been secured through government grant. The community infrastructure budgets of £400,000 for 2 years will be funded from the £5,590,000 earmarked for infrastructure as part of the 2014/15 budget report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

23. The utilisation of resources of road, footpath and environmental projects will comply with existing statutory legal procedures.

RISK ASSESSMENT

24. Highway infrastructure investment is categorised as low risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Regeneration and Transport

25. Investment in the borough's road and footpath network is critical to ensure all modes of transport continue to function and are accessible to all parts of the community.

Safer Communities

26. Well maintained roads and footpaths ensure the risk of injuries are minimised.

Environment and Housing

27. The Community Participation Budget has been very successful in improving minor environmental issues on a local ward basis and further investment in the programme will ensure those improvements continue to make the contribution.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

28. This report is not subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment because the activities relate to existing systems and programmes that are currently in execution.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

29. All Ward Members will be provided with a briefing on the next steps associated with this programme of activity once Cabinet has made its decision.

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Education related?

No

Background Papers

No

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

ALL

Property

N/A