

**Report to:** Performance Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 19<sup>th</sup> July 2018

**Lead Member/Officer:** Lead Member for Highways, Planning and Sustainable Transport / Head of Highways and Environmental Services

**Report Author:** Highways Asset and Risk Manager

**Title:** Developing a Highway Maintenance Strategy

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**1. What is the report about?**

This report is a brief follow up to the report submitted to the Performance Scrutiny Committee on December 7<sup>th</sup> 2017 about the Council's Highway Maintenance Strategy.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

At the meeting in December 2017, a request was made by the Committee that a representative from the Welsh Government be invited to attend such that funding issues can be discussed. This report adds to that previously submitted and introduces the Welsh Government representative as Mr Dewi Rowlands from the Department for Economy and Infrastructure.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

That Members comment on the contents of this report (and the Appendix) and also take the opportunity to discuss funding matters with the Welsh Government Officer.

**4. Report details**

- 4.1 Members are reminded that the condition of the County's roads are measured in two ways. The A and B roads are surveyed by a non-invasive technique called Scanner, and this determines the proportion of this element of the network that is deemed to be in Poor Condition. The remaining C and Unclassified roads (comprising 1142 kilometres of the overall 1,416) are subjected to a visual evaluation and scoring methodology.
- 4.2 Following on from the report to the Committee last December, data from both of these assessment methods has been analysed and Appendix A gives details of how, over the life of the previous Corporate Plan, these have changed. The Appendix gives a county wide perspective but Members may also be interested to note how the position in each individual Member Area Group regime has altered.
- 4.3 In terms of funding streams, the improvements to date have been financed primarily from Prudential Borrowing by the Council. For three years this was enhanced significantly by the Welsh Government via the Local Government Borrowing Initiative

which certainly gave a boost, but is no longer available to us. The annual capital allocation is currently £2.55 million and this results in around £2.3 million actually being spent on funded carriageway works spread across the whole network.

If the current levels of spending in respect to both revenue and capital are maintained throughout the current Corporate Plan period it is felt that this will result in:

- a) An increase in the budget allocation needing to be spent on reactive maintenance in order to fulfil our statutory obligations
- b) A moderate deterioration of measured condition
- c) An increased quantity of minor defects
- d) A consequent increase in the potential for 3rd Party Claims
- e) A likely decrease in customer satisfaction with the road condition.

4.4 Since the meeting in December 2017, the Welsh Government gave support to us of £100,000 in recognition of the additional costs incurred due to the severe winter weather and a proportion of this has been spent addressing the subsequent pothole issues. In addition a one-off 'Road Refurbishment Grant' of £30 million to be distributed to all Welsh councils, resulting in Denbighshire receiving £1,204,380. On the recommendation of the Strategic Investment Group (SIG), it was subsequently agreed by Cabinet that this grant would be used in the following ways:

- A525 Marsh Road/Vale Road junction in Rhyl. It requires re-surfacing and also the bulk of the existing traffic signal equipment is over 15 years old and is in need of replacement. In addition to the surfacing and signalling work, there is also a need to undertake work on the adjacent bridge. Cost estimate for re-surfacing work; replacement of the traffic signal equipment; pedestrian guardrail (as required); high friction surfacing; and work to address the potential for accidental wheel loading of the footway is £430k.
- A525 from the roundabout by St Asaph Cathedral up to Glan Clwyd School. This very busy section of carriageway is failing now and is also poor on skid resistance. Resurfacing it now will prevent further deterioration and will therefore be more cost effective. The estimate for this is around £160,000.
- Castle Street in Llangollen. From a Highways perspective the carriageway is failing, but the block paving footways are also now out of shape and this is beginning to lead to issues with mobility for users. The required highways improvements have an estimated value of £500,000. There are discussions taking place about a much bigger shared-space scheme in Llangollen, which could incorporate the required highways improvements. This community-led scheme would cost in excess of £2m, and the £500,000 could be used as match-funding to lever in Lottery Funding for the wider scheme. If the wider scheme does not come to fruition, we will go ahead with the highways improvement scheme in isolation.
- A525 Dual Toucan Crossing near Clwyd Retail Park, Rhyl. The existing dual Toucan Crossing is also over 15 years old and requires replacement. Cost estimate for replacement of signal equipment and high friction surfacing is £80k.

4.5 Whilst the provision of the Refurbishment Grant is welcome, the initial report to Performance Scrutiny Committee in December 2017 made clear that there are still

significant schemes within the county that cannot be funded and we are having to manage these as best as we can; the recent work on the A547 Abergele Straights is a prime example of this. In addition, Appendix A shows that for the bulk of the network there is a clear deterioration in condition and this will lead to increased pressures on the revenue budget (due to the statutory need to make potholes safe) so any investment before this point will prove to be invaluable.

**5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

This work contributes directly to the Connected Communities priority but in addition to this we will also link into the Resilient Communities agenda by extending the dropped kerb provision thus allowing greater mobility. We will particularly aim to do this along strategic routes where there is an enhanced mutual benefit rather than for the needs of individuals. Over the next few years we will set targets for recycling materials which will in turn link into the council's goal to reduce carbon emissions. In order to set challenging targets we need to make a baseline assessment, and this will be done shortly.

**6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

Budgetary considerations are contained in the main body of the report.

**7. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

Consultation with Members, Town and Community Councils and other interested third parties are an ongoing process when prioritising the work.

**9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

The reports sets out how the additional capital grant allocation is intended to be used. It also highlights the maintenance requirements over the network. As demand on capital is always greater than the funding available, submissions for annual capital allocations are assessed and prioritised by the Strategic Investment Group and reported to Council. This is an area that supports the council's corporate priorities and therefore a business case could be considered by the appropriate corporate board, within the funding available.

**10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

So as not to lead the Council open to litigation due to a failure to maintain the roads, we need a robust methodology to determine scheme prioritisation and this needs to be under-pinned with good inspection procedures and a suitable Code of Practice – all of which are achievable.

The other risk relates to contractor availability to undertake the necessary work, but this can be mitigated by good planning and procurement processes and these are already in place.

## **11. Power to make the Decision**

Section 7 of the Council's Constitution outlines Scrutiny's powers with respect of policy review and development, performance management, and liaising with external organisations, including national entities, to ensure that the interest of local people are enhanced by collaborative working.

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