

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020</b>
<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	<b>Cllr Brian Jones: Lead Member for Waste, Transport and the Environment / Tony Ward: Head of Highways, Facilities &amp; Environmental Services</b>
<b>Report author</b>	<b>Tony Ward</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Recovery Theme: Infrastructure – Highways and Public Realm</b>

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

- 1.1. This report is about “recovery” for highways and public realm. Recover in this context means recovery from Covid-19.

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

- 2.1. To enable Members to fulfil their scrutiny role by examining the issues relating to recovery for highways and public realm, and the plans currently in place to deliver our recovery objectives.

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

- 3.1 That the Committee supports the recovery plan, as set out in Appendix A to this paper; and
- 3.2 if appropriate, identifies any aspects of the recovery work which may benefit from detailed examination in the future.

## **4. Report details**

- 4.1. Recovery for Highways can be seen in two phases. Phase 1 is short-term recovery, i.e. the need to resume “normal” highways maintenance activities. This is critical, as the longer we go without returning to “normal”, the harder (and more expensive) it will be to return the network back to the condition prior to the floods of February 2020.

- 4.2. Phase 2 is the need to establish a more sustainable model of maintaining the highways network to a standard that matches the expectation of our residents and Elected Members in the longer-term.
- 4.3. The recovery plan, attached at Appendix A, focusses largely on Phase 1: “short-term recovery”. Phase 2: “long-term recovery and sustainability” will be debated in greater detail during 2020/21, and will be discussed at future meetings of the Budget Board, Strategic Investment Group (SIG), etc. as part of the future budget-setting process.

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

- 5.1. “Investing in roads and bridges to maintain a viable, sustainable infrastructure” is part of the Connected Communities priority – “*Communities are connected and have access to goods and services locally, online and through good transport links*”.

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

- 6.1. The cost of highways recovery, i.e. the cost of returning our highways network and associated highways infrastructure to the condition prior to the February 2020 floods, is currently unknown. Further work to calculate this is required once we have been able to complete a detailed inspection of all our assets. However, resuming “normal” highways maintenance activities again (after the hiatus caused by Covid-19) need not cost additional money. We already have capital funding available to deliver surfacing schemes (subject to contractor availability), and our internal highways workforce is now returning to work now that restrictions are easing.

## **7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

- 7.1. It is felt that a Well-being Impact Assessment is not required for this paper.

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

- 8.1. The report has been discussed with the Lead Member (June 2020); Senior Leadership Team (SLT) (18<sup>th</sup> June 2020); Informal Cabinet (6<sup>th</sup> July 2020); and Group Leaders (14<sup>th</sup> July 2020). Also, discussions about the Highways Capital Programme and the proposal regarding salt bins were discussed at informal Member Area Group (MAG) meetings throughout July 2020.

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

9.1. The funding position for the Council remains difficult and uncertain. Difficult decisions will continue to be required each year to balance the following:

- service savings, rationalisation and efficiencies
- the need to fund unavoidable pressures
- Council priorities and ambitions
- Level of Council Tax

There is a robust annual budget setting process in place to help balance these competing elements.

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

10.1. There is a section relating to risks within the recovery plan report, attached at Appendix A.

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

11.1. Scrutiny's powers in relation to matters detailed in this report are as per:

- 7.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000;
- 7.2 Section 7 of the Council's Constitution