

Report to: Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 25th November 2013

Lead Member/Officer: Lead Member for Public Realm/
Head of Highways and Environmental Services

Report Authors: Section Manager Network Management & Strategic
Highways Manager

Title: Draft Highways Capital Programme 2014/15 and
progress on the draft strategy

1. What is the report about?

The latest draft 2014/15 highways capital programme and development of the process to deliver a strategy and three year capital plan.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To enable members to debate the latest version of the 2014/15 Highways Maintenance Capital Programme within the timescale necessary for submission of a business case to Welsh Government for consideration under the Local Government Borrowing Initiative (LGBI).

To provide an update on progress with the development of the Strategy and a draft Highways Maintenance Policy.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 That Members consider and agree the latest draft of the Highways Maintenance Capital Programme subject to further changes at Member Area Groups.

3.2 That Members note the Policy document and agree to review the output from the Highways Strategy Working Group which has been arranged for December 2013.

4. Capital Programme 2014/15

4.1 Latest position

The latest version is attached as Appendix A but is still subject to consultation with individual Member Area Groups during the next four weeks.

The programme has been developed following an extensive review of data from surveys, consultation with relevant highways officers and input from elected members and Town and Community Councils.

The final piece of data, SCRIM (Sideway-force Coefficient Routine Investigation Machine - skid resistance) has been received during the first week of November and will be converted for review and input in to the programme before the meeting of this Committee.

4.2 Next steps

Following the review of the SCRIM data the draft programme will be debated with the Member Area Groups, either at meetings or via email. The output from the groups will be incorporated.

Officers will review the final programme and decide which schemes are suitable for submission to the Welsh Government for inclusion in the bid for funding from the Local Government Borrowing Initiative (LGBI). This will be focussed on larger resurfacing schemes which are easily identifiable as adding 20 years extra life to the asset, which is a prime objective of the funding.

2014/15 will be the final year for the LGBI funding and Welsh Government will be keen to monitor the effectiveness of this three year programme of works.

Following agreement of the capital budget by Council during February 2014 the capital programme will be tailored to the finalised amount of funding available and published. The delivery of the programme will be instigated immediately.

If there is a variation in the amount of funding available from that currently indicated and the programme has to be varied significantly then this will be discussed further with Members before progressing.

The delivery of the programme is undertaken by the Works Unit within Highways and Environmental Services and progress is communicated through the Members Event Calendar and progress reports to all Members.

5 Highways Asset Management Strategy

5.1 Progress to date

The Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting in July agreed to the establishment of a Working Group to look at this issue and a representative from each MAG has now been proposed. They are:-

Councillors Merfyn Parry, Peter Evans, Bill Cowie, David Simmons, Huw Williams, Cefyn Williams

Councillor David Smith, as Lead Member for Public Realm, has been invited to Chair the group.

Officers have been focussed on delivering the draft capital programme for 2014/15 which has to be prepared, agreed and submitted to tight timescales to Welsh Government as part of a fully evaluated submission. This has delayed progress on the development of the Strategy.

5.2 Next steps

The first meeting of the Group is proposed for 3rd December 2013.

A first draft of our approach to lifecycle planning, whole life costing, data management, and risk assessments will be presented to the group. The outcome of this will be incorporated in to a brief draft strategy document which should be available very early in the new year.

A Maintenance Policy document is already in draft form and will be presented to the first meeting of the group. This will support and inform the strategy.

As agreed with this Committee in July 2013 it is anticipated that the entire network will be prioritised during the first quarter of 2014/15. This will identify the current state of each section of highway, proposed remedial work where necessary, and estimated costs.

This document, supported by a cost benefit type analysis of funding levels will form the basis of a bid to the Strategic Investment Group for 2015/16 capital funding.

6 How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

Improving our Roads is identified as a priority in the Corporate Plan 2012-17.

7 What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The Council has indicated the likely level of investment in roads in the Corporate Plan. The Highways Asset Management Strategy and the considered development of the Capital Programme are fundamental in ensuring that best value is obtained from this investment.

8 What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision?

The highways maintenance regime is designed to improve the overall safety of all road users. To support the council's equality objective it is important that physical access to services, transport, the built environment and open spaces improve. On-going consultation with older and disabled people has highlighted the lack of dropped kerbs as an issue that may have a disproportionate impact in relation to safety and accessibility for people with a physical impairment including mobility scooter and wheelchair users and lack of tactile paving for people with a visual impairment. We will develop and equality impact assess a programme of work and thus identify priority areas for dropped kerbs through continued consultation.

9 What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

Officers involved in the maintenance of the highway have been consulted. Elected Members have been asked to input in to the process and will form part of the review process through Member Area Groups.

Town and Community Councils have been asked for their views.

10 Chief Finance Officer Statement

Investment in highways has been included as a corporate priority for several years and funded accordingly. The Corporate Plan aims to continue this and assumes funds will be made available for future years.

11 What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

Failure to carefully consider all aspects of the condition of the highway in developing the capital programme could lead to a failure to deal with safety issues. This is mitigated by the process used to develop the programme and the development of a Highways Asset Management Strategy.

Late development of the capital programme could cause funding problems with Welsh Government and also procurement difficulties. This risk is minimised by the early development of the programme and the early involvement of Members.

A lack of investment in the Highway when identified a priority could create a reputation risk for the Authority. The Corporate Plan identifies funding to support the priority.

12 Power to make the Decision

Highways Act 1980

Article 6.3.3 and 6.3.4 of the Council's Constitution sets out Scrutiny's powers with respect to matters under consideration in this report.

Contact Officer:

Section Manager Network Management
Tel. 01824 706875