

Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport

Highway Improvement Schemes – Prioritisation Process

Report by Executive Director Residents' Services and Director of Highways and transport

Ref No: HT02 (16/17)
Key Decision: Yes
Part I
Electoral Divisions: All

Executive Summary

Following the major reorganisation of the Highways Department a review has been conducted by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport into the process of how Highway Improvement Schemes are identified, prioritised and delivered.

An outcome of this review has been the need for a new process for the proposal and prioritisation of Highway Improvement Schemes by County Local Committees (CLCs) that is clear, transparent and sustainable and which aligns with County Council Policy and the future West Sussex operating model. As part of the review an Executive Task and Finish Group (TFG) was established by the Cabinet Member to review current arrangements and make recommendations on a future process. The Cabinet Member has considered the recommendations of the TFG and this report outlines a new process for scheme prioritisation, as described in paragraph 3.

Recommendation

That the Cabinet Member approves the new process for the prioritisation of Highway Improvement schemes to take effect from April 2016.

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 Highways Improvement schemes are changes to the existing highway infrastructure to improve the experience of the road user and/or community. They can range from minor road junction or footway improvements to cycling schemes and traffic calming and public realm schemes.
- 1.2 Since 2011, some highways improvement schemes have been identified through the County Local Committees and delivered through the Integrated Works Programme (IWP). Other schemes delivered through the IWP have come forward to mitigate the impact of new development; such schemes have been funded, in full or part, through developer contributions secured under s106 agreements.

- 1.3 Typically the type of improvement works include; pedestrian crossings, cycling facilities, new footways, school safety measures, traffic management and town/village enhancements, option appraisal studies and TRO based solutions such as speed reduction and parking protection.
- 1.4 Improvements schemes can be complex in nature consisting of activities such as consultations, legal orders, land acquisition, mobilising consultants and adhering to the terms of the WSCC Highways Term Contract, and for these reasons the delivery of schemes, once started, can typically take between 2 to 4 years. As there is currently no limit to the costs of schemes that can be proposed as CLC priorities, individual schemes on the list have ranged in value from several thousand pounds to several million pounds. The typical capital funding that has been available in total for these schemes has been approximately £2m per annum (to increase to £2.8m in 16/17), and on this basis, it will take several years to address all the current priorities.
- 1.5 With no formal county-wide prioritisation, schemes have been delivered on a 'first-come first-served' basis, without demonstrating value for money, level of need or demand on resources.
- 1.6 It should be noted that some highway schemes identified in s106 agreements are fully-funded by developers and that the County Council will deliver them to mitigate the impact of development. If the funding is not spent it will often need to be returned to the developer. As the nature and cost of such schemes is prescribed in the s106 agreement, there is no discretion about how the funds can be spent.

2. **Consultation**

- 2.1 An Executive Task and Finish Group (TFG) was established by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport. The objective was to review how Highway Improvements are identified, prioritised and delivered, with a view to providing advice and assistance on the establishment of a new clear, transparent and sustainable process that achieves the required strategic outcomes. The TFG has provided the Cabinet Member with options and recommendations for this new process that the Cabinet member had duly considered.
- 2.2 The Terms of reference of the TFG asked members to recommend a new process that would:
 - Take into account the needs of communities and ensure alignment with Future West Sussex priorities;
 - Be transparent, clear, logical and comprehensible;
 - Be legally compliant and appropriately governed; and
 - As far as possible, be future-proofed and sustainably achieved.

- 2.3 The TFG had three meetings between December 2015 and January 2016 and produced a number of recommendations which were contained in the TFG's final report, and are reflected in this report.
- 2.4 The proposed decision builds on the work done by The Executive TFG in developing a sustainable, flexible new process that meets WSCC aims and principles going forward. The new process has incorporated the recommendations of the TFG where appropriate.
- 2.5 The proposal was presented to, and discussed at, Environmental and Community Services Select Committee on the 11th March 2016; the Committee resolved to support the recommended proposal.

3. **Proposal**

- 3.1 The proposed new process concerns the assessment and prioritisation of highway improvement schemes requested by local communities. The new process seeks to introduce a logical procedure that provides greater clarity, understanding and certainty to Members and local residents.
- 3.2 A process chart has been provided as Appendix A to this report which sets out the new procedure as a process map. In addition initial assessment/application forms have been developed (Appendix B), and a scoring matrix (Appendix C) that enables officers to provide a value-for-money scoring. The intention is that these forms provide a clear and transparent system of scoring highway improvement proposals.
- 3.3 The new process will operate in accordance with the principles below described in the Process Note (Appendix D). This process will take effect from April 2016, on the date this decision takes effect, and is anticipated to formulate the 2017/18 programme onwards.

4. **Other Options considered**

- 4.1 The following, alternative options for a highways improvements prioritisation scheme were presented to the TFG for consideration:

Option 1- Similar to the current position

Each CLC has the opportunity to select any number of highways improvements schemes for progression, based on its own priorities.

Option 2 – equal monetary share to each CLC

This option would allocate each CLC an equitable budget (excluding any available s106 funds within its area) so that each CLC has the opportunity to select a maximum number of proposals each year, to this value, subject to scoring the proposals using the agreed priority scoring matrix.

Option 3 – Prioritised approach

This option would develop a programme based on the highest scoring priorities countywide, and in accordance with the resources available. All

requests would be assessed against the scoring matrix and the resulting priority score used as a basis for setting an annual forward programme.

- 4.2 The TFG quickly concluded that option 1 was not sustainable and resulted in long lists of schemes that are progressed irrespective of the estimated cost, making resource plans and forward programmes difficult. Members also agreed that this approach resulted in community expectations often being raised and not always being met.
- 4.3 Option 2 was also dismissed as the TFG felt it would not align with Future West Sussex priorities and could result in schemes being progressed with little strategic benefit.
- 4.4 The TFG were in full agreement that a countywide prioritised approach would be the best way forward and therefore asked officers to work up a process around Option 3 for the TFG to assess.

5. **Resource Implications and Value for Money**

- 5.1 The proposal presented above will be administered within current resources.
- 5.2. The proposed process would develop a programme based on the highest value-for-money scoring priorities countywide, and in accordance with the resources available. It would also ensure proposed schemes are aligned with the priorities of the Authority as well as taking into account the needs of communities and deliver them efficiently and sustainably.

6. **Impact of the proposal**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Report (EIR) is not required because this report deals with internal and procedural matters only.

7. **Risk Management Implications**

- 7.1 There are risks associated with not introducing the proposal as recommended in this report and implementing an alternative proposal. Should proposals differing from the recommendation of this report be taken forward the risk would be that expectations of communities are raised with the potential that WSCC may not have the resource to deliver all schemes proposed. The current proposal can be undertaken within existing resource.

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Appendices:

[Appendix A](#) – Highway Improvements Process Flowchart

[Appendix B](#) – Highway Improvements Community Application Form

[Appendix C](#) – Highway improvements Value for Money Scoresheet

[Appendix D](#) – Highway Improvements Process Note

Background Papers

None.

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