

25 March 2015

ITEM: 20 (ii)

Council

Cabinet Member Report – Highways and Transportation

Report of: Councillor Oliver Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

This report is public

I am pleased to be able to introduce this report as portfolio holder for Highways and Transportation, as these services lie at the heart of the delivery of the Council's ambitions for transforming the lives of our residents. Since being appointed to the Portfolio in January, I have placed real emphasis on investing in Thurrock's highways asset and delivering positive outcomes for local communities within increasingly challenging budget constraints. I have also ensured that Local Growth Fund schemes necessary to enable future growth and regeneration in Thurrock are kept on track.

The regeneration and growth of the South East has a very positive impact on Thurrock. The improvements to tolling mechanism on Queen Elisabeth II Bridge allow for free flowing traffic. This helps in our Lower Thames Crossing campaign against current proposals which would increase Thurrock's traffic, congestion and pollution, or it could lead to the destruction of the Green Belt (option C). As our campaign continues, Highways Agency has started the capacity improvements on junction 30 of the M25, in particular the A13 through junction 30 and to the junction with the A126. It is expected that the junction 30 enhancements and A13 widening will facilitate movement on our roads.

In the meantime, we are dealing with environmental impacts such as the amount of noise on the A13 approach slip road to West Stanford le Hope interchange, which we are in process of decreasing, or minimising risk of flooding in the critical drainage areas in accordance with our new Surface Water Management Plan (July 2014).

The health and safety of our communities are imperative to our services thus projects such as Grays level crossing and Stanford le Hope station improvements are developed to remove a risk of injury or death to pedestrians, and also of cyclists. This is particularly important as we invest to encourage more cycling and walking across the borough as part of a healthy lifestyle.

This report is essentially split into two parts. The first part outlines the responsibilities of the key areas of the Portfolio and some of the key successes. The second part focuses on the main challenges over the remainder of the year.

1. THE KEY SERVICE AREAS – RESPONSIBILITIES, PERFORMANCE AND PRIORITIES

In August 2013, the Council terminated its Strategic Partnership with Europa, transferred the outsourced highways service back in-house and established a new Transportation and Highways Service as part of the Planning and Transportation Directorate. A Head of Service was appointed in March 2014 to lead the service and integrate the highways function with the transport planning and client function. A service restructure has been undertaken, refocusing the teams on the core delivery areas of Highways Infrastructure, Highways and Transportation Services, Transportation Development and Major Projects. The new structure will be fully operational by April 2015.

The Highways and Transportation Portfolio in the past year was divided into two areas:

- Highways, and
- Transportation.

Highways

The Council, as Local Highways Authority, is responsible for maintaining:

- 560km of carriageway;
- 1000km of footway;
- 133 structures;
- 168 roundabouts;
- 50 traffic signals;
- 1,750 lighting columns;
- 3,500 illuminated signs;
- 1,500 illuminated bollards;
- 30,000 signs; and
- 20,000 gullies.

All of the above are used by the vast majority of Thurrock's residents and visitors. However, recent and continuing growth in Thurrock puts added pressure on this already aging and overloaded infrastructure.

The Council relies on its Department for Transport (DfT) capital funding allocation for providing capital improvements to its highway infrastructure. This capital investment is very limited and, over the years, the lack of funding has had a profound effect on revenue spending; increasing the number short-term emergency repairs, accelerating public and Member dissatisfaction and increasing the risk of claims brought against Thurrock Council; all of which impact upon the Council's reputation and image for investors.

In recent years, the DfT has pursued a range of initiatives designed to ensure that Local Highways Authorities use best practice measures to maximise the

value gained from limited highways maintenance budgets. This included the establishment of a Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP), geared to sharing best practice and providing support to Local Highways Authorities in improving the efficiency of their operations. In Autumn 2014, Thurrock invited a Local Government Association delegation to come to Thurrock and conduct a Strategic Review of Thurrock's Highways function to benchmark current operations against HMEP best practice. The delegation returned to take part in an Action Planning Day in January 2015.

In late 2014, the DfT consulted on a proposal that from 2016/17 to 2020/21 an increasing share of the funding (incentive funding) will be allocated on the basis of compliance with the Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP). This means that by 2020/21 low performing authorities would lose 20% of their maintenance funding. Even authorities in the mid band would only get 30% of their incentive funding by 2020/21. Authorities in the highest band would receive 100% of incentive funding. The feedback from the DfT on the banding that Thurrock would have achieved compared with other authorities which applied for funding would place Thurrock in the lowest band. Therefore, in December the Cabinet accepted the recommendations from the Transportation & Highways Service Strategic Review to develop a highways improvement plan which will equip Thurrock Council with a modern efficient continually improving service able to secure and make best use of maintenance funding.

Investment in our infrastructure is important to Thurrock's growth agenda, safety of the travelling public and promoting healthier lifestyles:

- Growth agenda - well-maintained infrastructure, in a sustainable funding environment, is pivotal in achieving the Council's growth agenda. Housing growth, for example, cannot be achieved without sufficient infrastructure to attract development and sustain it once complete.
- Safety - a network of roads in poor condition has a direct correlation to highway safety. As the local highway authority, the Council has a legal duty to maintain the network to a reasonable standard. Furthermore, an asset in poor condition is likely to promote a lack of pride in the community, and can be a precursor to crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. Clearly, the Authority and relevant senior managers have a duty of care where any part of the asset is life expired and is prone to failure, which could result in members of the public being seriously injured.
- Promoting Healthier lifestyles - an asset in poor condition, particularly footways and cycle ways, curtails promotion of sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling. Accordingly, assets in good condition increase the safety and attractiveness of these modes, with the resultant health benefits and the reducing need to access healthcare.

Transportation

The Transportation team comprises of three sections that fall within this Portfolio:

Sustainable Transport, Highways Development Control and Passenger Transport. These teams jointly provide a strategic transport service which co-ordinates, funds and delivers transport improvements to make Thurrock a safe, accessible and attractive place to live, work and visit.

The team also deals with day to day transportation related enquiries from the public, businesses and Members. In addition, the team provides advice and support to other Thurrock Council services and other local authorities.

With regard to strategy, the Transport Act 2008 places the duty for each Local Highway Authority to produce, develop and implement a Local Transport Plan (LTP). The latest LTP was produced in 2011 and is a vital tool to help Thurrock Council work with its stakeholders to strengthen its place-shaping role and its delivery of transport services to the community.

The Thurrock Transport Strategy (which sits above the LTP) has been developed to ensure that the key strategic objectives for transport are addressed. The Strategy document was refreshed for the period 2013 – 2026 and was approved by Cabinet in February 2013 to ensure that the Council's key priorities are appropriately emphasised, i.e. improvements to J30/31 of the M25 and A13 widening. The Highways Development Control Team liaises with Thurrock's Planning teams and Developers to help deliver new development projects, ensuring they are properly integrated within the highway and transportation network without risk to safety, efficiency or the environment, in accordance with the Council's and Government policies and guidelines.

Through development proposals, the team promotes the objectives of sustainable transport and optimises opportunities for the funding of transport infrastructure through development projects. The team commissions and project-manages capital transport schemes secured through developer funding. The team also checks engineering drawings and supervises adoptable highway works to ensure that new transport infrastructure is designed and constructed to appropriate standards. The team advises and assists in the preparation of highways and transportation policies, including the Local Development Framework and Thurrock's transport policies.

The Passenger Transport Unit provides a comprehensive passenger transport service in partnership with other service directorates, other local authorities, Transport for London, stakeholders, bus, rail and taxi operators, community transport (Transvol), Port of Tilbury, Schools and infrastructure providers to achieve best value for customers and residents. This is achieved by the development and implementation of policies, the co-ordination, promotion and purchase of passenger transport and infrastructure enhancements and the

operation of a fleet of passenger transport vehicles. The objective is to provide a passenger transport option for people to access work, education, food shopping and health care, offering an improved quality of life, a reduction in traffic congestion and social inclusion.

In 2014/15, Thurrock spent £585k on bus subsidies, of which £190k came from the Transportation & Highways Service Budget. This budget is set to be reduced to zero in 2016/17.

Local Growth Fund

The Highways and Transportation team is responsible for identifying and bidding for external funding for transport schemes. In 2014, the Council was successful in its bid for Local Growth Fund (LGF) for the period 2015 to 2021 which was submitted as a part of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). The Partnership secured £442.1 million from the Government's LGF allocation to support economic growth in area – with £64.6 million of new funding confirmed for 2015/16 and £143.6m for 2016/17 to 2021. This investment is expected to bring forward at least £190m of additional investment from local partners and the private sector. Combined together this will create a total new investment package of £632.1. In July 2014, Planning, Transportation and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed the success that Thurrock has had in attracting Government funding as part of the Growth deal and agreed to support the on-going work to progress the projects outlined in the deal.

The investment proposals for Thurrock for 2016/17 onwards include provisional allocations of:

- £5m to Thurrock cycle network improvements
- £7.5m to Stanford-le-Hope access improvements and to reconstruction of the A1014
- £5m to development of the A13 widening scheme; and
- £75m to delivery of A13 widening scheme 'subject to due diligence and alignment with decision-making on the preferred option for the Lower Thames Crossing'.

The Government's investments for TGSE for 2016/17 which encompass Thurrock include allocations of:

- £37.6m to capacity improvements along the A127
- £9m to integrated transport package for Basildon
- £7m to transport works to deliver the South Central Area Action Plan; and
- £6.7m to investment package to support delivery of the South Central Area Action Plan.

In September 2014, the Cabinet approved a proposal for the project management and delivery of the transport schemes necessary to mobilisation

of the above projects and to commence the process of public, partner and member engagement on the delivery of LGF funded transport schemes through Cabinet approval of the project planning/delivery proposals set out in this report.

Local Sustainable Transport Fund

The LGF includes the Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) allocation of £5m which contains £1m for improvement of Thurrock bus infrastructure schemes which will be implemented in 2015/16. The detailed information on this project is currently being scrutinised by the Independent Technical Evaluator. Once this gateway is passed the funds will be received and work should be progressed according to the schedule.

Beat the Street 2014 became one of the biggest and most successful active participation projects in the country. This was recognised in the final awards of Smart Travel 2015.

Unfortunately, a bid submitted for the extension of Government LSTF revenue funding for the period 2015-16 for further £1m was unsuccessful. However,

Stanford-le-Hope Integrated Transport Package

In addition to the LGF funding, c2c/Network Rail will make a contribution of £3m, the Council has identified £300k from its Capital Works Programme and London Gateway (DP World) has contributed £550k. Moreover, c2c provided £130k for the feasibility work and initial design of the station/bus interchange works.

Consultants, on behalf of the current train operator c2c, have produced a feasibility study and initial design of the scheme and this will inform the project plan and project planning process. Discussions on the design and delivery, including project management of the scheme, are on-going between the Council, Network Rail, c2c and London Gateway.

Cycling Improvements

The Thurrock Cycle Improvement package comprises of three elements:

- continuous off-road cycling and pedestrian through the Borough;
- improvements to the cycling network addressing missing links in key areas such as Grays, Ockendon and Stanford-le-Hope; and
- a package of measures to develop the Thames Riverfront route from Purfleet to Corringham.

The package will also provide measures which address north-south links to the existing cycle network and growth locations such as Purfleet, Lakeside,

Stanford-le-Hope and London Gateway. In addition, a cycle scheme will be developed to link Tilbury Fort and Coal House Fort.

Passenger Transport Services

2014 saw the award of the Thameside Rail Franchise to c2c for a further 15 years. The franchise was won on strong commitments to invest in both infrastructure and services. Building on this opportunity, Thurrock has signed a Memorandum Understanding with C2C to work closely in partnership to deliver future service and access needs.

With regard to buses, the Council continues to fulfil its statutory obligation to fund concessionary fares at a cost of £1.1m. Meanwhile, we have worked closely with bus operators to try to maintain bus services at a time when non-statutory bus subsidies are having to be cut back. In recent weeks, we have been trying to maintain some level of service to villages previously served by the previous 374 route. The new commercial 374 route would cover the majority of the old route but would leave Horndon on the Hill and Fobbing unserved.

The Council is funding services 11 and 265 at a cost of £250,971 and has currently agreed a small payment (£30,000) for service 374. There will now be eight return trips per day between Basildon and Grays via East Tilbury every 90 minutes. Saturday will also offer the same journeys with four return trips per day every three hours. The figures I have quoted are the lowest possible to run the desired services as they have been market tested through a tender process.

In addition to this the Council is still working hard to link Horndon on the Hill within the current bus network into Grays and negotiations are ongoing. In relation to Fobbing, other options are being considered. It is also our aim to work closely with the Operators to see services being improved in order for them to become fully commercial without the requirement of a subsidy from the local authority in the future.

In relation to service 12 this is wholly subsidised by developers' money in order to implement a service that suits the residents of the new housing development in Aveley. It would only require a peak service twice a day and as such it was required to be treated separately from service 11 as that only operates every 90 minutes. If we amalgamated service 11 & 12 together the funding would only cover a small part of the route and therefore additional funding would have been required for the rest of the route which we unfortunately do not have.

To conclude we are still looking at all options and are in discussions with operators and therefore, to elaborate further at this time, would be inappropriate but as soon as we have any further news we will publicly announce it.

Community Transport

Community Transport services also faced budgetary pressures. Planning, Transportation & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny group established a Task and Finish Group to investigate how Trans Vol could operate more efficiently in the future with reduced Council funding. It was agreed that there would be one-off funding of £50,000 for 2015/16 with the agreement that options would be explored within Children's Services and Adults, Health & Commissioning to maintain service viability.

Tilbury Ferry

The Council facilitated the ongoing operation of Tilbury Ferry, with support from the Port of Tilbury.

A13 widening

In November 2014, the Cabinet in consultation with the Leader authorised the Director of Planning and Transportation to enter into an agreement with The London Gateway Port Limited (D P World) allowing the Council to act as agent for DP World ("the Harbour Authority" under the Harbour Empowerment order 2008) in carrying out works required for the widening of the A13. The Cabinet also approved the carrying out of tender processes for contractors required in order to deliver the A13 widening scheme, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Transportation to award tendered contracts.

In addition to LGF funding, DP World will contribute £10m under s106 agreement to the A13 widening.

Street Lighting

This was one of the last projects that Councillor Andy Smith did for Thurrock Council, working with the highways and transportation team in order to replace the expensive and inefficient street lighting. The project for £6million of prudential borrowing to convert Thurrock's illuminated street furniture to Low Emission Diode (LED) was approved by the August 2014 Cabinet. The scheme will take 2 years to complete following the appointment of the contractor, which will provide Thurrock's residents and drivers with improved white light and a saving to Thurrock taxpayers. The capital investment of £6 million, against an asset life of 20 years, resulting in an annual saving of £680,000 per year in reduced electricity bills and maintenance costs would be offset against a repayment cost of £430k per year, leaving a net budget saving of £250k from 2017/18 onwards.

Local road safety

The news on 22 July 2014 stated that the number of people killed or seriously injured in traffic accidents in Thurrock fell significantly in the first half of this year.

Essex police figures show that in the first six months of 2014, 19 road users were killed or seriously injured, compared to 32 in the first six months of 2013.

Thurrock was one of just five of the 14 Essex districts or unitary councils where the numbers fell.

Grays Transport Study

In 2013 the Council developed an integrated multi-modal transport strategy for Grays town centre. This piece of work looked at existing and future transport issues which need to be addressed to support forecast growth and planned regeneration, including new development such as the South Essex College Thurrock Campus, Grays Magistrates Court, Hogg Lane South and the proposed rail station/underpass development in Grays South.

This work was developed around the regeneration vision for Grays and subsequent supporting work relating to the delivery of an underpass and public squares which is the subject of a separate report to this meeting.

The 2013 strategy identified the need for a more focused approach to be undertaken. This resulted in the development of the Grays Town Centre Access Study (August 2014) which identified a comprehensive package of measures to be considered for implementation which will deliver step-change improvements in terms of access and amenity, supporting Grays as a key destination for learning, business and investment.

Broadly, the measures that were identified are as follows:

- improvements to the existing road network and one-way system,
- additional and enhanced cycle links,
- a public realm scheme at the northern end of the High St (including two-way working on Orsett Road),
- reduced through-traffic on key routes,
- two way access on Crown Road
- gateway schemes at key entry points and
- improved access to key destinations in the town centre.

The focused package of experimental transport measures will be delivered by utilising a number of available and existing funding sources. These are summarised below:

- Local Growth Fund (LGF) cycle network allocation,
- Local Sustainable Transport Fund allocation,
- S106 developer contributions
- Planning and Transportation Directorate capital funding allocations
- Prudential borrowing

£1.4m has been identified to take forward the focused package of experimental measures.

The Council is also developing a revised LGF bid which will address the funding required to deliver the longer term improvements for Grays. Although the Grays scheme (consisting of the comprehensive transport package, underpass and public squares) has not been included in the current Thames Gateway South Essex Local Enterprise Partnership (TGSE LEP) submission for additional funds to 2021, the scheme will be considered for future bids.

Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme

Further to December 2014 Cabinet approval that £4m be invested in deteriorating highways assets, the Cabinet in February 2015 agreed for the capital projects to be added to the capital programme. The projects include:

Scheme	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total (£000)
Highways - Carriageway Surfacing	300.00	300.00	300.00	900.00
Highways - Footway Surfacing	100.00	140.00	100.00	340.00
Highways - Drainage Improvements	150.00	260.00	150.00	560.00
Highways - Safety Fencing	50.00	75.00	75.00	200.00
Highways - White Lining	75.00	100.00	75.00	250.00
Highways - Traffic Signals	100.00	550.00	100.00	750.00
Highways - Bridge Strengthening	-	250.00	750.00	1,000.00
Total (£000)	775.00	1,675.00	1,550.00	4,000.00

Thus, the majority of the £4 million prudential borrowing would be used to improve roads, which were not as good as they should be in Thurrock and had needed attention for some considerable time. In detail, some of the Highways improvement proposals will include:

- improvement of the Treacle Mine Roundabout to resolve the flooding issues which regularly occur,
- road resurfacing whole stretches of roads, not just pot holes, along stretches of the A128, Daiglen Drive in South Ockendon and Long Lane in Stifford, and
- improvement of footpaths in Sherwood Road, Lawns Crescent and Stifford Road.

That Thurrock Council was looking to borrow £4m for major road improvements was a news in Thurrock Gazette on 12 February 15.

2. THE MAIN CHALLENGES MOVING FORWARD

Since taking responsibility for this Portfolio, I have consistently promoted my view that the services within my Portfolio should now concentrate on making the good intentions in all our strategies actually happen. I have emphasised that projects involving job creation for local residents, business support for

local businesses and capturing inward investment that improves local infrastructure, must be priorities for the months, and indeed years, ahead. In this way, I am seeking to ensure that Thurrock is well placed to maximise the opportunities available to it, that we will compete to be an attractive location for investment and that local residents will directly benefit from our successes.

Looking to the future, significant areas of work will be:-

a) Securing maximum benefit through the Local Enterprise Partnership

With transport funding for new infrastructure now contained within the devolved Local Growth Fund it is vital that Thurrock, together with the rest of South Essex, works with the Local Enterprise to progress the £100m of schemes which have provisional approval to delivery in the next few years. In addition, we must have well prepared proposals to bid for any additional funding which becomes available later in the year.

b) Keeping traffic moving

The provision of an effective, free-flowing transportation network is an essential requirement if the Council's regeneration ambitions are going to be achieved. It is also important for local people going about their everyday lives. The key priorities identified in our Local Transport Plan are being progressed - the provision of free-flow tolling at the Dartford Crossing, the upgrading of Junction 30/31 of the M25 and the widening of the A13. We will continue to work closely with partners in the Highways Agency, Essex Police and with neighbouring authorities to keep traffic moving on Thurrock's roads.

c) Responding to proposals for a Lower Thames Crossing

The Council will continue to resist current proposals for a Lower Thames Crossing, and lobby for Government to reconsider more easterly options which could provide greater relief for the strategic network. We will follow the work of the Highways Agency closely to assess the detailed implications of the options which they are generating for consultation later in the year.

d) Delivering investment in Thurrock's highways

In the 2015/16 financial year, in addition to its core capital programme, Highways and Transportation will be rolling out £6 million investment in street lighting, £4million in carriageway, footway and drainage works and £750K in sustainable transport measures. We will aim to deliver this with minimum disruption to local people, and ensure that the full anticipated benefits of this investment are realised.

e) Making the most of shrinking revenue budgets

As the Council comes under pressure to deliver further budget savings, Highways and Transportation will work closely with transport operators,

neighbouring authorities and local communities to retain transport services as far as possible and to squeeze more value from shrinking budgets.

f) Supporting wider community priorities

Highways and Transportation has tremendous potential as an enabler for other Thurrock priorities, whether they be unlocking sites for investment, or supporting healthier lifestyles by making it easier to walk or cycle. We shall be working closely with other parts of the Council and wider stakeholders across the borough and beyond to maximise these opportunities.

3. CONCLUSION

I hope that from the contents of my report, Members will acknowledge the scale and breadth of the activities contained within this Portfolio. I am very aware of the importance of each of those services in contributing to the improvement of the quality of life for the residents of Thurrock.

There are particularly difficult challenges to my ambitions to ensure that those improvements are made, but no one should be in any doubt about my determination to deliver this important agenda, whatever the circumstance.

Financial Information:

(A Motion agreed by the Council on 23 January 2013 requires the Cabinet Member to cover all finance and budget issues of their portfolio that they consider relevant, including (but not limited to): fiscal management; budget responsibility of the cabinet member; receipts and actual spend vs. predicted spend; the levels of virements; and value for money.)

The financial information on revenue and capital budgets is presented in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1 - Highways and Transportation Revenue Budget**

Services	Sub services	Budget (£000)
Highways and Transportation Operational	Staffing	1,711.70
	SERCO	31.20
	Private Contractors (including Ferry)	955.80
Operations Total		2,698.70
Transportation	Scheme Development	100.00
	Traffic Management Act	120.00
	Transport Asset Management	8.70
	Grants to Voluntary Organisations	97.40
	Shared Bus Subsidy	191.10
	Concessionary Fares	1,133.30
Transportation Total		1,650.50
Highways	Drainage Maintenance	177.80
	Traffic Light Maintenance	186.30
	Street Furniture Maintenance	195.10
	Road Markings Maintenance	30.00
	Footway Maintenance	40.00
	Carriageway Maintenance	683.50
	Bridge Maintenance	111.20
	Bridge Assessment	15.00
	Street Lighting Maintenance	669.50
	Electricity	669.40
	Public Rights of Way Maintenance	64.00
Highways Total		2,841.80
Chargeable services	Private Developments	-10.50
	Statutory duty fees	-73.40
	Fees and Charges	-187.60
Income total		-271.50
Grand Total		6,919.50*

*This value does not include street cleaning budgets managed by Environment team but which are shown on highways and transportation financial reports.

**These figures exclude the Parking Account which does not form part of this portfolio.

Table 2 - Highways and Transportation Capital Programme

Projects	Budget (£000)
Bridges maintenance	447.00
Principal roads resurfacing/reconstruction	420.00
Classified roads resurfacing/reconstruction	230.00
Unclassified roads resurfacing/reconstruction	120.00
Footway maintenance	110.00
Street lighting maintenance	175.00
Drainage maintenance	373.00
Total maintenance	1,875.00
Congestion	310.00
Traffic Management	250.00
Accessibility	112.00
Road Safety	300.00
LSTF sustainable travel	125.00
LSTF liftsharing	5.00
Walking and cycling infrastructure	325.00
Public Transport Improvements	175.00
Total integrated transport	1,602.00
Grand Total	3,477.00