

<b>4 November 2015</b>		<b>ITEM: 6</b>
<b>Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Highway Maintenance Update</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Key	
<b>Report of:</b> Cllr. Oliver Gerrish, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation		
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Ann Osola, Head of Transportation and Highways		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> David Bull, Director of Planning and Transportation		
<b>This report is Public</b>		

## **Executive Summary**

The Council is committed to following best practice guidance to obtain maximum added value for investment in highway asset. Following on from the Local Government Association strategic review which was completed in January 2015 the Council has invested in new software to make better use of its highway asset information sets. The integrated data sets will inform the refresh of Council's policies which will determine priorities for the 2016-17 Highway Capital Programme.

### **1. Recommendation(s)**

**That the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

- 1.1 Notes the improvements being made in the Transportation & Highways department to make better use of the available information.**
- 1.2 Agrees to receive a report including a draft 2016-17 Highway Capital Programme of capital investment priorities at its January 2016 meeting.**

### **2. Introduction and Background**

- 2.1 The Council, as Local Highway Authority, is responsible for maintaining Thurrock's highway network including:**
  - 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

- 2.2 All of the above are used by Thurrock's residents, businesses and visitors. As Thurrock grows and evolves it is important to continue to maintain its existing highway asset as well as new infrastructure to accommodate new developments.
- 2.3 As the Local Highway Authority the Council has statutory responsibilities for highway maintenance and the safety of the road users. This includes the obligation to inspect and maintain the highway to a reasonable condition.
- 2.4 Historically, the Council has relied upon its Department for Transport (DfT) capital funding allocation for providing capital improvements to its highway infrastructure. Over the years, funding restrictions have had the effect of increasing the number of reactive repairs putting increasing pressures on existing revenue budgets.
- 2.5 In 2014-15 the Council, in recognition of the infrastructure deficit was able to allocate £10m of capital funding towards reducing this deficit.
- 2.6 The DfT has developed a range of initiatives designed to assist Local Highway Authorities to use best practice measures to maximise the value gained from limited highway maintenance budgets. This includes the establishment of the Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP), geared to sharing best practice and providing support to Local Highway Authorities in improving the efficiency of their operations.
- 2.7 In October 2014, the Council secured the funding support to allow a Local Government Association strategic HMEP review.
- 2.8 The DfT has changed their method of providing highway capital funding. This is now split into three categories. One category is, as before, based on the size and needs of the network. A new category Incentive Funding will be allocated to Local Highway Authorities who can demonstrate compliance with HMEP recommendations and operational standards. The third category is Capital Challenge funding which will be allocated on the basis of competitive maintenance bids. The emphasis on the Incentive Fund and Capital Challenge will increase through the funding period up to 2019. This funding arrangement is intended to incentivise all Local Highway Authorities to embrace evolving best practice. It is recognised that this process will require continual improvements over a number of years. Clearly, it is in

Thurrock's interest to develop working practices to allow us to make best advantage of the new funding arrangements.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 3.1 In December 2014, Cabinet accepted the recommendations from the Transportation & Highway Service Strategic Review to develop a highway improvement plan which will equip Thurrock Council with a modern efficient continually improving service able to secure and make best use of maintenance funding.
- 3.2 The Highways and Transportation team aligns its service delivery to the HMEP strategic review recommendation as presented to Cabinet in December 2014. These included:
- CPC4 – understanding your assets and setting priorities for each asset;
  - EC2 – fit for purpose 'resilient and integrated' approach to asset management; and
  - DC4 – asset data as a platform to develop a good programme management approach.
- 3.3 The Highways team possesses a large amount of data in various formats which has relied upon professional engineering judgement to integrate and inform investment decisions. The team has recently invested in new software which can amalgamate data sets to provide an integrated profile of highways assets across Thurrock. The information resulting from this revised process will enable better engagement with stakeholders. The asset information and the views of the stakeholders will be used to inform the 2016-17 Highways Capital Programme. This in turn will provide the basis for further development of the asset database and the optimisation of the highway lifecycle management. The Highways team will be able to support their decision making process with the objective and transparent reports which will enable wider engagement with community stakeholders.
- 3.4 In the development of this process, it would be beneficial if the Scrutiny Committee would agree to consider and discuss the next stage outputs which will be the creation of the draft Highways Capital Programme in January 2016 prior to submission to Full Council in March 2016.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 Transportation & Highways are developing a revised process for the efficient management of highways capital works. This has reached the position where the consideration and discussion from the Scrutiny Committee will assist in the further development of this process.
- 4.2 The proposed way forward supports the efficient discharge of Thurrock Council's statutory obligation as Local Highway Authority, the proactive

management of future revenue budgets and the preparation of future grant fund bidding.

- 4.3 The involvement of the Scrutiny Committee would broaden stakeholder input into the Highways Capital Programme prioritisation.
- 4.4 In January 2016 a draft Highways Capital Programme will be available prior to its submission to Full Council in March 2016. It would be beneficial if this Scrutiny Committee would consider and comment on this draft programme prior to finalisation of the Full Council report.

## **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 5.1 This report forms part a consultation process to inform the 2016-17 Highways Capital Programme.

## **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

- 6.1 This report is consistent with corporate priorities especially “protecting and promoting our clean and green environment”.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **John Smith, Corporate Finance Consultant**

This report has no financial implications.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Vivien Williams  
Planning & Regeneration Solicitor**

This report has no legal implications.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren  
Community Development and Equalities Manager**

This report has no diversity and equality implications.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- None

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Cabinet 17 December 2014 Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme – Strategic Review and Recommendations for Improvement
- Council 11 March 2015 Cabinet Member Report – Highways and Transportation Capital Programme 2015/16
- Details of the HMEP programme are accessed on the website [www.highwaysefficiency.org.uk](http://www.highwaysefficiency.org.uk)

9. **Appendices to the report**

- None

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