

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Economy

Date of meeting: 15 October 2018

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Report on new Eastern County Highways Maintenance Depot Project

Purpose: To update Lead Member on the project to construct a new Highways Maintenance Depot for the eastern half of the county and to seek approval to use the Highways Structural Maintenance capital budget to progress and complete the project.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Note the need for a new Highways Maintenance Depot set out in the report;**
 - (2) Approve the allocation of £370k from the 2019/20 Capital Structural Maintenance budget to enable the progression and completion of the project.**
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1. Background Information

1.1 The current budget for the project is £1.3m. This was assigned in 2010 to redevelop the existing Sidley Depot as part of a wider depot rationalisation review project. The revised costs for redeveloping Sidley Depot based on 2018 prices including for inflation and environmental mitigation requirements is estimated at £1.74m. Developing a new depot facility on Queensway, Hastings is estimated to be £1.67m. As a minimum a further £370k is required to complete the project.

1.2 Corporate Capital Board recommended seeking approval to re-allocate part of the highways structural maintenance capital budget to the project to progress and complete the project. This would be allocated from £21m capital budget for road, footway, drainage, structures and street lighting maintenance for 2019/20.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 The depot rationalisation initiative commenced in 2010 as part of a depot review process to consolidate the number of operational highway depots into more modern, maintainable facilities and to dispose of a number of small limited use depots that were unviable and to generate capital receipts for the Council.

2.2 The project initially looked to rationalise the services provided from two existing depots at Sidley and at Cripps Corner (see Appendix 1 for site locations) into a single modern depot at Sidley to provide winter and highway maintenance services for the eastern part of the county.

2.3 However, the current depot at Sidley sits within a residential area, evolving over time in a piecemeal way with buildings and facilities arranged awkwardly that constrain operations, and with the age of the buildings leading to rising maintenance costs (see Appendix 2). Sidley and Cripps Corner Depots (see Appendix 3 for land extent), are the only two highway depots without a salt barn and where winter gritting salt has to be stored in the open. In both cases the gritter sheds are iron framed and constructed with asbestos sheet circa 1970's that are a constant maintenance liability and need replacing while the current offices at Sidley are a prefabricated two story structure more than thirty years old that staff have recently had to stop using because the building is no longer fit for purpose and beyond economic repair.

2.4 As part of developing the project various discussions with Rother District Council (RDC), as the local planning authority, have indicated that they would prefer to redevelop the site as a continuation of the Elva Way business park adjacent to the site. RDC also indicated that any planning

consent for a new depot would likely require significant environmental mitigation measures and operational restrictions that were not envisaged at the projects inception.

2.5 In addition, the activities at Sidley Depot have attracted numerous complaints from the neighbouring residents and the threat of abatement notices from RDC Environmental Health Department. While operational hours are prescribed, the nature of highway work is such that emergency and other out of hours activities need to be undertaken outside of these hours, which result in complaints about noise, dust and smell.

2.6 The depot is also subject to regular inspections from the Environment Agency who monitor the adjacent water course with concerns about leaching from the nearby salt and fuel stores. In short the current facilities cannot meet modern environmental management requirements without significant ongoing operational and maintenance challenges and there is now a real risk that operational activities will have to cease in the future including winter salting.

3. Alternative Depot Site

3.1 With these increasing constraints in mind an alternative site has been identified on Queensway in Hastings (see Appendix 3). This is a green field site adjacent to the Queensway/Crowhurst Road junction and with good links to the Bexhill, Hastings, The Ridge and the A21.

3.2 Early feasibility and design work has estimated the cost of the project at £1.67m. This compares favourably with the cost of redeveloping Sidley depot and in addition, provides the opportunity to develop a modern purpose-built depot on a larger and unconstrained site without disruption to services.

3.3 In addition, once completed, the authority will be able to realise capital receipts from the sale of the Sidley and Cripps Corner depots to support the Councils future capital programme.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 There is an increasing risk that maintenance services will have to cease in the future if the limitations and shortfalls with the current facilities at Sidley and Cripps Corner depots are not addressed. This would lead to significant increases in revenue costs if operations for the east of the county had to operate from the nearest alternative depot in Heathfield. However, an opportunity to develop a modern and 'future proofed' facility at Queensway has been identified to ensure highway maintenance can be delivered effectively in the east of the county long into the future.

4.2 Following confirmation from the Council's Capital Strategic Asset Board that no additional funding is available and that this additional funding should come from within the existing CET allocations, Lead Member is recommended to approve the re-allocation of £370k from the 2019/20 capital highway maintenance budget to enable the development of a new depot facility at Queensway to complete the project.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None