

**Report to:** Lead Member for Transport and Environment

**Date of meeting:** 13 March 2023

**By:** Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

**Title:** Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements 2023/24

**Purpose:** To seek approval for the proposed allocation of funds to a specific programme of local transport improvements for 2023/24

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The Lead Member is recommended to:

**(1) Agree the programme of local transport improvements for 2023/24 set out in Appendix 1 to this report; and**

**(2) Agree the allocation of County Council capital funding, development contributions and Local Growth Fund monies towards specific improvements identified in the 2023/24 programme**

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## **1. Background Information**

1.1 The capital programme for local transport improvements sets out a proposed programme of schemes to be developed and delivered in various locations across the county in 2023/24. The programme is funded from a number of sources including a capital allocation from the County Council, development contributions and funding secured from the Government's Local Growth Fund (LGF) through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). A copy of the draft capital programme for 2023/24 is included in Appendix 1.

## **2. Supporting Information**

2.1 In May 2011, the County Council approved the Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011 – 2026 which identified the Council's strategy for transport investment. The strategic approach adopted in the LTP is to invest in infrastructure which delivers sustainable economic growth and improves safety, security and health. This will be achieved by developing schemes which tackle congestion, improve safety for all road users and where practical and appropriate, promote sustainable travel on foot, by bike and by public transport.

2.2 The LTP is complemented by a series of Implementation Plans setting out delivery proposals in line with the priorities set out in the plan of supporting sustainable economic growth and improving safety, health and security for five-year time periods over its lifetime. The second Implementation Plan was approved by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment at his decision-making meeting on 14 March 2016. The content of the 2023/24 draft capital programme for local transport improvements is consistent with the current LTP Implementation Plan.

2.3 The draft capital programme for 2023/24 has been reviewed to take account of the priorities set out in the Council Plan, the current LTP and its associated Implementation Plan, as well as ensuring the continuation of schemes that have commenced in the previous financial years and the availability of funding. For reference, the approved capital programme for 2022/23 can be accessed at the following link [Item 56 - Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements 2022/23](#). In addition, this report should be read in conjunction with the County Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan ([Item 21 – Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#)) and Bus Service Improvement Plan ([Item 19 – East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan](#)).

2.4 As part of the LTP and its Implementation Plans, and with a single budget for Local Transport and Road Safety schemes, a more robust, evidence-based prioritisation process was developed to assess requests received for all types of schemes. One of the key elements of this process involves assessing the extent to which scheme requests would meet the objectives of the LTP. These objectives include improving economic competitiveness and growth, improving safety and tackling climate change and demonstrating how our LTP and capital programme for local transport improvements can support the County Council's priority of sustainable economic growth as well as contributing towards the target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

2.5 This prioritisation process has been used to assess and identify any new schemes included in this year's programme. The County Council is currently updating its Local Transport Plan with consultation in autumn 2023 and adoption programmed for early 2024. In updating the LTP, the current prioritisation process used to assess requests for schemes for potential inclusion in the capital programme is being reviewed and will need to reflect the updated LTP's emerging objectives.

#### Draft 2023/24 capital programme

2.6 On 7 February 2023 Full Council approved the allocation of £5.324m in the County Council's capital programme towards Local Transport Improvements in 2023/24. This comprises £4.355m of ESCC capital funding and £0.969m of development contributions. In setting the programme for 2023/24, it is proposed to allocate the full £4.355m of ESCC capital funding but only £0.902m of the £0.969m development contributions, meaning a total spend of £5.257m against the £5.324m capital allocation. The unspent development contributions would be slipped to a future financial year.

2.7 Additional external funding of Local Growth Fund monies (£2.086m) increases the overall programmed spend on implementing local transport improvements in 2023/24 to £7.343m. There are constraints on how this external funding may be used in delivering specific types of local transport improvements in specific geographical areas which have been agreed as part of business cases or bids, or, in the case of development contributions, the user provision within the section 106 Obligation or funding legal agreement. In addition, the terms of some funding streams only enable the construction cost of a scheme to be funded, with the design costs having to be funded from County Council resources.

#### *Local Growth Fund funded packages*

2.8 A number of the schemes in the capital programme are to be funded from the Government's Local Growth Fund. A total of over £64m of funding has been made secured through various rounds of the Growth Fund to fund transport schemes in East Sussex.

2.9 Funding was awarded for the delivery of the following packages of local transport improvements which will support the housing and employment growth in the growth corridors around Eastbourne/South Wealden and Bexhill/Hastings:

- Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package
- Eastbourne and South Wealden walking and cycling package
- Hailsham, Polegate and Eastbourne Sustainable Transport Corridor

2.10 The South East Local Enterprise Partnership has agreed the extension of certain Local Growth Fund projects being delivered beyond the end of the initial Growth Deal period of 31 March 2021. The LGF packages, which form part of the Capital Programme of Local Transport Improvements, were highlighted to the LEP as projects where spend beyond March 2021 was anticipated. Consequently, approvals have been given by the LEP to spend beyond this date and up to March 2025 at the latest.

#### *Hastings and Bexhill Movements and Access Package*

2.11 There has been significant progression on each of the schemes in the Hastings Bexhill Movement and Access Package through their development cycles over the last 3 to 4 years.

2.12 Following discussions with East Sussex Highways as each scheme has progressed on the expected out-turn costs for completing the design and delivery of each scheme, the total value of these schemes will be significantly higher than the LGF funding available.

2.13 For this reason, it is recommended that work pauses on these schemes to undertake a full scheme and programme assessment to determine which are recommended to be taken forward for final development and/or delivery in 2023/24 within the current funding envelope. Undertaking this assessment will include - considering whether there are options for descoping and/or value engineering the schemes as well as exploring other existing funding sources such as development contributions to augment the LGF funding available.

2.14 As part of this process, and in accordance with the SELEP's accountability and assurance framework, East Sussex County Council (ESCC) will need to seek approval from the LEP on the revised scope of the programme that was in the approved business case. This is likely to require a review of the economic appraisal for the revised package to ensure that it still demonstrates high value for money (VFM), or where it indicates medium VFM, that there is a strong strategic narrative for the package.

2.15 Accordingly, funding allocations against any schemes in the Bexhill and Hastings Movement and Access Package have not been included within the draft Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements 2023/24. Following the completion of the review process, a separate report will be considered by the Lead Member at a future meeting in summer 2023 on this part of the programme.

#### *Road Safety*

2.16 Historically, the capital programme has included a separate allocation for road safety measures to fund the implementation of engineering schemes at specific sites identified as having a high crash record. The number of specific sites identified has reduced over the years and the latest approach combines a mix of site specific and route-based interventions. As part of the Strategic Casualty Reduction Programme, targeted engineering measures will continue to be introduced in response to problems identified through the ongoing analysis of crash data. Road safety engineering work will be focussed on traffic management measures (e.g. improvements to signing and lining) and targeted engineering works at identified sites and high-risk sections of A and B roads where crashes have occurred.

2.17 An allocation of £460,000 (£300,000 allocation plus £160,000 slippage of spend from 2022/23) has been made in 2023/24 for the Road Safety Team to undertake the above Strategic Casualty Reduction Programme (£250,000) and part fund the new Speed Management Programme. Precedence will be given to those sites of highest priority that have the potential to positively impact casualty reduction. The funding may be used in conjunction with other funding, if available, to maximise this impact.

2.18 In addition, a one off allocation of £110,000 has been made within the 2023/24 programme to the Road Safety team which will supplement the initial 3 year £500,000 budget for the new Speed Management Programme which will deliver over 25 schemes across East Sussex. The Programme involves undertaking a systematic assessment of the A and B class network and identify lengths of the main road network that would benefit from a reduced speed limit. It will also check that existing speed limits are effective and producing the desired reductions in vehicle speeds. The review will identify sites of greatest need and local concern where proven traffic management measures would have a positive effect and enhance the effectiveness of the speed limits.

#### *Community Match funded schemes*

2.19 The Community Match initiative forms part of the County Council's Community Highways Project launched in June 2014, with the aim of enabling local communities to take forward local transport improvements which are important to them but not of sufficient priority to be taken forward as part of the capital programme for local transport improvements.

2.20 Following the commencement of the highways contract joint venture (JV) between Costain and Jacobs in May 2016 (East Sussex Highways), the Community Match initiative was relaunched in October 2016 and forms part of the JV's social value offering.

2.21 At present £411,000 is allocated in 2023/24 for Community Match schemes. Three schemes were considered for funding by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment at her decision-making meeting on 21 October 2022 and are presented in the draft programme attached in Appendix 1. At present, £79,250 of the Community Match scheme budget has been allocated to projects. Further applications have been received for Community Match funding and these will be presented in a report to be considered by the Lead Member later in 2023 making recommendations about which schemes should be match funded as part of the 2023/24 programme.

#### *Consultation on draft 2023/24 programme*

2.22 The draft capital programme and briefing note was circulated by email to all Councillors on 16 February 2023 for comment. Councillors were given the opportunity to speak to officers about the schemes within the programme and discuss whether they felt any schemes from previous year's programmes had been omitted in error. It was requested that any comments about the programme be reported back through their transport spokesperson. Comments received will be reported verbally at the Lead Member's decision-making meeting.

### **3. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendation**

3.1 The draft capital 2023/24 programme of local transport improvements represents a balanced programme of improvements which will help deliver not only the objectives of the County Council's current Local Transport Plan but also contribute to achieving the broader corporate objectives of reducing carbon emissions, supporting economic recovery and growth, and promoting health and wellbeing.

3.2 It is therefore recommended that the funding approved by County Council, development contributions and Local Growth Fund monies for the Eastbourne South Wealden Walking & Cycling Package and the Hailsham – Polegate – Eastbourne Movement and Access Corridor identified to support the programme of local transport improvements for 2023/24 be allocated to the programme of schemes set out in Appendix 1.

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### **LOCAL MEMBERS**

All

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None