

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 11 March 2024

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements 2024/25

Purpose: To seek approval for the proposed allocation of funds to a specific programme of local transport improvements for 2024/25

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

(1) Agree the programme of local transport improvements for 2024/25 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 2024/25 programme.

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 2024/25. 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 2024/25 is included in Appendix 1.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 In May 2011, the County Council approved the Local Transport Plan (LTP3) 2011 – 2026 which identified the Council's strategy for transport investment. The strategic approach adopted in the LTP3 is to invest in infrastructure which delivers the Plan's objectives including sustainable economic growth; improving safety, security and health and tackling climate change. 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 LTP3 is complemented by a series of Implementation Plans setting out delivery proposals in line with the priorities set out in the Plan supporting sustainable economic growth and improving safety, health and security for 5-year time periods over its lifetime.

2.3 The draft capital programme for 2024/25 has been reviewed to take account of the priorities set out in the Council Plan including sustainable economic growth as well as contributing towards the target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050; LTP3 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.

2.4 As part of LTP3 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 LTP objectives.

2.5 The County Council is currently developing its next Local Transport Plan (LTP4) for the period 2024 to 2050. The current prioritisation process will be reviewed and updates proposed to ensure it is in alignment with the draft LTP4 which will have an emphasis on enabling safer and more accessible journeys, developing healthier places, decarbonising transport and supporting a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable economy. The draft LTP4 will be considered for adoption by the Council in summer 2024.

Draft 2024/25 capital programme

2.6 The County Council's capital programme considered by Cabinet on 23 January 2024 sets out the programme for the medium-term financial period of 2024/25 to 2026/27. This included an allocation of funds for Local Transport improvements. The Council's capital programme was considered and approved at County Council on 6 February 2024.

2.7 In 2024/25, the £2.5m Local Transport allocation comprised:

- £1.004m East Sussex County Council capital borrowing
- £1.496m external funding

2.8 As at 2023/24 Q3, there has been a slippage of £0.951m of County Council Local Transport capital funding into 2024/25, meaning a total of £1.955m available next financial year. From a review of all the existing committed schemes in the programme, the estimated forecast for County Council Local Transport capital spend is £3.736m. Therefore, the delivery of the 2024/25 programme is subject to a £1.781m capital variation to accelerate County Council's Local Transport capital funding from 2025/26.

Local Growth Fund funded packages - context

2.9 In March 2014, SELEP with the support of businesses, local authorities and education leaders from across the area, submitted their Growth Deal proposals with a focus on infrastructure required to unlock housing and employment growth. Through the various growth deal rounds, over £64m has been made available to fund transport projects in East Sussex.

2.10 The Growth Deal included funding awarded for the phased delivery of packages of local transport improvements (walking, cycling, town centre public realm, public transport infrastructure and localised junction improvements) which support housing and employment growth in identified locations known as "growth corridors" around Eastbourne / South Wealden and Bexhill / Hastings. SELEP has agreed the extension of certain LGF projects being delivered beyond the end of the initial Growth Deal period of 31 March 2021 up to March 2026 at the latest.

Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package (HBMAP)

2.11 Significant progress has been made towards delivering cycling, walking, bus infrastructure, traffic management and public realm improvements aimed at supporting economic growth across Hastings and Bexhill utilising the £9m LGF secured in 2018 towards the development and delivery of the HBMAP.

2.12 Following a review of the HBMAP programme in 2022, it was identified that the total amount of funding required to complete the design and delivery of the remaining schemes in the package would be significantly higher than the remaining LGF monies available primarily due to increases in costs across the construction sector. The Lead Member was advised at her decision-making meeting in March 2023 that work on HBMAP would be paused while a business case review was undertaken to determine which of the remaining schemes could be taken forward for final development and/or delivery within the remaining funding available.

2.13 A revised package of schemes was approved by the SELEP Accountability Board on 22 September 2023, and the Lead Member at her decision-making meeting on 15 January 2024, to deliver the following remaining schemes by March 2026:

- Albert Road, Hastings
- Station Approach, Hastings
- Bexhill Cycle Route A

Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package (ESWWCP)

2.14 Equally significant progress has been made on progressing each of the schemes in the £6.6m ESWWCP. Following a similar review to HBMAP, the total expected out-turn costs for completing the design and delivery of the remaining ESWWCP schemes would be significantly higher than the remaining LGF funding available.

2.15 For this reason, work on the package was paused to undertake a full scheme and programme assessment and determine which schemes should be recommended to progress to final development and delivery in 2024/25 and 2025/26 within the remaining £1.985m LGF available. The assessment considered whether there were 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.

2.16 The following 5 schemes, either from the original approved business case or SELEP approved project change request, were considered as part of the assessment:

- Horsey Way cycle route phase 1b;
- Eastbourne Town Centre cycle route;
- Willingdon Drove cycle route;
- Langney Rise cycle route; and
- Eastbourne cycle parking phase 2.

2.17 Two schemes set out in the original SELEP approved business case for the south Wealden area were Hailsham cycle route (A271 Upper Horsebridge Road) and Hailsham cycle parking. The cycle route was unable to progress due to topography and access difficulties associated with the proposal which would exceed the available funding, whilst the cycle parking facilities have been introduced as part of Department for Transport Emergency Active Travel Fund and are no longer part of this package.

2.18 Following the assessment process, the following three schemes have been identified for inclusion in the revised package as they all either presented higher benefit cost ratios than the two non-prioritised schemes, and/or are deliverable within the proposed extended funding timescales of December 2025:

- Horsey Way cycle route phase 1b,
- Eastbourne Town Centre cycle route, and
- Eastbourne cycle parking phase 2

2.19 All three schemes are affordable within the remaining LGF funding available against the package. This revised package was endorsed by Team East Sussex, the local Growth Board made up of business, local authority, social enterprise and education representatives from across the county, following its meeting on 29 January 2024. SELEP will not be in a position to approve the revised Business Case and Economic Appraisal prior to the transfer of LEP responsibilities to upper tier authorities in April 2024. Therefore, the determination of the approved package and revised business case assessment will be undertaken by the County Council following the LEP transition process and when appropriate governance processes are in place.

Road Safety

2.20 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.

2.21 As part of the Strategic Casualty Reduction Programme, targeted engineering measures will continue to be introduced at identified sites and routes through the ongoing analysis of crash data where road safety issues have been identified but no specific site or causation factor may be evident. Precedence will be given to those sites of highest priority that have the potential to positively impact casualty reduction. Road safety engineering work will be focussed on low-cost 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.

2.22 The following allocations have been made in the programme for road safety:

- £373,000 - Strategic Casualty Reduction Programme (£250,000 annual allocation plus £133,000 slippage from 2023/24 programme). The funding may be used in conjunction with other funding, if available, to maximise this impact.
- £50,000 - Annual allocation for speed management interventions.

- £110,000 - Speed limit review (slippage from 2023/24 programme). To undertake a systematic review and assessment of the A and B class network and identify lengths of the main road network that would benefit from a reduced speed limit. The review would also check that existing speed limits are effective and producing the desired reductions in vehicle speeds. The review would also 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.

Development contributions

2.23 The use of external funding in the form of development contributions will continue to be used, as appropriate, to increase the level of funding available to implement local transport improvements. There are constraints on how this funding may be applied, as it can only be used on specific schemes in specific geographical areas and some contributions are time limited.

2.24 The total amount of external funding from development contributions (s106 contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy) will amount to £0.848m in 2024/25. As highlighted in para 2.7, £1.496m of external funding is within the overall £2.5m Local Transport capital allocation for 2024/25. This means a slippage of £0.648m of development contributions into future financial years.

Consultation on draft 2024/25 programme

2.25 The draft capital programme and briefing note was circulated by email to all Councillors on 14 February 2024 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 years' programmes had been omitted in error.

2.26 It was requested that any comments about the programme be reported back through their spokespeople for Transport and Environment. These comments were considered at the cross-party Member Panel on 21 February 2024 and the outcomes of the Panel discussion will be reported verbally at the Lead Member's decision-making meeting on 11 March 2024.

3. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendation

3.1 The draft capital programme for local transport improvements 2024/25 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 the County Council, development contributions and Local Growth Fund monies for the Eastbourne South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package, Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package and the Hailsham, Polegate and Eastbourne Movement and Access Corridor identified to support the capital programme for local transport improvements for 2024/25 be allocated to the respective schemes set out in Appendix 1.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None