

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment
Date of meeting: 17 March 2025
By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
Title: Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements 2025/26
Purpose: To seek approval for the proposed allocation of funds to a specific programme of local transport improvements for 2025/26

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Agree the draft capital programme of local transport improvements for 2025/26 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 2025/26 programme.**
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1. Background Information

1.1 The capital programme for local transport improvements sets out a proposed programme of local transport schemes to be developed and delivered in various locations across the county in 2025/26. The programme is funded from a number of sources including a capital grant allocation received by the County Council from Government towards integrated transport schemes, development contributions and government's Local Growth Fund (LGF) previously secured from the former South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). A copy of the draft capital programme for 2025/26 is included in Appendix 1.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 The East Sussex Local Transport Plan (LTP4) covering the period 2024 to 2050 was adopted by the County Council on 8 October 2024. The LTP4 sets the strategy and policy framework for transport in the county for the next 25 years, and its adoption followed an extensive consultation and engagement process over a 2-year period which helped shape the final Plan.

2.2 The LTP4's vision is for 'an inclusive transport system that connects people and places, is decarbonised, safer, resilient, and supports the natural environment, communities, and businesses to be healthy, thrive and prosper'. This will be achieved through an increased emphasis on 'planning for people and places'.

2.3 This means that there will be a focus on enabling and encouraging integrated journeys and reducing the need to travel through land-use and planning policies. These will include encouraging and enabling inclusive and sustainable travel modes (walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport), adopting vehicles with cleaner fuels alongside the utilisation of emerging transport technologies that will help to achieve the Council's and the Council's partners' net-zero ambitions.

2.4 The LTP4 Strategy is supported by an Investment Plan. This sets out the County Council's and the Council's partners' ambitions for delivering the policies and investment priorities to achieve the vision and objectives of LTP4. This includes identified schemes and the types of schemes that the County Council and key partners wish to deliver, subject to funding being secured.

2.5 Various schemes in the draft 2025/26 capital programme for local transport improvements support the delivery of LTP4 and its principles of 'planning for people and places'. As the Council transitions to LTP4 there are several legacy schemes in the latter stages of their development and delivery cycle which are more reflective of LTP3 and its objectives which placed greater emphasis on the priorities of improving economic competitiveness and growth as well as improving safety, health and security.

2.6 As these legacy schemes are delivered, and with the introduction of a revised scheme assessment and prioritisation process, alongside consideration on potential changes to how local

authorities receive capital and revenue funding for transport schemes, future capital programmes for local transport improvements from 2026/27 onwards will closely align with the objectives of LTP4.

Draft 2025/26 capital programme of local transport improvements

2.7 The County Council's capital programme considered by Cabinet on 28 January 2025, and approved at County Council on 11 February 2025, sets out the programme for the medium-term financial period of 2025/26 to 2027/28. This included an allocation of funds for Integrated Transport improvements. For 2025/26, the £4.340m Integrated Transport allocation comprises:

- £2.431m East Sussex County Council capital grant; and
- £1.909m external funding (development contributions – s106 contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy).

2.8 As at 2024/25 Q3, there has been a carry forward of £0.616m of County Council Integrated Transport capital funding into 2025/26, meaning a total of £3.047m is available next financial year. From a review of all the existing committed schemes in the programme, the estimated forecast for County Council Integrated Transport capital spend is £3.047m. Therefore, to deliver the programme there will be no requirement to accelerate any of the capital expenditure from 2026/27 into 2025/26.

Local Growth Fund 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 This included funding awarded for the delivery of the following packages of local transport improvements (walking, cycling, public transport infrastructure and localised junction improvements) which will support housing and employment growth in the growth corridors around Eastbourne/South Wealden and Bexhill/Hastings:

- Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package (this comprises previous allocations for the junction improvement and walking/cycling packages); and
- Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package.

2.11 Following the Government's decision to transfer LEP responsibilities to upper tier local authorities from April 2024, the County Council is now the Accountable Body for legacy SELEP projects in East Sussex. As such, any Project Change Requests from this date onwards relating to the LGF, or other SELEP legacy programmes, will be managed through East Sussex County Council's internal governance processes, with the Government's Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government informed of any decisions. Therefore, both SELEP and more recently the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development, in accordance with the LGF Accountability and Assurance Framework, have agreed extensions to certain LGF projects being delivered beyond the initial local growth deal period of end March 2021. Any further extensions will need to be agreed in accordance with the East Sussex Local Growth Assurance Framework approved by the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development on 26 February 2025.

Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package (HBMAP)

2.12 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.

2.13 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 for Transport and Environment was advised at her decision-making meeting in March 2023 when considering the Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements 2023/24, 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.

2.14 The business case review was undertaken in consultation with key stakeholders. A revised package of schemes was approved by the SELEP Accountability Board in September 2023 to deliver the following remaining schemes:

- Albert Road, Hastings (on site and due for completion in March 2025);
- Station Approach, Hastings;
- Havelock Road improvements (contribution to the wider Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections scheme being delivered as part of the Hastings Town Deal); and
- Bexhill Cycle Route A (Sidley to Bexhill Town Centre)

2.15 The Lead Member for Transport and Environment subsequently approved the revised package of schemes for construction and potential inclusion in the 2024/25 capital programme for local transport improvements at her decision-making meeting on 15 January 2024. SELEP approved an extension in January 2024 for spend of the LGF funding by end of July 2026.

2.16 The remaining £3.261m local growth funding, augmented with £0.642m of development contributions will be used to continue the detailed design and construction across 2025/26 and 2026/27.

Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package (ESWWCP)

2.17 Likewise, there has been significant progress on 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 was significantly higher than the remaining LGF funding available primarily due to increases in costs across the construction sector.

2.18 The revised package comprised the following:

- Eastbourne Cycle Parking Phase 2;
- Eastbourne Town Centre to Seafront Cycle Route; and
- Horsey Way Cycle Route Phase 1b.

2.19 The revised package was endorsed by Team East Sussex (TES) following its meeting on 29 January 2024. On 17 September 2024, the Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development resolved to approve the revised Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package. The remaining £1.805m of local growth funding for the package will be used to continue the detailed design which started in 2024/25 and construction in 2025/26 with a current approved spend deadline of December 2025.

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

- £273,100 - Strategic Casualty Reduction Programme (£250,000 annual allocation plus £23,100 to be carried forward from 2024/25 programme). This funding will be utilised on targeted engineering measures introduced at identified sites and high-risk sections of A and B-class roads 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. These engineering measures will be focussed on low-cost traffic management measures (e.g. improvements to signing and lining). The funding may be used in conjunction with other funding, if available, to maximise this impact.

- £168,500 - Speed Management Interventions (comprising £50,000 - annual allocation for speed management interventions plus £118,500 to be carried forward from 2023/24 and 2024/25 programmes). This funding is part of the £500,000 programme to take forward the priority list of 16 sites announced in December 2024 following the completion of the review of speed limits across the county's A and B-class road network. The review assessed whether the existing speed limits are appropriate and identified areas where they could be reduced or made more effective.

Development contributions

2.22 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.

2.23 The total amount of external funding from development contributions (s106 contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy) will amount to £1.705m in 2025/26. As shown in paragraph 2.7, £1.909m of external funding is within the overall £4.340m Integrated Transport allocation for 2025/26. This means a carry-forward of £0.204m of development contributions into future financial years.

Consultation on draft 2025/26 programme

2.24 The draft capital programme and briefing note was circulated by email to all Councillors on 31 January 2025 for review and comment. It was requested that any comments about the programme be reported back through their spokesperson for Transport and Environment. These comments were considered at a cross-party Member Panel held on 12 February 2025. Following consideration of the comments and responses provided by officers, the Panel endorsed the draft programme.

3. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The draft capital programme for local transport improvements for 2025/26 represents a balanced programme of improvements which supports the key objectives of both the previous Local Transport Plan (LTP3), and the recently adopted Plan (LTP4) and its principles of 'planning for people and places'.

3.2 As the Council transitions to LTP4, there are several legacy schemes which are more reflective of LTP3 and its priorities which are in the latter stages of their development and delivery cycle. As these legacy schemes are delivered, and with the introduction of a revised scheme assessment and prioritisation process alongside potential changes to how local authorities receive capital and revenue funding for transport schemes, future local transport capital programmes and the schemes within from 2026/27 onwards will closely align with the objectives of LTP4.

3.3 The draft programme was considered and endorsed by the cross-party Member Panel on 12 February 2025. It is therefore recommended that the grant funding received by the County Council from Government towards integrated transport schemes, development contributions and Local Growth Fund monies for the Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package and Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package identified to support the capital programme for local transport improvements for 2025/26 be allocated to the respective schemes as set out in Appendix 1.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None