

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held on 27 June 2023 at Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes

PRESENT Councillors Keith Glazier (Chair)

Councillors Nick Bennett (Vice Chair), Bob Bowdler, Claire Dowling, Carl Maynard and Bob Standley

Members spoke on the items indicated

Councillor Bennett	- item 6 (minute 4)
Councillor Bowdler	- item 6 (minute 4)
Councillor Collier	- item 6 (minute 4)
Councillor Daniel	- item 5 (minute 3)
Councillor Denis	- items 5 and 6 (minutes 3 and 4)
Councillor Claire Dowling	- item 5 (minute 3)
Councillor Field	- item 8 (minute 6)
Councillor Hilton	- items 5 and 6 (minutes 3 and 4)
Councillor Kirby-Green	- item 5 (minute 3)
Councillor Maples	- item 5 (minute 3)
Councillor Maynard	- item 8 (minute 6)
Councillor Scott	- item 5 (minute 3)
Councillor Shuttleworth	- items 5 and 6 (minutes 3 and 4)
Councillor Standley	- items 5 and 6 (minutes 3 and 4)
Councillor Georgia Taylor	- items 7 and 8 (minutes 5 and 6)
Councillor Tutt	- items 5, 6 and 7 (minutes 3, 4 and 5)
Councillor Webb	- items 6, 7 and 8 (minutes 4, 5 and 6)

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 APRIL 2023

1.1 The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 18 April 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

2. REPORTS

2.1 Copies of the reports referred to below are included in the minute book.

3. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE INVESTMENT

3.1 The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport.

3.2 It was RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note what has been achieved with the £5.8m additional investment approved in November 2021.
- 2) a) Note the impact of the 2022/23 winter on road condition and, in accordance with our highways asset management plan agree the following to bring investment in 2023/24 to £28.2m. Agree additional one off £5.6m spend on highways maintenance comprising £2.5m patching work and £3.1m drainage work, to be funded from the Priority Outcomes and Transformation Reserve, which includes the balance on the 2022/23 Services Grant set aside for one-off investment;

b) Agree to increase the capital programme for 2023/24 by £5.1m to maintain steady state and;

c) Agree, subject to the County Council agreeing to increase the Capital Programme, that a further £5m be spent on highway maintenance to provide early improvements and resilience.

d) Agree to lobby the Government, directly and with other partners, to provide funding for highways sufficient to ensure East Sussex roads are adequate for the needs of residents and businesses.

Reasons

3.3 The additional £5.8m one-off investment in highway maintenance was successfully delivered in 2022/23 with the exception of some of the road markings and sign replacement works that have been delayed to the current financial year due to supply chain and weather issues. The additional £2.5m in patching paid dividends and was clearly noticeable in the autumn of 2022.

3.4 However, the exceptional winter of 2022/23 has partly mitigated the effect of the additional patching programmes and increased the backlog of patching works (to deal with non-intervention level potholes) to £2.5m. Therefore, further one-off investment of £2.5m will continue to tackle the backlog of patching and prevent intervention level potholes forming. This will provide additional early resilience to a weakened network during the current year in preparation for the coming winter months.

3.5 The very wet winter has generated the highest number of carriageway potholes since the contract with Costain began in 2016 with the relationship between wet winters and pothole numbers clearly evident. Alongside this there has been a visible deterioration in carriageway condition with some areas experiencing sudden surface failure.

3.6 The experience of the 2022/23 winter, and the impact it has had on the network, has shown that road condition will continue to deteriorate at an accelerating rate if similar winters are experienced in the future and funding continues at current levels.

3.7 The investment modelling undertaken considers how to address this and the levels of funding required. The modelling is based on using up to date maintenance costs to account for higher costs since 2021/22; the last condition information available from the September 2022 road condition surveys; estimating the impact on condition on the network following the 2022/23 winter; and using some engineering assumptions about the make-up (construction materials) of the roads.

3.8 Based on the outputs from the modelling additional investment is needed to achieve our current road condition targets known as steady state. Road condition targets, across the different types of highways, of 4%, 4% and 14% (averaged as 10% overall). The level of investment needs to be increased from £18.1m to £23.2m per annum as a minimum.

3.9 Further investment in road condition also needs the current £3.1m backlog of drainage issues to be addressed to protect the proposed investment in improving road condition. This and the ongoing patching of non-intervention level potholes through the investment of another £2.5m to reduce the accumulated backlog. This one off funding is in addition to the £28.2 increase in the capital programme.

4. COUNCIL MONITORING: QUARTER 4 2022/23 - YEAR END

4.1 The Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive.

4.2 It was RESOLVED to:

- 1) note the latest monitoring position for the Council;
- 2) note the changes to the Strategic Risk Register; and
- 3) recommend the County Council to agree £5m additional provision being made to the Capital Programme in relation to Highways Maintenance for 2023/24.

Reason

4.3 The report sets out the Council's position and year-end projections for the Council Plan targets, Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, and Savings Plan, together with Risks at the end of March 2023.

4.4 The winter saw challenging weather for the condition of the roads, with two periods of very wet and cold weather in November/December 2022 and March 2023. By the end of January 2023, we had more than doubled the number of pothole repair gangs from 10 to 23 and extended working hours. Overall, 93.7% of the repairs to potholes were completed within the required timescales in 2022/23. 30,000 potholes were repaired, with 21,600 of these potholes in the road. This is a significant increase on the 24,000 potholes completed in 2021/22. (Appendix 5 of the report).

4.5 Cabinet considered a report at an earlier agenda item which updated Cabinet on the condition of the highways and recommending Cabinet consider additional investment on highways maintenance in 2023/24 be increased by £15.7m. £5m of this increase will be funded through additional provision being made to the Capital Programme. Such additional provision will be funded by borrowing which will have a revenue implication of £375k per annum.

5. RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR) - STATE OF THE COUNTY

5.1 Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive.

5.2 It was RESOLVED to:

1) note the evidence base on demographics as set out in Appendix 1 of the report and the national and local policy outlook as set out in Appendix 2 of the report;

2) agree the priority outcomes and delivery outcomes as set out in Appendix 3 of the report and agree these as the basis of the Council's business and financial planning, subject to the proposed amendments set out in paragraph 4 of the report;

3) agree officers update the Medium Term Financial Plan as the basis for financial planning when more information is available, as set out in paragraph 5 of the report;

4) agree officers update the Capital Strategy and programme as set out in Appendix 4 and paragraph 6 of the report; and

5) receive reports on more detailed plans for 2024/25 and beyond in the autumn when there is greater certainty about future resources.

Reasons

5.3 The State of the County report is a key part of the Council's Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process, our integrated business and financial planning cycle. The report sets out an overview of the current context in preparation for more detailed planning for 2024/25 and beyond. In conjunction with our 2022/23 year end monitoring report, it reflects on our achievements over the last year, the challenges in the year ahead arising from both local and national factors and, in light of this, begins to refine our plans to guide our business planning and budget setting processes.

5.4 Work will continue over the summer to refine our understanding of the medium term impacts on our services of national reforms, the evolving economic context, changing demand for services and the financial resources that will be available to us in the coming years. We will also consider any further steps we can take to support our future capacity. We will use our RPPR process to plan for the future as best we can in the context of a likely one year financial settlement once again.

5.5 We will report back to Members in the autumn with an updated assessment of our service demand and funding expectations to inform more detailed business and budget planning for 2024/25 and beyond.

5.6 Members will continue to be consulted on plans as they are developed through Cabinet, County Council, Scrutiny Committees, Whole Council Forums and specific engagement sessions throughout the 2023/24 Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources process.

6. ADULT SOCIAL CARE STRATEGY

6.1 The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Adult Social Care and Health.

6.2 It was RESOLVED to:

1) Note the six priorities in the strategy, which outline what is most important to adults who need care and support in East Sussex, their unpaid carers, and families;

2) Approve the strategic response to the six priorities, as set out in our 'we will' statements; and

3) Approve the contents of the strategy publication and the proposal to launch the strategy in June 2023.

6.3 An adult social care strategy poses an opportunity to align local services and support around the needs of local people, the national vision for adult social care and existing plans or strategies linked to East Sussex County Council and the wider health and social care system. The strategy has been developed following an extensive engagement process with both residents and those who work within or alongside adult social care. It provides a set of long-term priorities for adult social care alongside a clear response for how we will help people live well in East Sussex, building on the strengths of local people, services, and community assets.

7. TO AGREE WHICH ITEMS ARE TO BE REPORTED TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL

7.1 It was agreed that items 6 and 7 should be reported to the County Council.

[Note: the items being reported to the County Council refer to minute numbers 4 and 5]

The meeting ended at 11.44 am.