

Additional DfT 'Pothole' Funding 2020/21

Delegated Officer Decision Report –	Executive Director Resources
Date of Committee:	N/A
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Richard Somner
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	To be consulted
Report Author:	Jon Winstanley
Forward Plan Ref:	N/A

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide supporting information for a delegated officer’s decision by the Executive Director for Resources (in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Transport and Countryside and Finance and Economic Development) to add £3.048m of DfT grant funding to the Council’s capital programme (in accordance with 10.10.2 of the Council’s Constitution).

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 To approve the addition of £3.048m of DfT grant funding to the Environment capital programme to be allocated as detailed in Appendix C to this report.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The use of this funding to support highway asset management activities as proposed will reduce future pressures on revenue budgets.
Human Resource:	None
Legal:	None
Risk Management:	The proposed use of this funding would form part of the Department’s business as usual activities.

Property:	None as a result of this report.			
Policy:	This proposal is in line with the Council's statutory duty to maintain the public highway and in accordance with the adopted Highway Asset Management Plan.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		No equalities implications
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		N/A
Environmental Impact:	x			The funding will be used in line with sound asset management techniques to reduce the need for future ad-hoc emergency maintenance which can be relatively uneconomical and adds to the Council's carbon footprint. The funding will also be used for drainage improvements to add resilience to climate change and to replace street lighting stock using more environmentally friendly materials and low energy lighting units. Surfacing will be undertaken using low temperature asphalt where practical to further reduce emissions.

Health Impact:	x			The proposed use of the funding will improve footways and carriageways that are on key utility cycle routes which will help promote active travel.
ICT Impact:		x		None
Digital Services Impact:		x		None
Council Strategy Priorities:				A well-managed highway network is essential to supporting the local economy.
Core Business:		x		Business as usual
Data Impact:				None
Consultation and Engagement:	Capital Strategy Group, Highways Asset Manager.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 During May 2020 the DfT announced additional funding from the Pothole Action and Challenge funds which has been distributed to Local Authorities formulaically. West Berkshire Council's allocation is £3.048m.
- 4.2 In addition the Secretary of State for Transport wrote to Highway Authorities and the Highways Sector as a whole with a request that where possible, maintenance works should be accelerated to help return the sector to pre-Covid levels of work.
- 4.3 The Environment Department employs sound asset management principles through its adopted Highway Asset Management Plan and the proposed allocation of the funding detailed in Appendix C is:
- (a) Directly in line with the request from central government.
 - (b) Deliverable in the current financial year.
 - (c) Fulfils the terms of the grant funding.
 - (d) Delivers value for money and will reduce future pressures on the Environment Departments revenue budgets.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 This report seeks delegated officer's approval to add £3.048m of DfT grant funding to the 2020/21 Capital Programme. A proposed allocation of this funding can be seen in Appendix C.

Background

- 5.2 On 15th May the DfT announced an additional £500m Pothole Fund nationally to be allocated to Highway Authorities in the 2020/21 financial year. Although entitled 'Pothole Fund' the purpose of the fund is 'to carry out maintenance activities that would prevent potholes forming in the first place'. This funding has been allocated to Local Authorities in accordance with the DfT's formulaic approach (based on length/category of road, along with numbers of street lighting units and highway structures).
- 5.3 Additionally, the government announced that it is not proceeding with the planned competition for Phase 2 of its £93m Challenge Fund (WBC were successful in securing £4.5m from phase 1 in 2019/20 towards resurfacing the A4). The competition has been scrapped due to Covid 19, which has meant the funding has been brought forward into this financial year and the funding has been allocated formulaically. This funding is for general use on 'Highway Asset Management'.
- 5.4 This means the total combined amount of additional funding from the DfT for expenditure in 2020/21 is £3.048m (£2.570m from the 'Pothole Fund and 0.478m from the Challenge Fund).

Proposals

- 5.5 It is proposed that the funding be used in accordance with the sound asset management principles as set out in the Council's Highways Asset Management Plan and it targeted at delivering value for money and preventing future pressures.
- 5.6 Appendix C details the proposed allocation across a range of highway asset management areas. In general terms £2,598k will be spend on measures that will directly prevent potholes from forming and £450k will be spent on other highway asset management improvements, which is acceptable within the terms of the two separate grant sources. The terms of the funding dictate that the funding must be spent this financial year, otherwise the funding could be at risk. The proposed allocation is in line with business as usual activities which can be procured through the Council's highways term contract with minimal lead in time. Therefore work could start on the proposed activities in July and should be completed this financial year.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 As part of phase 1 of the Challenge fund the Council submitted a bid for £1.329m for the Great Shefford flood alleviation project. This £2.430m project is to construct a flood alleviation channel to protect properties in Great Shefford from flooding. The scheme would also prevent the A338 from being inaccessible during flooding and protect the road from flood damage, which was the basis of our bid to the DfT. The remaining

£1.101m required to deliver this scheme would be subject to funding from the Environment Agency. This bid was unsuccessful as it did not deliver value for money under the DfT's assessment criteria in comparison to other bids.

- 6.2 The option to use this additional DfT funding to supplement the Great Shefford scheme has been considered. However there are a number of issues that had to be taken into consideration:
- (a) The funding must be used this financial year. The Great Shefford scheme will require complex detailed design, planning permission, land negotiation and does not sit within the scope of the highways term contract. It would therefore be subject to a procurement process (either full or via an appropriate framework). It is not considered possible to achieve these milestones and construct this financial year.
 - (b) The Environment Agency funding needed to supplement this scheme is by no means secure and is unlikely to become available in-year if requested. Again this significantly increases the risk of non-delivery.
 - (c) The challenge fund element of the grant issued is a maximum of £478k. It is debatable whether this project would fulfil the terms of the pothole element of the grant. This would leave a significant funding shortfall.

For the above reasons it is not deemed feasible to deliver the Great Shefford flood alleviation scheme using this funding. However, officers will continue to work with the Environment Agency and other stakeholders to pursue appropriate funding opportunities to deliver this scheme.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 On 7th May 2020 the Secretary of State for Transport, The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps MP wrote to all Local Authorities recognising the work of the Highways Sector throughout the lockdown period. In the letter he announced project 'Safestart' aimed at restoring highway sector works to pre-Covid levels and bringing forward highway maintenance works to help stimulate the economy. This proposal directly supports this government initiative.
- 7.2 The proposed allocation of this funding is in line with sound highway asset management principles, it will deliver value for money and will offset future pressures on asset management revenue budgets. The Department can deliver this work alongside existing work streams and early approval of this report will mean the funding will be spent this financial year.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix C – Proposed Funding Allocation.

Background Papers:

See Report

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
 - Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
 - Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
 - Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months
 - Item is Urgent Key Decision
 - Report is to note only
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Document Control

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Change History

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