

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

DATE: 26 JANUARY 2021

REPORT OF: MR TIM OLIVER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

LEAD OFFICER: KATIE STEWART – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ENVIRONMENT,
TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SUBJECT: FARNHAM INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMME

ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA: GROWING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY SO EVERYONE CAN BENEFIT,
ENABLING A GREENER FUTURE AND EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

This report provides an update to Cabinet in respect of the Farnham Infrastructure Programme (FIP) and seeks approval to proceed with development of schemes and implementation of the Quick Wins (project 1). Linked to this project, Cabinet are also asked to approve the advertisement of a Traffic Regulation Orders associated with Quick Wins (project 1). This action will help provide a speedy resolution to the implementation of Quick Wins in Farnham whilst the wider programme is developed.

Further reports will be brought back to Cabinet in respect of the detailed business cases as projects for the Town Centre (project 2) and specifically for the A31 Hickleys Corner (project 3) and A325 Wrecclesham Relief Road (Project 4) develop.

The proposals will support the following 3 Organisational Strategy Priority Areas: -

Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit: It is the aspiration to create an exemplary town centre which supports a low carbon economy whilst supporting Farnham in becoming a location of choice for business. This will in turn generate employment. The programme will also provide support for existing employers by considering their transport infrastructure needs and to increase their levels of local employment.

Enabling a greener future: The programme will produce proposals that support the Climate Change Strategy as published by Surrey County Council. It will also contribute to the delivery of the roadmap to net zero carbon by 2030 set out by Waverley Borough Council and Farnham Town Council, through the mitigation of carbon emissions and adoption of potential future technologies. The programme will also support the investment in ultra-low emission vehicles.

It will create a local transport network that prioritises public transport, walking and cycling while minimising car use, which promotes sustainable travel planning, whilst protecting existing biodiversity and related habitats surrounding Farnham and actively enhancing it within the town.

Empowering Communities: The Farnham Infrastructure Programme will encourage residents to have a real say in the future of their town and help shape its future. Early consultation with key stakeholders and the public will ensure that the community needs are understood at the earliest possible juncture so that the available opportunities and potential benefits can be maximised. The programme will also ensure it engages with a wide cross

section of the community, which will be supported by having engagement discussions in regularly accessed places within the community, through the use of Local Liaison Forums LLF's.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Note the Farnham Infrastructure Programme and progress to date; and
2. Approve the decision to move £2.5m for the Quick Wins (project 1) and ongoing feasibility work from the capital pipeline to the capital budget be delegated to the Capital Programme Panel; and
3. Note the continued development of the Farnham Infrastructure Programme with further reports brought back to Cabinet for projects 2 (Town Centre), 3 (A31 Hickleys Corner) and 4 (A325 Wrecclesham Relief Road) as more detailed business cases are developed; and
4. Agree that highway schemes associated with Project 1 'Quick Wins' are progressed through consultation (statutory or otherwise) and responsibility to resolve objections and decide whether to implement the proposals is delegated to the Executive Director for Environment, Transport and Infrastructure in consultation with the Deputy Leader.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The recommendations will enable the Farnham Infrastructure Programme to be developed to provide an exemplar future transport model for similar towns within Surrey by providing the necessary funding to continue development and implementation.

The capital programme (part of the 2021-26 Medium Term Financial Strategy) includes provision for future investment in Farnham over the next five years. Subject to Capital Programme Panel (CPP) approving a business case, £2.5m will be moved from the capital pipeline to the capital budget to allow the Quick Wins and further feasibility work to progress in 2021/22. As further schemes are developed and business cases approved in respect of projects 2-4, funding will be moved from the capital pipeline to the capital budget to allow works to commence.

The approval to advertise Traffic Regulation Orders would normally be sought from the Waverley Local Committee. Due to the timing of meetings Quick Wins (project 1) could be delayed if delegated approval is not sought now from Cabinet.

DETAILS:

Background

1. Over the last 25 years a number of transportation studies have been undertaken in an attempt to improve the quality of the environment within Farnham and its surrounding area for the benefit of its residents.
2. Key areas of concern include:
 - the town centre itself with the volume of through traffic, particularly HGVs, narrow footways, pedestrian and vehicular conflicts, the lack of alternative

public transport options and the poor air quality that results from all these issues:

- The significant severance between the town centre and North Farnham with South Farnham and the Railway Station caused by A31 Hickleys Corner, the junction of the A31 and South Street which forms the main link between North and South Farnham and the Railway Station and the major London Southampton transport link. A proposal for a significant alteration to this junction received early entry approval to the major roads programme in 2004. As a result, in changes to funding of major roads schemes shortly after early entry approval no further work was undertaken however the scheme is currently in the Transport for the South East Local Large Majors LLM Priority 5-year Programme.
 - A325 Wrecclesham Relief Road. This proposal looks to address the significant problems caused by the A325 within Wrecclesham Village which include road safety issues, speeding, HGVs and walking and cycling, The scheme is included within the Transport for the South East Local Large Majors LLM reserve list for consideration within the next 5-10 years.
3. To more effectively overcome the concerns covered in paragraph 2 the Farnham Infrastructure Programme has been developed overseen by the Farnham Board, a joint Board comprising members from Surrey CC, Waverley Borough Council, Farnham Town Council and the local MP Jeremy Hunt. The Board is chaired by the Leader of Surrey County Council and supported by officers from all three Authorities with Arcadis Consultants providing the programme management support. It should be noted that the Board has no executive powers and where appropriate the individual partner authorities would be responsible for providing the necessary approvals. Rather the Boards effectiveness is in its ability to bring partners together to provide a focal point and to gain a common understanding of the issues as well as to collaborate in the solutions. The Board is also supported by Local Liaison Forums (LLF's) to ensure the views of the public and business are fully reflected in any proposals being developed and taken forward.
4. The Farnham Infrastructure Programme (FIP) comprises four currently identified projects:

Project 1 – Quick Wins

This consists of a suite of potential improvements to address the following areas of consideration:

- Possible re-routing of HGV's
- Possible implementation of 20mph zones in the central area of the town
- Removing A-road category status for roads that cross the town centre
- Addressing concerns regarding pedestrian safety on narrow pavements
- COVID19 social distancing measures
- Other emerging solutions

Project 2 – Farnham town centre transport infrastructure improvements with the creation of pedestrian friendly areas thereby ensuring a thriving economy whilst giving consideration to and addressing the following:

- Providing improved measures to encourage walking and cycling
- Providing improved public transport
- Addressing congestion particularly in respect of through traffic

- Addressing air quality issues
- Providing new parking solutions for accessing the town centre
- Reducing HGVs in the town centre and Upper Hale
- Preserving and highlighting the towns historic nature
- Reducing conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles
- Supporting businesses to thrive and support local employment

Project 3 - A31 Hickleys Corner Improvements. This consists of measures to relieve congestion in Farnham whilst improving connectivity between North and Central Farnham with South Farnham and the Railway Station. The project will also deliver improvements to the A31 from Guildford to Winchester and will look to address the following:

- Improving safety for drivers whilst prioritising cyclists and pedestrians
- Reducing congestion through the town centre by reducing delays and queuing by enabling right turns on the A31
- Enabling better connectivity and reducing community severance in Farnham
- Reducing the impacts of the level crossing
- Exploring the possible adoption of Station Road

Project 4 – A325 Wrecclesham Relief Road Project. Removing traffic, including HGVs from Wrecclesham Village whilst looking to address issues such as:

- Road Safety and speeding
- Improved walking and cycling facilities
- Reducing bridge strikes
- Reducing detrimental environmental impacts particularly in conservation and residential areas of the village

5. In addition to the above consideration is also been given to the provision of a Western Relief Road for Farnham which could reduce the extent of possible through traffic through the town centre and Upper Hale.
6. Whilst full costings for the projects have still to be undertaken and business cases prepared, previous estimates of cost at current day prices indicate notional capital costs in the region of:

Project	Cost estimate
Project 1 Quick Wins	£2.0m
Project 2 Town Centre	£18.0m
Project 3 Hickleys Corner	£115m
Project 4 Wrecclesham	£100m

Opportunity will be taken to seek external funding from a variety of sources including Government grant, Planning contributions, Local Economic Partnership funding and funding from other Partners. For instance, projects 3 and 4 specifically would be eligible for Department of Transport (DfT) funding for Local Large Major (LLM) projects (DfT categorisation for highway and transport schemes in excess of £50m) which could cover up 85% of their cost subject to a satisfactory business case being made.

7. However, in order to leverage such external investment, it is critical that the Council provides the necessary resource to develop the associated business cases. To enable

the Programme to continue, approval is therefore being sought from Cabinet to develop and implement the Project1. Business cases for Projects 2, 3 and 4 will then be brought back to Cabinet as they are developed. Oversight of the Programme will be provided by the Farnham Board.

8. In addition to the above revenue requirement, additional revenue costs will be incurred to manage the programme and develop the business cases for Projects 2, 3 and 4. These costs are estimated at £1.14m in 2020/21 and £1.464m in 2021/22 and have initially been met from the Council's Feasibility Fund, although costs will be capitalised as and when appropriate.

Progress to Date

9. A Vision for Farnham provided at Annex A, has been consulted on and agreed by the residents and businesses in Farnham. The Vision, which details the projects and identifies the objectives and themes for the Programme was broadly welcomed with the majority of the 885 respondents agreeing or/ strongly agreeing with the Vision.
10. In addition, an HGV study has already been undertaken the results of which are detailed within the. Executive Summary at Annex B. A key recommendation of which is the implementation of a weight restriction within Farnham other than for access only. Discussions are already ongoing with Surrey Police, Hampshire County Council and Highways England regarding the implications of this recommendation.

As part of the HGV study a 20mph speed study has also been commissioned specifically in respect of the town centre. The result of this report will be reported to the 22 January meeting of the Farnham Board.
11. Approval to advertise Traffic Regulation Orders TROs is normally a responsibility of the Local Area Committee, in this case Waverley Local Committee. Unfortunately, the next meeting of the Committee is not until the end of March which would result in a significant delay in the implementation of the TRO. Under the circumstances and given the importance placed on starting to address the problem of HGV through traffic, delegated approval to advertise this TRO and any other TRO's associated with Quick Wins (Project 1) is being sought from Cabinet as part of this report.
12. To determine the most appropriate package of proposals that would meet current national, regional and local policies and strategies an Optimised Infrastructure Plan OIP is currently being developed. This OIP will identify the most efficient and effective combination of infrastructure projects to deliver the Vision for Farnham. This Plan will consider not only the town centre package of proposals as well as the 2 LLMs, Projects 3 and 4. The result of this work, will be reported to the January Farnham Board meeting.

Programme going Forward

13. Subject to the Boards approval the OIP will be consulted on during February and March to understand the public and business views in respect the specific infrastructure projects proposed to deliver the Vision. The outcome of the Consultation will be reported to the May 2021 Farnham Board meeting. However subsequent implementation of any proposals arising from the OIP will ultimately require the approval of the appropriate responsible authority.

14. Subsequently business cases will be developed specifically for the LLM's the results of which will be reported back to Cabinet, together with more up to date cost estimates, for consideration.

CONSULTATION:

15. The Leader, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and the three local Divisional Members are members of the Farnham Board and have therefore been engaged and consulted in the development of the Vision and its programme.
16. The Vision Statement has been fully consulted on with partner organisations, the public and businesses. In addition, regular Local Liaison Forums have been set up to keep members of the public and businesses up to date with progress and seeks their views in respect of proposals and concepts being considered as part of this Programme. To date seven LLF meetings have been held.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

17. Further reports with detailed business cases will be submitted to Cabinet as the Projects develop which will include for specific risks and implications.
18. In addition, a full Risk assessment for the overall Programme has been undertaken and will be monitored and reviewed through the Farnham Board.

FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

19. Programme management and initial scheme development costs are estimated at £1.14m in 2020/21 and £1.464m in 2021/22 and have initially been met from the Council's Feasibility Fund, although costs will be capitalised as and when appropriate. The Council's capital programme (included in the 2021-26 Medium Term Financial Strategy) includes provision for quick wins and town centre improvements (£20m) and the A31 Hickleys Corner (£115m).
20. Individual Business cases will be reported to future Cabinet Meetings for town centre improvements (project 2), A31 Hickleys Corner (Project 3) and A325 Wrecclesham Relief Road (Project 4) and will set out financial and risk considerations for each scheme.

SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTARY

21. Although significant progress has been made over the last twelve months to improve the Council's financial position, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2021/22 remains uncertain. The public health crisis has resulted in increased costs which may not be fully funded. With uncertainty about the ongoing impact of this and no clarity on the extent to which both central and local funding sources might be affected in the medium term, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term.
22. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-26 includes provision for the Farnham Infrastructure Programme, within the Capital Pipeline. In order to facilitate rapid progress, delegated authority is sought for the Capital Programme Panel, after

undertaking appropriate scrutiny, to authorise the transfer of £2.5m from the pipeline to the capital budget to allow schemes to commence. The financial implications of this have been factored into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and as such the Section 151 Officer supports the recommendation.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS – MONITORING OFFICER

23. There are no significant legal implications raised in the report at this stage, other than the recommendation to advertise and consult in accordance with the statutory process prior to determining whether any proposed traffic regulation order introducing traffic restrictions within Farnham is agreed as set out in the body of the report.

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

24. Equality Impact Assessments EIA’s will be undertaken as part of each individual Business Case.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

25. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail below.

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications arising from this report
Environmental sustainability	No significant implications arising from this report but see below.
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report but see below

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

26. An Environmental Sustainability Assessment (ESA) will be undertaken as required as part of the individual business case development for each project.

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

27. Public Health implications will be dealt with within the individual Business Cases.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

28. Individual business cases for the Town Centre (project 2), A31 Hickleys Corner (project 3) and A325 Wrecclesham Relief Road (project 4) will be bought back to future meetings of Cabinet.

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Consulted:

The overall Farnham Infrastructure Programme is overseen by the Farnham Board chaired by the Leader of the Council and comprising amongst others, the Deputy Leader and three Divisional Members.

Annexes:

Annex A – Farnham Infrastructure Programme Vision Statement

Annex B - Farnham HGV Study – Executive Summary

Sources/background papers:

Report to Capital Programme Panel CPP – May 2020

Reports to Farnham Board
