

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**

DATE: 24 SEPTEMBER 2024

REPORT OF: MATT FURNISS – CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

LEAD OFFICER: OWEN JENKINS - INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HIGHWAY, INFRASTRUCTURE & PLANNING

SUBJECT: COUNTYWIDE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT SCHEMES PRIORITISATION PROCESS AND 25/26 DELIVERY PROGRAMME

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

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To seek the approval of the modified prioritisation process for the Countywide Integrated Transport Schemes (ITS) programme, established by the Cabinet in February 2022, following a review by the Cross-party member reference group.

The Cabinet Member is also asked to approve the schemes that have been prioritised for delivery, as part of this programme, from 2025/26.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member approve:

- a) The proposed prioritisation process set out in Annex A of the report;
- b) The proposed ITS schemes to be funded from the planned 2025/26 Countywide Integrated Transport Scheme budget set out in Annex B of the report; and
- c) To delegate authority to the Highways Engagement and Commissioning Manager to make any minor amendments to the schemes which may be required to ensure that the schemes are progressed, in consultation with the relevant Divisional Member and, where required, the Cabinet Member.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Cabinet established the Countywide ITS budget in February 2022, as part of changes to highway decisions, and requested that officers develop a prioritisation process for the fund. The prioritisation process has since been reviewed and amended by a cross-party Member Reference Group, and additional feedback recommendations, to ensure that no one is left behind and that all communities have an opportunity to access this programme of works. The revised prioritisation process now needs to be agreed so that schemes can be approved and progressed to the design and delivery stage.

DETAILS:

Background

2. The Countywide ITS budget was established as part of a range of proposals to support Members in having more influence on promoting schemes that would benefit their residents. Under these new proposals, Members can prioritise and promote one scheme for consideration within their division per year.
3. Schemes for delivery during the 2022/23 financial year (22/23 FY) were determined from those previously agreed at the local and joint committees to help progress to delivery. Alongside this, during 22/23 FY, a new process was established to determine and agree schemes for delivery for the 23/24 FY onwards. This process was then modified for the 24/25 FY and now the 25/26FY, in response to feedback received.
4. We are now in the third year of determining the Countywide ITS programme and have based the prioritisation of the programme on the assumption that the budget will remain at £3.0m for 25/26. The actual budget available for 25/26 will be determined as part of the annual budget setting process, and therefore the final confirmed programme will be subject to change dependent upon the available budget.

Prioritisation Process, Reviews & Response to feedback

5. At the Cabinet meeting on the 22 February 2022, it was agreed that officers would develop a prioritisation process for the Countywide ITS programme, with a steer provided from the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee. The cabinet Member for Highways and Community Resilience formally approved the initial prioritisation process in November 2022. This prioritisation process was then subject to a further review by a cross-party Member Reference Group in March 2023.
6. Several elements of the process and prioritisation process were discussed by the Member Reference Group. The focus was on achieving greater transparency and communication of the process, identification of additional

tools that could support County Councillors to identify the scheme that would best benefit the local community, and improving how County Councillors were kept informed of the process.

7. In addition to this, the group were keen to understand the scoring process better, and to support the development of tools to ensure that it was easy for residents and all County Councillors to understand.
8. Building on this feedback the following tools were developed or reworked and circulated to all County Councillors at the beginning of the second year of this approach:
 - The flow chart for the process was redesigned to help make the process clearer.
 - A guide of estimated costs for potential schemes was provided to check costings (it was noted that these are estimates only which could change as a scheme progresses)
 - A scheme nomination proforma was provided for all County Councillors to complete for transparency of requests and ease of identifying potential alternative options.
 - A briefing note on what is likely to make a scheme successful was produced for guidance.
 - A FAQs document on the process was produced from key questions that had been received from County Councillors or residents in the first year for transparency and support.
 - Updates on the nominated schemes were included within the monthly highways financial updates for County Councillors to make it easier to track the progress.
 - The scoring criteria was reviewed to ensure that rural communities were not disadvantaged by the new approach.
9. Further feedback has been used to modify this process to make it clearer that, as it is not possible to define what is a rural community, that for the purposes of this process the boundary of Parish Council areas is used. There is also more clarity that consideration is given to the Healthy Streets for Surrey approach to the development of schemes. Members will also have the opportunity to fill out a short survey, following completion of a scheme in their division, to help inform future improvements to this process and scheme delivery.
10. In progressing the third round of this process, which is focused on looking at schemes for design and delivery in 2025/26 financial year onwards, 69 schemes have been nominated by County Councillors for prioritisation to the Countywide ITS programme. Each nominated scheme has been technically assessed on the broad feasibility and deliverability of the scheme.
11. The nominated schemes and their associated technical assessment have subsequently been prioritised using the modified process attached at Annex A. This has then been moderated to ensure a consistent approach countywide.

12. The schemes prioritised to be progressed to the design and delivery stages from the 2025/26 financial year are listed in Annex B.
13. The Cabinet Member has also reviewed this proposed programme (Annex B) to ensure that communities have a fair opportunity to this funding (no scheme has more than £350,000 allocated to it from this budget). This includes ensuring that there is also a fairer opportunity for County Councillors who have nominated a scheme in a Parish Council area to have their scheme prioritised for this programme.
14. Schemes put forward by County Councillors that are not in Annex B could be resubmitted for consideration for the 2026/27 financial year, or County Councillors may put forward an alternative scheme, this is their choice.

Analysis and Commentary

15. 69 schemes were submitted by Divisional Members to be considered for delivery through the Countywide ITS Fund (one scheme is a joint submission, and eleven County Councillors did not submit a scheme).
16. Each of these schemes were technically assessed and scored against the criteria in the prioritisation process.
17. Following this exercise, the schemes listed in Annex B are being recommended to be delivered through the Countywide ITS Fund from 2025/26 as these scored highest against the criteria and align with the aim to ensure that no community is left behind.

Consultation and Publicity

18. The Cabinet approved the establishment of an annual budget for integrated transport schemes at a meeting on 22nd February 2022. Following this, Members have been invited to submit a scheme on an annual basis for consideration.
19. The Highways Engagement and Commissioning Team have been in contact with all Members to talk through their schemes and provide them with guidance on the process.
20. A summary report on the outcome of the schemes and the benefits that this has provided for local residents will be reported for information on an annual basis to the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee. There will also be informal discussions as part of the Members Briefings, as part of a lessons learnt approach to improving this process for future years.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

21. A key element of the scoring process has been to ensure that any schemes that are recommended to be approved for design and construction can be delivered within the timescales, and that there are sufficient resources to complete the works.
22. It is proposed that authority is delegated to the Highways Engagement and Commissioning Manager to make any minor amendments to the schemes which may be required to ensure that the schemes are progressed, in consultation with the relevant Divisional Member and where required, the Cabinet Member. This is to manage the normal risks to any works programme.

FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

23. The estimated cost of the projects identified in Annex B is within a guide figure of £3m, which is based on the current Countywide ITS budget. The actual budget for 2025/26 is yet to be finalised, and therefore the final confirmed programme will be subject to change dependent upon the available budget .
24. All projects have been assessed to ensure that they are deliverable and affordable within the relevant financial period. However, some schemes could be programmed for delivery in the following 26/27 Financial Year to minimise disruption to traffic (especially if the scheme is located near to a school).

SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTARY

25. The Council continues to operate in a very challenging financial environment. Local authorities across the country are experiencing significant budgetary pressures. Surrey County Council has made significant progress in recent years to improve the Council's financial resilience and whilst this has built a stronger financial base from which to deliver our services, the cost of service delivery, increasing demand, financial uncertainty and government policy changes mean we continue to face challenges to our financial position. This requires an increased focus on financial management to protect service delivery, a continuation of the need to deliver financial efficiencies and reduce spending in order to achieve a balanced budget position each year.
26. In addition to these immediate challenges, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2024/25 remains uncertain. With no clarity on central government funding 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 the stable provision of services in the medium term.

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LEGAL IMPLICATIONS – MONITORING OFFICER

28. The recommendation (c) delegates authority to officers to authorise and manage expenditure from the budget in accordance with the Cabinet Member’s decisions. There are no further legal or legislative requirements relating to this budget.

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

29. All Members have been requested to submit a scheme that will benefit their residents. The schemes that have been recommended are those that support the Council to meet its Corporate Priorities, which are focused on inclusivity and leaving no one behind. There are no other equalities or diversity impacts arising from the scheme.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

30. None.

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

31. All of the schemes have been assessed against their ability for the Council to meet the principles within the Local Transport Plan 4. There are no public health implications arising from this report.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

32. All approved schemes will be submitted to the Council’s Highways Design Team for a more detailed scheme design, and following this, subject to no issues being raised, this will be programmed for delivery from 2025/26.
33. The outcome of the decision at this meeting will be reported on the Council’s website and all Members will be contacted on the outcome.

Contact Officer:

Zena Curry – Highways Engagement and Commissioning Manager
zena.curry@surreycc.gov.uk

Consulted:

- Cabinet in the development of the budget
- Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee on the prioritisation process.
- All Divisional Members have been consulted on submitting a scheme

Annexes:

- Annex A – Proposed Prioritisation Process
- Annex B – Recommended list of schemes to be agreed for funding.

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