

LOCAL HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

To: Highways and Community Infrastructure

Meeting Date: 7th July 2015

From: Executive Director Economy, Transport and Environment

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: N/a *Key decision:* No

Purpose: To report the outcome of the member review of the Local Highway Improvement Scheme (LHIS)

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- a) agree to the development of a LHIS webpage resource for applicants with a formal application process timeline.
- b) agree to the addition of an 'added value' category and reduction in the maximum category score to 5.
- c) agree to the introduction of a technical assessment to inform the member panel scoring process.
- d) agree to encourage Area Committee prioritised applications in Cambridge City, based on an area maximum of 2 applications per Ward.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Local Highway Improvement Scheme (LHIS) was introduced in 2012/13. The scheme provides a mechanism for local communities to partner with the County Council to deliver their priorities for minor improvements to their roads and paths. The scheme has attracted approximately 450 applications since its inception and over 200 schemes have been implemented. The scheme has been significantly over-subscribed and most of the projects would not have been delivered without the LHIS.
- 1.2 Whilst the scheme has been popular and successful in delivering its aims of empowering communities to help deliver local improvements, the opportunity was taken to review the scheme to determine the potential for further improvements.
- 1.3 A working group of this Committee was agreed on 10th February 2015, to review the LHIS. The approved terms of reference and membership of this group are set out in **Appendix 1**.
- 1.4 The terms of reference set out five key areas to review;
 - The overall funding availability for the programme.
 - The financial contributions from communities.
 - The consultation process.
 - Local Member input.
 - The governance and decision-making arrangements.
- 1.5 The working group initially met on 17th March 2015 and discussed issues and potential areas of improvement based on these five areas. Officers subsequently presented potential options to deliver these improvements at the second meeting on 19th May 2015. Attendance sheets for these meetings are included in **Appendix 3**.

2. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Programme Budget

- 2.1 There was a clear desire to increase the available budget for the LHIS, however the Integrated Transport Block (ITB), from which the programme is funded, has seen a 44% reduction for this financial year. The ITB is therefore already under significant pressure, so alternative sources of funding will be required to achieve this. Officers will continue to pursue options, including the potential use of underspend from previous financial years.
- 2.2 The maximum allocation to individual schemes was also considered, including the impact of a reduction from £10k to £8k. Whilst this would provide funding for more schemes, it has the potential to reduce the scope of the LHIS to more minor schemes, with around half of all funded schemes currently exceeding £8k each year.
- 2.3 It was agreed that maximising expenditure of the current budget was the preference and that the maximum allocation of £10k should remain unchanged.

Third Party Contributions

- 2.4 The minimum 10% contribution from all applicants was reviewed, with particular regard to Parish Councils with little or no precept. A sliding scale of contributions was considered to be an option.
- 2.5 The sliding scale that was put forward, proposed that a Parish Council with a precept of £5000 or less would not be required to contribute, whereas a Parish or Town Council with a precept in excess of £100,000 would be required to contribute 25%. Parish and Town Council's with precepts of between £5001 and £100,000 would continue to be required to contribute 10%.
- 2.6 Whilst this favoured Parish Councils with low precepts, the requirement to increase contributions from those with high precepts, in order to maintain the number of schemes, was not supported.
- 2.7 The sliding scale would also not apply to organisations or community groups applying for funding. Directing all applicants through their Parish Council would be an option, but the current LHS also limits the number of applications to one per applicant.
- 2.8 It was concluded that the minimum 10% contribution currently operates simply and fairly for all applicants and should therefore continue. It was also thought not to be a significant issue for Parish Councils with low precepts.

Consultation & Application Process

- 2.9 Providing more information on the process to give applicants a clearer understanding of the LHS, its aims, assessment criteria and timescales was seen as a key area of improvement.
- 2.10 This could be delivered through the development of more detailed webpages within the CCC website. It would provide an all-encompassing resource for applicants including all application information, examples of completed schemes and the solutions available for common highway issues, their advantages, disadvantages, effectiveness and average cost.
- 2.11 Development of a database of stakeholders to engage with during the window for applications was also requested, to make the scheme as accessible as possible for local communities. This would also include general media activity.
- 2.12 Introducing a clear process with robust deadlines was also discussed, to ensure that key procedures are completed and expenditure maximised each year. An outline of this process is set out in **Appendix 2**.
- 2.13 Getting timely final agreement from applicants, prior to the delivery of schemes, will enable the LHS to deliver more schemes within each programme year.

Local Member Input

- 2.14 Support from local members during both the engagement and application stage of the LHS was seen as valuable.
- 2.15 Members are well placed to engage with the local community on potential schemes and members of the working group felt that applications which demonstrate clear local member support should carry more weight during the scoring process.

Governance and Decision Making

- 2.16 Whilst a sliding scale of contributions was discussed and subsequently discounted, it was suggested that an additional score category be introduced.
- 2.17 Three categories currently exist; persistent problem, road safety and community impact. A fourth category termed 'added value' was proposed, to enable panel members to give a score for various positive aspects of applications that are currently not covered by the existing categories, such as;
 - Collaboration between multiple organisations, such as more than one Parish Council.
 - Providing additional funding contributions in excess of the minimum 10% and in proportion to their annual precept, if the applicant is a Parish or Town Council.
 - Evidence that the applicant has pursued alternative options to solve the issue, such as Community Speed Watch for speeding issues.
 - Evidence of significant local member support.
- 2.18 To inform the panel scoring process, a technical appraisal of all applications was discussed, with the aim of providing panel members with a qualitative assessment of four technical areas presented in the form of a traffic light scoring system.
- 2.19 These areas include; risks to delivery, effectiveness, road safety and maintenance related issues.
- 2.20 A reduction in the maximum score for each category, from 9 to 5, was also proposed to provide further uniformity to the scoring process across the County.
- 2.21 Arrangements within the Cambridge City area were also reviewed, where the process currently differs to the rest of the County. An unlimited number of applications are currently accepted from the City Council and scored by the Cambridge Joint Area Committee (CJAC), which acts as the member panel.
- 2.22 The applications that are received do not have the necessary approved third party contributions at the point of submission, but are allocated once the LHI Panel has scored the applications in priority order.

- 2.23 In order to bring the process in the city more in line with the rest of the scheme across the County, limiting the number of applications was considered an option. This could be achieved by the four Area Committees prioritising applications from their areas prior to submission and be limited to the equivalent of 2 applications per Ward. East Area Committee would therefore be limited to a maximum of 8 applications in total, with a maximum of 28 for the city as a whole. The City Council contribution would then be agreed following prioritisation by an LHI member panel. There are generally 15 schemes on average that are allocated LHI funding in the city area.
- 2.24 It is also suggested that a member panel made up of 6 CJAC members be created for the city, to maintain consistency for the LHI and simplify the scoring process. Whether the panel is limited to County Council members or also includes City Council members of CJAC is yet to be agreed.
- 2.25 This report will be presented to the 14th July CJAC, at which the committee will be asked to agree to form a panel comprising 6 members and the composition of the member panel.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The outcome of the member review has therefore led to recommended improvements to four main aspects of the LHI.
- 3.2 Development of more substantial information on the CCC website to provide applicants with access to user friendly application and technical information as well as a formal application process timeline.
- 3.3 Introduction of an 'added value' scoring category and reduction of the maximum score to 5 in each category.
- 3.4 Provision of a qualitative traffic light based technical assessment to inform panel member scoring.
- 3.5 Encourage Area Committee prioritised City Council applications limited to the equivalent of two per ward and the creation of a member panel, made up of 6 CJAC nominated members, based on County Council members only, or both City and County Council members.
- 3.6 All of the above recommendations could be implemented in time for the start of next year's application process, with the exception of the website development, which would go live as soon as possible, but likely to be towards the end of the year.
- 3.7 It is proposed that this year's application window will begin in early July and close in late October, with member panels being held throughout December and January. A specific report will then be presented to this Committee in March, to seek approval of the prioritised LHI scheme allocations. Subsequent years would follow the proposed timeline shown in appendix 2.

4. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

4.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

Minor highways improvements can increase accessibility, helping people gain access to skills and jobs.

4.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

Minor highways improvements can increase mobility and improve road safety, making it easier for people to access services.

4.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

There are no significant implications for this priority.

5. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Resource Implications

The scheme is based on partnership funding between the Council and the local community. Resources are therefore somewhat dependant on the type of applications that are received. However, the introduction of a technical assessment by officers as part of the application process will have an implication on resources, but this will be offset by no longer needing to complete this for successful schemes prior to delivery. The potential impact is therefore expected to be minimal and achievable within the current resources allocated to the programme.

5.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

There are no significant implications for this category.

5.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

It is hoped that the changes that are planned will provide further benefits to the LHS, making it even more accessible to the local community whilst maintaining the existing high level of local member involvement.

5.6 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

Source Documents	Location
LHS Working Group Terms of Reference & Membership	Appendix 1
Proposed Local Highway Improvement Scheme Application Timeline	Appendix 2
Local Highways Improvement Group Meeting Members Attendance Sheet 17/03/15 & 19/05/15	Appendix 3

LOCAL HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME MEMBER WORKING GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To review the current Local Highways Improvement Scheme (LHIS) to ensure that the scheme best meets community needs, given the overall limitations on highway budgets.

2.0 Key Tasks

- 2.1 To consider the overall funding availability for the LHI Programme.
- 2.2 To consider the financial contributions from communities.
- 2.3 To consider the consultation process.
- 2.4 To consider Local Member input.
- 2.5 To consider the governance and decision-making arrangements.

3.0 Membership

- 3.1 Councillors Butcher, Connor, Criswell, Hickford (Chair), Kavanagh, Palmer, Reeve, Rouse, Taylor, van de Ven and Walsh.

4.0 Timescales

- 4.1 To report findings to the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee on 2nd June 2015.

5.0 Officer Support

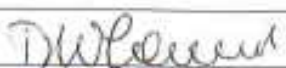

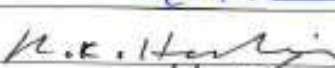
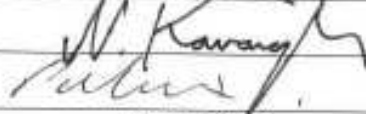
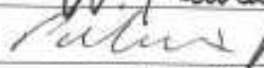
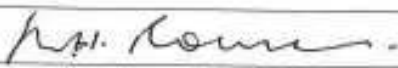
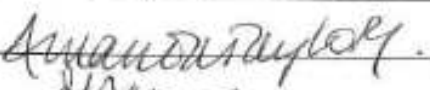
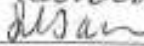
- 5.1 The group will be supported by the Service Manager - Local Projects.

PROPOSED LOCAL HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME
APPLICATION PROCESS TIMELINE



LOCAL HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME WORKING GROUP

Tuesday 17th March 2015
Attendance Sheet

Name	Signature
Councillor R Butcher	Apologies
Councillor D Connor	
Councillor S Criswell	
Councillor R Hickford	
Councillor N Kavanagh	
Councillor J Palmer	
Councillor P Reeve	Apologies
Councillor M Rouse	
Councillor A Taylor	
Councillor S van de Ven	
Councillor A Walsh	Apologies.

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Local Highway Improvement Working Group

Tuesday 19th May 2015
Attendance Sheet

Name	Signature
Councillor R Butcher	
Councillor D Connor	
Councillor S Criswell	
Councillor R Hickford	
Councillor N Kavanagh	
Councillor J Palmer	
Councillor P Reeve	
Councillor M Rouse	Apologies
Councillor A Taylor	
Councillor S van de Ven	Apologies.
Councillor A Walsh	