



06 July 2023

<b>Title</b>	Highway Maintenance Update: National Highways Grant Funding Allocation for Reading 2023/24 & 2024/25
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Sam Shean, Highways & Traffic Services Manager
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Karen Rowland, Environmental Services & Community Safety
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Inclusive Economy
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. That the Committee note the National Highways Grant Funding Allocation of £250k per annum for Reading Borough Council to invest on Highway Assets on the M4 Motorway designated diversion route through Reading for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 financial years.</li><li>2. That the Committee note and endorse the formal funding agreement between the Council and National Highways, and that officers proceed with delivery of the approved schemes.</li></ol>

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To update the Committee on the National Highways Grant Funding Allocation of £250k per annum for Reading Borough Council to invest on Highway Assets on the M4 Motorway designated diversion route through Reading for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 financial year periods.

## 2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Council approved Shaping Reading's Future – Our 3-year Corporate Plan 2022/23 to 2023/24. The Plan reflects the Council's priorities for Reading and provides direction for staff in delivering services to meet the needs of the communities within the Borough whilst working to a budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and updated to include to current Year-2 priorities.
- 2.2. To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.
- 2.3. To make travel more secure, safe and comfortable for all users of the public highway.
- 2.4. To provide a public highway network as safe as reasonably practical having due regard to financial constraints and statutory duties.

## 3. The Proposal

- 3.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy is informed by and supports delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities including its commitment to address the climate change emergency and seeks to ensure a balanced and affordable and sustainable budget. The Strategy is also informed by the Council's Vision: "to ensure that Reading realises its potential – and that everyone who lives and works in Reading can share in the benefits of its success", as well as its Corporate Plan priorities:

- Securing the economic success of Reading;
  - Improving access to decent housing to meet local needs;
  - Protecting and enhancing the life outcomes of vulnerable adults and children;
- 3.2 As part of MTFS an ambitious capital investment programme is being delivered with the Council investing **£9M** (over 3-years from 2020/21 to 2022/23) Capital and an additional **£8M** (over 5-years from 2022/23 to 2026/27) in Reading's local residential road and pavement network. This welcomed investment is over and above the annual Local Transport Block Funding settlement from the (DfT) for highway maintenance work to improve the condition of local residential roads and pavements and reverse a deteriorating highway network.
- 3.3 In addition to the Council's investment in Reading's local residential road and pavement network, an opportunity has presented to Reading to secure funding from National Highways, who manage the Strategic National Roads including the M4.
- 3.4 National Highways is the Strategic Highways Company for the section of highway which plans, designs, builds, operates, and maintains England's motorways and major A-roads, known as the strategic road network (SRN).

This Project is in relation to the upgrade of Highway Assets on the tactical diversion route between J11/M4 and J12/M4. For clarity, the National Highways Strategic M4 diversion route is from Junction 11 of the M4, north along the A33, left onto Rose Kiln Lane, left onto A4 Berkeley Avenue, left onto A4 Bath Road and back to Junction 12 of the M4 Motorway.

The Secretary of State is empowered by section 17 of the Infrastructure Act 2015 to provide financial assistance to any person for the promotion or improvement of transport services in the form of grants. National Highways is authorised by its Articles of Association to pay grants on behalf of the Secretary of State and National Highways are awarding Reading Borough Council Capital Grant funding to maintain highway assets along this strategic diversion route.

The Council will undertake works to maintain these Highway Assets along this strategic diversion route within the Borough and National Highways are funding works in respect of the Project on the terms and conditions set out in the Funding Agreement.

These terms and conditions of the Funding Agreement are intended to ensure that the Funding is used by the Recipient for the purpose for which it is awarded.

- 3.5 The Council has and will continue to actively bid for appropriate external funding including Department for Transport (DfT) and Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) grants to maximise the use of available funding to improve the condition of all highway assets.

### **PROPOSED - Highway Maintenance Diversion Route Proposal**

- 3.6 Works will include carriageway resurfacing, road marking refreshing using longer life cold applied Methyl Methacrylate (MMA) paints, preservation materials to extend the life of bitumen carriageway surfaces and the upgrade of strategic directional gantry signage.
- 3.7 Works up to the maximum value of £250kpa will be delivered by the Council in a combination of either highway maintenance contracts that the Council will be tendering for the 2023/24 & 2024/25 financial year periods or by the Council's own in-house Highways & Drainage Operations Team.

#### **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

##### 4.1 Reading Borough Council's vision is:

To help Reading realise its potential – and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

##### 4.2 The Highway Maintenance Programmes will contribute to the Council's 3-Year Corporate Plan 2021/2024 objectives of::

- Healthy Environment
- Thriving Communities
- Inclusive Economy

##### 4.3 TEAM Reading values:

Together – Collaborative working approach between the Council, consultant, contractors and the public

Efficiency – Continue to explore efficiency savings within the contract

Ambitious – Investing into the public highway

Make a Difference – Providing a safe inclusive public highway for all users

#### **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

5.1. The Council declared a climate emergency at its meeting in February 2019 and as such recognises the need to minimise the climate impacts of its decisions. A climate impact assessment of this decision has been conducted which suggests a 'net low negative' impact. Highway maintenance is an energy intensive activity and some carbon emissions from the process are inevitable, but a number of steps are being taken to mitigate these impacts as far as possible as set out below.

5.2. The Council on 15th October 2019 formally adopted of the 'Unite Construction Charter' where the Authority supports the 'Get Britain Building' campaign, which is aimed at supporting and sustaining the British construction industry. As a result, all relevant construction contracts will be required to comply with the Authority's Sustainable Buying Standard for Highways and Construction Materials, which requires structural steel and other relevant materials to be covered by BES 6001 Responsible Sourcing of Construction Product certification, or equivalent.

5.3. Tenders for any subsequent contracts that are necessary will be invited to submit Environmental Implications proposals which will form part of the quality element of the tender evaluation. A social value quality submission will also be required to be submitted with tenders and evaluation.

5.4. Tenders also needed to include carbon reduction targets and improved sustainability within tender returns. The intent is to reduce the amount of carbon used to produce the materials at source, using recycled materials, lower temperature bitumens, reducing the uncontrolled waste in the environment to reduce pollution of the natural environment, use of electric vehicles and plant, use of cold applied materials with lower carbon emission, as well as how they will achieve their carbon reduction targets.

5.5. The Council is committed to a tree planting programme to increase canopy cover, improve biodiversity and reduce localised flooding. The Council is committing up to 1% of the value of the road resurfacing programmes towards this initiative.

5.6. The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council in November 2020, highlights the importance of adapting to climate impacts as well as reducing the emissions which are driving climate change. The Council will regularly review design standards for roads, in conjunction with industry bodies, to take into account the extreme weather events (both extreme heat and extreme cold) to ensure sustainability of the public highway network.

## **6. Community Engagement**

- 6.1. The public can report highway defects to the Council, including the condition of carriageways, signage, road markings and structures concerns along the M4 strategic diversion route through Reading, which will be assessed and included within the review of these highway assets that will help inform priority schemes for consideration should they meet the assessment criteria.
- 6.2. This report will be available on the Council's website following Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee approval processes.

## **7. Equality Implications**

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
  - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. The National Highway Maintenance programme 2023/24 & 2024/25 consists of improvement work to the Council's existing public highway network and will be making improvements to existing highway assets along the M4 strategic diversion route. There is no overall change to service delivery at this time and all users will have a safe public highway. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

## **8. Other Relevant Considerations**

- 8.1. None.

## **9. Legal Implications**

- 9.1. The Borough Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway.
- 9.2. The Secretary of State is empowered by section 17 of the Infrastructure Act 2015 to provide financial assistance to any person for the promotion or improvement of transport services in the form of grants. National Highways is authorised by its Articles of Association to pay grants on behalf of the Secretary of State.

## **10. Financial Implications**

- 10.1. The National Highway Maintenance programme 2023/24 & 2024/25 will be fully funded by the National Highways Grant Funding.

## **11. Timetable for Implementation**

- 11.1. Not applicable.

## **12. Background Papers**

- 12.1. There are none.

## **Appendices:**

1. Appendix 1: Proposed National Highways Schemes on M4 Diversion Route