

Committee: **Community Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **1<sup>st</sup> September 2020**

Report Subject: **Highway Capital Works Programme 2017 – 2021**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Joanna Wilkins, Executive Member Environment**

Report Submitted by: **Head of Community Services, Clive Rogers**

| Reporting Pathway           |                           |                          |                 |                               |                    |                     |         |                      |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| 28.01.20                    | 04.02.20                  | 19.08.20                 |                 |                               | 01.09.20           | 02.09.20            |         |                      |

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide scrutiny members with an update on progress of the current Highway Capital Works programme 2017 – 2021 and present options around a future 2020 – 21 works programme.

## 2. Scope and Background

### Highways Capital Works Programme 2012 – 2016

- 2.1 A Wales Audit Office [WAO] Review of Blaenau Gwent's Highways Maintenance Service' was published in 2008. The outcome of this review was that whilst the Authority was managing the Highway Infrastructure effectively the current level of funding available meant that this could not be sustained. The maintenance back log at this time was some £25 million.
- 2.2 Annual Revenue contributions of £200k were identified from the Maintenance Revenue budget and were matched with a contribution from the Insurance Reserve of £200k in order to fund a Prudential Borrowing approval [25 Years] of £5.8 million for Highways Improvement Capital Works.
- 2.3 This was further augmented with an additional £1 million Welsh Government funding under its Local Government Borrowing Initiative [LGBI].
- 2.4 Works commenced in 2012 with the Programme finally completed in 2016, with the majority of works targeted at improving the quality of the classified network.
- 2.5 This report was due to be submitted to Scrutiny and Executive in February, however it was held back in order to see if additional capital was to be made available by the end of financial year. Other events have since come into play – COVID resulting in the delay in presenting this report into Scrutiny and Executive.

## Highways Capital Works Programme 2017 – 2021

- 2.6 As a result of the previous programme of works, and the improved nature and condition of the classified network, a programme targeting unclassified/ residential roads was approved by members in 2017.
- 2.7 Following on from the previous prudential borrowing scheme 2012 – 2016, a capital sum of £2.115million was generated from a 20 year prudential borrow based on revenue contributions of £130k per year.
- 2.8 This Capital Sum has been augmented by Welsh Government Highways Refurbishment grant funding as shown below in Table 1.
- 2.9 Table 1.

| <b>Funding</b>       | <b>Amount</b>     |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Prudential Borrowing | £2,115,000        |
| WG Grant 2017-2018   | £553,000          |
| WG Grant 2018-2019   | £380,065          |
| WG Grant 2019-2020   | £409,776          |
| WG Grant 2020-2021   | £383,000          |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>£3,840,949</b> |

### Network

- 2.10 The current gross replacement value of the Highway Network is estimated at £1.093 billion and is the Authority's most valuable physical asset.
- 2.11 Un-classified roads make up 74% of the total Highway network [198 miles] and form the majority of the local road network – residential roads & rear lanes.
- 2.12 Public perception of highways normally relates to the condition of local residential roads [un-classified roads]. Reactive repairs to pot holes and rutted surfacing are costly and the less effective way of maintaining the highway.
- Planned maintenance works as against reactive maintenance are the more cost effective way of maintaining the highway network.
- 2.13 The overall % of poor conditioned Un-classified roads pre-commencement of works was 17%. As a result of the previous two years this figure has been reduced to 11.4%.
- 2.14 Works completed to date can be found in the following appendices:

See Appendix A: 2018 – 19 Phase 1 Programme of Works (Completed)

See Appendix B: 2019 – 20 Phase 2 Programme of Works (Completed)

See Appendix C: 2018 – 20 Detailed Schedule of Roads / Works Phase 1 & 2

### Highway Capital Works Programme 2020-21 – Priorities

- 2.15 The proposed 2020 – 21 programme will continue to focus around improving the residential/unclassified network. The majority of reactive maintenance and insurance claims relate to the unclassified network that makes up 74% of the entire network. In addition to the

resurfacing of highest priority ranked roads it is proposed that other works will be undertaken relating to features essential to the highway network such as safety barriers, illuminated traffic signs and speed reduction measures.

2.16 Listed below are the proposed key priorities identified for 2020 – 21 Capital Works Programme:

- Residential Roads (proposed value of works £445k)

Following on from the previous works programme it is proposed that a priority ranking of residential streets is determined, utilising the assessment matrix criteria that was developed in line with the specific features associated with residential highways as follows:

See Appendix D: Highway Assessment Matrix – Residential Roads

See Appendix E: Highway Assessment Matrix – Residential Roads: Worked Example

- Priority A Roads / Industrial Estates (proposed value of works £150k)
- Crash Barriers (proposed value of works £50k)
- Illuminated Traffic Signs (proposed value of works £30k)
- Traffic Management Features and Variable Speed Safety Signage (proposed value of works £50k)

See Appendix F: 2020 – 21 Phase 3 Programme of Works (Proposed)

2.17 It is also proposed that should further WG Capital Funding for Highways be made available over the next few months, then these funds will be allocated in line with 2.16 above, namely residential areas and the matrix assessment criteria.

### **3. Options for recommendation**

#### **3.1 Option A (preferred option)**

Members accept update on progress of the current Highway Capital Works programme 2017 - 2021 and support the Highway Capital Works Programme 2020 – 21 – Priorities.

#### **3.2 Option B**

Members do not accept the update on progress of the current Highway Capital Works programme 2017 – 2021 and do not support the Highway Capital Works Programme 2020 – 21, but present alternative priorities.

#### **4. Evidence of how does this topic support the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 The report has been developed to provide an update on progress of the current Highway Capital Works programme 2017 – 2021 and supports the key priorities identified in the Corporate Plan namely – “reinvestment in highways and improvements to the residential network”.

#### **5. Implications Against Each Option**

##### **5.1 Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)**

###### **Funding**

Total funding £3,840,841 (prudential borrowing plus WG refurbishment Grants)

Cost of works to date:

2018 – 19 £1,861,800

2019 – 20 £1,254,041

Available Funding 2020 - 21 £ 725,000

##### **5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions**

Option A: Failure of available funding to meet Proposed Works Programme 2020 – 21.

Option B: Alternative proposed priorities by members exceed available funding.

##### **5.3 Legal**

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

##### **5.4 Human Resources**

There are no staffing implications associated with this report.

#### **6. Supporting Evidence**

##### **6.1 Performance Information and Data:**

The overall % of poor conditioned Un-classified roads pre-commencement of works was 17%. As a result of Phase 1 and 2 Works there has been a 5.6% reduction of poor conditioned unclassified roads to 11.4%.

##### **6.2 Expected Outcome for the Public**

Improved quality of residential highways. Improved safety to highway network.

##### **6.3 Involvement (Consultation, Engagement, Participation)**

Where relevant, consultation, engagement and involvement with the public, members and interested parties have been carried out as part of the delivery requirements of the programme.

#### **6.4 Thinking for the long term (forward planning)**

Investment in the residential highway network in Blaenau Gwent is identified to ensure sustainability for the future, bringing our roads up to a good standard and improving our highway infrastructure to meet the service requirements of the future.

#### **6.5 Preventative Focus**

By investing now will prevent problems getting worse with our infrastructure, thus making prudent decisions to invest now rather than later when the costs are likely to be higher through further deterioration and inflation.

#### **6.6 Collaboration / partnership working**

N/A.

#### **6.7 Integration (across service areas)**

N/A.

#### **6.8 EQIA (screening and indemnifying if full impact assessment is needed)**

An EQIA is not relevant to the content of this report.

### **7. Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 These works are bi-annually reported to Corporate Overview Scrutiny (Contracts over £500k) and Annual Progress report to The Chair and Members of Community Services Scrutiny Committee.

### **8. Background Documents / Electronic Link**

8.1 Appendix A: 2018 – 19 Phase 1 Programme of Works (Completed)

8.2 Appendix B: 2019 – 20 Phase 2 Programme of Works (Completed)

8.3 Appendix C: 2018 – 20 Detailed Schedule of Roads / Works Phase 1 & 2

8.4 Appendix D: Highway Assessment Matrix – Residential Roads

8.5 Appendix E: Highway Assessment Matrix – Residential Roads: Worked Example

8.6 Appendix F: 2020 – 21 Phase 3 Programme of Works (Proposed)