

## **Communities Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee**

**4 March 2024**

### **Additional Highway Revenue Expenditure 2024/25**

#### **Report by Assistant Director (Highways, Transport and Planning)**

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#### **Summary**

- The County Council has approved an additional £4 million revenue in 2024/25 for highway maintenance and repairs. The revenue has been allocated to help mitigate the continued pressures on the service caused by the impact of climate change including extreme weather events which has seen wide-scale flooding across the network.
- The additional funding will be focused on drainage maintenance and investigations, proactive pothole repairs, signs & line maintenance, ditches, and staff resources to support delivery of extra work and deal with the increased demand on the service.
- Delivery will be through current highway contracts.

#### **Focus for Scrutiny**

##### **The Committee is asked to:**

- Consider how the additional funding for 2023/24 was spent in case lessons can be learned for the 2024/25 additional funding.
  - Consider whether circumstances have changed in any respect between 2023/24 and 2024/25, which should be better addressed as plans for 2024/25 are put in place.
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#### **1 Background and context**

- 1.1 Highway revenue expenditure focuses on meeting the County Council's obligations to keep the highway safe. In some areas proactive maintenance is limited or cannot be afforded.
- 1.2 In the last few years, there has been experienced an increase in more extreme weather events resulting in melting roads, wide-scale flooding, wind damage and an increase in the number of potholes.
- 1.3 To partly redress the maintenance backlogs, an exceptional, one-off investment of £4.5 million was included in the 2023/24 revenue budget. This investment allowed for a number of proactive activities four key areas: drainage; potholes and carriageway condition; signs & road markings; and vegetation maintenance.

- 1.4 The proposal for additional funding in 2024/25, is to continue to focus on proactive measures to tackle drainage maintenance and investigation and pothole repairs and carriageway condition. The funding will also be used to secure additional resources to enable programmes of work to be effectively managed and deal with general increased work volume.
- 1.5 During the autumn/winter 2023/24 we have seen a significant volume of rainfall which has included periods of particularly intense rain and a number of named storms. Coupled with high ground water levels and flooding from watercourses, we have experienced widespread flooding on the network resulting in some prolonged road closures and many high priority sites needing remedial work.
- 1.6 Based on long term averages, we have experienced high rainfall levels for the last 12 months. The 3-month cumulative rainfall totals, i.e., October, November, December, were classed as exceptionally high for West Sussex. Using Chichester data for example, in the last 3 months of 2023 rainfall figures were:
- October 2023 – 250mm – Long term average 62.2mm
  - November 2023 – 133.5mm – Long term average 96.1mm
  - December 2023 – 129.1mm – Long term average 89.1mm
- 1.7 Across England December 2023 was the wettest December since 2012. January 2024 for Chichester was below the long-term average rainfall (total rainfall 73.9mm – long term average 84.2mm). However, we did have exceptionally high rainfall day on 4 January – 34mm falling in a single day.
- 1.8 We are now seeing an increase in the number of flooding related emergencies and enquiries each year.
- 1.9 Rainfall coupled with periods of freezing temperatures in January 2023 has resulted in a significant spike in the number of potholes and safety defects on the network.
- 1.10 The number of safety jobs (potholes and other safety issues) raised each financial year is increasing.
- 1.11 The 5-year average for 2018/19 – 2022/23 saw an average 37,112 jobs raised. For the preceding 5 years before that the average was 30,996. Last year we raised 41,127 jobs and this year we are projecting that we will have raised around 45,000 jobs. In addition, we repaired approximately 21,000 defects with the Jet Patchers.
- 1.12 In terms of customer enquiries and demand in the highway service, in 2022/23 we have received a record number of reports - 71,756. The average is normally around 50/55,000 per year.

## **2 Outline of Expenditure**

- 2.1 A summary is included in Appendix A.

## **3 Drainage proposals**

- 3.1 Additional revenue funding for drainage operations in 2023/24 has been used to increase enhance cyclical maintenance – with the annual gullies receiving an additional cleanse. This led to a reduction in reactive cleansing at these locations. An assessment of current data shows that gullies on the 4 yearly

programme are now subject to a significant number of reactive visit so we are planning to undertake proactive jetting of these assets – focussed on the assets which were last cleansed in 2022/2023.

- 3.2 We will continue to deploy additional gangs to support a wide range of proactive drainage activities such as digging out grips and replacing and freeing gully tops. There are a number of 'hot spot' areas across the County where proactive measures will assist with getting water off the network. Additional resources in the team will provide capacity to optimise the programmed of work.
- 3.3 During 2023/24, a significant volume of reactive jetting was undertaking to respond to flooding across the network. This has resulted in the need for further investigations in a large number of areas and as a result CCTV capacity will be significantly increased. Work to map drainage assets will continue.
- 3.4 Ditch clearance budget will be enhanced to a practicable level which can be managed by the Area Highway Teams.

#### **4 Potholes, Carriageway and Footway Maintenance proposals**

- 4.1 This year the County Council deployed three Jet Patchers. One Jet Patcher was funded from the exceptional revenue allocated to the directorate last year. As at the end of December 2023, the Jet Patchers repaired approximately 21k defects (plus also delivering proactive patching of 24,300 m<sup>2</sup>. The additional funding will continue to pay for a third Jet Patcher in 2024/25. This form of injection patching helps to proactively tackle any safety related defects in specific areas (mainly rural) and they also repair non-safety defects that are likely to become an issue at a point in the future, providing a longer-term benefit to the road network.
- 4.2 The extra funding will continue to support other proactive activities such as an additional 'find and fix' gang in the winter which are proposed to focus on pothole hot-spot areas, alongside an additional patching resource to undertake larger patching that provides a longer-term repair.
- 4.3 A trial will be undertaken of 'value added defect repair'. This is where gangs will be able to undertake repairs to nearby defects, which currently do not meet the 'investigatory' criteria but are likely to in the near future. The trial will be in a limited area and impact on scheduling, resources and finances will be carefully monitored.

#### **5 Signs proposals**

- 5.1 The current revenue budget for signs allows for repair/replacement of approx. 1,500 sign assets. The additional revenue budget will allow for larger signs to be replaced e.g., large 'Advance Directional Signs'.

#### **6 Vegetation proposals**

- 6.1 The normal footway siding programme will be enhanced to a practicable level which can managed delivered by the Area Highway Teams.
- 6.2 Funding will be used to continue to undertake accurate mapping of rural grass verges. This will help inform future cutting regimes and support better procurement of the service in future.

## 7 Staff Resources

- 7.1 There has been a significant increase of work for the Area Highway Teams which is impacting business as usual. The Service has very little capacity/resilience and the ability to proactively deal with issues on the network and populate and manage work programmes has been limited. An increase in emergency incidents across the network is also adding extra work and affects the ability of staff to manage normal work.
- 7.2 Additional resources will be employed to focus on riparian issues, management of more complex issues and identification of programmes of work, asset condition and auditing of contractor work. Resources will also continue with the mapping work of drainage assets which commenced in Jan 2024.

## 8 Finance

### 8.1 Revenue

#### Revenue Budget 2023/24 - 2024/25

	2023/24	2024/25
	£'000	£'000
<b>Maintenance Works Revenue Budget</b>	15,855	16,933
<b>Additional Funding</b>	4,500	4,000
	<b>20,355</b>	<b>20,933</b>

The £20.933m revenue budget for 2024/25 was approved by Full Council 16 February 2024.

A breakdown of how the additional £4m funding for 2024/25 is proposed to be allocated is set out in Appendix A. Delivery may be adjusted to take into account any changes in priority and other operational circumstances.

All proposed allocations are subject to priced programmes from the contractor and pre agreed contractual uplifts.

### 8.2 The effect of the proposal:

#### (a) How the cost represents good value

Expenditure will be through existing contractual mechanisms. The work will be programmed and optimised to ensure best value and efficiency.

The proposal is addressing areas of greatest need across maintenance activities. Existing condition and live asset data will be used to formulate programmes for priority focus and additional resources will support programme delivery.

#### (b) Future savings/efficiencies being delivered.

This funding supports proactive activities which will aid asset resilience and inform the design of future maintenance regimes.

Matt Davey  
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## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Additional Funding Expenditure 2024/25

Appendix B - Summary Presentation detailing performance in relation to 'Exceptional 'One-Off' Highway Revenue Expenditure 2023/2024'

## **Background Papers**

[Exceptional Highways Revenue Expenditure Report, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee, 6 March 2023 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)