

<b>Report of:</b>	Executive Member for Environment Director of Environment and Communities
<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive
<b>Date:</b>	7 March 2023
<b>Title:</b>	Highways Capital - Priority Assessment Review and Forward Works Programme
<b>Report for:</b>	Decision
<b>Status:</b>	Public
<b>Strategic priority:</b>	Physical environment
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Why:</b>	Decision(s) will incur expenditure or savings above £150,000
<b>Urgent:</b>	No
<b>Why:</b>	Not Applicable

**Executive summary**

The deterioration of national carriageways is an issue across the country. In Middlesbrough, 15% of all carriageways are currently rated Red / Amber. It is therefore appropriate to re-evaluate the approach to maintaining and improving highway assets, with a view to improving the condition of the road network.

Following approval of additional investment of £7.5m from the MTFP for carriageway improvement works, a re-evaluation exercise has been undertaken to address Red / Amber carriageway defects as per Department for Transport classifications and the development of a longer-term strategy for maintenance and improvements to carriageways, in-line with the medium-term financial plan.

## **Purpose**

1. Substantial investment is required in order to improve the road network. It is therefore timely to re-evaluate the current approach to maintaining and improving highway assets, with a view to improving the condition of the road network back to a publicly acceptable and manageable level.
2. The Executive is therefore asked to approve the revised prioritisation process undertaken to address the approach to Red / Amber carriageway defects which has enabled the development of a longer-term strategy for maintenance and improvements, in-line with the medium-term financial plan and still allowing compliance with our Statutory requirements and National Guidance on highway asset management.

## **Background and relevant information**

3. The condition of Middlesbrough's road network is in decline, with 15% of the total carriageway network (classified and unclassified roads) categorised as Red / Amber; those carriageways most in need of maintenance are either:
  - safety critical
  - carrying a high level of risk (high-traffic routes)
  - stakeholder priority
  - supporting the corporate vision; and / or
  - demonstrating value for money
4. Current repair methods focus on resurfacing sections of road and / or responsive 'plane and patch' on specific areas of failed road surface. Without intervention, those carriageways currently categorised as Low Amber / Green will deteriorate to Red / Amber categorisation.
5. Development of a strategy and forward work programme for the maintenance and improvements to carriageways has been carried out which has focussed on a re-evaluation of the approach to addressing and prioritising Red / Amber defects based on the parameters outlined below:
  - Those schemes with structural and major defects
  - Roads of higher classes so A roads will be weighted higher than B, and C roads and unclassified roads
  - Roads with high traffic flows
  - Roads which form part of the resilient network
  - Roads with low skid resistance
  - Roads which feed major and large transport hubs e.g. bus station, train station, local centres
  - Roads with a high number of complaints
  - Roads with a high number of insurance claims

6. Specific focus has been given to high volume / coverage areas and considered on a geographical 'zone' basis. Whilst we previously considered some of these factors before formulating prior works programmes, the new process includes additional factors to consider, will give a clear score to each road, based on all of the information in one place. The process will be in a format that will be measurable and clear to those who use it, and those whom it informs.
7. The existing process placed schemes in yearly budgets, and the schemes prioritised into working areas following the award of the works contract. We will now arrange the works into zones at a much earlier stage, prior to tendering the works. The zone approach will focus the budget in specific areas within the town, rather than the schemes being spread across the town. We anticipate that there will be efficiency savings achieved using the zoned approach. The zones split the town into 4 main areas, these match existing areas for safety inspection and have been assigned based on network length. The proposed works zones for the 3 year programme are shown as Appendix 2.
8. The Carriageway Priority Assessment Form is shown as Appendix 1 and includes a revised scoring matrix to consider the additional parameters described above and will give each scheme a clear accountable score.
9. Approval of the above approach, in-line with the medium-term financial plan would enable attention to be focused on Low Amber roads, thereby delaying further deterioration of roads currently categorised as being in acceptable condition.

#### **What decision(s) are being recommended?**

10. That the Executive:

- Approves the revised prioritisation process which has allowed the development of a longer-term strategy for identifying, maintaining and improving carriageways to address defects on Red / Amber roads, tendering for works via the NEPO framework.
- Approves the programme of works for 2022/25 as shown as Appendix 3

#### **Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

11. To provide the necessary detail to allow the Executive to make an informed decision based on need and impact, whilst demonstrating that the service remains fit for purpose to best address the needs of the town.

#### **Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended**

12. Due to the significant levels of deterioration across the road network and the due diligence work undertaken as part of this report, no other options were considered.

## Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

### **Legal**

13. Implementation of the above approach will enable the Highways Team to operate within the resources available to it, and continue to meet its various statutory duties; particularly, Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 'Duty to maintain highways maintainable at public expense'.
14. The duty is in reference to maintaining highways in an accessible and safe condition, insofar as feasible from time to time, the publicly maintainable highway for which the authority are the Local Highway Authority.

### **Strategic priorities and risks**

15. One of the Council's Strategic Plan has nine priorities; one of which is Physical Environment. Progression of this work is key to achieving one of the underpinning initiatives within that priority.

### **Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection**

16. There are no concerns that the planned approach could have an adverse impact on individuals or groups as a result of holding one or more of the characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010, therefore a Level 1 screening equality impact assessment is not required.

### **Financial**

17. As outlined in the Revenue Budget, Council Tax, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy 2022/23 report to Council on 23 February 2022, the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the period 2022/23 to 2024/25 provisionally provided, subject to approval by Executive, additional funding of up to £15m over the MTFP period for a Highways Maintenance Programme. This was subsequently reduced to £7.5m following the need to make budget savings as outlined in the Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Budget Savings Proposals Report to Council on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022. The current estimated costs of the proposed approach are therefore within the current funding available.
18. Following approval of the proposed approach by Executive, the Council's Investment Strategy will be amended accordingly to reflect this.

## Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Executive approval of longer-term strategy for maintenance and improvements to carriageways	Director of Environment and Communities	07/03/2023
Tender process and contract award for longer-term strategy for maintenance and improvements to carriageways	Director of Environment and Communities	01/05/2023

Completion of prioritised 2022/23 carriageway improvement activity	Director of Environment and Communities	31/03/2023
Implementation of longer-term strategy for maintenance and improvements to carriageways	Director of Environment and Communities	01/04/2023

## Appendices

1	Carriageway Priority Assessment Form
2	Proposed Zones for Carriageway Delivery Programme 2022-2025
3	Carriageway Delivery Programme 2022-2025

## Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Council	Revenue Budget, Council Tax, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy 2022/23,	23/02/2022
	Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Budget Savings Proposals 2023/24	08/11/2022

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