

Additional Background Information

- 1.1 The Transportation Capital Programme has been developed to take account of a number of 'key transport priorities' for the City of Wolverhampton that have been developed in conjunction with the Council's regional partners to support the regeneration of the city and the wider Combined Authority agenda. These include the Stafford Road and Birmingham Road corridors, City East Gateway and Westside; improvements to the ring road and arterial route network; further development of the city's cycle network; and enhancing the public realm in the city centre.
- 1.2 The Government's Road to Zero strategy has also pushed the sustainability agenda to the top of the Transportation Capital Programme, with the introduction of new projects encompassing ULEV strategies and Electric vehicle charging.
- 1.3 Of equal importance is the maintenance of our existing Highways (to help the increasing demand the highways are being put under). There is national recognition that the level of investment in highway maintenance has been significantly insufficient for many years. The Local Government Association estimate that the current funding gap between what is available and what would be needed to keep our roads in a reasonable condition is over £9 billion nationally. Putting this into context, the amount needed to bring the roads in City of Wolverhampton to a reasonable condition would be circa £20 million whereas the annual available maintenance budget is in the region of £3-4 million. This emphasises the need for the City to make the absolute most of its available resources and prioritise its activities carefully and efficiently. It should be noted that in 2019-2020 City of Wolverhampton Council resurfaced over 46,000sqM of road.
- 1.4 The capital programme includes separate allocations each year for the development of the highway network and for capital maintenance of the existing network. The programmes are predominantly funded by Central Government via annual grant allocations from the Department for Transport (DfT), known as the Integrated Transport Block Grant and the Highways Maintenance Block Grant. These grants are supplemented by Council prudential borrowing and third-party funding secured through planning obligations or agreements through section 278 or section 38 of the Highways Act.
- 1.5 In recent years the level of grant funding available to highway authorities via the annual block grants has been stable. At the same time there has been a corresponding increase in the funding available through competitive bidding processes, either directly from DfT (such as the DEFRA Air Quality grant) or via other organisations (e.g. Local Growth Fund, Access to Growth and the West Midland Combined Authority (WMCA))

- 1.6 This report seeks approval of a list of projects, subject to funding availability, for implementation during the financial year 2020-2021 and a further list of projects for which development work should be authorised with a view to implementation in future years.
- 1.7 This report seeks to make members aware of our participation in a joint West Midlands bid for funding from the DfT Challenge Fund for 2020/21, the focus of the bid will be to improve the condition of locally significant unclassified roads, these are primarily roads on bus routes. Some footway works will also be included, where they link into this network. The objective of this programme is to improve the overall condition of these roads, both the carriageway and footway surfaces.

If we are invited by the DfT to bid for the funding, we will have to commit to part funding the planned programme of works and it has been agreed by all the local districts to provide a minimum contribution of 10% towards cost of this programme from our local resources. This will in effect, be schemes that have already been identified on our local network for works in 2020/21.

Approval from the Section 151 officer will be obtained prior to submitting any bid, the estimated value of our programme included in the initial expression of interest to the DfT was approximately £4.7million, if we are invited to bid this could be reviewed.

- 1.8 This approach recognises the need to develop a 'pipeline' of future projects by undertaking the initial development work that might be necessary to get projects 'shovel ready'. Such work might include traffic modelling, feasibility, site investigation, detailed design and public consultation, among other activities. This preparatory work is important as it enables the programme to be flexible, dynamic and positions the Council to respond to changing circumstances. For example, the Council has been particularly successful at securing additional funding allocations which have been announced at short notice, further supporting our regeneration ambition and building resilience in our network
- 1.9 This approach also allows flexible management of budgets with the ability to bring forward alternative projects to accommodate any slippage within the programme or to react to changing circumstances or new funding opportunities. This flexibility and 'pipeline' approach has allowed the Council to bid successfully for a number of major projects and secure more than £79 million in additional external funding for transport projects in Wolverhampton since 2012.

- 1.10 The priority given to each project will depend on several factors including objective analysis such as accident and speed data, highway condition surveys, lifecycle planning, public consultation results etc. Relative priority will also be governed by the project's merits in terms of supporting local and regional objectives, regeneration ambition and contributing to the overarching priorities of the Council.
- 1.11 Progress reports will be submitted to councillors at least annually to provide an update on the work completed; review the priorities for future work; add further projects to the List of Projects for Development; and to seek the necessary approvals for the development and delivery of projects as required.
- 1.12 The Interchange project continues to be delivered and work is well underway with a substantial element of the Metro extension already completed. The project is being delivered with key partners and largely falls outside this Transportation Capital Programme, but it remains a key transport priority for the City and employees are working with partners to assist their delivery.
- 1.13 The projects undertaken between 2016-2017, 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and the outturn on each, are set out in the table at Appendix 2. The Panel is requested to note the successful delivery of the many and varied Transportation Capital Projects over the previous three years. It is worth noting that a large proportion of this investment is directed at the local economy with use of local contractors and Social Value contributions.
- 1.14 The proposed projects that form the Transportation Capital Programme for 2020-2021 are set out in appendix 3 and 4, while the projects for development for future years are set out in appendix 5. The estimated cost of each project is indicated, although costs will be refined as each scheme progresses through the feasibility/design/consultation process. There is an intentional 'over-programming' of projects to reflect the reality that some projects will inevitably be delayed due to unexpected circumstances or changes to priorities. The various work programmes, and the individual projects which make up those programmes, will be managed within the overall available resources for the relevant financial year and in accordance with the Authority's developing priorities. All works on the highway are coordinated by traffic managers to ensure that any disruption is minimised.

2.0 Progress

- 2.1 The right-hand column in Appendix 3 and 4 indicates the approval status of each project in the programme. It should be noted that Appendix 3 contains more of the strategic schemes that are largely funded through external provision. Some of the scheme values are large and budgets have not yet been approved but approval is sought to pursue development and funding opportunities.
 - Projects marked 'Prior' indicate that projects have previously been approved for implementation but have yet to commence because or are in delivery.

- Projects marked 'Approve' indicate that Cabinet is requested to approve the project for implementation (or to confirm approval in the case of projects that were previously approved); this category typically applies to projects where a separate consultation with local residents/businesses is not required because they do not involve any significant change to the network or the status of the project is now well advanced.
 - Projects marked 'IEDN' are generally those which require further development work such as a public consultation exercise to be undertaken before the design can be finalised and therefore this report seeks delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for City Environment, in consultation with the Director for City Environment to approve implementation through an Individual Executive Decision Notice.
 - Projects marked 'Cabinet' are those for which a separate report is intended to be brought to Cabinet/Cabinet (Resources) Panel at the appropriate time, seeking approval to implement the project. These are generally projects with a high value (in excess of £1 million) or a high public profile.
- 2.2 The Panel is requested to approve the projects in appendix 5 for development in anticipation of them being implemented in future years. 'Development' may include surveying, site investigation, options appraisal, feasibility analysis, traffic modelling, detailed design, statutory advertising and public consultation, among other activities. Approval is also requested to delegate authority, by means of an IEDN, for projects in appendix 5 to be brought forward into 2020-2021 if necessary to respond to changes in priorities and provide the necessary flexibility in the programme.
- 2.3 Delivery of the programme will be achieved using a combination of the Council's own employees and external contractors.
- 2.4 Employees will seek to deliver the programme in the most cost-effective way and minimise the impact on communities and highway users by, wherever possible, co-ordinating maintenance projects with those for developing and improving the highway network.
- 2.5 The programme contains nine separate components of which five relate to network development and four are capital maintenance. These are as follows:
- Network Development**
- 2.6 **Local Growth Fund.** The programme includes projects funded (or intended to be funded) in partnership with other organisations. These include the Local Growth Fund (LGF) Access to Growth and/or Land and Property Investment Funding (LPIF), Central government, DfT and DEFRA. It also includes funding from West Midlands Combined Authority and Transport for West Midlands as part of their available funding mechanisms relating to housing and employment growth, HS2 connectivity, network management, sustainable transport and innovation. These projects aim to unlock growth and development through investment in transport infrastructure, promote new approaches to infrastructure provision and management, facilitate a shift in

mode to more sustainable journeys and support innovation. Projects referred to in this report include City North Gateway, City East Gateway, Westside Link, Springfield phase 2.

- 2.7 **Highway Improvement Programme.** This category includes projects that will have a significant impact on the network in reducing congestion and improving access to regeneration and development sites, thereby helping to encourage economic growth. They also contribute to facilitating a change in journeys to more sustainable modes and support innovation. Such projects vary in size and scale but can be large and significant in both cost and benefit terms. They are funded primarily through the Integrated Transport (IT) Block grant, supplemented in some cases by developers' contributions or individual project grants direct via the Combined Authority.
- 2.8 **Local Safety Programme.** This programme has been a major contributory factor in the reduced number and severity of road traffic personal injury accidents in Wolverhampton; from more than 1000 in 2001 to 483 in 2018. The programme is developed using a prioritisation process in which each location is assessed on a range of factors including accident history, traffic flow, vehicle speeds and community surroundings. Potential projects are included in the programme based on issues that have been identified, often by local residents and businesses, as traffic management or road safety concerns. However, the list of projects requested is extensive and the prioritisation process means that some locations may remain on the list for many years.
- 2.9 **Cycling Programme.** This is a programme of projects to assist cyclists and promote cycling. Many of the projects are identified through liaison with local cycling groups regional partners and the City Council's Cycle Forum and all accord with the adopted Cycle Strategy and West Midlands Cycle Charter. It is worth noting that there is an inclusion to approve some enabling works to support the regional introduction of the West Midlands bike share scheme.
- 2.10 **Safer Routes to Schools Programme.** This programme contains projects which are developed in conjunction with schools with the aim of tackling road safety concerns, reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality, and localised on-street parking problems. The programme contributes to the Council's objectives in relation to tackling child obesity and improved fitness by encouraging children to walk and cycle to school rather than being driven to school.

Capital Maintenance

- 2.11 The Highway Capital Maintenance Block Grant is the primary source of funding for highway maintenance projects, this includes both carriageways and footways, some additional funding is provided from local resources. These programmes are developed from data collected before the worst of the winter weather. It is essential to build in flexibility to allow for exaggerated deterioration and conflicting issues such as utility works, or major project/developments.

- 2.12 **Capital Maintenance of Classified Roads.** This programme involves reconstruction and resurfacing of classified (A, B and C class) roads and is funded primarily from the Highway Capital Maintenance Block Grant for highways. The priority given to each scheme will depend on a number of factors including condition survey data, maintenance records, visual inspections, customer complaints and ward councillor requests. The approach accords with the Council's Highway Asset Management Plan and incorporates the principles of lifecycle planning. The programme will be managed within the available resources each financial year and in accordance with developing priorities. This programme has been boosted during previous years by the Council's successful bid to the Highway Maintenance Challenge Fund. Whilst this has resulted in a significant improvement in the condition of the City's priority routes, the authority continues to explore future Challenge Funding opportunities.
- 2.13 **Capital Maintenance of Unclassified Roads.** This programme covers the 'minor' roads in the network and includes both carriageway and footway resurfacing. As with classified roads, the projects to be implemented each year will depend on the availability of funding and the relative priority of each project. A life cycle-based planning programme has been developed for 2020-2021. It follows similar logic to that previously used for the classified network and strengthens our asset management approach. These projects will build on the work already undertaken to enhance the city's public realm and make the retail core a more attractive, vibrant place for shoppers and visitors.
- 2.14 **Highway Structures.** The Council is responsible for approximately 120 bridges, subway, footbridges and retaining walls, which are inspected on a two-year cycle. Defects identified are then programmed to be dealt with, where practical, from the approved capital budget. Larger projects such as bridge strengthening, or replacement will usually require separate funding and will involve applying for specific government grants and securing budget approval.
- 2.15 **Other Programmes.** The **Disabled Access** programme is a package of measures to improve the accessibility of our footway network for users with physical or sensory disabilities. The **Street Lighting Replacement Programme** has been developed and approved using the established street lighting prioritisation process for replacing worn out columns and upgrading to new energy efficient lighting. The business case for the major replacement of all street lighting with LED was successful and work will commence this year together with an enhanced SMART City programme delivered through a successful ERDF bid worth £2.1million. **Non-highway Structures** relates to maintenance work on bridges that are within the Council's ownership but not part of the adopted highway and therefore not funded from Transportation budgets. The work is nevertheless managed through the Transportation Capital Programme.

- 2.16 This year's programme includes one flood relief project to address persistent flooding of properties at Waterhead Brook, Underhill. The brook is on the boundary with Staffordshire and the project will be promoted in partnership with Staffordshire County Council. It is expected to be funded primarily through central government grant funding available to deal with local flooding issues, the scheme is anticipated to cost approximately £176,000..
- 2.17 The capital expenditure on the reconstruction and resurfacing of roads and footways, as part of a planned Asset Management programme, has the effect of reducing the need for reactive maintenance and hence the pressure on the Council's revenue budget for maintaining the highway network. It has also been shown to reduce the number (and cost) of insurance claims against the Council.