

Individual Executive Decision Notice

Report title	Accepting Midlands Connect Major Road Network Preparation Fund Grant for the A4123 Corridor	
Decision designation	GREEN	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Steve Evans, Cabinet Member for City Environment	
Wards affected	Blakenhall, Ettingshall, Spring Vale	
Accountable Director	Ross Cook, Director of City Housing and Environment	
Originating service	Transportation	
Accountable employee	Author name	Kester Sleeman – Graduate Management Trainee
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Report to be/has been considered by	Cabinet Member for City Environment	16 July 2021

Summary

Included within the Transport Capital Programme for 2021-22, approved by cabinet on 16 June 2021 was funding for development of the A4123 multi-modal corridor. Further funding was to be provided by a grant from Midlands Connect for £50,000 for development of the business case for the corridor. The grant agreement from this has now been approved by the Council's solicitors and approval is required in order to accept the funding and set up the necessary budget.

Recommendation for decision:

1. That the Cabinet Member for City Environment and Climate Change in consultation with the Director of City Housing and Environment and the Director of Finance approve the acceptance of the £50,000 Midlands Connect Major Road Network Preparation Fund grant for the A4123 corridor.
2. That the Cabinet Members for Resources and City Environment and Climate in consultation with the Directors of Finance and the Monitoring Officer approve the creation of supplementary Capital Budgets for the £50,000 grant for the A4123 corridor.
3. Approve the Council entering into and all necessary legal transactions.
4. Authority to the Director of Governance to execute any legal agreements to give effect to the recommendation.

Signature
Councillor Steve Evans
Cabinet Member for City Environment

Date:

Signature
Ross Cook
Director for City Housing and Environment

Date:

Signature
Councillor Ian Brookfield
Leader: Resources

Date:

Signature
Claire Nye
Director of Finance

Date:

Signature
David Pattison
Monitoring Officer

Date:

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Over the last few years, the A4123 corridor has been the subject of considerable development, primarily funded through the Black Country LEP's Local Growth Fund allocation. A strategic outline business case was developed and consulted on in 2019.
- 1.2 Further development has been taking place since this, particularly in order to refocus the work recent national policy announcements on buses and active travel. Funding has been obtained from TfWM through the Transforming Cities Fund to continue the development of the corridor, as well as projects funded through the Vision for Bus scheme and the Active Travel Fund.
- 1.3 An opportunity to bid for further development funding from Midlands Connect was made available on 6 August 2020 with grants of £50k available, with a requirement for 100% match funding. The existing funding from TfWM (£196,000 in current Transport Capital Programme) was able to be used as match, and so we submitted a bid to Midlands Connect on 6 November 2020. On 29 January 2021 we were informed that our bid had been successful, and a draft grant agreement was provided on 23 of March 2021, which was then developed with the Council's solicitors, and agreed on 7 of July 2021. The grant period runs until 31 March 2022.

2.0 Progress

- 2.1 The first section of the corridor will be delivered this year as part of the Active Travel Fund programme, centring around the future Metro stop between along the Sandwell-Dudley borough boundary. It will deliver a high-quality two-way cycle track in the existing verge, protecting cyclists from both motor vehicles and pedestrians.
- 2.2 Development of improvements at the Burnt Tree junction as part of the cross-city bus route are also underway, and we have fed back on plans to ensure all modes are considered as part of these improvements.

3.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 3.1 The alternative would be to not accept the grant, which would limit our ability to progress with the scheme and bring forward the elements of the corridor within Wolverhampton, as well as the remaining sections in Sandwell and Dudley.

4.0 Reasons for decision

- 4.1 The A4123 corridor is one of the key road corridors in the Black Country, and currently suffers from issues of congestion, poor air quality and inconsistent public transport journey times. It also offers little provision for cycling and walking. Development to date

has identified key opportunities to improve provision for all road users, and additional funding is key in bringing the scheme closer to delivery.

5.0 Financial implications

- 5.1 This report seeks approval to accept the £50,000 grant from Midlands Connect, in line with the Grant Funding Agreement, and to create the associated capital budget.
- 5.2 It should be noted that the council are in receipt of a grant offer letter detailing the value of the grant as in this report. The grant agreement has been received, and amended by the Council's solicitors, but requires approval in order to be signed. The grant period runs until 31/03/2022, and it is anticipated the risk of clawback on this grant will be limited.

[SB/15072021/K]

6.0 Legal implications

- 6.1 The Council has reviewed the grant agreement for the funding and are satisfied that the grant agreement is in line with the Council's objectives.
- 6.2 That the Council enter into all necessary legal transactions in relation to these arrangements.

[AS/14072021/A]

7.0 Equalities implications

- 7.1 The business case developed will include an equalities impact assessment and a distributional impact appraisal, ensuring that any proposed changes to the corridor do not have a detrimental impact to any equalities group. The increased provision for active modes on the corridor will improve accessibility for those with mobility impairments.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 8.1 One of the key aims of the work on the corridor is to encourage modal shift away from private car journeys which will have a positive impact on CO₂e emissions, as well as reducing harmful pollutant emissions. Consideration will be taken for the climate impact of construction, and any embedded carbon, and novel construction methods will be considered where appropriate.
- 8.2 Trees will be preserved and protected along the route so far as feasible, and where any trees are required to be removed, they will be replaced on a two-for-one basis.

9.0 Health and Wellbeing implications

- 9.1 The improvement in air quality along the corridor expected as a result of the changes offer a clear benefit to public health.

9.2 The additional provision for safe walking and cycling is intended to increase the number of trips on the corridor by active modes, helping reduce levels of physical inactivity within the Black Country.

10.0 Covid-19 Implications

10.1 There are no direct implications on the COVID-19 pandemic from this work.

10.0 Human Resources Implications

11.1 There are no human resources implications

11.0 Corporate Landlord Implications

11.1 There are no Corporate Landlord implications

12.0 Schedule of background papers

12.1 No schedule of background papers

13.0 Appendices

13.1 No appendices