

Agenda Item 25.

TITLE	Highways and Transport Update and Improvements to Work and Scheme Programmes
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee 21 November 2016
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Josie Wragg Interim Director of Environment
LEAD MEMBER	Malcolm Richards, Executive Member for Highways and Transport

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Improved delivery and control of highways maintenance activities and schemes across the borough.

RECOMMENDATION

Members note the improvements made to date, and further improvements proposed, detailed within the report.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The report provides a general update on highways maintenance activities and highway schemes provided within the Wokingham Borough Council, WSP Parsons Brinkerhoff and Balfour Beatty Living Places Highways Alliance, and provides information regarding development of future work programmes.

Background

The Highways and Transport Service are committed keeping the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee up to speed on improvements and developments within the service. On the 20 June 2016 an update was provided to the committee by the newly appointed Head of Highways and Transport on such matters. The committee welcomed these improvements and requested an update later in 2016, including an update relating to the following specific issues:

1. The criteria to determine when works are carried out and the emerging government guidelines.
2. A move towards more integrated working within the Highways and Transport Service and how the 21st Century Council would impact service delivery.
3. Initiatives to ensure all defects marked up were repaired, and how improvements could be made to the overall quality of highway maintenance works.
4. Improvements to forward planning of highway maintenance works and projects.

General Update

A review of the Highways and Transport Service, specifically in relation to delivery models and term contracts has taken place. The service is currently delivered partly in house and partly (the majority) through a number of term contracts. The main term contracts are held by Balfour Beatty Living Places (highway term maintenance & structures) and WSP Parsons Brinkerhoff (professional services). The service spends around £4M of revenue a year on maintenance works, £1.5M on professional services and generates around £2M of income per annum. Capital expenditure on schemes is approximately £10M/annum and this would be expected to be delivered by Balfour Beatty Living Places. Additionally the service is also looking to deliver the major infrastructure works to support the SDL delivery to 2021. This is likely to be in the form of a design and build major contract and provisional works for programing and delivery options are underway. The review's main purpose was to identify the most effective way to deliver the service in line with the requirements of the borough going forward.

It has been agreed that the existing term contracts for WSP|PB Professional Services and BBLP Highways Term Maintenance and Structures are to be extended for a one year term from April 2018 to March 2019, including a commitment from the Council, WSP|PB and BBLP, via a signed Memorandum of Understanding dated September 2016, to re-energise the Highways Alliance which will provide the flexibility the Council desires, and required timescales to deliver the 21st Century Council initiative, and move towards clienting more efficient outcomes focussed contracts from April 2019. The Highways Alliance members will re-energise partnership working for this period prior to new contracts being procured, promoting innovation, trialling new ways of working, delivering service improvement and efficiencies aligned with the 21st Century Council operating model.

Improvements in processes, response times and customer services remain a Council priority, and the customer experience is centric to the 21st Century Council initiative. As an interim measure the Council's corporate complaints team have been rolling out customer service improvements with all services, including Highways and Transport. However it is recognised further improvements are required across the Highways Alliance, and we will continue working with our partners WSPPB and BBLP to improve the customer experience and improve our communication.

Update of Specific Issues

The criteria to determine when works are carried out and the emerging government guidelines.

The Council's current Highway Maintenance Plan dated 2013, including highway inspections and intervention for defects, is available on the Council's website at this weblink: <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/search/?q=highway%20maintenace%20policy> Central Government will be releasing the eagerly awaited new Codes of Practice in November 2016. The new codes will be a step change towards a risk based approach where local Councils must decide their own maintenance standards, which must be risk based for all asset classes. Government will allow 2 years for local Councils to adopt their own guidelines, being by the end of 2018. However Wokingham is planning to undertake the process early to ensure the new approach can be written into the new contracts procurement cycle from late 2017, and operating from March 2019.

A move towards more integrated working within the Highways and Transport Service and how the 21st Century Council would impact service delivery.

The Highways Alliance members, comprising of the Wokingham Borough Council client team; working in partnership with WSP|PB and BBLP, will re-energise partnership working for this period prior to new contracts being procured from March 2019 promoting innovation, trialling new ways of working, delivering service improvement and efficiencies aligned with the 21st Century Council operating model. This enhanced partnership working and a move to the 21st Century Council operating model will ensure greater integration across the Highways and Transport Service, and wider across the Council. The 21st Century Council will deliver savings to the Council, however this will be through efficiencies, leaner processes and a move to self-serve; therefore no detrimental impact on service delivery is predicted.

Initiatives to ensure all defects marked up were repaired and how improvements could be made to the overall quality of highway maintenance works.

Over 7,000 works orders are issued to BBLP each year, approximately 3,000 of which are for carriageway and footway surface repairs. These 3,000 will often be marked up with spray paint before they are repaired. The Alliance currently undertakes an interim same day "make safe" for dangerous potholes and defects, and then returns within the normal 28 day standard repair time for a permanent and other routine non urgent repairs. The Alliance are looking at moving towards a first time permanent repair for most works including dangerous potholes and defects, although this will take some time to be introduced. The Council also received £159K Department for Transport pothole grant for 2016/17. BBLP have provided a pothole gang and truck who are travelling around the borough filling potholes from this grant funding.

Through enhanced partnership working across the Alliance, and the introduction of weekly Alliance Management meetings since July 2016, service failures and issues are raised and discussed between the parties. The Alliance is committed to work in partnership to address and improve service delivery as one team. Defects and poor quality of works are raised, discussed and joint measures agreed to improve processes and procedures moving forward. The Alliance have also started taking advice from subject matter experts from within WSP|PB and BBLP to learn from what has worked well elsewhere, such as within their own businesses and contracts with other Councils.

Improvements to forward planning of highway maintenance works and projects.

Programmes of planned works are currently produced annually, consulted upon with the relevant Executive Member, then hosted on the Councils website. Schemes for 16/17 (up to 31 March) can be found at this link: <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-travel/roadworks-and-new-roads/scheduled-road-maintenance/>

Schemes for 17/18 are currently being prepared and will be available at this weblink above shortly. Improvement in Highways Asset Management, including the adoption of the policy and strategy documents scheduled for November Executive committee, will deliver longer term improvements in asset management across the service, including improved planning of works and schemes. Each asset owner, for example for roads, bridges, drainage, will be required to produce longer terms plans and programmes aligned with revenue and capital budgets. It is intended these programmes will be initially to the end of the current Alliance contracts in March 2019, so around two years ahead. Longer term the Alliance will be looking to have 5 year programmes to 2021. These programmes will be subject to change due to the long timeline and changes to the network, demand and priorities over this period. However once prepared the programmes will be hugely beneficial for our Alliance partners planning and resourcing works and schemes, for co-ordination of works on the highway network and to enable a more effective way of communicating all works to residents, businesses and members.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	0	0	0
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	0	0	0
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0	0	0

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

The costs for this service are provided and delivered within existing contract and budget provision for the WSP and BBLP contacts.

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

No specific cross cutting themes.

List of Background Papers

None

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