

EXECUTIVE 16th February 2023

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| Report Title | Highways and Transport Block Funding 2022-25 |
| Report Authors | George Candler, Executive Director of Place & Economy Graeme Kane, Assistant Director: Highways and Waste |
| Lead Member | Councillor Graham Lawman, Executive Member for Highways, Travel & Assets |

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| Key Decision | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there public sector equality duty implications? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Applicable paragraph number for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 | |

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To inform the Executive of the grants received from the Department of Transport (DfT) for infrastructure improvements and confirm the allocation of spend on the highways network in accordance with the priorities laid out in the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Each year, the Department for Transport provides annual allocations of capital funding for the maintenance and improvement of their transport and highway networks to achieve the policies and outcomes set out in local transport and highway authorities Local Transport Plans.
- 2.2 In February 2022, the Department for Transport wrote to the Council, and published online, North Northamptonshire's funding allocations for 2022-25; totalling £9.955m, for each of the three years 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25:
- Highways Maintenance Block needs element - £3.735m

- Highways Maintenance Block incentive element - £0.934m
- Potholes Fund - £3.735m
- Integrated Transport Block Funding - £1.551m

These allocations, which were for the same amounts as in 2021/22, were all provided as firm allocations for 2022/23. For 2023/24 and 2024/25, they were also presented as firm allocations, except for the Highway Maintenance block incentive element which is an indicative allocation pending further engagement with local authorities.

2.3 In December 2022, the Department for Transport informed the Council that following a representation by West Northamptonshire Council that equal division of the Integrated Transport Block allocations for North and West Northamptonshire did not reflect the relative size of the authorities' networks, the allocations had been changed to reflect a 56% West / 44% North split, the same split which had already been used for maintenance funding.

2.4 The revised allocations for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024.25 are therefore:

- Highways Maintenance Block needs element - £3.735m
- Highways Maintenance Block incentive element - £0.934m
- Potholes Fund - £3.735m
- Integrated Transport Block Funding - £1.364m

These are all firm allocations for 2022/23. For 2023/24 and 2024/25, they are also firm allocations, except for the Highway Maintenance block incentive element which is an indicative allocation pending further engagement with local authorities.

2.5 Both the Highways Maintenance Block and the Potholes Fund are intended for maintenance of our highways, such as resurfacing or bridge repairs. The Integrated Transport Block is intended for small scale improvement work, such as road safety engineering or improved footways or pedestrian crossings.

2.6 It is recommended that the funding is used to progress several highways schemes and routine maintenance. These are selected based on their potential to improve the network in accordance with the priorities laid out in the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan. The funding is used to progress as many of the priority schemes that can be funded from the grants.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Executive:

- i) Note and accept the revised allocation of Integrated Transport Block funding of £1.364m in 2022/23.
- ii) Note and accept the receipt of the government grants totalling £9.768m per annum in 2023/24 made up of the following:
 - Highways Maintenance Block needs element - £3.735m

- Highways Maintenance Block incentive element (subject to confirmation) - £0.934m
 - Potholes Fund - £3.735m
 - Integrated Transport Block Funding - £1.364m
- iii) Approve the distribution of spending of the grants on maintaining and upgrading the highways network as set out in the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan.
- 3.2 Reason for Recommendation – To support delivery of the priorities laid out in the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan by utilisation of the government grant to support and maintain the Council's Highways infrastructure and transport network.
- 3.3 Alternative Options Considered: Options would include not spending the money and allowing DfT to recoup it. Alternatively, the Council could choose to spend the money on schemes that are not a priority in line with the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan

4. Report Background

- 4.1 Each year, the Department for Transport provides local highway and transport authorities with annual allocations of capital funding for the maintenance and improvement of their transport and highway networks to achieve the policies and outcomes set out in their Local Transport Plans.
- 4.2 In February 2022, the Department for Transport wrote to the Council, and published online, North Northamptonshire's funding allocations for 2022-25; totalling £9.955m, for each of the three years 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25:
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- 4.3 In December 2022, the Department for Transport informed the Council that following a representation by West Northamptonshire Council that equal division of the Integrated Transport Block allocations for North and West Northamptonshire did not reflect the relative size of the authorities' networks, the allocations had been changed to reflect a 56% West / 44% North split, the same split which had already been used for maintenance funding.
- 4.4 The revised allocations for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024.25 are therefore:
- Highways Maintenance Block needs element - £3.735m
 - Highways Maintenance Block incentive element - £0.934m
 - Potholes Fund - £3.735m

- Integrated Transport Block Funding - £1.364m

These are all firm allocations for 2022/23. For 2023/24 and 2024/25, they are also firm allocations, except for the Highway Maintenance block incentive element which is an indicative allocation pending further engagement with local authorities.

- 4.5 The funding will support several projects which will be prioritised from a list of schemes as having the best fit with the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan (the authority's Local Transport Plan), which the Council has a statutory duty to deliver. The benefits include:
- Maintaining the existing highways infrastructure assets
 - Investing in and improving the highways infrastructure
 - Improving access by cycle and foot, including safety improvements
 - Improved safety and traffic flows by upgrading traffic signals.

4.6 Highways Maintenance Block and Potholes Fund £8.404m.

This funding is used to support routine maintenance of the highways network to a safe standard in accordance with the Northamptonshire Asset Management Plan and Network Management Plan. As part of this, it also delivers the annual Capital Maintenance Programme which consists of a range of maintenance schemes across the Council which are developed annually based on need.

- 4.7 The Maintenance Fund is made up of the following funding streams from DfT:

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| Pothole Fund | £3,735,000 |
| Incentive Fund | £934,000 |
| Highways Maintenance Block | £3,735,000 |

4.8 Integrated Transport Block £1.364m.

This proposal delivers several comparatively small-scale measures which will contribute towards achieving the objectives in the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan. These are principally around extensions to the walking and cycling networks (including new crossings), the maintenance of traffic signals and Road Safety engineering measures.

- 4.9 In addition, the block allocation is being used to fund contributions agreed by the former County Council for the A14 Cambridge – Huntingdon scheme, as part of funding contributions sought from local authorities along the A14 corridor. The County Council had originally agreed to fund £1.5million of the costs of this £1.5bn scheme, at the rate of £60,000 per annum for 25 years commencing in 2020/21. North Northamptonshire Council has now agreed with the DfT to pay £37,371 per annum of this contribution for 25 years with a revised start date of 2022/23. £37,371 represents 62.3% of the £60,000 contribution agreed by the County Council, as 62.3% of the Northamptonshire length of the A14 is within North Northamptonshire.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1 Options would include not spending the money and allowing DfT to recoup it. Alternatively, the Council could choose to spend the money on schemes that are not a priority in line with their Northamptonshire Transportation Plan. Neither option is recommended.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 Once approved, the budget will be allocated to specific highway schemes. It is anticipated that most of these schemes will be delivered by the Council's new highway services provider, Kier.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources, Financial and Transformation

- 7.1.1 The budget requirements are funded from contributions from external grants from the DfT. They are intended for the purposes of improving or maintaining the highways network. There is no requirement for the Council to undertake borrowing to support these schemes.
- 7.1.2 Whilst this report reflects continuous improvement in services, it does not form part of the Council's Transformation Plan.

7.2 Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1 The Council must utilise this DfT funding in line with the restrictions and requirements as set out in the agreements linked to that funding.
- 7.2.2 Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders may be required for some of the works being funded to be carried out.
- 7.2.3 The funding helps to deliver the objectives of the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan (the Council's Local Transport Plan), which the Council has a statutory duty to deliver.
- 7.2.4 In accepting the grant funding awards from DfT the Council makes a commitment to deliver any defined programmes of activity within any required timescales. Should any of the funding be passed to a third party to deliver, the Council would need to reflect such commitments, whether such commitments are set out in formal grant funding agreement with DfT or otherwise, in any consequent/supplementary agreements to deliver any defined programmes (including but not limited to any provisions in relation to clawback of grant monies, Subsidy Control etc.). Legal services will advise and assist client officers as necessary, and where instructed, to deliver programmes of activity.

7.3 Relevant Policies and Plans

7.3.1 The proposal will assist the Council in meeting the priorities in the Corporate Plan around:

- Safe and Thriving Places
 - Maintain our highways infrastructure to help people move safely around North Northamptonshire
 - Enable people to travel across North Northamptonshire and beyond
- Green, sustainable Environment
 - Promote sustainable, active travel
 - Embed low carbon technology, sustained and improved green infrastructure, and sustainable forms of transport fit for the future.

7.3.2 The proposal will assist the Council in delivering the objectives of the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan (the Council's Local Transport Plan), which the Council has a statutory duty to deliver.

7.4 Risk

7.4.1 These schemes will form part of the authority's Capital Programme. The deliverability of the Capital Programme is monitored by each accountable project manager and senior officer. There is further review throughout the financial year reported through the Executive Committee.

7.4.2 If any overspends or emerging pressures are identified during the year, then mitigating actions will be sought and management interventions undertaken.

7.4.3 Details of pressures, risks and mitigating actions implemented will be provided as part of the project highlight reports as the year progresses and reported through the Strategic Capital Board.

7.4.4 There is a risk that delays, and cost increases may arise as a result of the significant volatility within the supply chain and high inflation rates arising from the current, national (and international) economic situation. This generally relates to the supply and price of materials with projects requiring increased lead in times. Whilst every attempt is made to cost these implications into the project, the risks remain.

7.4.5 The schemes are fully funded by the DfT.

7.5 Consultation

7.5.1 Highway improvement schemes are often suggested or requested by Councillors or members of the public. They are assessed against the priorities of the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan. If they are subject to a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) then public consultation is carried out through this process. In advance of any works, communication is shared with Councillors and local communities to minimise the impact of any works or road closures.

7.6 Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

- 7.6.1 Not applicable at this stage. The Sustainable Communities or Prosperous Communities Executive Advisory Panel may choose to examine highway and transport schemes and the development of a new North Northamptonshire Local Transport Plan in the future.

7.7 Consideration by Scrutiny

- 7.7.1 Not applicable at this stage. Scrutiny may choose to scrutinise highways schemes and the development of a new North Northamptonshire Local Transport Plan in the future.

7.8 Equality Implications

- 7.8.1 An overall Equalities Screening Assessment has been completed for the programme of works and no negative impacts to groups with protected characteristics were identified as a result of that screening. Where applicable, an Equalities Screening Assessment will be conducted for individual highways schemes to ensure they consider and support all residents including those with protected characteristics.
- 7.8.2 The highways and transport system is used by all who travel across North Northamptonshire. The initial list of schemes identified focuses on maintenance activity, and all sectors of the community can be expected to benefit from a more even carriageway or footway surface. It will be of proportionately greater benefit to the older age groups, those with disabilities, particularly those who have difficulty walking and/or need to use a wheelchair, and those who are pregnant or using pushchairs. There are no identified negative impacts on the nine protected characteristics within the Equalities Act 2010.

7.9 Climate and Environment Impact

- 7.9.1 Maintaining a safe highway with fewer defects improves carbon efficiency by avoiding accidents, congestion and delays. Innovative highway maintenance techniques are being explored by highway maintenance providers during reactive and planned maintenance activity; these seek to reduce carbon emissions. Schemes to be included in the full programme will also enable improvements to cycling and walking routes and therefore encourage sustainable travel and a potential reduction in carbon dioxide.

7.10 Community Impact

- 7.10.1 These proposals can be considered to have a positive impact on the community as the programme delivers the infrastructure to support and connect communities. An efficient highway network supports all manner of social benefits including access to education, healthcare, social networks and economic opportunities.

7.11 **Crime and Disorder Impact**

- 7.11.1 There are no evident crime and disorder implications of the proposals in this report.

8. **Background Papers**

- 8.1 Northamptonshire Transportation Plan
<https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/northamptonshire-highways/transport-plans-and-policies/Pages/local-transport-plan.aspx>