



EXECUTIVE

15th February 2024

Report Title	Highways and Transport Block Funding 2024-25
Lead Member	Councillor Matthew Binley, Executive Member for Highways, Travel & Assets
Report Author	Graeme Kane, Assistant Director for Highways and Waste Chris Wragg, Head of Strategic Transport

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/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	N/A
Which Corporate Plan priority does the report most closely align with?	Safe and thriving places

List of Appendices

Appendix A - A copy of the Climate Change Impact Assessment (CCIA)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To inform the Executive of the grants received from the Department for Transport (DfT) for infrastructure improvements and the intention to spend these amounts on the highways network.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. Each year, the Department for Transport provides annual allocations of capital funding for the maintenance and improvement of local transport and highway networks to achieve the policies and outcomes set out in local transport and highway authorities Local Transport Plans.

- 2.2. 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.
- 2.3. 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.
- 2.4. This funding is part of a package of investment proposed by the Council. On 21st December 2023, the Executive approved receipt of £1.069m for both 2023/4 and 2024/5 from the DfT as part of their Network North plan of transport improvements. The Council is also proposing to invest a further £3m for each of the following three financial years. This will represent the Council's biggest investment in the maintenance of North Northamptonshire's highways network since its inception as a unitary authority.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. It is recommended that the Executive:
 - a) Note and accept the receipt of the government grants totalling £9.768m 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
 - b) Agree to spend the grants on maintaining and upgrading the highway network in line with the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan and to deliver the current priorities in the list of identified maintenance schemes.
- 3.2. Reason for Recommendations: Utilisation of 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 their Northamptonshire Transportation Plan. Neither option is recommended.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. Each year, the Department for Transport (DfT) 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. The Council has been notified of the following allocations for 2024/25:
- Highways Maintenance Block needs element - £3.735m
 - Highways Maintenance Block incentive element - £0.934m
 - Potholes Fund - £3.735m
 - Integrated Transport Block Funding - £1.364m

These are all firm allocations, and identical to the initial allocations for 2023/24, except for the Highway Maintenance block incentive element which is an indicative allocation pending further engagement with local authorities.

- 4.3. This funding is part of the Council's overall investment into North Northamptonshire's highways network. It is combined with the funding already received from the DfT as part of their recently announced eleven-year programme of highway maintenance investment using funding from the cancellation of the northern sections of HS2. North Northamptonshire Council has been allocated £1.069m for both 2023/4 and 2024/5, additional to the allocations in 4.2 above. This funding was approved by Executive in December 2023.
- 4.4. As part of the draft budget for 2024/25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan, the Council is proposing to allocate within the capital programme a further £3million for each of the next three years (2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27) for highways maintenance. This decision is subject to Full Council's approval on 22nd February 2024. With these funding streams combined, it makes up the biggest investment the authority has made into the local highways network since its inception as a unitary authority.
- 4.5. This combined package of funding will support 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. The improvements to cycling and pedestrian networks will be informed by the Corby and Kettering Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) which have recently been adopted by the Executive. Feedback from residents and the Council's highways inspector regarding safety and accessibility of the network will also inform priorities for promoting active travel.

4.7. **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. The Council, with its contractor, will develop an Annual Plan, which will include the programme of highways maintenance works for the year ahead. This funding will enable the delivery of that programme on a prioritised basis. In line with DfT guidance, this programme will be published which will allow local people to see for themselves how the money is being spent.

4.8. The Maintenance Fund is made up of the following funding streams from DfT:

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

4.9. **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.

4.10. 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 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 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. The grants are intended for the purpose 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.

7.1.3 The £3.0m of Highways – road condition works capital funding from the Council's own resources which is included in the draft capital programme for 2024/5 compliments and extends the capital works funded from DfT grants.

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.

7.3. 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.
- 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 The Prosperous Communities Executive Advisory Panel (EAP) considered the development of the Local Transport Plan at their meeting held on 11th May 2023. The EAP also received a presentation on 5th July 2023 regarding the Council's Highways Asset Maintenance prioritisation matrix which is the approach adopted to prioritise the investment in, and maintenance of, the highways network. The Sustainable Communities EAP considered the Corby Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) on 26th April 2023 and most recently at their meeting on 9th November 2023. The progress and contents of the Kettering LCWIP was considered by the Sustainable Communities EAP on 9th August 2023.
- 7.6.2 The EAPs 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 The Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee considered the performance of the Council's highways contract at their meeting held on 19th December 2024. The minutes of this meeting can be found via the link listed in Section 8 of this report. The Scrutiny Committee 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 as a result of this increased funding and maintenance activity.

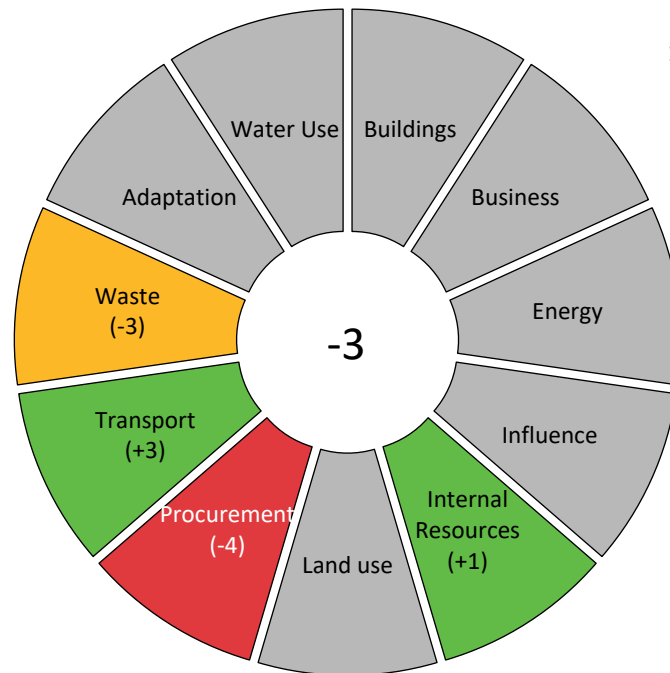
7.9. Climate Impact

7.9.1 While the proposals within this report are similar to those of previous years, as a capital scheme the carbon impacts need to be compared with the impact of not undertaking the works.

7.9.2 The elements which have been scored are as follows:

- Internal Resources (+1): The proposal uses grant funding which has already been obtained.
- Procurement (-4): As a capital scheme the proposal uses materials and other resources which would not otherwise be expended.
- Transport (+3): The proposal has benefits in terms of improving facilities for active travel and public transport.
- Waste (-3): Highway maintenance and construction activities generate waste material.

The overall score is -3.



North Northamptonshire Council has committed to being a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, 5 yrs & 11 mos away.

7.9.3 Viewed alone, the Integrated Transport Block expenditure would have either a neutral or slightly positive impact. The Maintenance spend has a negative impact because it uses materials and other resources to renew the highway in its existing configuration. However, the alternative of not undertaking the maintenance would make the roads less easy to use for all users in the long term, including active travel and public transport. It could also be expected to increase the resources that would be used if and when maintenance was undertaken at a future date, as long-term deterioration would increase the requirement for major reconstruction.

7.9.4 The highway industry continues to explore the options for zero-carbon maintenance and construction activity. Zero-carbon maintenance activity is currently possible, but only at a cost which would severely limit the level of activity that could be undertaken and lead to further deterioration in the road network.

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
[Highways plans and strategies | North Northamptonshire Council](#)
[\(northnorthants.gov.uk\)](#)

8.2 Agenda for Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 19th December, 2023, 7.00 pm - North Northamptonshire Council
[\(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)