

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--|
| 13 March 2024 | | ITEM: 16 Decision: 110711 |
| Cabinet | | |
| Integrated Transport Block (ITB) Capital Programme 2024/25. Highways Maintenance Allocation and Programme 2024/25. | | |
| Wards and communities affected: All | Key Decision: Non Key | |
| Report of: Cllr Maney, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Highways | | |
| Accountable Assistant Director: Julie Nelder – Assistant Director for Highways and Transportation | | |
| Accountable Director: Claire Demmel – Interim Executive Director of Place | | |
| This report is Public | | |
| Version: Cabinet/ Final | | |

Executive Summary

This report sets out how the Transportation Services team will prioritise the annual funding allocation from the Department for Transport (DfT) Integrated Transport Block Capital Programme (ITB). This funding is allocated to enable Thurrock Council to deliver identified policy improvements, infrastructure, and service provision within Thurrock in the 2024/25 financial year.

The report also sets out how the Highways DfT Maintenance Block Allocation and Pothole Fund for 2024/25 for the Highways Maintenance Service will be prioritised in alignment with Thurrock Council's Highways Asset Management Strategy and the DfT's Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme.

Commissioner Comment:

Commissioners have been consulted on the content of this report and agree with the recommendations made.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That Cabinet approve the 2024/25 Integrated Transport Block capital programme allocations and proposed prioritisation for the agreed policy areas of Road Safety Engineering, Safer Routes to Schools, Area Intervention Programme and Electric Vehicle Charging programme (as detailed in Appendix A).

- 1.2 That Cabinet approve the 2024/25 Highways Maintenance Block Allocation and Pothole Fund Programme (as detailed in Appendix B).
- 1.3 That Cabinet approve that delegated authority will be given to the Interim Executive Director of Place , in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Highways, to make any required changes to the ITB programme and the Maintenance programme, for 2024/25, within the overall programme budget, as well as other government funding allocations that may arise within the year to ensure delivery of the programme and to ensure the efficient expenditure of the grant allocations.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The DfT annual grant funding settlement provides the allocation for ITB schemes for the financial year. Thurrock Council's ITB capital allocation for 2024/25 is £979,000. This funding is allocated to the capital schemes within the programme and staff time required to design, manage, and deliver the programme.
- 2.2 The ITB programme has the ability to deliver an extensive range of transport improvements which reflect the vision and aims set out within the Council's long term Transport Strategy and Vision.
- 2.3 Delivery of the ITB programme ensures focus on the authority's statutory requirement to reduce accidents, tackling congestion, delivering improved accessibility, and improving air quality through transportation measures.
- 2.4 It is important that the ITB programme is aligned with the emerging Local Plan and the Transport Vision and Thurrock Transport Strategy (currently being developed) to ensure the effective use of the funding available to deliver necessary improvements to the transport network.
- 2.5 To achieve this, it is important for the programme to have a clear policy direction. Agreed approaches already exist to inform policy, priority, and budget allocation. The existing agreed policy areas are:
 - **TDP1 Road Safety Engineering (RSE)** – Within this policy area, scheme proposals focus on the Council's duty to reduce person injury accidents. Schemes are prioritised as a result of criteria consisting of category of road, vehicle movements and safety issues to reduce Personal Injury Accidents on the road network. A 5-year CRASH data search (identifying reported road collisions, vehicles, and casualties) is also used to determine priority and location of potential schemes. The data-led policy approach is important and valuable as it allows an informed decision to be taken regarding which roads / areas need to be prioritised. Identifying that a certain road has a high number of personal injury accidents (PIAs) helps to determine where RSE funding is allocated.
 - **TDP2 Safer Routes to Schools** – Within this policy area, scheme proposals are prioritised because of set criteria consisting of accident records, site assessment score and school travel plan status. This criteria is to be discussed and adopted by the emerging Overview and Scrutiny Task & Finish Group.
 - **TDP3 Area Intervention Programme (AIP)** - scheme proposals are prioritised because of Police CRASH data to ensure consistency with other policies. The defined areas for

AIP are not similar in geographic size. To eliminate this issue and to ensure that each area has a fair weighting, the accident analysis on PIAs / kilometre. Opportunities to utilise maintenance funding in these areas is also explored when relevant. Additional criteria focusing on requests from members, residents, Essex Police, Waste & recycling team, Parking team and local forums will also be considered to provide a more reactive approach.

- **TDP4 Electric Vehicle Charging** – scheme proposals are identified to align with the OLEV strategy for transition to ultra-low emission motoring. A minimum of 20 charging points will be installed each year within key locations. EV Charging will promote sustainable travel and reduce vehicle emissions in Thurrock. The existing programme ensures the supply and installation of charging points throughout the borough along with ongoing maintenance, back-office services, customer service and interface and payment services.
- **Parking requests** – request driven approach to delivering on-street parking provision to alleviate local issues. Requests will be assessed against an agreed set of criteria including safety, visibility, maintenance liability and access. This will also enable the delivery of verge parking improvements to prevent parking in undesirable locations.

2.6 This report also sets out the combined 2024/25 DfT Maintenance Block Allocation Programme of £2,803,000, which is prioritised in alignment with Thurrock Council's Highways Asset Management Strategy (covered in more detail in Section 4). This is the key document which ties into the DfT's Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme.

2.7 The Department for Transport is committed to allocating the above funding to local highway authorities so they can most effectively spend this funding on statutory duties for maintaining and improving their respective road networks, based upon their local knowledge, circumstances and priorities. DfT strongly advocates a risk-based whole lifecycle asset management approach to local authority highways maintenance programmes. This considers all parts of the highway network, such as bridges, cycleways and lighting columns and is not specifically just for the fixing of potholes. Whereas the Pothole fund is specifically aimed at targeting carriageway maintenance to ensure the best treatment method for the asset e.g. resurfacing, jointing, jet patcher etc...

2.8 It is the responsibility of the respective highway authorities to determine how best to spend this funding to fulfil their statutory duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980. With the current funding level, the approach adopted to manage highways asset is one of a steady state of decline, because nationally there is a pressure on the network which does not align with the allocation of funding. For instance, within Thurrock the accumulated depreciation costs of our carriageways is estimated to be £482,024,000 with an annual depreciation of £4,318,000 which outstrips the funding received from DfT.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 As agreed previously, by Cabinet members in February 2022, the ITB programme is informed by an adopted policy and data led approach to intervention. The Transport Development Policies allow the data led approach to be consistently applied to the ITB programme, ensuring that priority areas receive funding to enable measures to be implemented.

3.2 In light of the above the funding allocations in the 2024/25 ITB programme have been discussed in detail with the Portfolio Holder and are set out as follows:

| 2024/25 ITB Capital Funding Allocations | |
|--|-----------------|
| Road Safety Engineering TDP1 | £300,000 |
| Safer Routes to School TDP2 | £115,000 |
| Area Intervention Programme TDP3 | £194,000 |
| EV Charging Facilities TDP4 | £115,000 |
| Parking requests (on street requests & disabled) | £115,000 |
| Emergency Minor Works (under 10k) | £68,000 |
| Passenger Transport | £30,000 |
| Public Rights of Way | £42,000 |
| TOTAL | £979,000 |

- 3.3 The allocation for each project area is identified in Appendix A and is based on policy criteria (2.5). Following the successful award of the EV Charging contract, £115,000 allocation to EV Charging identifies the Council's commitment to delivering increased on-street charging opportunities across the borough. Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) grant funding will also be explored to enhance the EV Charging budget.
- 3.4 The provision of £68,000 within the Emergency Minor Works budget enables the Council to be reactive to requests and priority issues for things such as parking restrictions, bollards, pram ramps and buildouts. The allocation of £30,000 to Passenger Transport is considered necessary to support small-scale network improvements and enhancements at bus stops. It is proposed to allocate £42,000 to the Public Rights of Way section of the capital programme to support delivery of new and additional signage and other supporting infrastructure.
- 3.5 The Transportation Services team will continue to utilise additional funds received by the Council to deliver the A126 Safer Roads Fund programme, A1013 Treetops Capital Bid scheme, EV Charging and the Active Travel Fund programme within the 2024/25 financial year.
- 3.6 The Council is likely to continue to receive ad-hoc requests for maintenance and small scheme improvements to be carried out on the transport network. Whilst there is limited flexibility within the programme once agreed, in some cases, requests will need to be implemented within the current financial year rather than held pending a future programme. This might include works to protect the public from risk of injury or where serious deterioration on the network may have occurred.
- 3.7 The responsibility to authorise variations to the ITB and Maintenance allocations, using new funding or carry forward funds, is delegated to the Interim Director of Transformation (Public Realm) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Highways.

- 3.8 Similarly, delegated authority can be used for additional Government funding (such as Safer Roads Funds, and Active Travel) and schemes can be subject to cost changes because of increasing scope or unforeseen revisions to schemes.

4. Highways Maintenance Block and Pothole Fund Funding

- 4.1 The DfT annual settlement provides the funding for the Maintenance Block and Pothole fund allocation, which this fiscal year has been combined and increased marginally due to the relocation of HS2 monies. We are therefore expected to receive a combined contribution of £2,803,000, which aligns with the combined settlement from 2023/24.
- 4.2 Historically the DfT has also provided an annual settlement of typically £1,106,000 via the Pothole fund which is specifically set up to help support resurfacing the highway, including the fixing of potholes. Whilst the Pothole fund is ringfenced to carriageway repairs, the Block Funding is required to support all Highway Assets including footways, drainage, Intelligent Traffic Systems, Road markings etc. So therefore, the allocation is split across all the assets groups but with funds targeted at the higher risk issues such as managing the declining carriageway network, which also attracts the highest proportion of Insurance claims, although not in value. Therefore, this fiscal year it is proposed to increase the footway allocation to £350,000 as this attracts the higher value in claim.
- 4.3 The Maintenance Programme is built around the good practice principals set out in the Code of Practice for Well Managed Highway Infrastructure. The Code of Practice was commissioned by the Department of Transport and came into effect in October 2018. It provides guidance for authorities when developing their approach to highway infrastructure in accordance with local needs, priorities, and affordability. The Council's adopted approach to this is via the Highways Maintenance Strategy, which focuses on maintaining and prioritising the asset in the most efficient way. Not just focusing on the financial element, but also the end user. It is therefore generated using a data lead approach.
- 4.4 Members are advised that the allocations are not 'ring fenced' for spend in the specific areas set out within the programmes but it is ringfenced to Highway Maintenance works therefore, Local Authorities have some flexibility to manage these allocations. As a result, the funding allocations may be amended within the total allocation to meet local needs on the network in accordance with the maintenance strategy. Appendix B provides a summary of how the DfT Allocation is allocated across the Council's maintenance programme.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 Endorsing the recommendations set out in this report will enable the ITB Capital Programme and the Maintenance Block Allocation programme to be implemented to ensure ongoing improvements to transport infrastructure, service provision and to ensure ongoing improvements are undertaken to the borough's adopted highway network.
- 5.2 Supporting and endorsing a consistent policy approach for ITB projects provides a level of assurance and consistency for the policy approach that is taken to identify, prioritise and deliver key elements of the ITB programme in relation to Council priorities.

6. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 6.1 The ITB Capital Programme has been developed in line with the priority areas identified and agreed in the Council's Transport Strategy.
- 6.2 Input is received throughout the year through engagement with residents, interest groups and key stakeholders through the enquiry process and submissions to the council. This information is assessed and used to identify whether schemes should be explored for implementation. Input and feedback are also provided by Community Forums, Bus Operators, Cycle Forum, Local Access Forum and Your Place, Your Voice, and Local Plan roadshow events. These engagement opportunities have provided ongoing input and information that has informed the development of the ITB Capital Programme. Feedback from Community Forums, Member Enquiries and Resident Enquiries provide an increased understanding of local issues as the ITB programme is developed and prioritised. Ward Members will be advised in advance of works affecting their respective wards prior to delivery. The ITB programme is to be added to the Council's web page (when completed and approved by Members) to clarify the schemes and measures to be implemented in 2024/25.
- 6.3 The Maintenance Block Allocation and Pothole Fund Programme has been developed in line with the priorities identified and set in the Council's Highway Maintenance Strategy. With the annual programme published on the Council website.
- 6.4 Once approved, the nature and time frames for delivery of the maintenance schemes will be shared with residents and stakeholders accordingly, with further, more detailed communications being carried out in advance of the works starting.
- 6.5 This report was presented at PTR O&S on the 21st February 2024.

7. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 7.1 The ITB Capital Programme and Maintenance Block Allocation Programme will help improve and enhance the transport network across the Borough making it safer, less congested, and more accessible, thereby promoting and supporting People, Place and Prosperity within Thurrock.

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mark Terry**
Senior Financial Accountant

The Council will be allocated £979,000 ITB capital allocation, £1,106,000 for Pothole maintenance and £1,383,000 Block Allocation for Maintenance for 2024/25.

Additional capital schemes, including A126 Safer Roads Fund scheme, A1013 Treetops capital bid scheme and Active Travel Fund scheme are funded separately from the ITB allocation, but it is worth noting the integration of these capital schemes.

Additional funding may be allocated to the ITB and Maintenance programmes in-year. These allocations can be approved through the delegated authority route.

The cost of implementing the ITB capital and maintenance programmes will be contained within the funding announced by Government.

The s114 announcement has no implications on the ITB and Maintenance grant funding allocations or proposed delivery programmes.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Caroline Robins**
Locum Principal Solicitor

There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations included in the body of the report. A Cabinet decision is required to approve the recommendations and the delegated authority process is set out within the body of the report.

The Council is required to use the allocated funds in accordance with Council approved policies and procedures, and any conditions and requirements set by the relevant government department as to how the funds are to be spent.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager Community Development

The ITB and Maintenance funding is for a series of Highways maintenance and network improvements and EV charging facilities that have been identified with the support of extensive community and stakeholder engagement.

A Community Equality Impact Assessment (CEIA) will be prepared for each proposal to inform delivery. CEIAs will be shared with Cabinet to support the decision-making process where initiatives will be prioritised for funding.

8.4 Risks

Not Applicable.

8.5 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children

Not Applicable

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Thurrock Transport Strategy
- Integrated Transport Block (ITB) Capital Programme Policy

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix A – ITB Capital Programme
- Appendix B –Highways Maintenance Programme

Report Author:

Mat Kiely

Head of Transportation

Place