



## Proposal for additional spending on Highways

Date 16 April 2018

### Report from Leader of the Council

#### Summary

Following recent announcements and prudent investment and budget management decisions, the Council is in a position to invest £5m in priority spending on the Highways.

- The Transport Service currently spends £2m on reactive repairs throughout the financial year to ensure that the highway remains safe for all users. In addition the Service have recently benefited from £0.350m from one-off gains within the TfB contract.
- Following the announcements in December 2017 and March 2018 by the Department for Transport, Buckinghamshire County Council has been awarded an additional £0.966m for repair of potholes.
- As a part of the revenue budget settlement for 2018/19 a fund of £0.480m was devolved to County Councillors to fund locally important schemes within the Highways network.
- As a result of prudent financial management, it is proposed that £1.234m of funds from the General Fund reserve is allocated to provide additional investment in the Highways.

#### Recommendation

It is recommended that £1.234m of funds from the General Fund is combined with the existing service budgets, member devolved budgets, DfT funding, to create a £5m programme of high quality of highway repairs.

#### Council is asked to:

1. **Agree that £1.234m of County Council reserves are used to supplement existing funding to provide for predominately plane and patch type repairs.**
2. **Agree that all County Councillors are encouraged to use the £0.480m devolved member budget to focus additional resource to the carriageway repair budget.**

## **Purpose of this Report**

1. To set out the need for a £5m Highways investment programme covering predominantly plane and patch type repairs, building on the existing £2m reactive repair programme.

## **Background**

2. Since 2011 the County Council has invested over £120m in to the maintenance of its carriageway network. This funding reversed a good many years of underinvestment and has now resulted in a general improvement across the board of all classes of road. This improvement now means that our classified network is comparable with those of our neighbours and is seeing year on year improvement. However, the unclassified network that represents almost 50% of our network is still in poor condition and its condition lags that of our neighbours by some considerable margin.

## **Highway investment programme**

3. The focus for the capital carriageway programme for 2018/19 is to ensure that the condition of our classified network does not deteriorate and that improvements continue to be made to the unclassified network.
4. The winter that has just finished has been our most severe winter for around 7 years, with our gritting fleet dealing with over 80 frost events and 3 serious snow events. This prolonged bout of poor weather has meant that the network has been exposed to additional stress, the result of which is evidenced by:
  - A 300% increase in the numbers of defects reported versus the levels that would normally be expected by the teams at this time of year
  - An increase in the numbers of claims for damage received by the County Council
  - An increase in the numbers of emails received by County Councillors from residents and businesses complaining about the condition of roads.
5. The Department for Transport (DfT) has for a number of years offered an additional grant to Councils for pothole repairs, in Buckinghamshire. Two separate announcements were made by DfT in December 2017 and March 2018, these allocated a £0.593m and £1.187m respectively for additional pothole repairs. These grants replace the existing pothole repair grant of £0.814m and result in £0.966m of additional funding over and above the budgets announced at Full Council in February 2018.
6. In light of the pressures that members are coming under the Leader of the Council, Cllr Martin Tett, has asked for plans to be drawn up to allow for a further £1.234m of County Council reserves to be spent wholly on carriageway defect repair.

7. Transport for Buckinghamshire has been asked to develop a method for distributing the funding, and has recommended that allocations are made on the basis of road length (excluding A class roads) in each division. TfB's Local Area Technicians (LAT's) are to be given full control of the allocations and will work to advise members where the work, predominantly plane and patch schemes, in each Division will be focussed. LATs will ensure that schemes are developed to maximise the amount of patching work that can be completed in an area and will seek to address known "pothole farm" areas.
8. Each Local Member also has access to around £9,400 of member priority funding, this will "purchase" approximately 1 plane and patch gang day and will allow Members, should they choose, to spend additional resource on those roads that are, to their mind, the ones that require urgent attention. Members can, if they want, ask their LAT to allocate the resource based on their knowledge of the network and the areas that need addressing.
9. It is anticipated that somewhere in the order of 15km of additional carriageway patching can be achieved should Council agree to the funding allocation as described above, with the Member fund providing for 2.5km to be treated.

**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**