

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

TYNEDALE LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Tynedale Local Area Council** held at Hexham House, Gilesgate, Hexham, Northumberland, NE46 3NH on Tuesday, 13 February 2024 at 4.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor T Cessford
(Chair), in the Chair)

MEMBERS

A Dale
SH Fairless-Aitken
I Hutchinson
D Kennedy
N Morphet

JR Riddle
A Sharp
G Stewart
H Waddell

OFFICERS

R McCartney
N Snowdon

N Turnbull

Infrastructure Manager
Principal Programme Officer
(Highways Improvement)
Democratic Services Officer

ALSO PRESENT

1 member of the press and 1 member of the public.

42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Horncastle, Oliver and Scott.

43. MINUTES

In answer to a question, it was confirmed that a report on the Petition 'A68 Safety Improvements' was expected to be considered at the meeting on 21 May 2024.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meeting of the Tynedale Local Area Council, held on 16 January 2024, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Ch.'s Initials.....

44. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN PROGRAMME AND HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE INVESTMENT IN U AND C ROADS AND FOOTWAYS PROGRAMME 2024-25

The Local Area Council received a report which set out the draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads and Footways programmes for 2024-25 for consideration and comment prior to final approval of the programme by the Executive Director for Place and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Improving Our Roads and Highways. (A copy of the report is enclosed with the signed minutes).

A further copy of the appendices had been circulated electronically and a paper copy provided at the meeting as some information at the top and bottom of page 15 had not been visible when the papers had originally been circulated.

The Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement) stated that the budget was based on a settlement from the Department of Transport of £26,256,124 assuming a similar allocation to the previous year. He provided a breakdown of the different elements. A sum of £62,500 was to be retained by the North East Joint Transport Committee to cover central support costs.

Appendices A – D contained details of the proposed schemes across 4 main areas: sustainable transport, safety, roads and bridges, structures and landslips. Appendix E contained details of a proposed additional £4.45 million for maintenance for U and C classified roads and footways categorised by local area committee. The latter was subject to approval by the County Council on 21 February 2024.

The following comments and queries were raised by members:

- A sum of money had been allocated for road widening on the C254 at Fellhouse Fell with the work being carried out in phases across several financial years. The second phase had not yet been carried out and was not showing in the schedule. The officers agreed to check whether the money for this scheme had been ring fenced and carried over to 2024/25.
- Clarification of the location of the pavement work on Hencotes, Hexham.
- Whilst a similar level of funding for 2024/25 was proposed to 2023/24, with inflationary costs, this would be significantly less in real terms reducing the amount of work able to be undertaken by the Council.
- Concern that the Council had insufficient funds to repair and maintain the highway. It was acknowledged that it had been a particularly wet winter which was having a significant impact on rural roads, particularly in locations with steep inclines. Water on the highway was detrimental to the surface when it froze, lifting the surface and resulting in potholes. The maintenance programme needed to be increased to clear ditches, repair gulleys and more lasting repairs of potholes. Provision for more gully

wagons, street cleaners and manpower were required. These comments were repeated by several members.

- With the recent changes to the Highways Code in 2022 giving priority to vulnerable road users, whether the LTP programme was doing enough to make street design adequately reflect the new 'hierarchy of the road', and in particular whether schemes could incorporate continuous footways. Reference was made to the footway maintenance scheme on the B6531 Leazes Crescent and Burnland Terrace, Hexham. The Infrastructure Manager agreed to check this with the Design Team.
- Recent schemes had been helpful to slow traffic in the vicinity of the Queen Elizabeth High School and an enquiry made whether any other measures were proposed. It was confirmed that a draft report had recently been sent to the Headteacher and would be subject to further consultation with other interested parties. This would be shared with Councillors as soon as appropriate.
- The LTP prioritisation process be shared with all members.
- Reprioritisation of schemes following bad weather and road deterioration could be negotiated (if one road suddenly became significantly worse than another) if the preparatory works, such as design and road surveys had been undertaken. This would be checked for Adderlane Road, Prudhoe.
- The Fix My Street presentation by the Highways Delivery Manager at a meeting of Hexham Town Council had been extremely helpful and well received.
- The policy for pothole repair versus road resurfacing was not determined by the number of potholes, but if there was a failure of the structural integrity of the road surface. Regular safety inspections meant that potholes on main roads were repaired within 24 hours. Fix My Street and the Horizon system would enable better oversight and management of the highway and the type of repair likely to be required.
- Basic maintenance of gully and ditches was essential. It was queried whether the regular programme was being followed. It was acknowledged that resource was diverted when the Council needed to respond to adverse weather and reactive maintenance. Given the size of the area, it took time for the equipment to get around the route.
- The quality of repairs by contractors be closely managed to ensure they lasted more than a few days. Failure of resurfacing work within 12 months should be investigated and followed up.
- Clarification on the safety scheme proposed for Radcliffe Road, Haydon Bridge be provided to the local member.
- More revenue funding was required in addition to capital funding.
- It was understood there was insufficient resource within the Rights of Way section to plan new routes following landslips.

Councillor Riddle, Cabinet Member for Improving Our Roads and Highways, stated that in addition to the £4.45 million proposed for the investment in U and C Roads and Footways, County Council was also being requested to approve an additional £5.77 million which would increase the total highways budget for 2024/25 to circa £36 million. If approved, this would be allocated as

fairly as possible. The impact of the wet winter weather and significant storms could not be underestimated.

He added that during 2024/25 it was proposed that Area Highway Managers be given flexibility to undertake more permanent repairs of the highway. Also, information had been requested regarding the hours the gulley wagons were in use on planned versus reactive maintenance and whether use of the equipment could be maximised with perhaps the implementation of an additional shift. It was acknowledged that the drivers of the gulley wagons were also likely to be included in the winter services rota. It was noted that the gulley wagons could not clear gulleys during snow events. The Council had to maximise use of the workforce and equipment which was why some vehicles were interchangeable.

The Infrastructure Manager reported that there were 96,000 gulleys in the county with 17,800 in the Tynedale area.

Some areas had been allocated more funding than others and had resulted in a few members expressing their disappointment on the number of schemes within their wards for the 2024/25 programme.

RESOLVED that:

- a. The report be received and noted.
- b. Members' comments be considered in the finalisation of the LTP Programme and additional £4.45 million for the Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads and Footways programme for 2024-25 by the Executive Director for Place and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Improving Our roads and Highways.

45. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 19 March 2024 at 6.00 pm.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____