

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a virtual meeting of the **Ashington & Blyth Local Area Council** held on **Wednesday, 10 February at 6:00 pm.**

PRESENT

Councillor G Webb (Chair)

MEMBERS

E Cartie
G Davey
S Davey
B Gallacher
J J Gobin
L Grimshaw

J Lang
K Nisbet
K Parry
L Rickerby
E Simpson

OFFICERS

P Jones
K Norris
D Rumney

N Snowdon

Service Director – Local Services
Democratic Services Officer
Principal Programme Officer
(Highways Maintenance)
Principal Programme Officer
(Highways Improvement)

120. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Campbell, M Purvis and T Wilson.

121. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN PROGRAMME 2021-22 AND HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE INVESTMENT IN U AND C ROADS AND FOOTWAYS PROGRAMME 2021-22

Paul Jones, Service Director – Local Services, introduced the above report which set out details of the draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) programme for 2021-22 and the draft Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads and Footways programme for 2021-22.

Mr Jones advised members that prior to formal confirmation from the Department of Transport (DfT), the programme for 2021/22 had been developed on the basis of an assumed capital allocation of just over £19 million. The programme also covered £5 million which was the second year allocation from the overall £15 million the Council had invested in U and C roads and footway maintenance over a two year period and had been developed following dialogue with County Councillors and Town and Parish Councils, all of which had been taken into consideration. Although there were always more requests than funding available, work had been prioritised in a consistent manner to achieve the best

value for money for those using the transport network. As set out in the appendices, the funding was divided across four key areas, Walking and Cycling; Safety Works; Road Maintenance Improvement Schemes and Bridges, Structures and Landslips.

Mr Jones highlighted the following key elements:

- In terms of Walking and Cycling over £1.5 million had been allocated for improvements which would benefit health and wellbeing and tie into the Council's climate change agenda. As part of NCC's medium term financial plan £3 million had been allocated within the capital programme through the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans to develop infrastructure in the twelve main towns in the county. This was an ongoing programme to invest in cycling and walking infrastructure to support modal shift and reduce the numbers of short car journeys, and would place NCC in a strong position to attract government funding.
- On Safety schemes, just over £2 million had been allocated and would include improvements to address accident hotspots. An allocation of £350,000 had been made for general refurbishment and renewal of road signs/markings as deterioration of these had been highlighted by members of all the Local Area Councils.
- Roads had the highest allocation of just over £12 million as these were the county's biggest assets in terms of the network to be maintained. One of the main elements was an allocation of £750,000 for a countywide programme of drainage works to address issues causing damage to the network.
- Just under £3 million had been allocated to look at Bridges, Structures and Landslips and this was predominantly around bridge strengthening works and preventative work around landslips.
- The £5 million programme for U and C roads was split across four areas, Rural Road Refurbishment; Residential Road Refurbishment; Small Works and Footway Refurbishment. Small works involved those roads which needed structural maintenance, patching works and micro surfacing works in order to tackle long term problems.

Once feedback had been received and considered, the programme would be finalised with work commencing on 1 April 2021.

Questions from members were invited and the following information was provided:

- In terms of cycling, Mr Jones agreed that keen road cyclists who wanted to travel at speed and cover longer distances would generally avoid the use of cycle tracks. Much of the cycling provision within towns was for commuting or for families to use for recreation purposes. It was acknowledged that cycling infrastructure needed to be fit for purpose and well maintained. Officers were aware that securing budget provision to ensure the on-going maintenance of cycle infrastructure was an issue to be aware of. The £3 million allocation for LCWIPs was for development of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans that had been prepared for the 12 main towns across Northumberland including Ashington and Blyth. This was to look at the key routes within settlements and take these forward to encourage as many people to use them as possible. Funding for this would be from a variety of sources, including contributions from developers and hopefully include Government grants going forward.
- Regarding drainage, the routine cleansing maintenance of gullies was a separate revenue budget issue. There had to be a balance between carrying out routine

work and reactive work where problems arose. The capital budget drainage investment itself was more about looking at the drainage systems and making sure open drains alongside roads were clear. If there was under capacity of drainage systems within the highways network these would be tackled and the diameter of pipework improved to clear water from roads and prevent surface water flooding.

- If Members wished to prioritise any particular drainage issues in their local area, they were requested to report them to their Local Area Manager for inclusion in the programme.
- Regarding landslips, reference had been made to the historic problem at Todstead, between Rothbury and Weldon Bridge which was an area close to the river. Work had been carried out to patch up the main landslip there and consultants had been appointed to look at the sub slips within that. Members were advised that because of the significant costs that were likely to be involved to deliver the final scheme which was still being developed, it was anticipated that this would not be funded through the LTP. Once a detailed scheme had been established, funding would be sought from the Council's capital borrowing and bids would be made for government funding.
- The £2,000 minimum amount for Members' Small Schemes was a requirement from the capital finance rules and had been in place for some time. Members were implored to make the best use of this and were encouraged to use it. If they wished to use it for highways maintenance, officers would be happy to support them in any way they could.
- It was acknowledged that micro surfacing was appropriate for some sites and not others but it had become an important part of the toolbox in the urban environment. Surface dressings had not been popular with residents, particularly in estates, and micro surfacing was a very effective preventative treatment other than surface dressing.
- Regarding an application made a year and a half ago for a pelican crossing opposite St John's vicarage, an interactive sign, funded by the local member, had been erected to encourage vehicles to slow down when approaching the crossing. Officers would look at this to see how improvements could be made and the scheme for a pelican crossing may be considered this year as part of phase 1. Officers would arrange for some surveys to be carried out with a view to taking this forward if it met the necessary criteria.
- Officers were aware of the deteriorating condition of Queens Road, Bedlington Station and were making plans to have work carried out in the first quarter of this financial year.
- In terms of planned general highways work in the next two years, members were advised that the Council was well equipped to carry out work but acknowledged it would depend on the level of funding received from central government and funding allocated from the budget.
- Micro surfacing was a seasonal activity and set up costs were high, it was therefore more cost effective for contractors to carry out this work.
- The total cost of the traffic calming scheme at South End Avenue, Blyth, including funding provided by Councillor Webb from his small schemes budget, was in the region of £70,000. There were some amendments to make to the scheme and a consultation would take place as soon as possible. In response to an offer of additional funding from Councillor Webb to take this forward quickly, Mr Snowdon said he would contact Councillor Webb outside of the meeting to discuss this further.
- With regard to parking restrictions on Plessey Road, an update would be provided to Councillor Cartie regarding the current position of the TRO.

Chair's Initials.....

The Chair and members thanked the Service Director – Local Services and his team for the excellent work they had carried out, especially in such extreme conditions. Mr Jones acknowledged the comments made saying they were much appreciated and would be passed on.

RESOLVED that

- 1. The report be received and noted.
- 2. Members’ comments be considered in the finalisation of both the LTP Programme for 2021-22 and the Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads and Footways Programme for 2021-22.

122. URGENT BUSINESS

With the agreement of the Chair, Councillor G Davey raised an issue regarding a planning application which had been submitted for a footbridge over the railway line between Chase Meadows and the footpath leading to the new railway station. He raised concerns about the design which was not suitable for disabled access, cycle access or pushchair access. Councillor Davey referred to a bridge over a redundant railway line in the Isabella Ward that had full disabled access and recommended that the new footbridge should be based on that design. Councillor Cartie and Councillor Gallacher supported the comments made stating that the design was not fit for purpose and there should be a block review of this design for any new railway footbridges across the county.

In response Mr Jones said the comments would be passed on to Stuart McNaughton and his team who were carrying out this work through Acomb.

RESOLVED that concerns about the design of the footbridge over the railway line between Chase Meadows and the footpath leading to the new railway station not being fit for purpose be passed to the Strategic Transport Manager and that these comments also be noted for any future footbridge proposals.

123. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday, 10 March 2021, time to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 6:32 pm

Chair _____

Date _____

Chair's Initials.....

Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council, 10 February 2021