

Environment, Development & Transport Committee

Item No.

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| Report title: | Local Member Highways Budget Proposal |
| Date of meeting: | 17 March 2017 |
| Responsible Chief Officer: | Tom McCabe – Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services |
| Strategic impact The Highways and Transport Service contributes directly to supporting the following Council priority: <i>“Good infrastructure – We will make Norfolk a place where businesses can succeed and grow. We will promote improvements to our transport and technology infrastructure to make Norfolk a great place to do business.”</i> A Local Member Highways Budget fits in with our locality working approach which champions community engagement and allows the flexibility to make decisions and take actions based upon local needs. | |

Executive summary

This report outlines the proposal to provide each local Member with an annual budget of £6000 to be used on highway work within each financial year, offering flexibility to progress small highway projects at their discretion based upon local need.

It is recognised that communities across the county may have different local priorities and what may be important to one may not be for another.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- 1. For 2017/18 a Local Member Highways Budget is provided, re-allocating part of the Challenge Fund budget.**
- 2. In future years, should the initiative be successful, the “Local Member Highways budget” will merge with the Parish Partnership scheme to provide a single highways budget of £6000 for each division to minimise administration costs.**

1. Proposal

- 1.1.** To provide local members a discretionary budget of £6,000 per division in 2017/18 for local highway work that has not already been identified for delivery.
- 1.2.** Members, in consultation with local highway teams, can champion small highway projects considered a priority for the community. Subject to technical and legal compliance, this fund will enable the delivery of approved schemes.

- 1.3. The Local Member Highways Budget allocation could be enhanced by others; for example town/parish council match funding of small projects (in a similar way to the Parish Partnership initiative).
- 1.4. In 17/18, the Local Member highways budget will run in parallel and in addition to the Parish Partnership Scheme. If considered successful, we would seek to merge these initiatives in future years in order to maximise leverage and draw in match funding. We anticipate a need to adjust resource in order for the local teams to manage this workload but this would not add to our costs.
- 1.5. **Implementation and delivery**
 - 1.5.1. County Council elections are in May 2017 and we propose to introduce this new initiative at the induction of Members. This enables schemes to be identified and delivered in the remainder of the financial year.
 - 1.5.2. Once established, proposals will be discussed with Members during autumn for incorporation into the locally delivered schemes programme in the next financial year.
 - 1.5.3. Proposals can be made throughout the financial year but consideration needs to be made to allow for planning and delivery.
 - 1.5.4. These schemes will be delivered by the local works team.
 - 1.5.5. First response will be provided by local highway engineers who will be able to provide advice and assistance, however this resource is finite.
 - 1.5.6. Any proposal would be administered in the area by the local Highway Engineer. The cost of that design work would be set against the scheme.
- 1.6. **Work that can be covered by the Local Member Highways Budget**
 - 1.6.1. All work must align to the agreed priorities of the Council.

Only small projects could be funded with a limited budget.

For example:

- Advisory signs i.e. “Unsuitable for HGV’s and advisory speed limits i.e. 20mph signs outside schools would be possible.
- Small footway extensions and modifications
- More significant work to public rights of way
- Minor drainage work
- New non regulatory signs and replacement of existing signs and road markings. Possibly some new road markings such as “SLOW”.
- Feasibility work or investigations that cannot be resourced by front line staff.
- Very minor traffic management projects – this could include minor amendments to things like waiting restrictions. More significant Traffic Regulation Orders can be more costly and are unlikely be delivered within a 12 month time period, so would only proceed if officers advise that the proposal would be achievable.
- Day rates for gangs to carry out additional maintenance to areas of the highways that a local Member would like improved i.e. PRow or verges.

- Other highway improvements – improved visibility splays, junction improvements, kerbing, work in conservation areas.

We recommend that illuminated signs, street lighting or reflective bollards would not be included in the scope of this initiative. This aligns with NCC energy saving objective of 50% by 2020, based on 2007 baseline.

2. Evidence

2.1. Localism and locality working

Greater emphasis is being placed on localism and more local ways of working in our strategic approach. We recognise that the local priorities in one part of the county can be very different from another. This approach allows for local decision making. A Local Member Highways budget will allow more flexibility in meeting locally identified needs.

2.2. Parish partnership

The Parish Partnership scheme is an example of successful collaboration that has delivered projects based upon local priorities. The scheme has proven popular over the last five years it has been running. In 17/18 there is a full programme to help fund schemes put forward by Town and parish councils.

From 18/19 we propose that the Parish Partnership fund is incorporated into the Local Highways Member budget. This will mean that there is a single budget available to each division and decisions on how to spend the budget (including the potential to match fund) will happen at a local level.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1. A budget allocation of £504,000 (£6000 for each County Councillor).
- 3.2. £1 million capital allowance had been put together to support bids as part of the DfT Challenge Fund match funding – it is proposed that the £504,000 is re-allocated from this budget in 2017/2018. This is one-off funding.
- 3.3. In 2018/2019 a budget allocation of £504,000 is proposed for the merged initiatives (Local Member Highways budget and Parish Partnership scheme), funded from the highways capital allocation. It is anticipated that this will draw down significant match funding for local sources.
- 3.4. Funds relate to a specific financial year and are not transferable. Any funds not used in any division will be declared surplus. Divisional budgets could be used to fund cross divisional projects but not given away outside the highways area.

4. Issues, risks and innovation

- 4.1. Members will require a good understanding of what is required in terms of their local area and local discussions will inform if a hard engineering solution is required or whether a softer, behavioural method may be more appropriate.
- 4.2. To determine how much the work is likely to cost and how the money is spent – particularly if the decision is between one or more parishes. This would be an additional activity for the local highway engineer. Technical advice will be provided to the member.
- 4.3. It is possible that some more significant schemes could not be delivered within the available budget. Dividing the budget into 84 Member divisions will mean that schemes costing over this amount will not be undertaken. Match funding will be needed to deliver these more expensive schemes.

- 4.4. In 18/19 onwards, if the Parish Partnership initiative is merged with the Local Members Highway Budget, the decision to proceed with projects will be made at a local level. This means that local Members will need to make sure there is good engagement with parishes in their division to understand their needs and opportunities for match funding.
- 4.5. Individual Members may have different areas of expertise and focus for their community. As a result they may require additional guidance on how best to utilise the budget available. We would offer Members training for this new aspect of work. Monitoring would be carried out and local staff could assist Members if they identify work that could be financed by their discretionary budget.
- 4.6. The Head of Highways will ultimately have responsibility for arbitration around any technical matters and hold the delegated financial responsibility for approving the project.
- 4.7. We would need to make sure staff and Members are clear on the approach. In 17/18 both the Local Member Budget and the Parish Partnership will be running but as we look to merge the initiatives in subsequent years any requests for local schemes will be via the local Member.

5. Background

- 5.1. This report was requested after discussion at the Environment, Development and Transport Committee on 27th January 2017. Minutes from this committee can be found on the [Norfolk County Council Website](#).

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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