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**Meeting of the Housing & Public Realm Scrutiny – 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

**Report of the Interim Director of Public Realm**

**Public Realm - Transport and Highways Progress Report**

**Purpose**

1. To present the current progress report on all matters associated with Transport and Highways. Inclusive of items such as: Strategic Transport and partnership working, Highway Maintenance, Asset Management and a neighbourhood approach to Traffic and Highways functions.

**Recommendation**

2. It is recommended that the Housing and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee review the contents of this report and that any identified issues are referred to the relevant Cabinet Member and Service Director to feedback and inform future decisions.

**Background**

3. This report is intended to provide members of this Committee with an update in relation to the Highways and Transport teams.

**Transport Strategy – Partnership Working**

4. The Transport Strategy team are responsible for the development and project management of major regional and sub regional capital transport infrastructure projects and programmes working alongside the West Midlands Combined Authority. The team also develop Transport policy and provide the Dudley MBC input to the West Midlands Local Transport Plan in partnership with the Black County Transport Group. Functions also include planning and designing the improvements and

expansion of regional connectivity, encouraging economic/labour market growth through the development of major highway projects and public infrastructure improvements.

- 4.1 The City Regions Sustainable Transport Settlement funding has been secured to support growth aspirations across the Borough through enhancing the transport infrastructure network. It has become imperative through devolution and climate change agendas that all local authorities including Dudley rely upon the future of our network and plan towards the future, promoting cycling, walking and sustainable modes of travel such as bus services.
- 4.2 The main strategy for Dudley and other West Midland authorities is set out in the Local Transport Plan (LTP), a document currently being prepared at regional level with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), and Transport for the West Midlands (TfWM).
- 4.3 The overarching LTP is due to be finalised by the end of 2022, which will allow the next phase of area-based strategies which will inform what Dudley will aspire to achieve through partnership working with the Black Country Transport Group on cross boundary corridors and initiatives through specialised resources.
- 4.4 Whilst it is recognised that Dudley's infrastructure network brings challenges adapting to a modal shift system the team are committed to provide Borough wide improved connectivity/accessibility through sustainable and safe infrastructure (building on Metro).

### The next 5 Years

5. Over the next 5 years Dudley's medium-term strategy for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) funding is outlined in summary below:
  - Network Improvement Plans
  - Continuation of annual Local Safety Scheme Programme/Safer Routes to Schools and other sustainable measures
  - Pedestrian Facilities upgrading the cycling and walking connectivity.
  - Public Rights of Way
  - Traffic Regulation Orders



- Infrastructure measures to support regeneration

## 6. CRSTS Major Schemes:

- 5 Year Integrated Transport Block (Local Network Improvement Plans) £1.76m per annum (E.g., Local Safety, Safer Routes to School, Ped facilities, TRO's, PROW, local cycling measures, local Junction Improvements)
- 5 year Maintenance settlement £4.49m per annum (E.g., Classified and Unclassified road networks, footways, structures, street lighting)
- A4123 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor - £29m (Split across Dudley, Sandwell and Wolverhampton)
- A461 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor - £25m (Split across Dudley, Sandwell, and some development funding for Walsall)
- Black Country ULEV Charging Scheme - £7m (Split across all Black Country Local Authorities)
- Metro Sustainable Access Measures - £16m (Split across Dudley and Sandwell)
- Black Country Walking and Cycling Package - £8m (Split across all Black Country Local Authorities)
- Dudley Town Centre Interchange Sustainable Connectivity Package - £7.5m
- Stourbridge Town Centre Sustainable Connectivity Package - £3m

## 7. Dudley Transport Strategy Challenges:

7.1 Dudley is like any other authority and holds its own challenges in relation to the changing modal shifts required on a regional, national, and global level.

7.2 Dudley borough has a constrained highway footprint on the majority of its Key Route Network corridors, which will mean that as cycling, walking and public transport (bus) initiatives are initially developed there will be competing and conflicting use on the highway. In order to provide safe corridors of travel for none car users it is highly possible some areas of on street parking will be lost, this means Transport Engineers are having to be inventive when planning and designing key active travel corridors. The topography within the borough also provides additional challenges when developing schemes, particularly with regard to cycling.



- 7.3 The Transport Strategy Team are committed to working with partners across the West Midlands to not only provide a quality multi-modal highway network in support of the climate change agenda but are also in the early stages of developing a Dudley own Road Safety Strategy which will look to set out actions and priorities for the next 5 years that will be measurable and effective for all public Highway users.

*(Please note further information on this section will be given via a presentation in committee by Nick McGurk, Head of Transport and Highways)*

## 8. **Highway Maintenance**

- 8.1 Highway Operations strive to ensure Dudley's carriageways, footways, cycleways, Public Rights of Way network and car parks exceed customer expectations.
- 8.2 The team are responsible for the contract management of major civil engineering projects through the Borough and hold accountability of the contract management. The team oversee the delivery of capital investment structural highway maintenance on both classified and unclassified roads. The team also have an additional revenue for road marking and lining, high friction surfacing, guardrail replacement and the highways footway reconstruction program.
- 8.3 At all times, Highway Operations services aim to provide a positive experience for all our customers, from the free and expeditious movement around the Borough, through to prompt and efficient responses to requests for service and having a culture of continuous improvement.
- 8.4 The Highway Maintenance team is responsible for the maintenance of the Borough's highway network, from undertaking statutory safety inspections and competing day to day reactive repairs through to long term asset management and lifecycle planning to inform an investment strategy to ensure the safe condition of our carriageways, footways, cycleways and Public Rights of Way network.
- 8.5 This financial year the Highway Maintenance team have programmed £10.5M of medium to long term maintenance on Dudley's Highway network.

- 8.6 The £10.5M breaks down to a £7M Capital Investment for the long-term Structural Highway Maintenance of the boroughs Classified and Unclassified Roads. These works involve the reconstruction of the upper layers of the highway to extend its operating life between 20 and 40 years.
- 8.7 The City Regional Sustainable Settlement (CRSTS) is set at £4.86M annually and this remains fixed until Financial Year 2026/27. Contracts for resurfacing the highway are commonly set for 3 to 5 years and prices on change annually based on a cost fluctuation % connected with industry factors. We are currently seeing a totally unprecedented rise in the cost of coated stone products for resurfacing. Over just a short period of time we will be undertaking less highway reconstruction work as our budgets are not keeping pace with inflation. Long term contracts take advantage of economies of scale and long purchase agreements with quarriers. We are now experiencing quarries raising prices every few months meaning contractors will not be able to undertake works for the rates they have tendered.
- 8.8 The remaining £3.5M Council Revenue Investment is for predominantly Unclassified Roads and includes works such as maintenance of Guardrails, Anti-Skid Road Surfaces, Road Markings, Footways Maintenance, Highway Drainage, Gully Emptying, Patching and Pothole works.
- 8.9 The current Revenue Budgets have remained stable in recent years but as with the Capital works there is large increase in material costs in the road maintenance sector and the annual budgets are not keeping track with the inflationary factors.
- 8.10 This aside it is expected that this year's Structural Highways Maintenance Programme will be completed on time and to budget. In future years without budget increases we will be surfacing fewer roads.
- 8.11 The Asset Management section in conjunction with Civil Engineering agree upon the final programme of works as there are many factors that affect the degradation of the highway network. Asset Management survey our road stock and produce a long term Classified Maintenance Programme from the survey information.

- 8.12 The Unclassified network relies heavily on regular inspections and assessments being undertaken before a final programme is formulated. In future the goal is to have all the Unclassified network surveyed on a regular basis to promote an ongoing five-year programme of work.

*(Please note further information on this section will be given via a presentation in committee by Nick McGurk, Head of Transport and Highways)*

## 9. Reactive Highway Maintenance

- 9.1 The operational model for the Street Maintenance service is primarily a direct labour workforce supported by the local supply chain for such items as the supply of specialist plant associated with resurfacing, the supply of additional labour to deal with peaks in workload and a term contract for scheduled cleansing of highway gullies.
- 9.2 This model enables us to provide a quick response to any urgent issues affecting the public highway.
- 9.3 We have a trusted and loyal workforce who also have a long track record of supporting the council on a wider basis such as supporting local and national election arrangements and numerous civic events such as Remembrance Day and other special events like the recent Commonwealth Games Cycle Trial.
- 9.4 The primary role of Street Maintenance is to keep the public highway open and free of any dangerous defects that could cause serious harm to the public at large. We also strive to keep the council out of court by regular safety inspections of the highway as a typical cost of a personal injury case is circa £30K in legal fees alone.
- 9.5 The public highway is the most valuable asset that the council looks after, the highway network provides access to employment and shopping locations, as well as for the everyday journeys that we all make for healthcare and leisure needs.
- 9.6 We are all guardians of the public highway for now, with plenty of officers and members who came before us, and plenty will follow in the years to come.



- 9.7 The highways sector continues to face pressures from raw material increases and general inflationary cost charges that will make it harder to deliver an effective service against a challenging macro-economic climate.
- 9.8 The Street Maintenance service is actively looking at how we can improve the capture of relevant data and present key operational performance to all stakeholders to demonstrate that funding is being used wisely.
- 9.9 Despite making significant progress, we, like other highways authorities, are in an increasingly challenging environment, with deteriorating assets, increasing traffic volumes, uncertainty around future funding and, more recently, facing the impacts of the global pandemic. We have therefore decided to develop a new Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) to identify a clear investment strategy and associated action plan for the future that is fit for purpose and recognises the challenges and opportunities ahead.
- 9.10 This strategy sets out the direction for implementation of asset management and provides a link for the implementation of other relevant aspirations in the Council Plan, such as corporate objectives, business planning, risk management and transport objectives. It will provide an overview for the adoption of asset management principles to achieve greater efficiency and value for money and describes the benefits that this brings to economic prosperity, the wider community and investment in the highway infrastructure on a comparable basis to other infrastructure services the authority funds. The strategy also sets out how asset management activities are implemented, measured and continuously improved.
- 9.11 The Strategy will set out a performance management structure as a fundamental component for the delivery of services of the highest quality that is affordable. The performance management section will show how performance will be continually measured through indicators, standards, and targets.
- 9.12 The delivery of an effective Highway Maintenance programme must balance the need to keep the network safe and respond to the public's reasonable expectation that minor defects will quickly be made safe, against the need to preserve and improve the long-term sustainability of the network by carrying out programmed works.

- 9.13 To support a new way of thinking and working to meet these challenges the directorate and service area have reviewed working practices and methods alongside team structures to understand where efficiencies and performance can be gained.
- 9.14 It will be confirmed that a holistic Highways Team will develop from this work, which will allow us to manage the highway effectively utilising internal and external support both from a design and delivery perspective. The service will also look to enhance through digital improvements helping inform annual programmes.

*(Please note further information on this section will be given via a presentation in committee by Nick McGurk, Head of Transport and Highways)*

## 10. Asset Management – HIAMP

- 10.1 We manage our highway infrastructure by effective highways asset management and compliance with the principles of the Well-managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice.
- 10.2 In recent years, we have significantly developed and improved our approach to highways asset management and introduced various measures to implement the Well-managed Highway Infrastructure (WMHI) code of practice.
- 10.3 As a result, we have been able to demonstrate consistently that we are a competent highway authority, make the case for additional funding, and optimise our ability to defend claims.
- 10.4 The Dudley Highways network comprises of 200km of classified roads and 850km of link and access roads along with associated footways, structures, street lighting and signing assets. It provides access to businesses and communities and helps shape the borough and the quality of life for those within or visiting the borough. The adoption of an asset management approach will enable the following long-term objectives to be achieved:
- The promotion of good maintenance of footways, cycleways and public lighting to contribute to safety within the borough.



- Encouraging the use of new techniques, innovative ways and materials and new technology to support advances in highway maintenance.
- Improve accessibility for vulnerable people by promoting better maintenance of footways, cycle ways and public lighting in, planning, specification and maintenance work.
- Ensure that all highway maintenance functions are undertaken in accordance with the relevant legislation, whilst consulting widely on highway asset management policies and programmes and developing a whole street approach to co-ordinating and improving street care services.

10.5 A well-maintained and managed highway can reduce the opportunity for compensation claims and the cost of vehicle damage to motorists and insurance companies. It can also reduce delays and inconvenience due to unexpected repairs and failures of the network.

10.6 The asset management strategy is a clear and concise high-level document setting out how the highway infrastructure asset management policy will be delivered for Dudley MBC to meet its long-term corporate goals and objectives. The overarching policy document is the Dudley Council Plan.

10.7 This strategy concentrates on our Highway Asset Management processes and procedures and details how we will meet our statutory obligations to manage the above asset groups in accordance with the following requirements:

- The Highways Act 1980, in particular - Sections, 41, 58 ,81
- Well-Managed Highways Infrastructure: A Code of Practice
- Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Guidance (HMEP)

10.8 This strategy sets out the direction for implementation of asset management and provides a link for the implementation of other relevant aspirations in the Council Plan, such as corporate objectives, business planning, risk management and transport objectives. It will provide an overview for the adoption of asset management principles to achieve greater efficiency and value for money and describes the benefits that this brings to economic prosperity, the wider community and investment in the highway infrastructure on a comparable basis to other infrastructure services the authority funds. The strategy also sets

out how asset management activities are implemented, measured and continuously improved.

- 10.9 The Strategy will set out a performance management structure as a fundamental component for the delivery of services of the highest quality that is affordable. The performance management section will show how performance will be continually measured through indicators, standards and targets.
- 10.10 The delivery of an effective Highway Maintenance programme has to balance the need to keep the network safe and respond to the public's reasonable expectation that minor defects will quickly be made safe, against the need to preserve and improve the long-term sustainability of the network by carrying out programmed works.

*(Please note further information on this section will be given via a presentation in committee by Nick McGurk, Head of Transport and Highways).*

## 11. **Traffic Neighbourhood Model**

### Traffic Service

- 11.1 The Traffic and Road Safety team are responsible for the management of the road network in order to achieve the expeditious movement of traffic. The team oversee the creation of Traffic Regulation Orders and prepare programmes of work to ensure the safety of the public using the roads.
- 11.2 “The Traffic Management Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to manage their road network to enable traffic to move freely and quickly on their roads and roads of nearby local authorities and the strategic network”
- 11.3 It is proposed that the current Traffic Team review all policies in line with a vastly changed neighbourhood model. The COVID pandemic has resulted in significant changes of working patterns which has led to more neighbourhood concerns around parking and safety.
- 11.4 It is proposed to allow for a great connection with the community that the following processes and policy's will be reviewed:



- Traffic Regulation Order Policy.
- Access Protect Marking Request Service Policy
- Disabled Bay Application Policy
- Mirrors on the Highway Policy

- 11.5 This will enable the Traffic team to manage the community requests and expectations, clearly setting out the key aspirations for the Borough. Timelines set for these policies will range from December 2022 through to the new financial year April 2023.
- 11.6 The proposed neighborhood model will allow the team to gain a community feel of the safety and congestion issues in each area and will support the speed of processing successful requests through a more aligned consultation process.
- 11.7 Allowing the Traffic team to focus on the main priorities in line with National Standards to provide safe passage for all highway users as well as reduction of congested streets and neighborhoods leading to decarbonization and better-quality of life for residents.

*(Please note further information on this section will be given via a presentation in committee by Nick McGurk, Head of Transport and Highways)*

## **Finance**

12. There are no direct financial implications in receiving this report.

## **Law**

13. There are no direct law implications in receiving this report.

## **Risk Management**

14. There are no direct risks associated in receiving this report.

## **Equality Impact**

15. There are no special considerations to be made with regard to equality and diversity in noting and receiving this report.



15.1 No proposals have been carried out.

15.2 No proposals have been made, therefore does not impact on children and young people.

### **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

16. There are no specific direct human resource issues in receiving this report.

### **Commercial/Procurement**

17. There is no direct commercial impact.

### **Environment/Climate Change**

18. This report refers to multiple council priorities including the Climate Change and sustainability pledge for decarbonisation.

The outputs of this progress report shall provide the necessary evidence/information to inform the Council's action on Climate Emergency in line with the Council's ambition to be Carbon Neutral by 2030.

It builds on Dudley's 'Forging a Future for All' objectives:

1. Climate commitment, creating a sustainable borough on its way to net zero carbon emissions, improved air quality, reduced fuel poverty.
2. Creates a pathway for sustainable travel
3. Creates an evidence base for likely changes in policy and planning requirements.

### **Council Priorities/ Projects**

19. This report refers to multiple council priorities.

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**Appendices**

None