Title: Highways Investment and Reactive Maintenance update

Report of the Operational Director, Enforcement Services

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Wards Affected: All | Key Decision: No
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Summary
At its meeting of March 2016, Members received a report providing a broad analysis of the spend of the highways improvement programme spend between 2008-2016, by ward and a rationale for the decision making of spend in 2016-17.

Members have asked for further clarification on a number of points.

- Clarification on the decision making process for the spend on the highways improvement process
- Clarification on the decision making process for future spend and confirmation that the decision making is transparent

Recommendation(s)
Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

In review of the process it is recommended that a consolidated report on all Highways Improvement to be approved by Cabinet on an annual basis.

Reasons
The council’s vision and priorities include the theme, “Growing the Borough” with the objective of “Enhance the borough’s image to attract investment and business growth” and “Support investment in housing, leisure, the creative industries and public spaces to enhance the environment”. The borough’s highways form a key element of the built environment of the borough, driving and enabling growth as well as forming an essential part of the public’s perception of the borough as a place to work and live.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Public Audit and Accounts Committee has received reports in January 2016 and March 2016, summarising the borough Highway spend for the financial years 14/15 and 15/16, the breakdown of spend by ward between 2008-2016 and the rationale for spend in 2016-17.
1.2 This report aims to provide further clarification of the decision making process for spend in previous years. In addition, the report provides members with the decision making process for spend for 2017-18 and subsequent years, which will be intelligence led and transparent.

1.3 There is a documented chronology of decisions that relate to expenditure on planned Highways improvement from 2005. These are as follows:-

- **2005** – An independent Highways conditions survey was completed. The survey identified that approximately 16.9% of unclassified carriageway were at a standard that required a repair. The survey identified a backlog of improvements in the region of £80m.

- **2006/7 and 2007/8** – The council made a capital allocation £3m in 2006/7 and £2m in 2007/8 for the maintenance of the public highway.

- **2008** – In February 2008, the then Executive agreed £20m to be committed to support highways maintenance improvements. The spend profile agreed was 2008/9 £6.5m, 2009/10 £6.5m, 2010/11 £4m, 2011/12 £3m. 2008 also saw the creation of the Capital Delivery Unit (CDU). The CDU was established to take the lead in the physical delivery of major investment in highways maintenance. In June 2008, the Executive agreed the appointment of a lead contractor for the delivery of the above programme. This report also set out basis of an area based approach. The rationale for this approach was to incorporate works of other council services and that of external partners within one area of work. It is suggested that an area based approach is more cost effective through better management of resources. The report provided a table of eleven areas with a recommendation that Rose Lane area (Chadwell Heath), Kenneth Road area (Whalebone), Gorseway area (Eastbrook) and Rusholme Avenue area (Heath), be programmed to commence immediately.

- **2009** – In September 2009, the Executive approved to shorten the Highways Investment Programme to 3 years with the capital allocation increased to £10m in 2009/10 and to £3.5m in 10/11. Effectively front loading the programme. In addition it was agreed that a further £1m of investment be made for both 2009/10 and 2010/11. The foreshortened programme was due to the high performance of the contractor and management of the project. The report continued with the area based approach, providing a progress report on the 11 areas, originally identified in the June 2008 report.

- **2012** – In September 2012, Cabinet approved the allocation of £6m to deliver priority highways maintenance works during 2012/13 and 2013/4. This followed an assessment of highway condition where a number of roads were identified as having a Highway Conditions Index of 70+ (very poor) or which were anticipated to deteriorate to this level over the subsequent two year period. The assessment was carried out by the Highways Engineers in Regeneration in association with recommendations from network management. The report to Cabinet continued with the area based approach adopted in 2008 and provided a programme of works as part of the report.
2014 – In April 2014 Cabinet approved a one year highways investment programme totalling £4.176m as part of the overall Capital Programme. It also agreed a funding profile investment of £2.408m to deliver priority highway maintenance works on non principle and unclassified roads. The decision on which road to work on were based on conditional surveys carried out by the councils Highways Engineers, using the same Highways Index methodology as highlighted above. The areas based approach continued to be applied with 8 areas listed for improvements.

2015 – In March 2015 Cabinet approved £1.05m for highways improvement. This included £550,000 for carriageway resurfacing and £500,000 for footway resurfacing for 15/16. This agreed expenditure was significantly less than the identified priority resurfacing list compiled by the borough’s highways inspectors, which amounted to £2m. A further £3.2m had been identified as being required for footway resurfacing. This was a significant challenge as it meant that less than half of what had expected in capital expenditure was allocated. The priorities list was effectively halved and the Highways Team used their expertise to prioritise the list. As a result, a list of the most problematic roads was identified and was discussed and reviewed by the relevant Cabinet Member. In October 2015 it was agreed that funding would be identified to undertake a Highways Condition Survey of the whole borough. This will be very helpful in determining any future programmes of work. This is a significant piece of work and will be completed in the summer of 2016.

1.4 The documentation related to the above chronology is available through www.moderngov.barking-dagenham.gov.uk. The chronology provides a clear process for decision making in relation to the Highways Investment Programme between 2006 and 2015.

1.5 In terms of the reactive maintenance works, these are carried out as a result of routine and regular safety inspections across the borough. These inspections are carried out by Highway Inspectors who identify defects that require urgent attention. In addition the Highway Inspectors visit carriageways and footways that are reported by members of the public and ward councillors. This process has been in place throughout the above period 2006/2016.

1.6 The decisions in relation to expenditure formed part of the reports to Cabinet during the above period.

1.7 In terms of the financial year 2015-6 it would have been prudent for the rationale for the area based proposals to have been communicated to wider group of members. There was clearly a basis for the decisions however, due to the fact that this was not articulated, members have been left in a position where they have not been provided with the level of information that provides a transparent process.

1.8 In terms of 2016-17 the decision in relation to the Highways Improvement Programme have been set out in the March 2016 report to PAASC. Three criteria have been set:-

- Proximity to School
- Proximity to Medical Facility
1.9 The allocated spend for the Highways Improvement Programme for 2016/17 is £700,000. To date no works have been undertaken. This is due to the fact that the Highways Engineers are awaiting the findings of the Highways Network Assessment, which will provide a priority list of roads which can then be costed. It is proposed that the outcome of the above is shared with members. Reactive maintenance work continues to be undertaken through repairs identified by the Highways Inspectors.

1.10 In terms for 2017/18 and beyond, the council has commissioned a Highways Condition Survey and a Highways Network Assessment. These two documents will provide the council with a sound evidence base on both the overall conditions of the principle, non principle and unclassified roads in the borough, alongside a clear long term plan for road improvements, maintenance and management.

1.11 The finding and recommendations of these reports will form the evidence based rationale for expenditure for the Highways Improvement Programme for 2017/18 to 2019/20. This will include all expenditure on roads and pavements, which this is only one element.

1.12 The recommendations will be presented to Cabinet in late Autumn 2016. The report will include information on the methodology and list of priority roads. The agreed capital programme expenditure will form part of the Capital Programme proposals in early 2017.

1.13 Information gathered from the Highways Network Assessment is currently being analysed. As part of the report to the PAASC meeting in June a short presentation on the Highways Network Assessment will be provided to committee members.

2 Financial Implications

2.1 The report is for information only, therefore, there are no financial implications arising at this stage. Any future recommendations arising from the Highways Conditions Survey and Highways Network Assessment will form part of the council’s capital programme for 2017/8 and beyond, approved by cabinet.

3 Legal Implications

This is a ‘for information only’ report and has no legal implications.

Other Implications

Risk Management - No specific implications

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None

List of appendices: None