

APPENDIX 3

HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION AND WASTE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25TH JANUARY 2006

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

(a) REVENUE BUDGET 2006/07

Growth

i) Community Speedwatch Scheme

One of the main areas for service development was the implementation of a Community Speedwatch Scheme, aimed at addressing concerns about speeding traffic, using self help measures for the community to gather data on speeding motorists and, with the help of police, alert them to their offences. The Council was aiming to work with Parish Councils and other community groups/organisations in non-parished areas to achieve this.

ii) Highways Maintenance

The Committee welcomed the above inflation growth of 4.7 % which was higher than the Retail Price Index though it recognised that this may only go some way to address the increased fuel and bituminous product price rises. Members expressed concern at the Government freeze on funding to Highways Maintenance as set out in the Comprehensive Spending Review. Members unanimously agreed to request the Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste Management to make representations to Government on this.

iii) Reduced Income

A reduction in activity in the housing market had impacted on the level of income generated from search fees and developer contributions.

Savings

iv) Aggregates

Improved procurement strategies would enable the authority to significantly reduce costs. Such strategies are in place in neighbouring authorities to the extent where Leicestershire is now on average paying 11% more than these authorities on the most used materials.

v) Winter Maintenance

A saving of £90,000 would be achieved by introducing new techniques and using new materials coupled with a review of salting routes. Such a review would take into account the de-trunked road network and recent

changes in patterns of road use. The intention was not to reduce the length of road surfaces treated, but to ensure that winter maintenance work was properly targeted.

vi) Managing Administration and Travel

The proposed saving would be achieved by cash limiting administration budgets (i.e. not providing an inflation uplift), limiting expenditure on IT equipment and tighter controls on travel costs. It was not intended that there should be an affect on frontline services.

vii) PSA Road Casualties Target

The saving of £120,000 arises due to the PSA stretch target having been achieved. The work to reduce road casualties would continue as this was a key performance indicator in the LTP and a commitment in the MTCS. The Government is also preparing to provide extra funding for road safety through the LTP.

viii) Environmental Maintenance

There were a range of measures proposed to achieve the saving including reducing the number of amenity grass cuts from 9 to 8 per year. An assurance was given that safety issues would be taken into consideration and safety would not be compromised. In response to concerns about the impact the proposed reduction would have, the Cabinet Lead Member undertook to revisit this saving proposal.

ix) Concessionary Travel

The decision to remove provision in the budget for concessionary travel was taken in the light of the decision of the Government to provide funding directly to district councils to provide concessionary travel schemes. In Leicestershire it was estimated that the 7 district councils had, between them, received a sum of £2.53 m. The County Council had indicated that should the district councils wish to come together to provide a county-wide scheme the County Council would be willing to administer such a scheme on their behalf. The Lead Member stated that, in his view, the £2.53 m given to the district councils in 2006/07 together with the £800,000 which currently exists in district council budgets for concessionary travel would be more than sufficient to fund and administer a county-wide scheme.

(It was proposed by Mr Max Hunt CC and seconded by Mr John Legrys CC that the Cabinet be asked to reconsider its decision and to reinstate the £0.775 m in the budget for concessionary travel so that the County Council could continue to support the scheme as well as fulfil the commitment in the LTP to provide concessionary travel for disabled people. The proposal was put and not carried, 5 members voting for and 6 against).

x) Bus Services - Uneconomic Routes

The County Council currently spent £450,000 on “bought back in services” which were out of line with the existing policy. A review of such services would be undertaken in the coming year which would generate savings in the order of £150,000. The review would look at alternative means of providing services as well as promoting services to make them more economical. The proposed savings took into account the costs of alternative service provision. Elected members and local communities would be consulted on proposals arising from the review.

xi) Area Traffic Control

The County Council had a service level agreement with Leicester City Council for the provision of the service. A sum of £609,000 was included in the budget for 2006/07. A briefing paper on the activities of Area Traffic Control would be submitted to the Chairman and Spokesmen of the Committee in the near future.

b) CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2006/07 – 2008/09

xii) Local Transport Plan (LTP) Settlement

The LTP settlement in 2006/07 was higher than the £15.57 million received in 2005/06, principally because additional funds had been allocated to the integrated transport improvement programme.

xiii) Department for Transport (DfT) Assessment of the Local Transport Plan and Annual Progress Report

The Committee welcomed the DfT review of the Annual Progress Report which had assessed the Council as being ‘excellent’ with a score of 90%, the third highest shire authority. Officers explained that as a result a 12.5% performance reward grant of £778,000 had been allocated to the provisional LTP, which had received a ‘promising’ assessment. The Authority would be working hard prior to the adoption of the second LTP to improve the assessment to ‘very promising’ which would, if achieved, result in a performance reward of 25%.

Details of how the extra funding would be spent would be included in the final LTP to be submitted in March 2006.

xiv) Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement

The Capital programme also made provision for the decriminalisation of parking enforcement. A scheme was currently being developed in partnership with districts to be implemented during 2007 with costings to be finalised.

xv) Delivery of Schemes

The County Council had been successful in its delivery of schemes within the LTP Programme and had received the highest scoring of 30 out of 30 in terms of its performance and delivery. In the event of any potential underspend, future programmes would be brought forward.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

a) **REVENUE BUDGET 2006/07**

The primary increase in haulage costs was due to the closure of Bradgate Landfill Site which was necessitating travel to other more distant sites. Some of this cost was offset by improved recycling rates (the County area had achieved the 4th best recycling rate in the country) and hence a reduction in the amount of materials going to landfill.

The Municipal Waste Strategy, due to be issued, recognised the need to promote recycling initiatives and provision had been included in the budget for promotion of recycling. The strategy also recognised the need to minimise waste at source and also to provide additional “bring and drop-off” skips.

b) **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2006/07 – 2008/09**

A major programme of improvements and refurbishments of household waste sites would be undertaken in the coming years. This would seek to improve accessibility to the site and provide facilities to enable a greater variety and quantity of materials to be recycled.

The Municipal Waste Strategy envisaged a range of actions to address the needs of the County and ensure they did not incur penalties under the ‘landfill directive’ from 2010. At this point in time it was too early to predict what form of waste treatment facilities would be required beyond 2010.

DECISION

That the proposed Revenue Budget 2006/07 and Capital Programme 2006/07 to 2008/09 be noted and the comments now made be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission.