



**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 20 JANUARY 2022**

MEMBERS' HIGHWAY FUND UPDATE

**REPORT OF THE
DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with the latest update on the Members Highway Fund (MHF) following the end of November deadline for Member submissions and to set out proposals for managing the 2022/23 fund.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. At its meeting on the 22 June 2021, Cabinet agreed an additional £5m highways funding to be spent in the financial year 2021/22. This included £1.4m as a Leicestershire County Council Members' fund which would allow each County Council Member a sum of £25,000 to spend on small scale highways and environmental improvements within their area.
3. Members were updated on the scheme at an All Member Briefing on 13 July and an update on progress was given at an All Member Briefing on 9 December.

Members Highway Fund Applications

4. In total 392 formal applications have been received from 51 Members and contact has been made with all 55 Members. The majority of applications have been for measures that are related to speeding, such as vehicle activated signs and village gateway treatments (over 40%), with the provision of additional street furniture, such as bollards and benches being the next most popular (over 20%).
5. Other requests include improved parking schemes, bus shelters, structural testing of lighting columns for parishes, works on Public Rights of Ways, and tree planting.
6. A number of applications are being delivered by the provision of grants to parishes and community groups as in many cases this was the most efficient way of delivering the project. For example, the purchase of vehicle activated

signs – for which LCC currently does not have a contract and the painting of railings and installation of planters, activities the department does not typically undertake.

7. Currently, 99 of the applications have been declined. The table below shows the breakdown of those that have been declined and why:

Reason for decline	%
Not permissible on the Highway / out of scope	44
BAU or Additional Maintenance Funding– delivered through revenue funding	35
Cost Prohibitive	11
Withdrawn by Member	10

8. Some requests were withdrawn by Members following advice from officers or following Parishes changing their minds. Some Members submitted several requests that exceeded their allocation once final costs were provided so were then withdrawn. The requests that were declined due to being business as usual/additional maintenance funding were instead delivered under programmes of work the department were carrying out anyway. This meant the MHF did not need to fund these requests. Such applications included highway maintenance works, school safety zones and signing and lining work. The remaining declined applications were either because they were out of scope of the fund, such as the provision of lighting on private land or the request was not permissible on the highway, for instance, repeater 30mph signs in a built up area where street lighting is present.

Member Panel

9. A Member Panel was set up to monitor the decisions and delivery of the MHF project. The Panel has met fortnightly and will continue to meet until all applications have been fully processed. The panel has been extremely beneficial in supporting officers to reach decisions on whether a request is within the scope of the fund and by providing robust challenge on specific issues that needed to be addressed, for instance where a Member questioned a decision to decline a request.
10. The panel has cross party membership and is chaired by the Cabinet Lead Member for Highways Mr. O. O'Shea CC. The other Panel members are: Dr. R. K. A. Feltham CC, Mr. K. Merrie CC, Mrs A. Hack CC and Mr S. Bray CC.

Communication

11. Bulletins containing relevant updates on the process and guidance for Members continue to be sent out on an ad-hoc basis.
12. Members also receive regular summaries updating them on the status of their requests and informing them of their latest provisional balance. The next

monthly update will be sent in January and will provide a full status update on finalised requests.

2021/22 Programme Delivery Challenges and Proposals for 2022/23 MHF Programme

13. The Members Highway Fund was an entirely new initiative for the council and as such its implementation has highlighted several areas for improvement. Perhaps the most significant challenge in implementing the scheme has been that while funding was provided for additional resource, the current recruitment market is very difficult. This meant it was not possible to recruit to the posts that were identified as being necessary to resource the programme.
14. The use of agency workers was investigated where practical, however, these have provided a limited return on investment. The outcome of this is that other projects such as the Community Speed Management Initiative have not been delivered as planned as we have had to divert officers from those areas of core work to assist with MHF delivery. Overall, however we have still had a shortfall of five posts required to resource the process.
15. The process of recruitment is currently underway for the delivery of the 2022/23 fund, however, given market conditions it is likely this will be challenging.
16. Based on experience this year, to streamline the process for Members and in view of the resourcing challenges we face, a revised proposal for how the 2022/23 fund will be delivered has been developed. This proposal seeks to reduce the resource requirement and provide greater clarity for Members on what can be delivered under the fund.
17. This clarity would be achieved by offering Members a “menu” of options from which to choose for their spend. This would comprise:
 - a) the purchase of MVAS & VAS – all consultation and engagement would now be carried out by officers with units provided through an LCC contract, includes licensing costs;
 - b) paying for a year’s support for moving MVAS – where the community cannot move MVAS units themselves, this can be provided by LCC for the year;
 - c) paying for structural testing on lamps/columns via LCC contract (a request that is made frequently);
 - d) the ability to allocate a proportion of fund to enhanced maintenance works, where Members can suggest preference for location of spend - £5000 minimum spend on one or a mix of the following:
 - Signing Refresh/Cleaning,
 - Lining Refresh,
 - Public Rights of Way,
 - Vegetation works,

- Edging back.
 - e) a single location scheme, that is subject to an initial discussion with officers, to ensure suitability prior to design work taking place.
18. This menu-based option should reduce the level of Member and officer time, and therefore the amount of abortive time due to projects not progressing and also give greater parity of support. Experience has shown that some Members are currently receiving more intensive support than others.
19. The proposal also allows for the fact that there will not be additional monies made available for refreshing of signing and lining on the roads as there was this year, which addressed numerous requests from Members.

Resource Implications

20. The majority of projects in the current year are still moving through the process towards delivery due to officer capacity and Members requiring additional information prior to final decisions being made. This means final costs have not yet been captured.
21. It is anticipated the fund will be at least 90% committed by the end of the financial year. Several schemes, however, will not be delivered until the next financial year. Confirmation has been received that:
- a) if a Member has not allocated all their funding, they will be able to carry forward the balance to the next financial year;
 - b) any delay, due to projects not being delivered this financial year, will need to be funded from this carry forward.
22. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance were consulted on the content of the report.

Timetable for Decisions

23. The timeline for the implementation of the programme for 2022/23 would be as follows:
- a) February - provide Members with detailed proposals for 2022/23 fund;
 - b) Online applications to be made available early in the new financial year;
 - c) Member surgeries to be held during May – a short meeting with each Member for initial discussions on how they might want to spend their fund;
 - d) Applications to be submitted by 27 May 2022;
 - e) Further meetings on non-standard requests e.g. single location, non-standard projects to be held in June;
 - f) Programming and delivery of requests to commence July 2022.

Conclusions

24. Members are asked to note the content the progress of the Members Highway Fund for 2021/22 and to consider proposals for the Fund for 2022/23.

Background papers

Report to the Cabinet 22 June 2021 Members Highway Fund – Proposals
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s161909/Highway%20Fund.pdf>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

This report will be circulated to all Members of the County Council.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

25. There are no equality or human rights implications arising from the report.
26. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment is not required as the fund operates within the scope of existing discretionary services which are already provided.
27. The opportunity to access these discretionary services will be countywide regardless of local governance arrangements or other factors such as local demographics.

Other Relevant Impact Assessments

None.

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