



**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 9 JUNE 2022**

MEMBERS HIGHWAY FUND UPDATE

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

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update members of the committee with the position of the Members Highway Fund (MHF) at the end of its first year (2021/22) and beginning of its second (2022/23).

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. On 22 June 2021, the Cabinet agreed an additional £5m highways funding to be spent in the financial year 2021/22. This included a Members' fund with a total value of £1.4m. This fund would allow each County Council Member a sum of £25,000 to spend on small-scale highways and environmental improvements within their division.

Background

3. Members have received regular individual updates on the progress of the funding during 2021/22 as well as update reports being provided for Scrutiny. All Member Briefings took place on the 13 July 2021, 9 December 2021, and 19 April 2022. Applications for the 2021/22 fund were closed at the end of February 2022.

Members Highway Fund Applications

4. The Department received 515 formal applications; all 55 Members have applied to the fund.
5. 184 applications were not taken forward for the following reasons:
 - Not permissible on the Highway/out of scope - 33%.
 - Business-as-usual – delivered through revenue funding - 22%.
 - Cost Prohibitive - 11%.

- Withdrawn by a Member - 23%.
 - Delivered via AMF (Additional Maintenance Fund) - 7%.
 - Other - 4%.
6. The applications that were taken forward mainly focused on schemes to support traffic calming measures, such as providing vehicle activated signs (VAS) and mobile vehicle activated signs (MVAS), or to introduce street furniture such as benches and bollards. The current status (as of the end of April 2022) is as follows:

Projects Completed	Grants made to Communities	Projects under construction	Projects in Design	Projects under Processing	Applications Not Progressed
10	13	12	217	79	184

7. As the first year of the MHF has closed, the Department has taken the opportunity to reflect on the successes, challenges and lessons learnt over the past 12 months. The biggest success was the Members' response, with all Members engaging with the process and 95% allocating over 90% of their funds to local projects. The biggest challenge was to create a process to deal with requests and deliver projects in an efficient way – this was achieved for the initial processing stage but has subsequently led to a “log jam” of projects for delivery.
8. Lessons learnt from this year include:
- The MHF is resource intensive and additional staff are needed to deliver the scheme.
 - The current volatile economic climate is making it difficult to accurately predict costs.
 - A more efficient process is required to process and manage applications, including the Member sign off process and agreements on the scope of the scheme, including locations by communities.
 - Greater investment is needed at the initial application stage to scope out projects.
 - Earlier closure of the fund is needed to enable a “sensible” delivery window.
 - Improved process is required to deliver projects that are not part of the Department's business as usual services.

2022/23 Fund

9. As a result of the learning from last year, an online application form has been developed for the 2022/23 year. This will be the only way that Members are able to submit requests to the fund. Members have received information on

how to use the form through an All-Member Briefing. Online training and one-to-one sessions will also be available if required.

10. The benefits of the new application process include:
 - a) Faster and easier completion of the application form for Members, with a drop-down list to enable popular options to be selected.
 - b) An online account for Members to view, manage and process all their application requests.
 - c) The ability for both officers and Members to approve or decline applications without the need to complete additional paperwork.
 - d) Members will be able to see the progress of their requests in real time and will be notified when individual applications have been updated.
11. It is anticipated that the new process for submitting applications will produce a more streamlined and focused approach for the delivery of the fund. In addition, for the other more complex and bespoke schemes, there will also be an option for the Members to meet with officers prior to them submitting their application form.
12. Following a review of the type of requests received, it was agreed that a list of options for enhanced maintenance works (e.g., edging back, sign washing etc.) would be made available for Members. This will allow Members to authorise works up to a certain value, which they can either specify the location or request that officers schedule the works within their area based on risk and efficiency. In order to enable these works to be programmed to maximise output, requests for enhanced maintenance works will need to be submitted by the end of May 2022.
13. The deadline for all other applications this year will be the end of October 2022.
14. The list of options that Members will be able to pick from are:
 - a) Static single vehicle activated signs (VAS).
 - b) Mobile vehicle activated signs (MVAS).
 - c) One year's support for moving MVAS.
 - d) Inclusion on Structural Testing Programme for columns.
 - e) Allocation of budget to sign cleaning (applications to be received end of May).
 - f) Allocation of budget to lining refresh (applications to be received end of May).
 - g) Allocation of budget to public rights of way (applications to be received end of May).
 - h) Allocation of budget to vegetation works (applications to be received end of May).

- i) Allocation of budget to edging back works (applications to be received end of May).
- j) Other.

15. A Members Panel was set up to help oversee the development and administration of the MHF and has proved valuable in helping steer the scheme. The Panel will continue to meet in order to monitor the decisions of the fund and for the Members to retain an overview of the programme delivery.

Consultation

16. Individual applications to the MHF 2022/23 will continue to be subject to further consultation with local Members and the public, and reports will be presented to Members, as appropriate.

Resource Implications

17. A total of £166,000 has been spent on projects from the 2021/22 fund. The remaining £1,234,000 has a total of £1,047,000 planned expenditure against it. £162,000 has not yet been allocated to projects and £25,000 remains in contingency.

Scheme Year	Scheme Delivery - Spent	Grants Delivered – Spent	Schemes Planned	Remaining & Contingency	Total
2021/22	£77,500	£88,500	£1,047,000	£187,000	£1,400,000
2022/23	£0	£0	£0	£1,400,000	£1,400,000

18. From the £400,000 resourcing budget for 2021/22, £162,300 was spent. The underspend was due to the inability to recruit to roles to support the MHF. The unspent funding has remained in place and will be used to continue to deliver the scheme and to support the close down of the fund if needed.
19. Additional staffing resource has recently been secured to provide support for the programme delivery of the fund. The officers will support Members to complete application forms and process requests. The impact of the fund, however, is continuing to be felt across the Highways and Transport Service due to the inability to recruit to vacancies and the need to divert staff from other work on to MHF work. The result of this is mainly being felt within traffic management projects, such as the Community Speed Initiative and the level of engagement that can take place with communities and Members regarding developments in their localities.

Conclusions

20. Now that additional staffing resource has been provided, the Department is confident that there will be more effective and meaningful engagement with Members and service users (e.g., Parish Councils) and more streamlined delivery of the MHF in the coming year. Comments, observations and questions from members of the committee would be welcome at this early stage of the enhanced level of delivery and at any points during the coming year.

Background papers

Cabinet – 22 June 2021, Members Highway Fund –
Proposals <https://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MID=6444#A168166v>

Highways And Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 20 January 2022 –
Members' Highway Fund Update
<https://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1293&MID=6732#A170380>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

21. None.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

22. There are no equality or human rights implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report. It has not been necessary to undertake a detailed equality assessment on the MHF 2022/23.
23. Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments (EHRIAs) will be carried out in relation to individual applications to the MHF 2022/23 when appropriate.

Environmental Implications

24. No detailed environmental assessment has been undertaken on the MHF 2022/23. However, the County Council will assess the environmental implications of individual applications to the MHF 2022/23 when appropriate.

Partnership Working and Associated Issues

25. Working with key partners, such as district councils, parish councils, and other local stakeholders will continue to be important in ensuring the MHF meets the aspirations of Members and communities and is delivered effectively.

Risk Assessment

26. The MHF 2022/23 has been risk assessed as part of a wider risk assessment of the Environment and Transport Department's business planning process.

27. The delivery of this programme is supported by the Department's business planning process and risk assessments will be undertaken for individual teams, schemes and initiatives, as appropriate.

Officer to Contact

Ann Carruthers
Director, Environment and Transport
Tel: (0116) 305 7000
Email: Ann.Carruthers@leics.gov.uk