

COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL COMMITTEE FOR SOUTH LAKELAND BUDGET WORKING GROUP	Appendix 2
Meeting date: 09 March 2011	
From: Corporate Director, Environment	

HIGHWAYS REVENUE BUDGET 2011/2012

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 *This report presents a recommended Highways Revenue Budget following decisions on devolved Local Committee budget allocations by Cabinet at its meeting on 3rd March 2011 (subject to any call-in).*

2.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 *Local Committee budget allocations were set by Cabinet on 3rd March 2011 (subject to any call-in) together with guidance for the use of those allocations from the Executive, in line with the Council Plan 2011 to 2014 and the 2011/12 budget, both of which were agreed by Council on 17 February 2011.*
- 2.2 *The proposed highways revenue allocation to this Local Committee is £2,969,951, including an allocation for structural maintenance winter damage repairs from additional government grant which at this time is only an approximate figure based on previous last year's award.*
- 2.3 *There are no direct equality implications but well maintained highways promote accessibility for disabled people, other persons with impaired mobility and vulnerable road users.*

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 *That Local Committee is recommended to approve the draft Highways Revenue Budget as shown in Appendix 1.*
- 3.2 *That Members note the allocation for Structural Maintenance shown in Appendix 1 may vary subject to final notification of the Government's allocation to Cumbria later in March 2011.*

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This report presents a draft Highways Revenue budget for 2011/2012. At the time of writing the report, the overall budget allocations to Local Committees are subject to possible call-in and subject to final decisions on grant allocations by Government (see Cabinet Advice and Guidance below).
- 4.2 The proposed highways revenue allocation to this Local Committee is £2,969,951, including an allocation for winter damage repairs which is subject to final confirmation by DfT.

Cabinet Advice and Guidance (extracted from Report to Cabinet 03/03/11)

- 4.3 The **Highways Revenue** budget areas have been merged, giving Local Committees discretion as to local priorities for spending revenue resources in line with Better Highways principles. The overriding priority is the Council's priority of maintaining a safe and reliable highway network. This budget may only be spent on highways and street lighting.
- 4.4 When the indicative local committee highways revenue allocations were reported to the Leadership and Local Committee Chairs meetings an approximation had been made of the impact of incorporating the detrunked roads. The allocation to local Committees was based upon allocating the overall total excluding street lighting based upon percentages of the overall total in 2010/11. Unfortunately this methodology was not a good approximation of the agreed formula.
- 4.5 Similarly the current formula also includes an allocation for highways response teams and highway stewards. This approach has been superseded by the better highways approach, where each local committee agrees the number of teams from within its overall budget.
- 4.6 The formula has therefore been run excluding these elements. This results in variations from the figures reported in December and January.
- 4.7 The government has also recently announced that each highway authority will receive a share of £100m to address potholes from the recent bad weather. The Cumbria allocation is estimated to be in the order of £2.7m based on the DfT methodology for allocating this money. DfT will confirm the total amount of DfT funding available and write to local highway authorities informing them of their allocation after the 16th March; final budget adjustments will then be made. Two options are being recommended to Cabinet to distribute this money. The first is that as local committees have already started planning that there is a floor set so that no local committee has a lower allocation than that reported to the leadership and local committee chairs meetings. The second is that the remaining balance is allocated to local committees based upon weighted road length/population.
- 4.8 This resource is fairly limited and the DfT have set out specific criteria in terms of how this additional funding can be spent. Officers are currently carrying out a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the winter

weather in order to identify the location and severity of damage to the highway network. This information will be used to assist in targeting where this one off investment can have the greatest impact within each area. In line with the Better Highways approach Cumbria Highways has been working towards dealing with the underlying causes of the defects on the highways in order to avoid repeat repairs and achieving a permanent fix. Criteria were developed in line with this Better Highways approach last year to assist in targeting resources to addressing the underlying cause and achieving a permanent fix. It is therefore proposed that these criteria be used to assist local committees to target these additional resources in order to achieve the greatest impact.

Local Priorities.

- 4.9 In preparing its highways revenue budget for 2010/2011, the Local Committee's Highways and Transportation Working Group undertook a zero-based budgeting exercise and resolved to allocate additional funding to drainage cleansing and drainage repairs.
- 4.10 In allocating more money for drainage, the budget allocation for verge maintenance was reduced via the omission of the full-width cut (25% of verge length cut to full width of verge every four years to prevent the establishment of brushwood and self-sewn trees). It is considered that the full-width cut cannot be omitted on a permanent or longer term basis as the establishment of brushwood and self sewn trees presents two main risks:
- (a) Operational risk due to the potential for root growth to damage drains; and
 - (b) Longer term financial risk since established brushwood cannot be removed by mechanical flail mower and requires more expensive hand cutting.
- 4.11 The proposed highways revenue budget set out in Appendix 1, therefore re-establishes a budget to allow the full-width cut to approximately 25% of verge length in accordance with the Council's guidance on verge maintenance standards.
- 4.12 The recommended drainage cleansing budget in 2011/2012 is less than in 2010/11, reflecting the overall budget allocation for 2011/12. The drainage cleansing allocation has been set at a level to fund 2 cleans of the Area's 36,000 gullies. Reactive response to drainage cleansing demands will, to a certain extent be met by the allocation for *Reactive Maintenance – Plant and Materials*. However, in practice, the demand for ad-hoc reactive response to flooding events and blocked gullies liable to cause flooding to property may well erode the allocation for the second scheduled clean and in that event the second clean will be targeted at those areas where experience has shown that gullies are prone to silting.
- 4.13 The budget allocation is sufficient for the existing eight reactive maintenance Area Teams. Their work will be supported by the Structural Maintenance programmes of work as set out in the following section of the report.

Structural Maintenance

4.14 In accordance with the systems thinking approach underpinning Better Highways, the prioritisation and distribution of the additional funding from Government was determined in 2010/11 and is based on the following prioritisation criteria:

- Levels of use;
- Value for money, i.e. the extent to which a scheme addresses the underlying causes of deterioration and enables a number of different issues to be addressed in one site visit;
- Proximity to other schemes, i.e. a measure of the ability to minimise disruption by better coordination of projects
- Safety, i.e. high priority has been given to those schemes assessed as potentially dangerous i.e. with a significant number of safety defects or temporary repairs and defective areas that are likely to become dangerous before permanent repairs could otherwise be programmed;
- Customer demand i.e. the level of public concern and complaints;
- Local considerations e.g. judgement as to local issues e.g. near school, on a bus route, popular motorcycle route etc.

4.15 The Area Stewards and Area technicians have been asked to submit lists of winter damaged roads, which are being assembled into an Area list prioritised in accordance with the above criteria. The final prioritised list will be presented to the next meeting of the Highways and Transport Working Group for consideration.

4.16 The Structural Maintenance allocation will support the work of the eight Area reactive maintenance teams. In addition, Members may recall that in addition to the named NPRN maintenance schemes, the approved NPRN programme includes allocations for winter damage repairs, area carriageway planned structural maintenance programmes, area drainage capital schemes and area footway schemes, which will further support the work of the Area Teams in line with the principles underpinning Better Highways.

The recommended highways revenue budget

4.17 The recommended highways revenue budget for 2011/2012 is set out in Appendix 1.

4.18 At the time of setting the budget allocations to Local Committees, the allocation for *Structural Maintenance* was provisional pending DfT confirmation of the final grant for winter damage repairs expected to be issued on 16th March. The Structural Maintenance allocation is subject to conditions imposed by DfT and is fixed and may not be vired to other budget lines.

5.0 OPTIONS

- 5.1 Local Committee may accept, amend or reject the recommended draft Highways Revenue budget.

6.0 RESOURCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The highways revenue budget is allocated for delivery of better highways through general highway maintenance including grass cutting and essential work to highway trees; cleaning drainage systems and highway signs; repairs to drainage systems; road lighting and illuminated signs; road markings and non-illuminated signs; carriageways footways and other paved areas; highway fencing and earthworks; Local Committees may set their own programmes of work provided it provides a safe and reliable highway network including lighting infrastructure.
- 6.2 The highways revenue budget may not be vired to other Local Committee budgets but can be supplemented by other budgets. .

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 In discharging its devolved functions and responsibilities, Local Committees should ensure all decisions made are:
- In accordance with any relevant strategy or plan agreed by the Council;
 - In accordance with any policy, strategy, plan or criteria agreed by the Executive;
 - Within the approved budget;
 - Where appropriate taken after consideration of advice by the Monitoring Officer or s151 Officer.
- 7.2 Pursuant to s41 of the Highways Act 1980 (subject to a statutory defence under s58 of the Act), failure to maintain the highway in a safe condition, as far as is reasonably practicable, can leave the Council open to financial, legal and reputational risk as a consequence of injury, damage or loss suffered by third parties.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The recommended budget represents an appropriate, although difficult, balance between budget availability, the declared Local Committee priorities for highway maintenance, and the maintenance demands of the local road network.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Recommended Highways Revenue Budget for South Lakeland Local Committee 2011/2012.

IMPLICATIONS

Staffing: None
Financial: None.
Electoral Division(s): All South Lakeland

Executive Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If a Key Decision, is the proposal published in the current Forward Plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Is the decision exempt from call-in on grounds of urgency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If exempt from call-in, has the agreement of the Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee been sought or obtained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Has this matter been considered by Overview and Scrutiny? If so, give details below.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has an environmental or sustainability impact assessment been undertaken?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has an equality impact assessment been undertaken?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/>

PREVIOUS RELEVANT COUNCIL OR EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

Cabinet 3rd March 2011 Local Committee Budget Allocations Criteria for Devolved Responsibilities.

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