

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 18 MARCH 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES

M53 JUNCTION 3 MAJOR SAFETY SCHEME – PROPOSAL TO CARRY OVER CAPITAL FUNDING FROM 2009/10 INTO 2010/11

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report seeks Members approval to carry over £250,000 capital funding allocated to the above major safety scheme from 2009/10 into 2010/11 and also increases the size and scope of the original scheme.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 On 19th March 2009, I reported to Members on the overall Road Safety Block allocation of £950,000 from the Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2009/10 Programme. The report set out the projects proposed within a number of individual programmes that contribute to the overall Road Safety Shared Priority and included the more traditional types of scheme to reduce road accident casualties.

2.2 Members may recall that £250,000 of the £950,000 Road Safety Block allocation had been identified for the M53 Junction 3 (Woodchurch Interchange) improvement scheme, previously reported to and endorsed by Members at the meeting of 15th January 2009 (minute no. 336 refers). The allocation for 2009/10 was estimated to meet approximately one half of the overall cost of the scheme, with a similar allocation identified from the Road Safety Block in 2010/11.

2.3 The M53 Junction 3 has a total of 60 recorded personal injury collisions occurring during the 3-year study period (1/9/2004 to 231/8/2007) involving 93 casualties of which 5 sustained serious injuries.

2.4 The proposed project is an improvement scheme to a key junction on the Borough's strategic highway network, which provides access to the national road network. The scheme would be expected to achieve a reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents and in the casualty rates at the location. The scheme would also be expected to address the increased use of the North Cheshire Trading Estate by heavy goods vehicles and traffic congestion on the roundabout.

2.5 The scheme will contribute towards achieving the road safety aims and objectives set out in the Council's Corporate Plan, Wirral's Local Area Agreement and Merseyside's Second Local Transport Plan.

2.6 The original proposed scheme included the provision of traffic signals, together with improvements to the carriageway surface, destination markings, street lighting and signing to improve traffic movements and capacity at the junction, regulating traffic patterns to and from the adjacent highway network and reducing congestion and delays.

2.7 The first phase of the works (design) commenced mid to late 2009 and it was programmed that construction works would commence early 2010 and completed 2010/11.

2.8 A further allocation of £310,000 (of the £980,000 Road Safety Block allocation), was identified to meet the remaining overall cost of the original scheme, and was considered and approved by Members on 14 January 2010 in a report setting out the proposed Local Transport Plan (LTP) Capital Programme for 2010/11.

3.0 CURRENT STATUS OF THE SCHEME

3.1 Highway, Drainage and Street Lighting Maintenance Considerations

The works included in the original scheme and identified in paragraph 2.5 are specifically for the improvement of the highways within the interchange. However when the site was being surveyed for both tendering purposes and as a review of the condition of the highway asset it was found that the surfacing on sections of the carriageway approaching both the interchange and the Woodchurch Road viaduct from both an easterly and westerly direction were in need of repair. These areas are at either end of the viaduct and extend up to and including the junctions with Palmwood Close and Ackers Road. The survey was carried out before the recent spell of cold weather commenced in December 2009 and the condition of the surfacing has worsened during the last 3 months.

The original scheme also included some improvements to the existing street lighting stock to improve the levels of illumination around the interchange. The survey has also identified that the existing concrete lighting columns are in poor condition and electrical cabling feeding the columns no longer complies with current lighting specifications and regulations. The columns and the cabling were installed when the motorway was built in the late 1960's/early 1970's.

A number of illuminated and non illuminated traffic signs are included in the safety scheme for replacement, however it is also intended to replace any of the existing traffic signs within the Palmwood Close/Ackers Road limits that are in poor condition or no longer comply with the requirements of The Traffic Signs and General Directions 2002.

Maintenance work is also required to the highway drainage system beneath the railway bridge which floods in times of persistent heavy rain. This is in an area where the carriageway requires resurfacing so any excavation and reinstatement work can be undertaken before the new surfacing is laid.

3.2 ASDA Superstore Junction Improvements

ASDA has submitted proposals and received planning approval for the installation of a right turn facility from its superstore in Woodchurch Road. ASDA has agreed that rather than reconstructing this junction after the Council's scheme is completed it will allow the Council to carry out the works on their behalf to minimise disruption and inconvenience to the road user.

These works which ASDA will fund include the removal of a section of the central reservation in Woodchurch Road directly outside the entrance to the store car park to allow for the realignment of the junction to incorporate the right turn lane. This scheme involves the resurfacing of the junction and the refurbishment and improvement of the existing traffic signals at this location.

As part of their scheme and in addition to the junction alterations ASDA is also funding the provision of new traffic signals at the intersection of the exit slip road from the interchange and Woodchurch Road.

3.3 Proposed Cycle Route

The scheme proposals include the installation of a cycle route along the southerly footway from Palmwood Close into the Durley Drive housing estate and leading into the North Cheshire Trading Estate. It may be possible in the future to extend this new route beyond the trading estate to cycle route 56 at Landican Lane and also on the northerly side via public footpaths 10 and 13 (Birkenhead) to Woodchurch High School and Upton Station. This will also link to route 56 near to Upton Road.

To extend the route on the northerly side will involve converting the existing Puffin pedestrian crossing on Woodchurch Road to a Toucan crossing.

The proposed extensions to the new cycle route will be the subject of funding bids to Sustrans and Merseytravel.

3.4 Highways Agency Maintenance Contract

The Highways Agency is currently undertaking a scheme to carry out essential maintenance repairs to the structure of the Woodchurch Road viaduct which will include the resurfacing of the carriageway surface on the viaduct. The works commenced in January 2010 and will be completed by the end of March 2010.

4.0 PROPOSAL AND JUSTIFICATION

4.1 It was anticipated when the funding of the scheme was approved that a considerable proportion of the works would have been completed by the end of the current financial year. However because of the phasing of the Highway Agency maintenance work the Council's contract has now been delayed until the first quarter of the new financial year.

4.2 By including the ASDA proposals in the scheme it is possible to achieve efficiency savings in relation to contract preliminaries, traffic management and material procurement by delaying and implementing the various elements of the work as one contract.

4.3 It is now intended therefore to commence the scheme in May 2010 subject to Members' approval to utilise both elements of the Road Safety Block allocation (£250,000 plus £310,000) in 2010/2011.

4.4 The maintenance work included in the scheme amounts to £185,000 and Members are requested to endorse the use of Highway Structural Maintenance and Street Lighting expenditure as part of the complete scheme. Members will note that the proposed Highway Structural Maintenance and Street Lighting Programme for 2010/11 (containing the maintenance elements of this scheme) is also on the agenda for this Cabinet meeting.

4.5 The estimated cost of the original scheme was £560,000 but with inclusion of the various elements of maintenance work and the ASDA junction improvements the estimated cost to undertake the complete scheme now amounts to £1,030,000.

4.6 It is important to note that by executing these works as a single scheme, it is anticipated that it will be possible to make savings on contract contingencies and associated works in the region of £135,000.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Funding for the overall scheme now costed at £1,030,000 is summarised as follows:

LTP Road Safety allocation 2009/10	£250k
LTP Road Safety allocation 2010/11	£310k
ASDA contribution	£115k
Efficiency Savings (contingency and associated works)	£135k
Highway Structural Maintenance & Street Lighting	£185k
Sustrans contribution	£35k
Total	£1030K

6.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The scheme has been designed and will be inspected by existing staff as part of their normal duties.

7.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 There are no implications under this heading.

8.0 HEALTH IMPLICATIONS/IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 There are no implications under this heading.

9.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The improvements at this location will have a positive community safety benefit.

10.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no implications under this heading.

11.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no implications under this heading.

12.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no implications under this heading.

13.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no implications under this heading.

14.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

14.1 Upton, Oxton and Prenton wards

15.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 There were no background papers used in the preparation of this report.

16.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 Cabinet is requested to:

- (1) Approve the carry over of £250,000 of LTP Capital funding from 2009/10 into 2010/11 for the reasons described in this report.
- (2) Endorse the proposal to allocate £185,000 from the Highway Structural Maintenance and Street Lighting Programme for 2010/11 for this scheme.

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