

Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee**16th January 2020****Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2023/24.****Minute Extract**

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Environment and Transport and the Director of Corporate Resources which provided information on the proposed 2020/21 to 2023/24 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as it related to the Environment and Transport Department. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. B. L. Pain CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Environment and Transport and Mr. O. O'Shea CC the Cabinet Support Member to the meeting for this item.

In introducing the report, the Director of Environment and Transport advised members of the continuing financial challenges facing the Council. Since 2010/11 the Department had made overall savings of £42million by restructuring, revising service delivery models, generating income and some reductions to non-statutory services.

The Lead Member for Environment and Transport advised Members that while there was proposed growth to the Department amounting to between £8.5million and £11.7million per annum by 2023/24, savings were still needed due to the increasing resource needed for SEN Transport provision and lack of Government funding.

The Lead Member informed Members of the need for a more reliable, balanced, medium term approach to funding from Government. Currently the County Council were reliant on winning in-year funding bids from Government for capital schemes and annual allocations for maintenance to address the deterioration of the Council's road network.

Arising from the discussion the following points were noted :-

Growth

- (i) **G17 – SEN Transport** - Growth reflected the increased client numbers and costs arising from increasingly complex needs presented by some service users. It was hoped that the investment made by the Council in local SEN provision would assist in reducing costs in this service area.
- (ii) **G18 – Additional posts support the expanded capital programme** – Some members expressed concern that the Department was able to find funding to pay for additional posts, while cuts were still being made to front line services

such as subsidised bus services. The Cabinet Lead Member advised the Committee that such posts were funded through the capital programme from money received from developers via developer contributions (S106) and Government funding. It was important that the Council bid for such funding to mitigate impacts of developments and growth..

- (iii) **G22 – Community and Parish Engagement** - The Department recognised not all areas within Leicestershire were represented by parishes. Officers would still work with the communities and Local Members in such areas. Since October 2019 a team has been set up in the department and initiatives were starting to bear fruit. The work included better communications with communities on highways matters as well as initiatives such as providing limited free design work for communities initiatives, which had previously been charged for.
- (iv) **G23 – School Crossing Patrols** - Mr Hunt requested that officers looked at issue of road safety near schools more holistically including the use of civil parking enforcement teams at the start and end of the school day. The Director assured Members that the County Council’s Safe and Sustainable Travel Team worked with schools in developing their travel plan’s, enforcing parking restrictions and schemes such as park and stride. The Department would continue to work with schools in taking forward any initiatives to improve safety.

The Lead Member agreed that more innovative solutions were needed to solve the challenge created around enforcement of parking and encouraging active travel solutions for schools. With regard to school crossing patrol vacancies Members were encouraged to promote and raise awareness of vacancies in their areas.

The Director informed Members that the School Keep Clear scheme would continue and that the Council were looking at procuring another camera car to expand the scheme further. The cars were able to enforce outside of schools on the zig-zag lines, red routes near the airport and bus stops with the correct linings.

Savings

- (viii) **ET1 – Revised Passenger Transport Policy** – Due to further withdrawals from commercial bus operators the saving had to be reprofiled and as a result £60,000 less of the saving would be achieved in the next two financial years. As services were withdrawn the Council needed to step in whilst it implemented the Passenger Transport Policy to ensure communities had access to key services.
- (ix) **ET2 – Implement Review of Social Care and SEN Transport** – There had been a delay in the delivery of savings from the post 16 SEN transport proposals due to the delayed outcome of the Judicial Review.
- (x) **ET5 – Recycling and Household Waste Sites service approach** – Arising from an earlier decision to insource the remaining Recycling and Household

Waste site, reconsideration of the opening hours of the sites and an initiative to grow the reuse side of the operation, the Council were able to reduce costs and look at further efficiency, savings and income generation.

Savings under Development/External Influences

- (xi) **Street Lighting** – A concern was expressed over broken streetlighting on unadopted roads. The Lead Member advised Members that it was not the County Council's duty to resolve these issues as the roads were not of an adoptable standard. It was for the developer, management company or trustee of the development to bring it up to an adoptable standard before the County Council would adopt and take on the maintenance liability. He reminded members that it was the responsibility of the relevant planning authority to make sure that new developments were complying with the terms of the planning permission and for homeowners to be aware of the implications of purchasing homes in developments with unadopted roads.
- (xii) **Temporary Traffic Management** - Officers recognised there were issues within some communities regarding the number of temporary traffic management works. Whilst the County Council worked with the appropriate organisations and would challenge how the road works were being undertaken, often the Council was limited in its influence. The Council could fine organisations flouting the agreements, however in many cases the level of fine allowed to be levied would not be enough of a deterrent to large organisations such as Severn Trent. Where emergency works were needed the County Council had even less control.
- (xiii) The County Council had an overarching ambition to rationalise traffic regulations affecting parking which was being undertaken under the 'managing traffic in our communities' project and was being done on a rolling basis across the county.
- (xiv) The Lead Member informed Members that the County Council could not use its regulatory powers to drive up income for the Authority by levying, fines for parking offences. The growth in income was in relation to the work undertaken in processing parking tickets issued by civil enforcement officers at off street car parks on behalf of the district authorities.
- (xv) **National Resources and Waste Strategy** – the County Council had responded to Government's National Resources and Waste Strategy consultation which had been circulated to the Chairman and Spokespersons for comment previously. Government had since produced a response to the consultation and indicated that there would be further consultation papers. If timings allowed officers would bring future consultations to the Committee.

Capital Programme

The Director reported that the figure of £210.8million in paragraph 25 of the report regarding major infrastructure scheme funding was incorrect. The 2020/21 programme amounted to £121million.

The Lead Member prefaced the Capital Programme by informing Members that the £278million Capital Programme needed increased staffing resources within the Department to enable the Council to plan and deliver the projects.

Mr Hunt raised a concern that the Council's budget, while asking the public to pay an extra four percent for their council tax, was weighted towards new major highway projects that would only put more traffic on the roads with less emphasis on maintaining the existing infrastructure.

In response to a question regarding the risk of project delivery, the Lead Member informed Members that Government had a requirement for schemes to be 'shovel ready' to be able to secure capital funding for a project. This inevitably carried risk but to date the Council had been relatively successful in its bids. The Lead Member reiterated the need for Government to take a more medium-term approach to funding, and it was hoped the Department for Transport would consider those points.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report and information now provided be noted;
- (b) That the comments now made be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission at its meeting on 27 January 2020.