

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

27 February 2006

Report of the Director of Planning & Transportation

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SMALL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME 2005/06 – PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

Summary

The County Council is currently finalising its schedule of traffic and highway improvement schemes for implementation during 2006/07. This report describes how the Borough Council can take the opportunity, in partnership with the County Council and others, to ensure that schemes with high local priority and proven need can be secured in the County Council's programme.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Following the ending of the Kent Highways Partnership on 31 March last year the borough council acknowledged that the primary responsibility for carrying out traffic and highway improvements rested with the county council and it decided that such schemes would no longer be scheduled specifically in the borough council's Capital Plan. Nevertheless, the borough council wished to continue to promote and advocate some highway and traffic improvements because of their recognised local significance and priority.

1.1.2 This approach involves continuing the practice of using borough funding to contribute towards partnership initiatives with the County Council and, where appropriate, parishes or developers. Within the Capital Plan, there is an allocation specifically aimed at promoting such opportunities, the Local Transport Plan Partnership (LTP) Programme. There is also an allocation, the Community Partnerships Initiatives fund, aimed at supporting a broad range of initiatives in conjunction with other potential partners that could be used to support joint arrangements in addition to those promoted through the Local Transport Plan Partnership Programme.

1.1.3 This time last year, the borough council was able to employ both of these budgets constructively to retain many local priority schemes on the county council's emerging works programme for 2005/06 that would otherwise have had to have been dropped. **Annex 1** lists the schemes "saved" in this way and also indicates

the important element of parish council funding involved in the process. Progress on these schemes will be detailed at the next meeting of the Joint Transportation Board on 6 March.

1.2 Proposed Joint Funding Arrangements for 2006/07

- 1.2.1 Given the successful outcome last year, we are recommending to the Board that a similar exercise be repeated for this year. As was the case last year, the exercise is not straightforward because it attempts to marry together two parallel programming processes at each council that are still at the “work-in-progress” stage, during the delicate period of budget setting in this last quarter of the financial year.
- 1.2.2 Nevertheless, the emerging details of the likely scale of funding for the county council highways works during 2006/07 and its implications for what can go forward in the firm programme are sufficiently clear for recommendations to be proposed on where and how any contributions offered by this council might be used to best effect to retain local priorities in the programme.
- 1.2.3 A ‘long list’ of schemes for inclusion in the small improvement programme for 2006/07 was considered by the Joint Transportation Board (**JTB**) in December (report attached at **Annex 2** for reference purposes). That list constituted an ambitious programme reflecting expected enhanced funding from the LTP. In the event, the funding available for transport packages was less than expected by the KCC Divisional Office so the long list has had to be trimmed back to create a short list of schemes matching the available budget. The Divisional Manager will be reporting on next year’s Small Improvement Programme to the JTB in March and will be able to confirm more detail on this.
- 1.2.4 For the moment, the short-listing has been carried out on the basis that there is £445,000 available for integrated transport schemes in Tonbridge and Malling for 2006/07 enhanced by a £75,000 contribution from the County Council Local Board. It has to be emphasised that, at the time of writing, the destination for this additional funding from the Local Board has not yet been fully confirmed. If it is, the aggregate figure of £519,000 compares favourably with the allocation at this same stage last year, which was £426,000, and we understand it is one of the highest across Kent. Conversely if it is not confirmed, then a corresponding reduction of £75,000 will need to be made in the programme shown in **Annex 3**.
- 1.2.5 At the time of drafting this report the county council was still finalising the Small Improvement programme so the contents of **Annex 3** showing the suggested joint funding arrangements is provisional. Nevertheless, it represents the best ‘snapshot’ of the likely shape of the final programme and demonstrates how the Borough funds can be best deployed to ensure that additional schemes reflecting local priorities come forward.
- 1.2.6 The timing of this process is critical. Now is the best time to influence the final content of county council’s own programme but we have been mindful of the fact that the Board would wish to consider these proposals in advance of the JTB

meeting on 7 March. That will ensure that the borough Members at the JTB have the benefit of the views from this Board and also an indication by that stage of what further cuts, if any, might need to be made in the scheduled schemes should the KCC Local Board decide to allocate its funds to schemes outside of the draft programme.

1.3 Other Proposed Works and Funding

- 1.3.1 Another part of the annual works programme is the group of schemes coming under the category of “Casualty Reduction Measure” (**CRM**). We understand that four of the six schemes listed as bids in the December JTB paper have gone forward to the final programme. That raises a question of whether the two that have been deferred should be factored into the proposed joint funding arrangements. These were a junction modification at Red Hill, Watlingbury, and anti-skid surfacing at the Shipbourne Road/Yardley Park Road junction. The schemes going forward to the programme represent a further investment of just over £140,000 on highways in the borough in the next financial year. The schemes deferred for consideration next year amount to £110,000. With an already proposed contribution of some £58,000 to the small improvement programme and a possible further contribution towards works at the layby on the west side of the A228 near Ham Hill, we have reached the limit of what we would wish to recommend the Board supports. Consequently, the county council should be left to defer the two unfunded CRMs.
- 1.3.2 There is a further element of the works programme that is yet to be confirmed but it may be by the time of the JTB. It concerns measures aimed at improving access for disabled people arising from requirements in the Disability Discrimination Act. Our understanding is that this will be a fully funded programme across Kent` so additional pump-priming monies will not be required. Nevertheless, it will represent further investment in the borough’s highways infrastructure and contribute towards one of the highest historical bid results for Tonbridge and Malling.

1.4 Assessment of the Programme

- 1.4.1 Budget constraints on the County Council following the Government’s award of LTP funding make it inevitable that the balance of schemes on the “long-list” will have to be deferred for funding consideration in future years of the LTP. Most of these deferrals can be properly justified. For some, scheme development is at an immature stage and much remains to be done on design and consultation. For others, such as the cycling initiatives, the broad strategy underpinning them has yet to be drafted, consulted on and adopted.
- 1.4.2 It is worth making special mention of one particular initiative that has been deferred but which carries a high borough priority, West Malling Station southern side access improvements. The county council now has an engineer working on this project so that opportunities presented by the new link road to the bypass, which is well underway, can be fully exploited. However, it carries a budget estimate of £500,000 to fund a new bus and taxi interchange and terminus. That

amounts to almost the entire LTP budget for this borough during 2006/07. The critical point is that progress depends on the co-operation of Network Rail if the county council is to secure all the necessary agreements and technical approvals required to implement works on the station forecourt. The county council cannot guarantee how that process will unfold and based on our own difficult experience with Network Rail in promoting improved access to the north side of the station, we consider the chances of KCC being able to practically implement the scheme during 2006/07 are low. Bearing in mind the works in progress still to be completed and the need to co-ordinate all the various parties, which also involves the construction of a new car park, it seems appropriate that the funding for the station forecourt project should follow in 2007/08. That would be a logical and practical programme but the County Council should be left in doubt that this is a very high priority for the Borough and as a scheme has considerable transport benefit.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 The proposals sit well with the council's general legal duty of securing social environmental and economic well being on behalf of the local community.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 The proposed investment from the Capital Plan amounts to some £58,000. This should help secure a place in the highway authority's works programme for five schemes with an estimated cost of £185,000, some of which would otherwise have to be deferred to a future year. We believe this represents a sound rate of return and value for money.
- 1.6.2 Taking existing agreed commitments into account, there is a balance of £40,000 available from the LTP Partnership Programme. We recommend that it be used to part fund the joint arrangements for the small improvement programme with the £18,000 balance being met from Community Partnerships Initiatives fund.
- 1.6.3 At a meeting of the JTB last summer, Snodland Members were supportive of action to deal with the state of the lay by on the west side of the A228 near the Ham Hill roundabout. The County Council has included a provision in its programme for works at this location, also subsuming the problem of rat-running through the northern part of Lunsford Lane from the roundabout on the opposite side of the road.
- 1.6.4 In advance of investigation, survey and design work, it is not possible to say whether the amount budgeted in the small improvement programme will be sufficient. However, there remains the potential for this to exceed the amount allowed. Given that the Borough has already committed itself to work on this initiative in partnership with the County Council there is the need to identify the source of such financial support. We suggest, therefore, that a further commitment from the Community Partnerships Initiatives allocation be earmarked for that purpose and that, in the light of the out-turn for the similar scheme by the

Borough Council on the other side of roads a few years ago, it be set at a maximum of £40,000.

- 1.6.5 In parallel with the improvement programme, there continues to be a problem in securing a place in the schedules for many maintenance interventions. The Board may recall that a part of borough revenue surpluses were directed a couple of years ago at supporting a focused programme of footway repairs to achieve a significant upgrade in the general standards of surfaces. That initiative successfully achieved what it set out to do. However, maintenance is by nature an activity that always needs to be carried out and there are many locations where a small contribution towards the highway authority's maintenance budget can accelerate considerably the timing of local priorities and also help inject an element of environmental enhancement in the form of, for example, soft landscaping. With that in mind, we recommend that a further slice of the CPI allocation should be set aside for the purpose of securing such increases in the priority of selected maintenance works and providing some associated environmental improvement. We envisage a sum of £20,000 to pump-prime particular schemes and we will provide the Board with regular updates on how successful these arrangements prove to be.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 Implementing the programme will be down to the county council and risks will be associated with the lack of direct control of timing, quality and cost. These will be mitigated primarily by requiring progress reports to each of the meetings of the JTB so that Members have an opportunity to scrutinise each of these factors. This will be supplemented by regular officer-level contacts.

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 That the joint funding arrangements with the county council for the 2006/07 programme of traffic and highway improvement schemes described in the report and in **Annex 3 BE ENDORSED**.

The Director of Planning and Transportation confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

Nil

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