

From: David Brazier Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Phillip Lightowler – Interim Director Transportation

To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee Meeting – 19 May 2022

Subject: To approve funding for a county-wide pothole repair and patching programme.

Key decision: 22/00039

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: All Districts.

Summary:

Highways & Transport has a duty to ensure the effective discharge of the Council's statutory duties and powers as Local Transport & Highway Authority, in particular its duty of care to help ensure safe passage for all road users. The Department for Transport (DfT) highways grant has been reduced by £9m impacting the budget available for asset management of all highway's assets, including an allocation for pothole and patching work. To ensure this work can continue Members asked officers in Highways Asset Management and Corporate Finance to consider funding options to support a annual pothole programme without increasing the council's financial borrowing commitments

Recommendation(s):

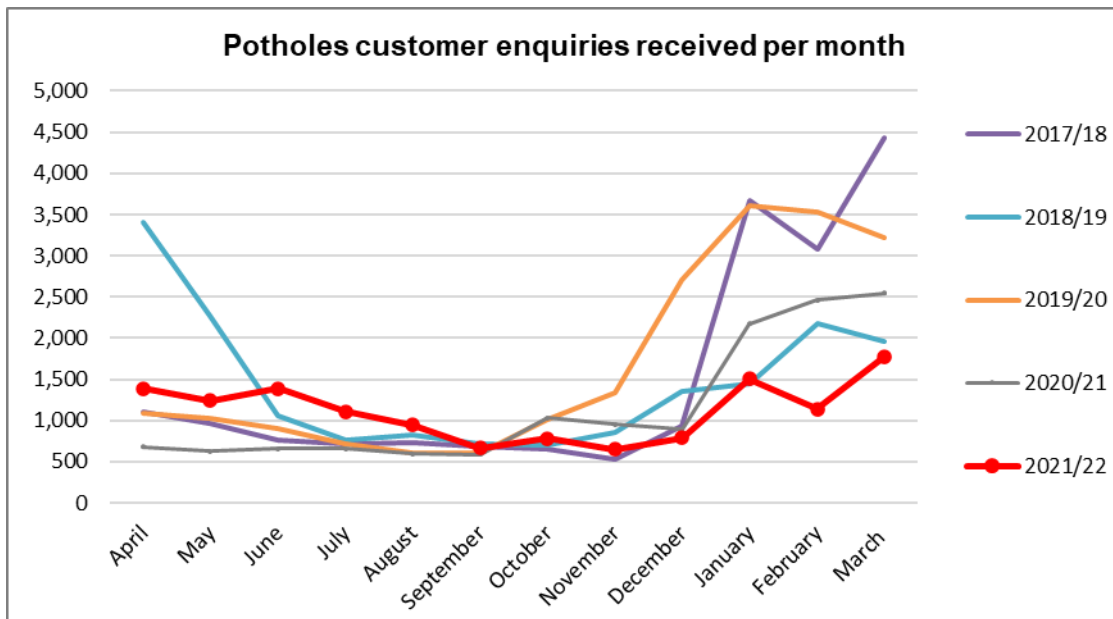
The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on the:

1. proposed decision to fund an annual pothole and patching programme (Pothole Blitz) of £7m per annum totalling £21m over 3 years;
2. delegation of authority to the Corporate Director of Growth Environment and Transport and the Corporate Director of Finance to agree funding mechanisms to support the programmes; and
3. delegation of authority to the Director of Highways and Transportation to award and enter appropriate contractual arrangements for the provision of the Pothole and Patching programme (Pothole Blitz) contracts as shown at Appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The pothole blitz programmes over recent years have proven to be successful in terms of delivering local highway repairs. This was in addition to the ongoing maintenance, major resurfacing and surface treatments programmes delivered in line with the authorities published approach to Asset Management

1.2 This additional work has contributed towards the reduction in customer pothole related enquires received over the past 5 years. The graph below details and highlights the lower numbers particularly over the winter period.



1.3 Additional capital grant funding for potholes received from DfT alongside additional KCC capital borrowing has enabled a Pothole Blitz programme to be delivered over the previous 2 financial years without adversely affecting any other highways asset capital budget.

1.4 The capital grant funding for highway maintenance has been reduced significantly by the DfT for 2022/23 and this will continue for the next 3 years. This 20% reduction amounts to £9m per annum and £27m over the 3-year period.

1.5 This has placed a pressure on the capital budgets for management and maintenance of highways assets. It was not possible to sustain funding for critical assets such as drainage, footways, structures, and highway inspectors repairs whilst also funding a Pothole Blitz campaign fully.

1.6 Officers were requested to examine options to facilitate the delivery of a pothole blitz campaign and without increasing in year capital borrowing.

1.7 This will most likely be achieved by a re-profiling of existing borrowing as the short-term funding route, however the full details of this are yet to be agreed by the relevant Corporate Directors.

2. Contract and Procurement

2.1 The existing pothole blitz contracts have been extended to deliver this year's programme however this is the final allowable extension under the contract.

2.2 A commissioning and procurement exercise will be undertaken later this year and will seek to review the optimum number of contracts required to deliver the most efficient and effective future programmes of the pothole blitz.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 Options to provide the £7m funding for 2022/23 programme are currently being considered and will be agreed between relevant Corporate Directors without impacting on existing asset management funding needed to ensure compliance with the risk-based approach in the Asset Management Strategy.

3.2 The method to be adopted will not increase capital borrowing for the current financial year. In all likelihood this will entail a re-profiling of existing borrowing or a revenue growth pressure/similar. Future years funding of programmes will be decided on an annual basis in a timely manner in order to ensure efficient delivery.

4. Legal implications

4.1 The Council has a legal duty to maintain the highway network for which it is responsible. This work substantially contributes that duty.

4.2 All relevant procurements will be carried out in full compliance with the mandatory rules and processes that must be complied with when spending money on behalf of the council.

5. Equalities implications

5.1 It is not expected that there will be any negative equalities impacts that could be reasonably anticipated from this decision.

6. Recommendations

6.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on the:

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7. Background documents

Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision

Equality Impact Statement;

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s111863/EqIAPotholepatchingprogramme.doc.pdf>

8. Contact details

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