

From: **Barbara Cooper - Corporate Director – Growth, Environment and Transport**

To: **Mike Whiting - Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste**

Decision No: 18/000038

Subject: **A256 - Urgent Road Asset Renewal and Preservation Works**

Summary: This report concerns a project to improve the road surface of the A256 between Sandwich and Whitfield. Funding of £3.2m in 2018/19 has been allocated in the Medium Term Financial Plan for these works. The most urgent element of this work concerns the application of a specialist preservation treatment over much of the dual carriageway section to avoid road surface failure and significantly higher expense. Given traffic speed and volumes, this treatment must be applied in the hottest month of the year, August, to avoid premature failure.

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste is asked to agree

i) the proposed works to extend the life of the majority of this section of the A256 road surface between Sandwich and Whitfield and to replace the road surface in other areas and

ii) the delegation to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport, under the Officer Scheme of Delegations, to take further or other decisions as may be appropriate to deliver the scheme in accordance with these recommendations

as attached at Appendix A.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report outlines proposals to proceed with urgent road maintenance work to improve the road surface of the A256 between Sandwich and Whitfield.

2. Financial Implications

2.1 Funding for these works was allocated during last year's capital funding cycle and has therefore been included in 2018/19 of the Medium Term Financial Plan. The cost estimate of £3.2m has not changed.

3. Policy Framework

3.1 Proceeding with these works is consistent with Kent County Council's new asset management approach. This approach is set out in *Developing our Approach to Asset Management in Highways - 2018/19 – 2020/21* which was considered by this Committee on 31 January and subsequently adopted and published in February, in order to evidence a Band 3 Incentive Fund rating and maximise Department for Transport capital funding for 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21. Implementing that approach contributes to our day to day management of highway maintenance and

therefore plays a vital part in delivering Kent County Council's Strategic Statement *Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes*.

4. Background

- 4.1 During last year's capital bidding round, Highways, Transportation and Waste was allocated funding of £7.52m for the highest priority (27) highway sites (high risk issues requiring intervention in the very short term). The £3.495m allocated for 2018/19 included the major renewal and preservation of the A256's road surface between Whitfield and Sandwich at a cost of £3.2m and that is the subject of this paper.
- 4.2 The A256 is an 'Other Strategic' road in our highway maintenance hierarchy. It also forms part of our Resilient Highway Network, the portion of our 5,400-mile road network that is vital to maintaining economic activity and access to key services during extreme weather emergencies and other major incidents. It is also likely to form part of the new Major Road Network that the Department for Transport has recently consulted on, a matter which this Committee considered at its 20 March meeting. (The MRN will be a new category of road between Highway England's Strategic Road Network and Local Authorities' local roads and this is being set up to put these important roads on a similar investment/improvement planning footing as motorways and trunk roads from 2021/22. Local Authorities will continue to be responsible for maintaining these roads and any funding streams are unlikely to be used for maintenance save for major structural renewal projects.) The A256 is also a key link between the channel ports and Manston in respect of interim lorry parking arrangements. In short, this road is vital to the economy of East Kent, an area of the county that is not otherwise well served by north-south main roads.

5. A256 Condition

- 5.1 As part of our regular mechanical condition surveys and safety inspections, we have identified that the existing road surface on the A256 between the A2 at Whitfield and Sandwich, and the dual carriageway in particular, is nearing the end of its serviceable life. It has for several years been losing aggregate (a sign of bitumen losing its cohesiveness and strength) and its centre-joints are opening which represents a hazard to motorcycles when they change lane. Most of these serious defects are not obvious to untrained eyes that tend to focus on pothole formation. These defects are not considered safety critical at this time and this road is subject to regular safety inspections.
- 5.2 The main risk if left untreated is that aggregate loss will continue and lead to the road surface rapidly failing which, given the high-speed nature of this road, would likely be catastrophic. In our professional judgement, we are very close to that eventuality now. If that were to happen, we would need to consider measures such as reducing the speed limit, lane closures and possibly full road closures. In addition, we would then need to replace the surface course for much/all of the road which would be prohibitively expensive in the current financial climate.
- 5.3 However, we can apply a specialist road surface preservation treatment called surface dressing to seal the existing surface, avoid further aggregate loss, restore texture and extend the life of this road by around ten years. This treatment costs around £4 per square metre, compared to £25/35 per square metre for replacing the

existing surface. This would be an appropriate treatment for much of the dual carriageway section. However, other areas such as some of the roundabouts around Sandwich would not be suitable for this treatment and will need a new surface inlaid. An indicative plan of our intended works is at Appendix B.

- 5.4 The surface treatment element of this solution needs to be delivered in August 2018. That is because it can only be laid in warmer months but as the A256 is a high-speed road, it will need to be laid in optimum conditions to minimise any chance of premature failure. If these works do not take place in August 2018, they would have to be delayed until August 2019, but it is likely that the road will deteriorate beyond being suitable for surface dressing by that time.
- 5.5 The surface dressing element will be delivered using established competitive rates in our Term Maintenance Contract with Amey. The remaining machine resurfacing works will be delivered later in the year under our recently awarded Road Asset Renewal Contract with Eurovia.
- 5.6 There are no legal or equality implications resulting from these planned works.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 A large section of the A256 between Sandwich and Whitfield, an economically and strategically important north-south road in East Kent, is at the end of its lifecycle and in danger of rapid failure. This would lead to temporary measures such as speed limit reductions, lane closure and full road closures being implemented to reduce the risk to road users. If that happens, the cost of fully renewing the road surface would be considerable and challenging to resource. However, much of the road can be life-extended through the application of a specialist treatment at a lower cost than full renewal. Such treatment works are weather dependant and to minimise the risk of failure need to take place in August. It is proposed that other sections of this road will be renewed later in the surfacing season as these surfacing are less dependent on weather conditions.

7. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste is asked to agree

- i) the proposed works to extend the life of the majority of this section of the A256 road surface between Sandwich and Whitfield and to replace the road surface in other areas and
- ii) the delegation to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport, under the Officer Scheme of Delegations, to take further or other decisions as may be appropriate to deliver the scheme in accordance with these recommendations

as attached at Appendix A.

8. Appendices and Background Documents

- **Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision**

- **Appendix B - Indicative Plan of Works**

- Our Approach to Asset Management in Highways document
- Implementing Our Approach to Asset Management in Highways document
- Developing our Approach to Asset Management in Highways - 2018/19 – 2020/21

All three documents available via: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/transport-and-highways-policies/highways-asset-management>

9. Contact details

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