

Chief Executive's Budget Proposal**OPTION: Preventative Maintenance (Parks and Highways)**

2015/16	2016/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
570	-	570

SUMMARY OF OPTION

The vast majority of the funding the Council uses to maintain highways comes in the form of grants from national government. Wirral is one of only a few Councils in the country to put extra, local money into this fund to carry out 'preventative' work, across both our highways and our parks. This option would see us removing this additional investment, and focussing our maintenance work where there is a safety implication.

If non-essential maintenance is a priority for the community, then Constituency Committee budget priorities might include serviceability maintenance of highway and coastal infrastructure. Increasing volunteer involvement in the maintenance of infrastructure, subject to safe systems of work, might allow continued maintenance of the appearance of street furniture, for example, through painting of railings or restoration of highway seats.

Repairs to damage caused by vehicle collisions or vandalism represent a significant part of the maintenance budget. Recovery of that expenditure needs to be improved and a campaign for the support of the public in identifying those causing the damage might lead to increased recovery of the costs, resulting in greater funding being available for other maintenance or further savings.

The service needs to continue to build on the good work in managing the highway network, through continued improvement in its asset management approach to optimising maintenance choices and techniques. This will provide confidence that decisions are making the best use of resources, and help the Council to demonstrate that it is efficient in its use of capital funding provided by government, thereby attracting greater capital funding, since it is expected that funding levels from government capital will be determined by the Council's ability to prove it is applying best practice and making sustainable efficiencies. It is important that capital funding is available to carry out preventative maintenance to support the reduction in reliance on revenue budget funding.

IMPACT ON RESIDENTS

The maintenance of highways is a statutory duty for the Council as local highway authority and in exercising permissive powers to provide and maintain coastal defences; the Council is governed by statute. Highway Maintenance is a universal service - the highways are used by every resident, business and visitor, either directly as a pedestrian, cyclist, passenger or driver, or indirectly by relying on delivery services, waste collection, home care and the like.

IMPACT ON PARTNERS

The Council has objectives to increase growth in the borough's economy. The deterioration in the condition and appearance of highways may lead to a loss of confidence in the transport infrastructure and the local environment; reducing investment in jobs in Wirral.

All services provided by the Council and other agencies rely on the highway network to carry out their work, and could be affected by declining network conditions.

The Council's highway services contractor will experience an approximate 20% reduction in revenue funded routine and preventative maintenance ordered through the contract. This will potentially result in job losses in the contractor's local workforce.

IMPACT ON COMMUNITY, VOLUNTARY AND FAITH SECTOR

No direct implications in relation to Highways Maintenance, however Park Friends Groups would be concerned by this reduction as demand for preventative maintenance works is significant across the borough's parks and countryside sites, however given the difficult financial situation facing the council it may be unavoidable.