



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/20

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR PROSPERITY, DEVELOPMENT & FRONTLINE SERVICES

CAPITAL PROGRAMME – HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION & STRATEGIC PROJECTS

Author: Andrew Griffiths – Service Director Highways and Transportation

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee of the Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects Capital Programme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the contents of the report and progress in delivering the capital programme.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 RCT is the 3rd largest local authority in Wales with a population of approximately 240,000 and covering an area of 424km²

- 3.2. The Council's highway assets are valued at £3.4B (2016) and is the largest asset the Council owns.
- 3.3 The assets consists of 1284km of A,B,C and unclassified roads, 1,989,045m2 of footways, 468 highway structures (inclusive of bridges and culverts), 1093 retaining walls, 29,200 street lighting lanterns, 47,147 road gullies, over 30km of drainage ditches, traffic signals and signage.
- 3.4 In 2011/12, the Council committed to additional spending each year on highways infrastructure together with funding received from Welsh Government. On 3/10/16 the Cabinet approved the Corporate Plan which again recognised the importance of highway infrastructure and Cabinet on 17/3/2016 approved the 3 year Capital Programme. Subsequent Cabinet approvals was obtained each year for the yearly Capital Programme and Supplementary Highways Programme. On 14/02/2019 the Cabinet approved the Council's 3 year Capital Programme and on 21/3/2019 the Highways Supplementary Capital Programme was approved. Subsequent reports on 18/6 and 17/10/2019 highlighted the Highways Investment Schemes programme.
- 3.5 The highway network and associated infrastructure has benefitted from over eight years of enhanced levels of investment and has improved the fabric of the highways network and provided greater resistance to the impact of winter weather conditions and storm events.
- 3.6 Continued enhanced levels of investment in the highways infrastructure assets means that interventions can be undertaken in a more pro-active manner where more efficient and cost effective preventative maintenance is carried out rather than expensive reactive treatments and reconstruction of roads, footways, structures, drainage assets, etc.
- 3.7 The investment plan priorities are carriageways, footways, car parks, structures, street lighting, safety barriers, disabled access, town centres, drainage, transport infrastructure, traffic management and essential highway repairs.

4. UPDATE / CURRENT POSITION

Carriageways / Footways

- 4.1 Since April 2019, 77 carriageway schemes and 21 footway schemes have already been completed to the combined value of £6.3million under the Highways Investment Programme
- 4.2 On 21st March 2019 Cabinet agreed to delegate authority to the Group Director in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Director of Finance and Digital Services, to extend activity to approve additional projects during the financial year where capacity exists for accelerated planning and delivery in accordance with the purpose of the wider programme.

- 4.3 On 17/10/2019 Cabinet approved to undertake additional schemes as highlighted in the report in the sum of £5.84million due to the progress made in the first 6 months.

Street Lighting

- 4.4 By March 219 the Council successfully converted all the remaining street lighting lanterns to LED. This has resulted in electricity charges being reduced by over 70% since 2013/14 and has reduced the Council's carbon footprint by over 2,750 tonnes annually.
- 4.5 All concrete street lighting columns have been replaced. Existing steel lighting columns are now being tested based on age and inspection. As part of the capital programme the Council is now undertaking a replacement programme of street lighting columns that have come to the end of their design life. The Council is also undertaking a cable replacement programme as a result of testing of the infrastructure.

Drainage

- 4.6 The Council has committed £348k in 19/20 for various drainage repair works and studies at various locations within the Borough. These works include installation of "super gullies", pipe repairs, pipe lining, additional drainage and modifications to culvert outlet and inlet structures.
- 4.7 All the schemes are progressing well despite the prolonged periods of inclement weather in the last few months.

Structures

- 4.8 Structures consist of highway bridges, pedestrian footbridges, culverts over 1.0m in diameter, retaining walls, soil nails and rock anchors. The Service Area has recently taken responsibility for Parks structures which also incorporate the previous structures.
- 4.9 The Council is prioritising the inspection of structures on the Precautionary Salting Network and to date only 10 highway structures inspections are outstanding. From the inspections undertaken, the Council can prioritise the repair and remedial works to the various structures.
- 4.10 In respect of the highway structures there are over 75 which are currently at various stages of design for repair and replacement subject to future funding.
- 4.11 Currently the following structures are about to commence / on site / complete:
- St Albans – advance utility works ongoing, main bridge replacement to commence in early 2020
 - Pont Rhondda – on site due to complete winter 19/20
 - Castell Ifor – on site, due to recommence in May 2020
 - Abercwmbi retaining wall – commenced 28/10/19

- Gwrangron Culvert – on site due to complete late Autumn 2019
- Station Rd Bridge, Hirwaun – on site due to complete late Autumn 2019
- Pont Cynon bridge repairs – completed October 2019
- Hopkinstown River Wall – complete
- Williamstown footbridge phase 1 – complete
- Mill Farm footbridge – complete
- Nantgarw revetment phase 1 – complete

Several parks footbridges are due to commence on site shortly for completion by end of March 2020.

Making Better Use Programme (MBU)

- 4.12 The MBU programme looks at improvements to the existing highway network by the efficient utilisation of highway space for the improvement of highway safety, easing congestion, improving journey times and also consideration of highway safety ie formalised controlled crossings. This has been successful in previous years with the introduction of additional carriageway lanes by utilising verges to provide dedicated turn left / right turns eg Ynys roundabout, Asda roundabout, etc.
- 4.13 The current MBU programme consists of 11 projects to be constructed and a further 7 in study stage. The seven studies are currently ongoing, 2 out of the 11 construction schemes are complete with the remaining nine to be constructed between now and end of March 2020.

Traffic

- 4.14 The Traffic management programme of £160k consists of small scale projects which are implemented to improve traffic safety. To date these are all on programme and consist of :
- Disabled Parking
 - Residents Parking
 - Traffic Regulation Orders
 - Speed Limit Review
 - Minor schemes
 - Development of future schemes

Transportation Infrastructure

Active Travel

- 4.15 Funding has been obtained from Welsh Government's Active Travel Fund for the three schemes; the design of the Rhondda Fach Community Route, which is progressing well and should be ready for tender by end of the financial year. The construction of Llantrisant Community Route Phase 2 and Nant Cae Ddwg bridge on the Taff Trail, both of which are currently on site and due to be complete in winter 19/20. Funding has also been secured from the Active Travel Core Fund to undertake feasibility studies, and progress the design of a number of other active travel schemes within the borough. These include, linkages within the Rhondda

Fawr to provide improved walking and cycling journeys to the main town centres, public transport facilities and major trip attractors. The design of an active travel route from Talbot Green to the boundary with Bridgend at Llanharan. The design of a route through Gelligaled Park, Rhondda and design of improvements to the Cynon and Taff Trail. Feasibility work is also currently being undertaken to progress the Abernant Tunnel scheme, and to identify new active travel links to and within Church Village, Treforest Industrial Estate and Upper Boat. Further bids are pending consideration by Welsh Government and include funding to continue proposals in respect of the Rhondda Tunnel.

Mountain Ash Cross Valley Link

- 4.16 Good progress has been made to date in respect of this project which is partly financed via Welsh Government's Local Transport Fund Grant. The A4059 junction works are complete. The Council's design and build contractor for the main bridge works completed the design and commenced works on site in Summer 2018. Despite the challenges in respect of the diversion of the Dwr Cymru Welsh Water combined sewer, the bridge beams were successfully landed at the end of September and work is progressing for completion late Spring 2020.

A4119 Dualling (Stinkpot Hill)

- 4.17 This project has received funding from Welsh Government's Local Transport Fund Grant to date. The project is nearing completion of the preliminary design stage with negotiations ongoing with the Fire Service about the potential of formation of a new access to their headquarters after the removal of an existing roundabout / access off the A4119. A planning application will be required for the formation of a new access to the Fire Station. Ecological surveys have indicated the presence of lesser horseshoe bats which will require mitigation measures. Third party land will also be required for the implementation of the project which has commenced with the respective landowners.

Cynon Gateway North (Aberdare Bypass)

- 4.18 Preliminary design work continues on the project which will link the A465 Heads of the Valleys Croesbychan Roundabout with the Aberdare Bypass just north of Robertstown. Agreement has recently been reached with the Welsh Government and their technical advisors in respect of the location of the Croesbychan roundabout which will facilitate the tie in of the Cynon Gateway North. Ecological surveys are ongoing with geotechnical investigations about to commence shortly. It is anticipated that the preliminary design will be complete in Summer 2020. A planning application will be required to be submitted and acquisition of third party land.

Llanharan Bypass

- 4.19 This project has received funding from Welsh Government's Local Transport Fund Grant and the preliminary design will be complete in Spring / Summer 2020. Ecological surveys are ongoing together with geotechnical site investigation. A planning application will be required to be submitted in Summer 2020. An exhibition was held earlier this calendar year which was well attended by the public and as a result the horizontal alignment of the route has now been finalised avoiding the Llanharan Welfare Ground.

Gelli Treorchy Relief Road

- 4.20 Feasibility studies are ongoing into the investigations of options to relieve traffic congestion in Treorchy. Stag Square is a major bottleneck causing congestion and delays to users of the road network including public transport. The option investigation which is ongoing will need to tie into the overall masterplan for Treorchy which is being formulated.

Porth Transport Interchange

- 4.21 Funding (£0.82M) has been obtained from Welsh Government's Local Transport Fund regional allocation toward development of a transport hub as the key ingredient in the Transport Quarter proposed in the Porth Regeneration Plan. Land acquisition is progressing with demolition of the day centre and former Barclays programmed to take place in the new year. In addition City Deal funding (£0.225M) is being sought to deliver additional parking capacity off Rheola Road opposite the Rheola public house, which is within easy walking distance of the station. The contract for this work has been tendered and will provide an additional 29 parking spaces. Ducting will be provided to enable electric vehicle charging infrastructure to be implemented in future.

A4119 Bus Corridor

- 4.22 The Council has received further funding on top of the previous two years for the A4119 bus corridor. This looks at improving infrastructure and making modifications to highway layouts to prioritise public transport and make it more accessible. Currently being delivered this year out of the funding received are the completion of the bus boarders along the route and design of modifications to roundabouts on the A4119.

Safe Routes in the Community

- 4.23 The Council has secured funding from Welsh Government's Safe Routes in the community funding for the implementation of Llwynypia SRIC and Pontyclun Phase 2 SRIC. Both schemes utilise 20mph limits with other associated features dependent upon the scheme and will be delivered on site by end of March 2020.

Road Safety Grant

- 4.24 The Council was successful in securing over £300k for the digitalisation of the Council's fixed speed cameras within the borough together with the introduction of average speed cameras for the Lower Rhondda Fach Relief Road covering the section to the north of Porth by the end of March 2020.

Park and Ride Programme

- 4.25 Porth Park and Ride Phase which involves the creation of additional car parking north of the Phase 1 has received planning consent and will commence construction in January 2020. Pontyclun Park and Ride Phase 2 is still currently at feasibility stage with various car park layout options being considered.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no negative or adverse equality or diversity implications associated with this report.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 There are no consultation implications aligned to this report.
- 6.2 The public are consulted on the various projects (dependant upon nature and size) via public exhibitions and Traffic Regulation Order consultations.
- 6.3 The public are kept informed of projects via the following methods:
- Public exhibitions
 - Consultations – mainly Traffic Regulation Orders
 - Letter drops to affected residents
 - Press releases
 - Social media
 - Frequently Asked Questions
 - Advance signage

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 The Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects Supplementary Capital Programme approved by Cabinet on 21/03/2019 provided specific capital allocations of the £15.032 million in favour of Highways Technical Services and £10.934 million in favour of Strategic Projects.
- 7.2 The work packages for the Highways Improvement schemes are:
- Carriageways £6.301m

- Footways £1.512m
- Vehicle Restraint Barriers £0.1m
- Disabled Access Improvements £0.030m
- Highway Structures £5.794m
- Parks Structures £1.0m
- Street Lighting £0.250m
- Car Parks £0.045m

7.3 The Strategic Projects work packages consist of;

- Land Drainage / Flood Risk Management £0.348m
- Traffic Management £0.16m
- Transportation Infrastructure £10.364m

7.4 On 17/10/2019 Cabinet approved to undertake additional schemes as highlighted in the report in the sum of £5.84million for carriageway and footway schemes due to progress made in the first 6 months.

7.5 On 17/9/2019 Cabinet approved further funding via the Council Corporate Plan – Investment Priorities in the total sum of £3.75m for highway structures, flood alleviation works, MBU, A4119 dualling, Mountain Ash Cross Valley Link and Treorchy Link Road. (details of exact breakdown in the report).

7.6 The Council has been successful in securing external funding from Welsh Government and other sources in previous years and again in 2019/20 the Council has secured the following:

- Active Travel Fund £1.602m
- Local Transport Network Fund £0.6m
- Local Transport Fund £0.1m
- Road Safety Capital £0.371m
- SRIC £0.296m
- Drainage / Flood Capital Grant - £0.185m
- Regional Local Transport Fund:
 - Porth Interchange £0.82m
 - Relocating Treforest Station £0.28m (pending)
 - North West Cardiff/RCT Mass Transit £0.07m
 - Park and Ride Assessment Treforest/Upper Boat £0.035m
 - Other bids are also pending

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

8.1 There are a number of legal implications which are dependant upon the nature and type of project and can vary from and include, but not restricted to:

- The Highways Act 1980
- Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984
- Acquisition of Land Act 1981

9. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

- 9.1 The Capital Programme supports a number of the authority's own plans, policies and strategies that relate not only to transport, but the wider local agenda including:
- Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
 - Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan
 - Local Development Plan
 - South East Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan (2015)
 - Strategic Opportunity Areas
 - One Wales: Connecting the Nation (Wales Transport Strategy 2008)
 - National Transport Plan (2010, updated 2011)
 - Wales Spatial Plan (2008)
- 9.2 The Capital Programme supports the Council's Corporate Plan Priority "Place – creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work".
- 9.3 The programme is wide ranging and deals with the maintenance, enhancement and creation of transportation infrastructure in order to meet travel demand. The programme supports enhanced connectivity to link homes with employment opportunities, education and health facilities, and to act as a catalyst for development and regeneration. In conjunction with grant applications, a range of sustainable and active travel opportunities are promoted.
- 9.4 The programme supports the Well-Being goals fostering prosperity and resilience with inclusive and sustainable transport options supporting more cohesive and vibrant communities.
- 9.5 The requirement to reduce carbon emissions is set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 and also in the Environment Act (Wales) 2016. More recently, Welsh Government produced Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales and in May 2019, the Committee on Climate Change recommended new emissions targets for the UK: net zero greenhouse gases by 2050 (Wales is set at 95% due to a disproportionate impact from the farming industry). The capital programme will help to relieve congestion, promote public transport and thus aid in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The capital programme continues the enhanced levels of investment under the RCTInvest initiative, delivering sustained improvements to the resilience and durability of our highways and transportation infrastructure, promoting sustainable transport opportunities and network efficiency.
- 10.2 The improvements to the standard of our network are supporting continued reductions in the Council's exposure to claims for slips, trips and falls on the highway network from 712 in 2004 to 124 in 2018. This level of claim is at the lowest level experienced within RCT.

- 10.3 The capital programme is fundamental in aiding and creating employment opportunities and economic growth by making the transport infrastructure and public transport systems more efficient to improve accessibility and connectivity.
- 10.4 The capital programme expenditure for 2019/20 is currently on target to be delivered by March 2020.
- 10.5 RCT is one of the few councils that continues to make significant investments in maintaining and improving our highways and transportation infrastructure. This evidenced by the Key Performance Indicators for roads requiring maintenance. In RCT in 2018/19, (2010/11 in brackets), the percentage of roads requiring maintenance was:
- Class A roads 4.9% (16.2%)
 - Class B roads 6.5% (15.2%)
 - Class C roads 3.0% (15.3%)
 - All classified roads 4.8% (15.7%)