

County Road Highway Maintenance Revenue Budget 2011/12

Report of the Executive Director of Environment, Economy and Culture

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and approval by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendation: It is recommended that:

- (a) the budget for highway maintenance for 2011/12 be agreed as detailed in Appendix I;
- (b) authority to amend the allocations to maximise the impact of the maintenance programme be delegated to the Executive Director of Environment, Economy and Culture;
- (c) the policy changes as detailed in section 5 and Appendix II of this report are approved.

1. Summary

This report considers the allocation of revenue highway maintenance funding for 2011/12 by maintenance operation. It should be noted that the effects of the last few years' winter damage to the highway infrastructure is having a significant impact on the overall condition of the network. The cost of dealing with the damage arising from winter weather will compound this by reducing the funding available for normal repair works. The significant reduction in this budget will also have a major effect.

2. Background

- (i) Within the County Council's target revenue budget for 2011/12 the highway maintenance base budget has been set at £33,601,600. This is made up as follows:

	£
Road Maintenance	28,967,500
Street Lighting	4,634,100
Total Revenue Budget	33,601,600

The allowance for routine maintenance of the detrunked sections of the A361/A39 has now been incorporated into this revenue allocation.

The above figures do not include the Local Transport Plan (LTP) settlement in relation to Capital Highway Structural Maintenance and Bridge Assessment and Strengthening which is the subject of a separate report to Cabinet (EEC/11/36/HQ). This capital allocation includes almost all structural maintenance work on both Principal (A) roads and non Principal Roads.

- (ii) The Devon Citizen survey indicates that the standard of maintenance on some parts of the network still falls below the expectations of road users.
- (iii) The current winter has been even more severe in terms of adverse weather events than any in the last 30 years. This follows severe winters for the past two years. The effects are felt not just in the cost of dealing with the events as they arise and in their immediate aftermath but also in serious ongoing attrition of the surface and structure of the County's highways. Members will already have observed an

increase in potholes breaking out. With water-logged and frozen ground and continuing low temperatures this problem is expected to increase substantially over the next few months. The current year's maintenance budgets have been put under great strain as a result of this year's weather. Its consequences will continue to cause severe problems in 2011/12.

- (iv) This allocation is a 17% reduction in real terms that is including inflationary estimate, from 2010/11. The following functions need to be adjusted to meet this reduction:

Surface dressing
Patching
Footways
Cycleways
Grass cutting
Weed control
Highway structures
Siding and water tabling
Traffic signs, signals, road markings and studs
Winter service
Public rights of way
Street lighting
Town centre management

3. Strategy and Analysis

- (i) Devon's Strategic Plan 2009-2013 includes the following pledges:

to reduce the number of potholes by 30% by 2013 (baseline 2010)

96% of A roads and 90% of B roads will be in good condition by 2013.

Approximately 130,000 potholes have been found this year (since 1st April 2010) that were considered to be a potential safety defect. This number will be significantly exceeded by year end. Achieving a reduction of 30% in the number by 2013 will require significant maintenance work of both a reactive and preventative nature, mainly in the form of pothole permanent repairs, patching and surface dressing work.

- (ii) The combination of continuing construction inflation and the effect of the severe weather mean that the County Council will have difficulty in keeping the number of defects on the network to an acceptable level in the coming year. The examination of relative priorities indicates a series of pressures. Restrictions exist on the type of work that can be undertaken with capital funding, with cyclic functions not permissible unless part of a larger scheme which builds, improves or significantly increases asset life. It is considered appropriate to finance all reconstruction, surfacing, surface dressing and some patching from the LTP Capital Maintenance budget, leaving some planned patching as the only structural maintenance funded from revenue.
- (iii) If sufficient capital funding is available, the strategic pledge relating to the condition of A & B roads could be achieved by implementing annual programmes of road resurfacing, reconstruction and surface dressing (structural maintenance) works. The choice of treatment and location of the works would be selected by applying good asset management principles, using the Council's Pavement Management System to achieve best value for money in enabling the Council to meet its pledges and also manage the condition of the rest of the network.

4. Detailed Allocations

Appendix I shows the total budget allocated by maintenance function.

The allocation for the rectification of safety defects has been increased following the experience of previous years from £4.8 million in 2010/11 to £7.2 million for 2011/12. This is a reflection of a poor network condition that has suffered winter damage. Funding for the repair and replacement of vehicle restraint systems (safety fencing) has been increased to £700k in an attempt to rectify some of the backlog of sub standard barriers.

Provision has been made for the maintenance of service costs for the four picnic sites on the North Devon Link Road and Atlantic Highway (£125k). It is recommended that further consideration is given to closing/disposing of these sites in the near future.

5. Policy Changes

Reductions in the allocations for specific functions will result in the requirement to change the policy or work practice. These are summarised below and in Appendix II.

Budget	Current Policy	Proposed Policy Change to achieve reduced spending
Weed Clearance	Hard areas, pre-surfacing treatment, French drains & harmful weeds	Only prior to surfacing treatment on French drains & for control of harmful weeds
Grass Cutting	Urban verge cutting 6 times per year	Reduce urban verge cuts to 2 times per year
Patching and non safety defect potholing	Structural maintenance on a priority basis with durable materials. Permanent pothole repair on minor roads.	No reconstruction on minor roads. Use of lower cost materials with risk of shorter life. Intermediate pothole repairs on minor roads will be permitted.
Bridge Maintenance	Maintain bridge stock in "Good" condition. Improve overall condition of the retaining wall stock.	Allow overall bridge condition to decline to "Fair" within 10 years. Maintain an overall "Fair" condition for retaining walls.
Street Lighting	Monthly scouting for outages. Bulk lamp changes at 3 years.	Reduced scouting. Routine maintenance limits to the 6 year interval required for electrical testing and certification.
Traffic Signs, Signals, Road Markings and Studs	Planned and reactive maintenance.	Reactive maintenance only, limited to essential markings on minor roads.
Siding Watertabling cleaning & ditching	Reactive, pre-surface treatment, salting routes & excess leaves. Ditches on verges regardless of ownership.	Prior to road surface treatment & on priority 1 salting routes. Excess leaves on major roads only. Rely on landowners to comply with Highways Act.
Public Rights of Way	Maintenance regime to achieve 95% "easy to use".	Reduced maintenance regime leading to less than 95% easy to use.

6. Sustainability Considerations

The revenue funding for highway maintenance will assist in protecting the highway asset and making Devon's highway network safer for all modes of transport. Maintenance work will be managed to minimise the effect on the surrounding environment and materials used

to achieve long term durability. Recycled and secondary aggregates will be used with a target of reusing 100% of suitable materials arising from highway maintenance activities.

7. Equality Considerations

An Equalities Impact and Needs Assessment has been carried out on the policy changes required to achieve the highway maintenance budget reductions for 2011/12.

The only potentially significant impact will be for people with disabilities (mobility and sight impairment) and older people, who would be disproportionately disadvantaged if standards of footway and, to a lesser extent, cycleway, maintenance were to fall. In particular, fear of falling in the highway is a significant issue for older people wishing to maintain the freedom to venture out of their homes independently.

In mitigation, it is proposed to continue to provide a reasonable level of service from footways and cycleways by funding more major resurfacing and reconstruction from capital allocations. Also, revenue funded safety inspections and reactive safety defect repairs will continue, to ensure that all roads, footways and cycleways are kept reasonably safe, having regard to type and volume of all types of traffic using them.

8. Legal Considerations

No direct implications at this time, other than a possible increase in third party insurance claims.

9. Risk Management Considerations

The proposals contained in this report have been assessed and all reasonable actions are taken to safeguard the Council's position, understanding that a risk will always be present in a deteriorating highway network.

Where risks have been identified such as the public liability risk associated with compliance with Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 (the duty to maintain the highway and the duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow and ice) the implications have been taken into account in preparing this report.

10. Options/Alternatives

Options exist for improving parts of the service but, within an overall cash limited budget, this would have to be to the detriment of other parts of the service. The balance in Appendix I follows assessment of relative maintenance priorities to determine where funding is essential.

It is also important that the capital funding for highway maintenance (see report EEC/11/36/HQ) is supported by a robust revenue allocation, as the commitment by the County Council is being monitored in this respect and could influence future capital settlements.

11. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion

A well maintained highway network is an essential requirement for the successful delivery of Devon County Council's Strategic Plan. In particular, the ability to efficiently transport people and goods around the county underpins Devon's economy and has a direct impact on the quality of our environment.

Targeting and carrying out this maintenance effectively and efficiently while integrating policies for freight, public transport, walking and cycling will enable Devon County Council to

make the best possible use of transport assets in accordance with the emerging Transport Asset Management Plan, contributing to the achievement of the seven objectives contained in the Devon Local Transport Plan.

Chris McCarthy

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation,
Councillor Stuart Hughes

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Lester Willmington

Room No: AB1, Lucombe House, County Hall, Exeter

Tel No: (01392) 383379

Background Paper	Date	File Ref.
1. File M.F. Rev. Financial Revenue.	November 2010 to February 2011	M.F. Rev.
2. Devon PMS data.		
3. Devon Highway Inventory Data.		

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County Roads Maintenance Budget Allocations 2011/12
Revenue Financing

Appendix I
To EEC/11/37/HQ

Function Code	Function Narrative	Allocation £
05	Patching	1,629,995
06	Footway Maintenance	340,000
08	Cycle Routes Maintenance	133,400
10	Town Centre Management / Urban Regeneration	36,000
12	Research & Materials Testing	235,426
14	Drainage	1,995,000
16	Fencing / Safety Fencing	700,000
19	Condition Surveys / PMS	14,000
21	Highway Structures	819,000
23	Cattle Grids	205,000
38	Safety Defects	7,250,000
28	Weed Clearance	149,291
29	Grass Cutting	1,063,742
31	Road Cleaning/Ditching	1,791,297
32	Hedge and Tree Maintenance	570,000
36	Highway Incident Reaction/Clearance of Debris	1,024,808
40	Gully Emptying	1,180,209
43	Traffic Sign Maintenance	350,000
48	Road Markings/Stud Maintenance	1,114,000
50	Traffic Signals/Signs Energy	160,000
51	Traffic Signals Maintenance Agreements	667,000
70	Winter Service Operations	1,724,400
71	Winter Service Plant Apportionments	2,020,500
72	Winter Service/CIR Systems	240,000
79	Emergency Works	1,431,572
83	Highway Information Management System	74,000
84	Depot Charges	1,117,700
88	Traffic Data Collection	147,660
91	Public Rights of Way (excluding grants)	658,500
100	Street Lighting & Illuminated Signs	4,634,100
89	Picnic Sites Atlantic Highway & North Devon Link	125,000
		33,601,600

**Appendix II
To EEC/11/37/HQ**

Budget Reduction	£,000's	Policy Change (P)/Work Practice Change (W)	Consequence
Bridge Maintenance/Highway Structures	250	<p>Reduced programme on preventative type work (W), resulting in 80% reduction in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painting • Re pointing • Water proofing • Removing vegetation • Timber Treatment • Cleaning • Graffiti <p>25% reduction in bridge and retaining wall repair work.</p>	<p>Fall in condition of bridge and retaining wall stock. Increased occurrences of unpredicted collapse of retaining wall stock and structures at risk.</p> <p>Increased traffic disruption due to lane closures or diversion.</p>
Patching (including localised carriageway reconstruction and non safety potholing)	2636	<p>Reduced programme of work (W) No Reconstruction on Minor roads (P) Use of lower cost (possibly shorter life) material (P) Non structural repair prior to other work (W) Intermediate pothole repair in lieu of permanent on minor roads (P) Some surface dressing schemes will not be preceded by structural patching (P)</p>	<p>Safety of road users at greater risk. Reactive maintenance only with associated longer term difficulties and accelerated increase in deterioration of highway assets. Minor repairs only on minor roads. Cost effectiveness of repairs reduced in the longer term.</p>
Surface Dressing	1481	Revenue funding for these functions will reduce or cease but it is proposed to fund replacement work programmes from capital.	Capital funded highway maintenance will contain a greater proportion of lower cost treatments, such as surface dressing, in the mix to compensate for loss of revenue funding. These treatments will not generally be as long lasting as traditional resurfacing and reconstruction but will be effective in delaying deterioration of structural road footway and cycleway layers.
Footway Maintenance	1253		
Cycleways	250		

Budget Reduction	£,000's	Policy Change (P)/Work Practice Change (W)	Consequence
Traffic Signs, Signals and Road Markings and Studs	300	No routine and planned maintenance of traffic signs, reactive only (W). Reactive maintenance on minor road signs limited to mandatory and regulatory signs (P). No routine and planned maintenance of road markings and roadstuds, reactive only (W). Reactive Maintenance on minor road markings limited to mandatory and regulatory (P).	Safety of road users at risk. Significant increase in backlog of maintenance. Warning and Information signs will be in poor condition. Markings and studs will become illegible. Civil parking enforcement will be more difficult.
Siding Watertabling (Cleaning) and ditch clearing. Sweeping	250	Reduction in ditch cleaning – more reliance on landowners to fulfil their obligations (P). Siding to be restricted to pre-surface treatment works and on priority 1 salting routes only. (P) No removal of excess leaves on minor roads (P).	Safety of road users at risk. Fewer parish lengthsman – reduction in parish/town involvement. Damage to fabric of highway and rate of deterioration increased due to ingress of water. Accelerated increase in deterioration in highway assets. More flooding of the highway and adjacent property.
Grass Cutting	422	Reduce urban road verge cutting from six times to twice per year (P).	Safety of road users at greater risk. Unkempt appearance of roadsides. Unit costs will increase as grass more difficult to cut. Drainage features may be blocked by long grass.

			Detrimental to wildlife.
Budget Reduction	£,000's	Policy Change (P)/Work Practice Change (W)	Consequence
Weed Control	390	No total weed control on hard areas such as footways and kerblines (P). Weed treatment will be confined to noxious weed, in preparation for resurfacing or surface dressing work and on French drains only.	Weeds could become a safety (trip) hazard. Unkempt appearance of roadsides. Accelerated deterioration of footway asset.
Winter Service	250	Reduce development work (W). Rationalise precautionary gritting routes (P).	Possible increase in time required to treat the routes.
Town Centre Management	96	Reduce funding for town centre managers (W). Discontinue funding for Red Cow railway crossing keeper (W).	Amenity value of town centres reduced. More pedestrian delays at St David's Station.
Street Lighting	700	Routine maintenance will be limited to the required 6 year electrical testing and certification. (P) Cyclic lamp changes will be extended to six years if the lamps survive the double switching brought about by part-night operation. (P) Low wattage lamp conversions will be limited due to the reductions in the Energy Conservation and Deteriorated Equipment allocations (P).	Safety of road users at greater risk Significant increase in backlog of maintenance. Potential for increase in fear of crime. Accelerated increase in deterioration of highway assets.
Public Rights of Way	230	Greater use of statutory powers (enforcement) for landowner responsibilities (W). Cut back in large bridge replacement. Reduced maintenance of less well used paths and enhanced maintenance of Regional Routes i.e. vegetation cutting (P). Reduced maintenance of permissive paths (W). Reduction in National Park Agency fees.	Safety of path users at greater risk. The proportion of paths classified as easy to use will reduce from the current 95% performance.