

## Meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3

27 November 2023

### Recommendations / Information requested

	Recommendations / Information Requested:	Response:
<b>Strategic Transport Projects</b>		
<u>Recommendations:</u>		
1	<p>The Committee acknowledged that a list of schemes is required to be ready for any current or future transport funding bids, in the event that surplus funding is available from Welsh Government towards the end of the financial year. and for identifying projects for developer contributions through Section 106 planning (S106) agreements. Nevertheless, the Committee expressed some concerns over the process for transport projects, with no form of prioritisation, even with projects that fall under the same strategy, such as Active Travel. Whilst appreciating that funding was controlled by Welsh Government, Members felt the system appeared to be the wrong way round and rather than waiting for funding to become available, a comprehensive table or plan of transport needs, solutions, and priorities within the Borough, to then use to go out and seek funding, would seem a far more effective method.</p> <p>Furthermore, Members expressed grave concerns over the future maintenance and ongoing costs for the Authority of any transport project, particularly in light of the Council's current financial situation. The Committee therefore viewed it as vital that some form of prioritisation was considered for transport projects taking account of the future financial situation of the Authority and its ability to be able to maintain these going forward.</p>	<p>All projects are periodically reviewed in light of the relevant statutory plans i.e. LDP, LTP as well as current national policies. The forthcoming Regional Transport Plan (RTP) is underway and may identify other potential projects and workstreams in 2024/25.</p> <p>The 'local' need for transport projects is a relevant factor but must also be balanced against statutory requirements and relevant policies in the up to date LDP and LTP/RTP. Officers seek to monitor completed projects in order to evaluate their use. In the case of active travel routes, monitors can be installed to measure use, however, the principle of developing active travel infrastructure is not necessarily to meet current demand it is to create future demand.</p> <p>Active travel funding is subject to strict criteria imposed by Welsh Government. The team endeavour to develop routes that effectively serve and join up communities and where there are subsequent safety benefits these are explored. All potential routes are explored and discussed with TFW and Sustrans in order to establish whether they will meet the necessary criteria to be include on the funding programme. Active travel priorities must also be focused on developing the routes that will serve the strategic sites coming through the replacement LDP, which have been included due on sustainable development principles. However, safety concerns alone are not necessarily sufficient to qualify for funding and there are different funding opportunities for this purpose subject to criteria.</p>

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	<p>In light of the above, whilst acknowledging the limitations Officers faced around funding availability from Welsh Government, they still expressed concern that some of the projects could now potentially be inappropriate and moreover were concerned that because of the funding process that is in place, the Authority could find itself bidding for projects, 'just because' the funding is available, rather than because there is a distinct need for it. With a review of the transport projects list scheduled to be undertaken in the near future, for agreement by Cabinet, the Committee recommended that the review take account of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Whether projects are now out of date given how long they have been on the list;</li> <li>➤ Whether there is clear evidence of the 'need' for the project – for example, the benefits for the community, any evidence from similar projects that clearly indicate success in a modal shift;</li> <li>➤ How projects could be prioritised, even if just within their own strategy, such as Active Travel routes – could safety be used as a criterion for these projects?</li> </ul> <p>What are the future financial implications of any project for the Authority in relation to its maintenance liability as well as any potential impact on existing infrastructure?</p>	<p>Unfortunately, any infrastructure development will incur ongoing maintenance liabilities proportionate to the scale of the project. Future strategic transport reports will now also include the revenue implications of new development.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p>In addition to this Members expressed concern that due to historical budget cuts, the Authority did not have the staffing resources and internal expertise to support some transport projects, particularly on the ability to estimate or provide any indicative costs of each scheme, which should be required to inform any decision on a project for the list or on which future</p>	<p>The officers involved with strategic transport projects are highly experienced and are able to provide estimated costs. However, projects cannot be taken forward without detailed feasibility work, design and full costings and the full implications of a project may not be known until initial feasibility work has been undertaken and are included in the report in order to attract funding for this purpose. Officers also rely on the outsourcing of work to our joint venture</p>

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	funding bids to progress. The Committee requested reassurance as to how this could be addressed going forward.	business partner Capita Redstart (now WSP), TFW and Sustrans. Unfortunately, due to budget cuts the Transport team has lost funding for 2 strategic transport posts and there will be an unavoidable consequential impact on service delivery. Managers will continue to monitor workloads and priorities within the resource envelope available.
<b>3</b>	Members highlighted that whilst the report did not deal specifically with other aspects such as parking, safety, pavements etc, these were intrinsically linked to transport projects. The Committee therefore requested reassurance that a joined-up approach was being undertaken by the Authority when these projects were considered for funding bids, and that this form part of the evidence provided to the Committee for any future report on this subject.	All transport schemes are developed jointly with operational colleagues, however, as described above it is more often the case that funding bids are made to explore the feasibility of the scheme where detailed consultation will take place.
<u>Information Requested:</u>		
<b>4</b>	To assist the Committee with future consideration of this subject, Members requested that a diagram or flowchart be provided to illustrate how the various transport projects fit under their own plans or strategies and how they then fit together.	Unfortunately, the team is not resourced to carry out this request as there is no longer a business or technical support function within the service. The relevant strategies and policy links have been included in the report for Members' benefit.
<b>5</b>	The Committee requested that the Democratic Services Manager explore whether it has been previously reported by Officers that there was a direct link between the Pyle Park and Ride scheme and the Porthcawl Metrolink project, as this was the Committee's understanding.	The Metro funding programme originally included an enlarged park and ride facility at the existing Pyle railway station. This was taken through the Welsh Government Transport Appraisal process (WelTAG) and ground investigations were carried out on site, where it transpired that the site was not suitable for a regional park and ride facility. This is for a number of reasons mainly down to flood risk, the presence of significant underground services that would require diversion and land ownership issues. As such the cost benefit ratio was considered to be very limited and this placed the whole funding

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		<p>package at risk unless an alternative project was identified. The Porthcawl Metrolink was put forward as it was included in the Local Transport Plan as a project. Also, in view of the Porthcawl regeneration proposals it was considered that the facility would add to the sustainability credentials of the emerging development. Porthcawl is also identified as a transport node on the South East Wales Metro. CCR agreed to include the Metrolink within the Metro programme and continue the funding. It should be noted that the Metrolink design includes capacity to accommodate any future park and ride or tourist service.</p> <p>The Porthcawl Metrolink is also included within the replacement Local Development Plan as well as a relocated Pyle railway station as part of the emerging strategic development site. This provides further long term opportunities to develop transport links with Porthcawl. Whilst this has also been identified as a long-term strategic transport project in the interim the current Pyle railway station remains the principal railhead serving Porthcawl and whilst development opportunities around the station are limited, this does not prevent the Council from investigating short-medium term improvements including enhanced facilities and potential bus links to the Metrolink. Any such proposals will have to be agreed with Transport for Wales which has responsibility for the station and Network Rail that has responsibility for the track.</p>