

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

22 APRIL 2015

BRIEFING NOTE ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT MOTION

THE ORIGINAL GRANT FUNDING

1. During the development of the capital programme for the period 2015/16 to 2019/20 the cabinet considered two schemes that had received grant aid during the year. These were bridges' gyratory improvements and sustainable transport improvements.
2. The schemes will be completed by Kent County Council but the grant conditions require contribution from the borough council. The bid for grant funding included maximum contributions from the council of £2.4m for the two schemes. The grant awarded is a total of £8.75m for the two schemes.
3. The sustainable transport scheme will develop cycle paths into the town centre along the River Medway. At the time of submitting the bid for funding the council committed a maximum of £1m of its own resources but expected to receive a maximum of £0.5m from other contributors making the minimum council contribution £0.5m.
4. The two schemes are reflected in the capital programme that was approved by council on 25th February 2015 as one of the budget decisions. The programme shows only the planned council contribution and assumes the funding for the sustainable transport scheme will be required in 2016/17.

CURRENT SCHEME ISSUES

5. The sustainable transport scheme involves a stretch of the river from East Farleigh to Aylesford. A large part of the costs involve the creation of a new tow path in the Tonbridge and Malling Borough area.
6. Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council has declared that it does not support the project, is not willing to contribute towards it and wish the government funding to be spent on flood protection measures instead. This has potentially called in to question whether the project can still proceed.
7. Kent County Council is seeking approval to amend the scope of the scheme so that all works take place in the Maidstone Borough area, which will reduce the costs of the scheme to £1.5m and the council's contribution to around £500,000. The cycle path proposed is between Allington Lock and Teston Bridge or Barming.

8. It is not clear yet whether such a significant change would require the project to be reappraised by government. A meeting of the Project Manager and stakeholders to explore these issues is planned for the 1st May 2015.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

9. The medium term financial strategy for capital, as agreed by council on 25 February 2015, incorporates principles of scheme prioritisation. Available resources from under spend of previous schemes are directed to the highest priority schemes and not earmarked for further work related to the scheme that under spent. This principle ensures that schemes are funded in priority order.
10. The proposal to earmark resources as set out in the motion would be contrary to the principles agreed in the medium term financial strategy unless the further work that the motion suggests was identified as the highest priority scheme requiring capital funding.