

Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

25th January 2022

Transforming Cities Fund update

For Review and Consultation

Portfolio Holder: Cllr R Bryan, Highways, Travel and Environment

Local Councillor(s): Cllr Janet Dover, Cllr Maria Roe, Cllr Shane Bartlett, Cllr David Morgan, Cllr Mike Parkes, Cllr Cathy Lugg, Cllr Julie Robinson, Cllr Rod Adkins, Cllr Andrew Parry. Cllr Bill Pipe, Cllr Andrew Starr, Cllr Alex Brenton, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Ryan Holloway

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

That the Committee notes the progress that has been made on the significant Transforming Cities Fund programme.

Reason for Recommendation:

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In 2020 Dorset Council, jointly with BCP Council, secured £79 million of external funding from the Department for Transport through the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) programme.
- 1.2 At the Place and Resource Scrutiny Committee, December 2020, it was agreed that a regular update on the Transforming Cities Fund programme would be provided.

- 1.3 While elements of the infrastructure being delivered through TCF are controversial with some people, the benefits are well evidenced and align with national and local priorities.
- 1.4 This report highlights the significant progress that has been made in delivering the individual infrastructure projects that make up the TCF, including two rounds of public consultation, local elected member engagement and delivery of schemes. This includes the Leigh Road scheme in Wimborne that is nearing completion.
- 1.5 This report also notes the impact that Covid has had on the delivery of the programme and outlines the process put in place by the Department for Transport for requesting changes to the previously agreed programme as a result of these impacts.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The total value of external grant received by BCP from the DfT to date is £44.8 m against the spend profile agreed with DfT. Note that actual spend is running behind that originally agreed with the DfT for reasons outlined earlier in this report.
- 2.2 Dorset Council have to date drawn down £3,816,935 of this for our active schemes on Leigh Road and Ringwood Road and for scheme design and preparation work on all other schemes.
- 2.3 Dorset committed to provide match funding for the Transforming Cities Fund programme from local Section 106 funds, other external funding and the Local Transport Plan (LTP). Expenditure of Section 106 match funding is on track with the Leigh Road as is external match funding which has been secured through Sustrans also for Leigh Road.
- 2.4 Match funding from Dorset's LTP has not met the intended profile due to resource issues, with priority given to progressing the main body of work, and Covid impact on intended workstreams. These are getting underway now with a workplace grant scheme due to commence in the new year and our LTP match spending profile will be reprofiled alongside the review of delivery programme expected in the new year. This will also take into account other, directly related, investment in the TCF area such as the expansion of the Beryl Bike scheme into Ferndown and Wimborne. It is not expected that this reprofiling will have an undue impact on other projects.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

- 3.1 This investment enables the delivery of high-quality infrastructure within the Dorset Council area required to promote an increased uptake of safe, active travel modes for utility and leisure trips. This will result in improved physical and mental health outcomes for people shifting to those modes for their regular, short trips. Air quality will be improved through reduced car use.
- 3.2 Public Health Dorset were a key partner and supporter of the TCF bid and will be actively involved in the project delivery phase. Project design will include assessment using tools such as 'Healthy Streets' to maximise the benefits to public health.

4. Climate implications

- 4.1 The schemes proposed are aimed at increasing the amount of sustainable, low carbon, travel and will form part of the ongoing efforts to reduce carbon emissions from transport.
- 4.2 New materials and methods of construction are being explored for these schemes, and others within the Dorset Council area, to reduce the environmental impacts of the construction process itself.

5. Other Implications

- 5.1 Additional resource has been secured for the Dorset delivery team to enable this large programme to be progressed. In addition, WSP have provided a significant support for project management, consultation and design. We will continue to monitor the need for staffing resource and seek to engage the necessary support when needed.
- 5.2 All works will contribute to capital assets and are therefore chargeable to the TCF award.

6. Risk Assessment

- 6.1 Programme risks are regularly monitored, updated and mitigated where possible. The top risks currently identified are;
 - Increases in material prices
 - Objection to corridor proposals
 - Programme delivery extending beyond March 2023

- Statutory undertakers unable to provide resource at the necessary time
- Coronavirus COVID 19 outbreak

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.1 The decision to delegate authority to the CGB for TCF programme decisions will not have any adverse impact on protected groups.
- 7.2 Individual scheme proposals and packages within the overall TCF package are subject to EQIA assessment to ensure that groups with protected characteristics are properly considered in the design process.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1:
Transforming Cities Fund December 2021 Newsletter

9. Background and Context

- 9.1 There have been 3 previous reports to committee or cabinet on the Transforming Cities Fund: Cabinet in November 2019; Cabinet in May 2020 and Place and Resource Scrutiny Committee in December 2020.
- 9.2 This report is in response to a request made at the Place and Resource Scrutiny Committee, December 2020, for a regular update on the Transforming Cities Fund programme of work.
- 9.3 On 11 March 2020 we were informed that, jointly with BCP, we had been awarded a total of £79 million of external funding from the DfT which had to be spent over a 4 year period with all delivery expected in years 2 - 4.
- 9.4 In May 2020 Cabinet approved the draft 3 year delivery programme already set and approved by DfT in the Strategic Outline Business Case. Cabinet also approved delegated authority to deliver the programme and for scrutiny to be provided through the regular updates to the Councils Governance Board (CGB).
- 9.5 Delivering this amount of infrastructure over a 3 year period is challenging so governance, assurance frameworks, project management and communications strategy were set up to ensure that the project was delivered within budget and set timescales. The Assurance Framework agreed with the DfT is included in the background papers.
- 9.6 Governance included the creation of the Councils Governance Board (CGB) which includes portfolio holders and key local members from both councils alongside senior officers. Authority for making decisions relating

to the TCF was delegated to the CGB. The CGB have been meeting every two months throughout the TCF.

- 9.7 Three rounds of public consultation were undertaken during 2020/21.
- Initial Engagement (11th November to 21st December 2020)
 - Cycle Corridors (24th February to 31st March 2021)
 - Sustainable Travel Corridors (10th May to 14th June 2021)
- 9.8 Due to covid restrictions these were necessarily virtual rather than face-to-face sessions. Where comments were received regarding the detail of the proposal on any scheme section they have been recorded and are being considered by the design team in the development of individual scheme proposals. Points that were in overall objection or support of the principal of spending on active travel were noted and recorded.
- 9.9 A recent letter from Baroness Vere of Norbiton in October 2021, to Portfolio holders of lead TCF authorities, restated the governments focus on active travel and warned against watering down projects or deviating from the core principle of the package that had been agreed with the DfT.
- 9.10 Regular meetings are taking place between local councillors and the design team. This includes going through individual scheme proposals and has been completed on several scheme sections leading to useful, local, feedback on specific issues. We will continue with these sessions with the relevant local members as other sections are progressed by the design team.
- 9.11 Several corridor sections within BCP and Dorset have received a large number of comments or objections to specific elements of a proposal. In these cases, additional face-to-face engagement with the public has taken place or has been programmed (subject to covid restrictions). In Dorset this includes the section of Ringwood road between Church Road and the Victoria Road/New Road junction. The design team are working to respond to the issues raised through the previous round of consultation to provide a revised scheme for engagement which is currently scheduled for April 2022 (subject to Covid restrictions).
- 9.12 The Dorset scheme on Leigh Road and Wimborne Road West was the first TCF scheme to commence construction. This is a large scheme that is now mostly complete with final completion expected early this year.
- 9.13 A second scheme has now commenced on Ringwood Road, between Longham mini-roundabouts and Glenmoor Road. This is expected to complete around March 2022.

- 9.14 The TCF Newsletter is provided to project stakeholders at regular intervals. The latest edition is provided at Appendix 1 and provides further information on progress in DC and BCP for information.
- 9.15 Design and engagement with members continues for the remaining corridor sections at the appropriate time.
- 9.16 The funding criteria required scheme completion by March 2023. The delivery team are increasingly aware that delivery of some schemes may slip beyond the intended timeframe due to the impacts of Covid on the cost and availability of materials and due to the introduction of revised design criteria from the DfT. The Department for Transport are aware of these issues and acknowledge that this is not peculiar to Dorset. They have said that Dorset and BCP are doing well (compared to other TCF areas) and commended us for moving forward with delivery despite the challenges faced over the last 18 months.
- 9.17 The DfT have now provided Dorset and BCP with the ability to submit change requests for cost increases and delivery extensions due to Covid and design issues and have encouraged us to consider that process.
- 9.18 A review of the delivery programme will take place early in 2022 to inform any change requests to the DfT. Any submission will be agreed by the CGB.
- 9.19 Dorset expects to commence further sections on Wimborne Road East and West early in 2022.
- 9.20 Background Document 1.
Place and Resources Overview Committee minutes December 2020
- 9.21 Background Document 2.
Transforming Cities Fund Local Assurance Framework (final)
Nb. Confidential document that can be provided to Dorset Council elected members on request.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.