

Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

30 March 2023

Transforming Cities Fund update

For Review and Consultation

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

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

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

- 1.1 To inform the Place and Resource Scrutiny Committee of progress to date regarding the Department for Transport (DfT) based Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) award, the associated DfT Year End Report for 2021/22 and Stakeholders Newsletter with details of work to date and progress into the next year.

Recommendation:

- 1.2 The Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee comments on the progress to date regarding the TCF programme delivery, with questions and comments being considered for the remaining programme.

Reason for Recommendation:

- 1.3 Cabinet has delegated authority to the Council Governance Board (CGB) under the Assurance Framework for Transforming Cities Fund, to allow maximum flexibility in meeting the strict DfT timeline for delivery and ensure that the authority is best placed to progress scheme delivery at pace. Place and Resource Scrutiny Committee previously requested that a regular update should be provided and this report along with the associated DfT End of Year report and Stakeholders Newsletter is designed to inform the Committee of progress.

2. Report

- 2.1 On 11 March 2020, BCP and Dorset Councils were awarded £79 Million by the Department for Transport (DfT) as part of the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) programme to build a new network of cycling, walking and bus infrastructure across the region. Of this total £14.25m is allocated to Dorset Council schemes. The purpose of this report is a year-end update providing information on progress in the first two full years of the TCF programme and is for information purposes only. The TCF SE Dorset City Region is shown in Appendix A and the Corridors are shown in Appendix C.
- 2.2 The DfT require Quarterly Proformas to be submitted and an End of Year Report. Regular quarterly meetings are held with the DfT, including attendance from Programme Management Board (PMB) members and the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO).
- 2.3 Representatives from DfT attended a site visit with officers and Cabinet Members from BCP Council and Dorset Council, the DLEP and key stakeholder representatives on 30th March 2022, including a tour of recently completed schemes, which was well received.
- 2.4 The Governance Framework has been in operation since February 2020, enabling the programme to continue at pace. As the programme is a joint undertaking with Dorset Council, Councillors and Officers from both authorities are involved at each level of governance and delivery. The Governance Framework is included at the end of this report as Appendix D.

- 2.5 Over the first two years of the TCF programme, COVID-19 had a major impact both locally and nationally. The TCF Programme Management Team (PMT) was however fully engaged in the delivery process and communicating effectively throughout this time. There are numerous 'virtual' meetings ongoing including BCP and DC Councillors Briefing sessions/workshops, bi-monthly CGB and Programme Steering Group (PSG) and Stakeholder meetings, along with regular communications, consultation, and other programme meetings. Since the start of 2022, as guidance has progressively been relaxed and removed, face-to-face meetings and engagement has now commenced where appropriate.
- 2.6 Updates relating to Programme and Delivery are reported to the PMB and CGB on a quarterly basis. Delivery Teams are established for the corridors across the programme. Within that, a reporting structure is identified, along with the scope of works, lead responsibilities, consultation, construction, programme management and delivery, budget and resource requirements. A Procurement Strategy has been developed and is in place.
- 2.7 A Risk Register highlighting the Top Ten Risks across the programme is presented to the PMB, mitigation is discussed where necessary, and reported back to the PMT for action. PMT hold bi-monthly workshops to assess the risks. The Top Ten Risks are reported to CGB meetings to fully appraise the board of the risks and the mitigation proposed. Top risks continue to relate to programme finance, objections to schemes and delivery resource.
- 2.8 Since March 2020, significant progress has been made, with plans for the entire programme in place, and sustainable travel improvements at several locations either complete or underway.
- 2.9 Highlights of new sustainable infrastructure now in place and being used across southeast Dorset include:
- a. A 2.3km stretch of new walking and cycle paths, three new crossings and bus stop improvements on Wimborne Road West and Leigh Road from the Canford Bottom roundabout to the junction with Brook Road.
 - b. 2.3km of completed walking and cycling paths on Wimborne Road East and West between Canford Bottom Roundabout and Trickett's Cross Roundabout.

- c. A new shared footway/cycleway and improved bus stops and junctions on Ringwood Road between Longham mini roundabouts and Church Road.
 - d. Walking and cycling improvements through Upper Gardens in Bournemouth, from the Square, along the south-west side of the gardens to the entrance on Princes of Wales Road – see video.
 - e. New and upgraded cycle paths and footpaths, crossings, wayfinding and lighting through Kings Park from Harewood Avenue to Ashley Road.
 - f. Cycle and walking improvements linking Rigler Road to Hinchliffe Road and Blandford Close via Holes Bay.
 - g. Major walking and cycling improvements on two junctions on Fernside Road and Garland Road in Poole.
 - h. A series of bus, cycling and walking improvements in north Poole along Queen Anne Drive/Magna Road between Gravel Hill and Knighton Lane.
 - i. A new cycle track along Whitelegg Way and walking, cycling and bus improvements around Redhill Roundabout and Wimborne Road slip road.
- 2.10 The expansion of the Beryl Bike rental service in Christchurch with 275 bikes now available to hire at 50 new locations. The service has also launched in the Dorset area with 122 new bikes available at 50+ locations across Wimborne, Colehill, West Parley, West Moors and Ferndown.
- 2.11 Further details are contained in the Stakeholder Newsletter recently sent out, as shown in Appendix B, which demonstrates progress to date and into the future financial year.
- 2.12 In the last report to the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee, January 2022, key programme risks were stated as;
- Increases in material prices
 - Objection to corridor proposals
 - Programme delivery extending beyond March 2023

- 2.13 A combination of the escalating global costs of construction materials and labour due to the pandemic, as well as rising fuel costs and inflation, have had a considerable impact on the SED TCF programme. In addition, changes to national design standards for cycling infrastructure that were introduced in July 2020, four months after the Transforming Cities Fund award, have raised the specification and quality of facilities required. Although welcome, they have significantly added to design and construction costs and have also resulted in longer construction periods due to the complexity of the schemes.
- 2.14 These unforeseen financial increases, which are outside of BCP Council and Dorset Council's control, mean the SED TCF budget is no longer sufficient to cover the full network of cycle, walking and bus infrastructure improvements originally planned.
- 2.15 Following a comprehensive review of the six planned sustainable travel routes, revised plans have been submitted to the Department for Transport recommending the improvements that can continue to be constructed and funded through southeast Dorset's current TCF allocation and those that will need to be completed once further funding has been secured. We expect to agree the revised SED TCF programme, including an extension to the original March 2023 delivery timeframe, with central government within the next few weeks and will provide a more detailed programme update to members and stakeholders, when we will be in a position to confirm the planned next steps for each section of the network. As part of this process, the track record of continued and sustained delivery in difficult circumstances by the southeast Dorset TCF team has been highlighted to the DfT.
- 2.16 We are committed to our original ambition of creating a fully connected network of sustainable travel routes across southeast Dorset and are actively working to secure additional funding to facilitate this.

3. Communications, Consultation, Stakeholder and Public Engagement

- 3.1 It is recognised that a key element of the TCF process from the outset was the branding, communications, consultation and engagement with stakeholders and the public. A Communications Plan, Strategy and Protocol are in place, approved by CGB. BCP Council have been leading on proactive and operational communications and media activity supported by Dorset Council. In line with DfT requirements, the TCF branding is at the forefront of all communications and consultation.

- 3.2 Construction has continued throughout 2021 and 2022, following the first scheme, Leigh Road in Dorset that commenced in January 2021, fully supported by a comprehensive comms programme. The stakeholder newsletter details schemes completed or under construction.
- 3.3 Trip End grants for Businesses is currently going through the application and award process.
- 3.4 Other schemes delivered with comms support include Wayfinding and the expansion of the Beryl Bike Hire scheme to Dorset.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The local authority is liable for the local contributions as detailed in the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). This equates to an LTP Contribution of £6.1M overall (£950k Dorset Council) phased over the life of the Programme, to deliver schemes locally that continue to promote walking, cycling and bus usage, complementing the TCF Programme. In addition, there are third party contributions that equate to just under £15M included in the SOBC across Dorset Council and BCP Council.

5. Environmental Implications

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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. Efforts have been taken to increase greenspace where possible and to introduce more biodiversity by wildflower seeding new sections of verge and introducing trees where possible.

6. Well-being and Health Implications

- 6.1 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.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1 Considering the timescales and the shared delivery with Dorset Council across the programme, the governance needs to be agile to enable delivery at pace. Taking this into account responsibility was delegated to the CGB by cabinet and this has been working well.

8. Risk Assessment

- 8.1 No decision is being asked for at this committee. Programme risks are monitored as part of the delivery of TCF and key risks have been identified within the body of the report.

9. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 9.1 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.

10. Appendices

Appendix A – TCF area

Appendix B – TCF newsletter December 2022

Appendix C – TCF corridors and progress

Appendix D – TCF governance framework

11. Background papers

DfT Year End Report for 2021/22 (confidential report available to members via email request)