

Decision Report
Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee



Forward Plan Reference:

Decision Date – 19th December 2023

Key Decision – Yes

Local Transport Plan – Programme Timescales and Governance

Executive Member(s): Councillor Mike Rigby Executive Lead Member for Transport and Digital

Local Member(s) and Division: n/a

Lead Officer (s): David Carter Service Director for Infrastructure and Transport

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Summary

- 1) Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) have a statutory duty under the Transport Act 2000 (as amended by Local Transport Act 2008) to prepare a Local Transport Plan (LTP) which consists of a policy document and proposals for the implementation of those policies.
- 2) The Department for Transport (DfT) has announced the requirement for LTAs to renew their LTP and have developed new LTP guidance (publication date to be confirmed). At the time of writing, the DfT is asking LTAs to publish (at the very least) their high-level LTP vision and objectives, underpinned by a list of interventions, in Summer 2024. This will be followed by the adoption of a full plan by the end of 2024/early 2025.
- 3) This paper seeks agreement from The Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee on the proposed timescales outlined in Appendix A, as well as the internal governance process outlined in Appendix B.
- 4) There is a strategic relationship between the LTP and Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS must specify (among other matters) the development plan documents which, when prepared, will comprise part of the development plan for the area including the Local Plan, Minerals Plan, Waste Plan, and Neighbourhood Plans.

- 5) To achieve 'SMART' LTP outcomes as required by government and to deliver for the residents and businesses of Somerset, there needs to be a strong link with planning. For example, levels of transport provision or usage that is viable for the place are interdependent with spatial planning. Placemaking is a holistic approach and requires both plans to be aligned to achieve significant change and meet objectives such as carbon reduction.
- 6) Where possible, we will develop a shared evidence base (settlement role and function, Landscape Character Assessment, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Transport Baseline and Modelling etc) while recognising that the two plans are being delivered on separate timelines. This will ensure value for money is achieved and we are working towards the same objectives by joining up the system. The relationship between both workstreams is reflected in the shared governance processes outlined in Appendix B.

Recommendations

- 7) The Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee resolves to:
 - a) Approve the Local Transport Plan programme timescales outlined in Appendix A
 - b) Approve the governance process, as set out in Appendix B

Reasons for recommendations

- 8) To meet the statutory requirement to prepare a Local Transport Plan.
- 9) To ensure Somerset has a Local Transport Plan in place when the DfT begins the multi-year funding settlement process.

Other options considered

- 10) There is no alternative option to meet the statutory requirement.

Background

Overview of the Local Transport Plan

- 11) The DfT announced the requirement for authorities to renew their LTP and have developed new LTP guidance, the publication of which has been delayed. In the interim, they are gathering intelligence to understand where local authorities are in their LTP journey.

- 12) A key driver behind the above requirement is the summer 2024 spending review. It is understood that the DfT will use the evidence base supplied by LTAs to seek a multi-year funding package from Treasury which might cover a 3-5 year period; and to understand the potential carbon impacts of the funding programme. Funding allocations have yet to be considered and will be dependent on the outcome of the LTP process.
- 13) We are waiting for all the LTP guidance from the DfT, the publication date of which is currently unknown.
- 14) The LTP will communicate Somerset's vision for 2050 and set the high-level pathway to achieving that vision between now, 2030 and 2050. There are opportunities for alignment between policy areas such as planning, economic development, infrastructure, transport, active travel, parking, public health and climate mitigation/ resilience. Alignment will be coordinated through the proposed governance structure, which sets out particular arrangements for officers to work together on the LTP and Local Plan through the Working Group(s).
- 15) LTPs will need to reference a range of sub-strategies, some mandatory (Bus Service Improvement Plans, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans and Electric Vehicle Charging Strategies) and others based on mode or activity. It has been stated in current guidance that if there is no LTP policy, it is unlikely that authorities will receive significant funding. LTPs will therefore have a crucial role in demonstrating the required evidence base for funding for LCWIPs, which will in turn inform future master-planning exercises for our key settlements.
- 16) We are adopting a 'place based' approach to Somerset's LTP and Local Plan development, which recognises that a one size fits all strategy does not work for our unique communities across the county. This approach will enable us to deliver the right interventions for different place types, with an understanding that the needs of people vary across Somerset. The outcome is to create well-designed places for people that are more resilient to the impacts of climate change, giving people a choice about how they travel and improving overall connectivity.
- 17) The LTP programme is engaging with multiple strategic partners, including the NHS, to ensure the plan is not just looking at transport in isolation. To deliver change, the LTP needs to make linkages across a complex system that includes public health, social care, planning, environment, active travel, rights of way, road safety etc.
- 18) **Local Transport Plan Outline Programme:**

- Summer/Autumn 2023: Initial member and key stakeholder engagement.
- Autumn/Winter 2023/2024: High-level transport vision
- Spring 2024: Consultation on draft Local Transport Plan
- Summer 2024 (subject to national guidance): Carbon quantification of future policy impacts and potential costs and supply evidence base to Department for Transport
- Winter 2024/ Spring 2025: Adoption of new Local Transport Plan (subject to national guidance)
- Consultation and Engagement at key stages

Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan

19) The recommendation of approving the work programme will help achieve the Council Plan 2023-27 vision and priorities, in particular the priority for a greener, more sustainable Somerset which notes the importance of reducing carbon emissions from transport. The LTP is one of a number of strategic documents Somerset Council will need to produce to deliver the priorities set out in the Council Plan.

Financial and Risk Implications

20) The DfT allocated a grant of £178,571 to all Transport Authorities to support the delivery of LTPs. At the time of writing, spend to date is £161,775.13. This includes carbon baselining/analysis, LTP evidence base and strategy development and commissioning of stages B and C of the statutory Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Of the original DfT grant, £16,795.87 remains (not factoring in the 5% Professional Services contract administration fee which now applies).

21) For comparison, Transport Authorities typically spend in the region of £300k to deliver all aspects of an LTP, with cost breakdowns of 50-60% transport planning, 25 - 30% carbon and 15- 20% SEA.

22) There is a significant risk that additional external resource will be required in 2024/2025 due to a lack of resource in the Transport Policy Team, and more widely within the authority. One solution is to commission external consultants to cover the gap, but this comes at a cost.

23) To date, we have tried to keep tasks in-house to reduce consultancy costs and stretch the DfT grant further. If consultants are required to deliver more than anticipated due to SC not having sufficient resource in the New Year, this could

potentially add £65k - £100k to the total. This would leave a significant shortfall if we were unable to mitigate risk around internal resources/expertise and rely solely on DfT grant funding.

24) An additional sum of £89,000 was allocated from internal transport budgets for 23/24, which would have mitigated this risk. However, in the current economic climate, this money has been offered up as a saving. This amount was in addition to the DfT grant of £178,571.

25) Somerset's negotiating position with the DfT will be significantly weakened if we are unable to deliver a LTP in line with national requirements, potentially reducing the amount of inward investment we can attract. As a new Unitary Authority, the LTP is also strategically important as it is one of the mechanisms needed to deliver carbon reduction, improved accessibility and a resilient and reliable transport network.

26) The key risks of not approving the programme and governance proposals are as follows:

- DfT guidance significantly departs from current communications from them, however, WSP were contracted to write national guidance and are working with us on Somerset's LTP,
- Failure to maximise the opportunity to attract future grant funding for transport measures,
- It would suggest that the council is not actively progressing with the Local Transport Plan and unable to meet national timescales, which may create a reputational risk and a reduction in grant funding support from Government,
- A lack of work programme and timescales prevents us from clearly communicating our plans to local communities and key stakeholders,
- We are unable to meet our statutory obligations.

Likelihood	2	Impact	3	Risk Score	5
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Legal Implications

27) The Council's Constitution describes how the Council will discharge its responsibilities, including responsibilities for the preparation and adoption of the Local Transport Plan, which must be considered and endorsed by Full Council, prior to adoption.

HR Implications

28) There are no immediate HR implications.

Other Implications:

Equalities Implications

29) The recommendation is to approve a work programme of a statutory document and as such there are no direct Equalities implications of this report. The individual Local Transport Plan documents will undergo their own Equalities Impact Assessment as part of their development.

Community Safety Implications

30) There are no immediate Community Safety Implications.

Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

31) The Local Transport Plan will specifically address climate change mitigation and adaptation and aim to create more sustainable places and transport systems in the future.

Health and Safety Implications

32) There are no specific health and safety implications.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

33) There are no immediate Health and Wellbeing implications.

Social Value

34) There are no immediate Social Value implications.

Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

35) Scrutiny have been consulted as part of the Transport and Placemaking Policy Principles engagement and provisionally agreed their involvement in LTP development.

Background Papers

36)None

Appendices

- Appendix A: Local Transport Plan Programme Timescales
- Appendix B: Local Transport Plan Governance Process

Report Sign-Off (if appropriate)

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	David Clark	27/09/2023
Communications	Peter Elliott	06/12/2023
Finance & Procurement	Nicola Hix	06/12/2023
Workforce	Alyn Jones	26/09/2023
Asset Management	Oliver Woodhams	22/09/2023
Executive Director / Senior Manager	Mickey Green	30/11/2023
Strategy & Performance	Alyn Jones	26/09/2023
Executive Lead Member	Cllr Mike Rigby Cllr Ros Wyke Cllr Dixie Darch	30/11/2023
Consulted:		
Local Division Members	n/a	
Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr Diogo Rodrigues Opposition Spokesperson for Transport and Digital Cllr Mark Healey MBE Opposition Lead Member for Prosperity, Assets and Development	06/12/2023
Scrutiny Chair	Cllr Martin Dimery Chair of Scrutiny Committee - Climate and Place	25/09/2023