

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

15 November 2023

Delegated Budget Schemes – Progress Review

Recommendations

That the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes:

1. The progress made against agreed proposals set out in the June 2020 Cabinet paper on the new Delegated Budget Scheme Process.
2. The current process for delivery of Delegated Budget Schemes.
3. The proposed new guidelines for Delegated Budget Schemes and next steps.

1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 Communities Overview and Scrutiny conducted a review of the Highways Delegated Budget scheme in 2019 which included a member workshop which focused on potential solutions to support improvements to the delivery and communications with Members on Delegated Budget scheme delivery. As an outcome of the review a Report entitled Delegated Budget Scheme – Covid response and Long-Term Scheme Proposals was presented to Cabinet on 11th June 2020. The report set out a number of suggested improvements to to the Delegated Budget scheme.
- 1.2 The overall aim of the proposed improvements was to reduce the continued annual underspend and deliver a high percentage of agreed works within the financial year. Pre-2020 an average of £500k of delegated budget schemes were being delivered each year. The teams are now delivering over £2m per year of delegated budget works and are targeting to achieve over 50% of current delegated budget funding delivered in this financial year. **Appendix 1** provides data and charts demonstrating the increased delivery.
- 1.3 The table on the following page lists the improvement actions agreed at the 2020 Cabinet meeting as well as setting out the progress and next steps for further improvement.

Improvement	Action taken	Next Steps
Development of a dedicated internal website for members to have easy access to details of the schemes agreed for delivery	A website was set up on April 2022 via SharePoint to provide Members with information about delegated budgets, the process and financial updates. It includes information on the budget allocation, types of schemes and examples of completed schemes, Area Surveyor contact details, and a monthly update which includes each member's budget, agreed list of schemes and progress towards delivery.	<p>Feedback from members is that more information about delivery timescales, delivery dates and costs need to be included in the regular reports. These are being added as available.</p> <p>Members have also asked for the monthly reports to be personalised to each member and not part of the large spreadsheet covering other Member schemes.</p>
Regular updates to members on progress of their schemes	The minor works team now sends out regular email updates to all members which includes a copy of the report showing where in the process their scheme is. Currently this shows as 'Inception', 'Design', 'Estimation' or 'Delivery'.	As above, Members have asked for more detail on the report, especially estimated delivery dates and a financial update on spend/ committed funding and balance.
Elimination of the £6k de-minimus enabling members to agree smaller scale works providing greater flexibility and more schemes that could be delivered in-year.	The limit was lifted and members have a list of minor works and small maintenance schemes that can be delivered with their Delegated Budget. This has led to a higher number of small schemes being developed many of which have been delivered 'in-year'.	Develop a "shopping list" of works that members can choose, with indicative costs has been produced (goes live November 2023). This will help inform members of likely costs associated with schemes and assist them in working with area surveyors to agree works.
Inclusion of a deadline for agreeing delegated budget works early in the financial year with highways teams	A deadline for agreeing a list of schemes with the Area Surveyor has not yet been set as it was felt that the team needed to focus on the backlog of works.	Now that the backlog has been substantially cleared the recommendation is to set a spring deadline for every member to reach agreement with their Area Surveyor on the schemes for the current financial year.

Improvement	Action taken	Next Steps
Development of a match funding scheme enabling delivery of larger or more complex schemes and directly involving local communities	Details of the Highways Community Action Grant have been confirmed with the portfolio holder and the first pilot scheme was delivered in Henley-in-Arden.	The team are developing a website page so that the information about the scheme and the application forms can be shared with members, parishes, town council's and other community groups.
Developing the highways locality officer role (now Area Surveyors) to include responsibility for managing the Delegated Budget schemes with their local members.	A consultation was held with staff on a revised job description resulting in changes to the role being implemented in 2020. Area Surveyors now take on responsibility for agreeing Delegated Budget works with their members and are the point of contact for members on Delegated Budget works.	Further work is being done to improve relationships between members and their respective Area Surveyors so that there is a clear understanding of their roles in supporting members to get Delegated Budget works delivered.
Establish a dedicated minor works team to improve delivery and ownership of the delivery phase of schemes	A minor works team was established in September 2020 with Paul Taylor as the team leader. The team's role is to oversee delegated budget works to ensure timely completion and assist in the design and planning of delegated budget schemes where required. Additional technician resources have been added to the team to improve the pace of delivery and the communications with members. This includes one member of the team that pulls together the updates for members and the SharePoint site.	Further work is being done to strengthen the team and the processes used to communicate works with our contractor Balfour Beatty. The aim is to speed up scheme delivery timescales and provide better information on delivery dates to members.

Improvement	Action taken	Next Steps
Resolving the backlog of schemes and the reducing the amount of unspent delegated budget capital funding.	The backlog of schemes has significantly reduced with very few if any pre-2020 scheme remaining undelivered. Unspent capital in the scheme pre-2018 has been used to develop the Highways Community Action Grant and to support the School Zone Repainting scheme.	Delivery now stands at over £2m per year and the backlog of works to be completed has been significantly reduced. Members will be required to agree projects within a given timeframe, further work is taking place to improve the pace of delivery with highways contractors to ensure more works are delivered in-year, where the projects are committed to, by the member, on time.

Delegated Budget Process

- 1.4 Feedback from members has also indicated that it would be helpful for the process around delegated budgets to be clarified. This will help members to understand their role in the development and commitment of delegated budget spend but also on what should be expected of officers in planning for and communicating delegated budget delivery. The team has worked with the communications team following instruction from the Portfolio Holder to develop a simple diagram that demonstrates the process for the delivery of Delegated Budget schemes showing the roles and responsibilities of both local members and officers. The Portfolio Holder is intending to share this with members in a future communication following on from the proposed improvements in this report being taken to Cabinet for adoption.

2.0 Proposed further improvements

Shopping List

- 2.1 A brochure of estimated works costs has been developed and is included as Appendix 2. This is intended to give local members a basic understanding of approximate works costs when first considering schemes. This will assist members when working with their Area Surveyor to identify and agree schemes for delegated budget spend as well as help to set expectations on costs and delivery timescales. There is a caveat that all schemes need to be investigated further to provide accurate estimates, which will proceed to design and delivery if it is no more than 10% greater than the quote obtained from the shopping list.

Deadline for Engagement

- 2.2 In practice, the development of Delegated Budget schemes should be a continuous process where the Area Surveyor and the Member have regular

conversations about current year schemes but also about potential schemes for future years. In this way each spring the Member and the Area Surveyor should be in a position where they have an agreed list of potential schemes making it easy for the member to then commit their Delegated Budget funding spend for that financial year.

- 2.3 The June 2020 Cabinet report indicated that there should be a deadline near the start of the financial year, before which councillors must commit to works to ensure there is sufficient time for the development, planning and delivery of works in that financial year. The recommendation is members work with their Area Surveyor to develop their delegated schemes during the fourth quarter of each financial year, so they are ready to commit to a list of schemes by the end of May each year. At times this might mean members committing to scheme delivery even if the scheme details are not fully developed and only estimated costs are available.
- 2.4 This will enable an advanced programme of works to be created that the Minor Works Team can then work closely with Balfour Beatty so the contractor can ensure sufficient resources are available and outline delivery timescales can be set against each scheme. This should enable the delivery teams to provide better estimates of delivery timescales against every scheme by June so that member reports can include delivery dates or estimated delivery quarters.
- 2.5 Any works not committed to by the end of May cannot be guaranteed to be delivered in year and may need to roll forward into the following financial year for delivery. It is recommended that the May deadline is reiterated to members each spring with an email from the portfolio holder to all members.

Member Engagement

- 2.6 Critical to setting a deadline for committing to works is good engagement between members and their Area Surveyor. Area Surveyors will be in contact with Members to agree regular diarised meetings throughout the year.
- 2.7 In the June 2020 report to Cabinet, it was recommended there should be a "move away from carrying any delegated budget into future years". It is proposed that members will no longer be allowed to hold more than the equivalent of one year's budget of unallocated funding beyond 31st May each year. This allows new schemes to be funded after this date, but which may not be delivered until the next financial year.

Communications

- 2.8 One of the key complaints from local members about Delegated Budget scheme is the lack of information provided on delivery timescales. In some cases, members have not been made aware of when works will take place before Balfour's is on site delivering the work. It is important that members have the opportunity to communicate with residents well ahead of advance work warning signs going up on site so that there is an opportunity for the

work to be highlighted in parish, town council, ward or other community newsletters.

2.9 At a minimum, officers will:

- Ensure estimated start dates are input into the monthly Delegated Budget reports to give members an idea of when works are likely to take place.
- Email members at least two weeks in advance of works starting on site to confirm the start date and extent of the works may impact on residents such as road closures or traffic restrictions.
- Ensure advanced warning signs are put out on the works site two weeks in advance of works starting. These signs will also clearly identify the works as being 'Delegated Budget' works being delivered by Warwickshire County Council.
- Provide photographs and updates during the works so that members can use these to keep residents informed or share positive news stories with their communities.

2.10 Communications between Area Surveyors and Members is key and County Highways will ensure that all members are offered at least four face-to-face meetings every year with their Area Surveyor as well as regular MS Teams meetings as required to ensure that members are update on Delegated Budget projects. This regular contact with member is critical the Delegate Budget process.

Changes in Delivery Teams

2.11 In order to deliver on some of the commitments above, the team have been exploring ways to improve the process and workflow of delegated works being designed to hand over to Balfour's for delivery. At present, Balfour Beatty (BB) is contracted to deliver works within 12 months of receiving the order but has a local arrangement to deliver within 6 months. This allows them to batch multiple small works in similar locations together, to provide WCC the economies of scale and efficiency of costs. To enable better more accurate provision of delivery dates for schemes the processes set out in the highways contract with Balfour's will need to be changed.

2.12 BB has expressed a desire to work in partnership with us to improve the pace of delivery on delegated budget and to provide delivery dates based on early receipt of a draft programme of Delegated Budget schemes each spring. This will require an additional dedicated planning/programme manager, but it is likely an agreement can be reached on how to resolve this over the remaining two years of the BB's contract.

2.13 County Highways will start the retendering process for the highways maintenance contract in 2024 which will result in a new contract being in place in May 2026. The intention is to define Delegated Budget works in the new contract as a specific type of work with contracted timescales for delivery.

3.0 Financial Implications

- 3.1 The key financial implication of these proposed changes is to reduce the amount of unspent delegated budget capital funding.
- 3.2 The adoption of the changes set out in the June 2020 Cabinet paper have also had the impact of reducing the unspent funding as delivery of delegated budgets schemes in-year has more than doubled. The further proposals being recommended in this paper will further strengthen the ability to deliver schemes in-year.

4.0 Environmental Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct environmental impacts identified from these proposals; however, members have the option to choose works such as tree maintenance, tree planting or highway verge maintenance that could support or enhance our natural environment as well as enhancement to active travel provision. Well managed and well maintained highway verges can add to ecological diversity.

5.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- Communities Overview and Scrutiny Report November 2023
- Report to Cabinet with recommendations for change December 2023
- Implementation Spring 2024

Background papers

WCC Cabinet Report - Delegated Budget Scheme – Covid response and Long Term Scheme Proposals - 11th June 2020

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Progress report on Delegated Budget Delivery

Appendix 2 – Brochure of works costs

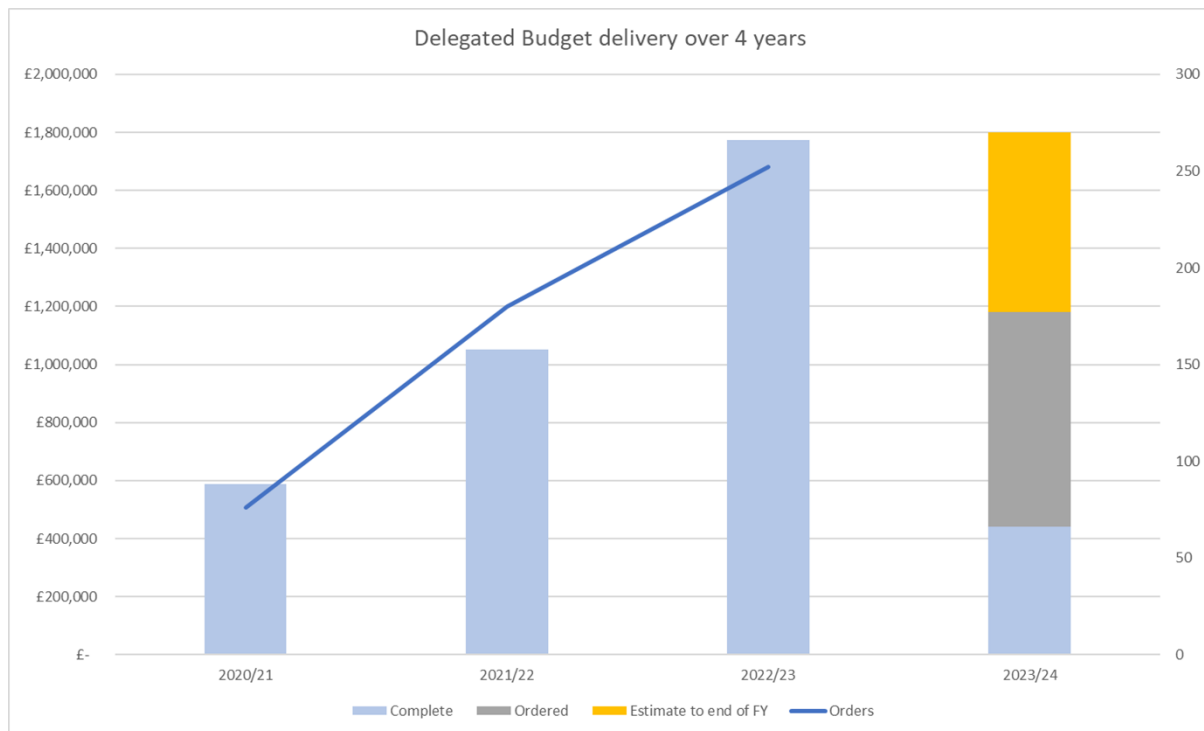
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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): not applicable

Other members: Councillors Clarke, Chilvers, Feeney, Fradgley, and Matecki

Appendix 1 – Progress Statistics on Delegated Budget Delivery.



A1 – Number and Value of Jobs completed – Note 2023/24 FY not yet complete

Value (£)	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Current Financial Year (to date)	Total Number of jobs
0-5000	45	127	156	100	428
5000-10000	11	22	38	23	94
10000-15000	6	10	17	11	44
15000-20000	4	6	11	10	31
20000-25000	2	6	10	3	21
25000-30000	2	2	8	1	13
30000-35000	3	1	3	3	10
35000-40000		1	3	1	5
40000-45000	1	2	1	4	8
45000-50000	1	1	1		3
50000-55000		1	2		3
60000-65000	1				1
75000-80000			1		1
80000-85000			1		1
160000-165000		1			1
Grand Total	76	180	252	156	664

A2 – Distribution of job value

Appendix 2 - Delegated Budgets – A Guide to the Cost of Highway Works

This guide provides cost information about highways works that Warwickshire County Council commonly receive requests for and is intended to act as a guide for Members when considering works in their area.

Costs are approximate and based on construction cost only and do not include fees involved with the design and implementation of a scheme, the cost of any legal procedures involved unless stated, or the traffic management to support the installation of such measures.

These costs are produced as a guide, but as each site is unique, costs can vary therefore scheme costs are confirmed during the design stage, prior to the order for delivery being placed.

Pedestrian Facilities

Works	Cost
Tactile Crossing	£3000 - £5000
Pedestrian Refuge	£6,000 - £18,000
Zebra Crossing	£15,000 - £25,000
Signalised Crossing (Pelican / Puffin / Toucan)	£45,000 - £65,000 £80,000 - £110,000

Footways

Works	Cost
Footway Patching	£45 - £90 per m ² (Bitumous material when <100m ²) £70 - £90 per m ² (Paved when <100m ²)
Footway Reconstruction	£45 - £75 per m ² (Bitumous material)
New Footway	£150 - £160 per m ² (Bitumous material) £80 - £100 per m ² (Paved)
Shared Footways / Cycleways	£150 - £160 per m ² (Bitumous material)
Kerbing	£30 - 40 per metre

Carriageways

Works	Cost
Carriageway Patching	£40 - £85 per m ²
Carriageway Resurfacing	£40 - £50 per m ²

Verges

Works	Cost
Verge Hardening	£60 - £70 per m ²
Grass Grids	£80 - £90 per m ²

Signage

Works	Cost
Warning / Regulatory Signs (without post)	£20 - £230 per sign
Directional Signs (without post)	£20 - £1100 per sign
Ornamental Finger Post	Determined on case-by-case basis as priced off contract
Sign Cleaning	£15 - £170 per sign

Lining

Works	Cost
Lining	Up to £15 per metre Up to £400 per symbol Up to £25 per letter
Removal of Lining	Up to £40 per metre, symbol or letter (blacking out) £4000 per day (hydroblaster)
Road Studs	Up to £40 per stud

Traffic Calming

Works	Cost
Cushions	£1,000 - £1,100 per cushion
Hump	£3,000 - £6,000 per hump
Tables	£6,000 - £10,000 per table
Gateway	£2,000 - £5,000 per gateway
Build out (one-way priority traffic)	£15,000 – £25,000
Chicanes (pair)	£5,000 - £10,000
Mini Roundabout	£15,000 - £20,000

Bollards, Barriers and Fencing

Works	Cost
Bollards	£100 - £1000 per bollard
Pedestrian Guard Rail	£100 - £200 per m
Birdsmouth Fencing	£30 - £40 per m (1000mm high) £50 - £60 per m (1800mm high)

Street Lighting

Works	Cost
Standard Column	£2,000 - £3,000 each
Ornamental Column	£3,000 - £10,000 each
VAS (Vehicle Activate Sign)	£5,000 - £10,000 each
Temporary Flashing Sign for Schools (pair)	£3,000 - £5,000 each
Road crossings, trenching and connection	£100 - £200 per linear metre

Forestry

Works	Cost
Tree Sapling	Up to £5 per sapling
New Street Tree	£250 - £450 per tree
Pollarding	From £400 per tree
Crown Reductions	From £400 per tree
Tree Grilles	£500 - £2000 per grille
Tree Pit	£400 - £500 per pit

Traffic Management

Works	Cost
Closure	£500 - £600 per day
Temporary Traffic Lights	£500 - £600 per day
Lane Closures	£1,000 – £2,000 per day
Convoy Working	£1,000 – £2,000 per day

Other Highway Works

Works	Cost
Bus Shelters	£6000
Lining Survey	£100
Speed Surveys	£150
Topographical survey	From £500
Road Safety Assessments / Audits	From £500
Parish Council Feasibility Study	£500
Traffic Regulation Orders	£6,000 + £3,000 per additional notice order