

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 2 July 2015

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director - Policy & Resources

PORTFOLIO: Transportation

SUBJECT: Liverpool City Region Major
Maintenance bid for the SJB Complex

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval to submit a Major Maintenance bid to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR CA) for the Silver Jubilee Bridge Complex, utilising prudential borrowing to provide the necessary partial match funding.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) The Silver Jubilee Bridge Complex Major Maintenance bid to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for an element of the Regional Growth Fund, be approved; and**
- 2) Council be asked to approve the inclusion of £330,000 in the capital programme to provide the partial match funding required for the Major Maintenance bid.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) was given Grade II listed status by English Heritage in 1988 (scheduled as the Runcorn Widnes Road Bridge). The steel structure when opened was the largest steel arch bridge in Europe. The bridge is a landmark feature in the North West and remains the seventh largest bridge of its type in the world.
- 3.2 The Silver Jubilee Bridge Complex (SJBC) includes the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB), its three approach viaducts, eighteen other major highway bridges, eighteen retaining walls and two sign gantries, with all 41 structures forming part of the strategically important River Mersey and Manchester Ship Canal crossing.
- 3.3 The availability of this strategic link within the regional road network is dependent on the condition and serviceability of all structures forming the SJB Complex.

- 3.4 Due to the age of the SJB Complex and the historical under investment in lifecycle maintenance prior to the formation of Halton Unitary Authority in 1998, the complex requires a continual programme of structural and maintenance works to maintain it in a steady state condition and hence available for use.
- 3.5 In 2006, having identified the poor condition of much of the SJB Complex, Halton developed a long term maintenance strategy. This set out a number of interventions necessary to allow the structure to continue to perform and carry the excessive traffic load that it does today. In 2009, the Department for Transport (DfT) approved a major maintenance scheme and £38 million of funding to remove a significant amount of maintenance backlog to the structures forming the SJB Complex including significant structural works. This scheme was subsequently delivered between 2010 and 2014. As part of the business case for this major capital intervention, it was also established that in order to maintain a steady state of maintenance long-term and to retain the value of the major capital investment, it would be necessary to continue to undertake between £1.6 and £2.2 million of maintenance works each and every year, on average. While this position was accepted it was also noted that Halton's funding under the Formula Funding regime would never provide sufficient funds to cover the on-going maintenance at the necessary level. The result of ignoring this aspect would ultimately be to devalue the investment made in removing the backlog and eventually create the same maintenance deficit situation again.
- 3.6 Halton's Bridges team and its Consultants have examined a number of options with regard to the SJB Complex for its on-going maintenance and remain convinced that timely and appropriate investment in maintenance is the right way forward. This is also the only way of safeguarding the previous capital investment and to continue to remove the longstanding maintenance deficit carried over from the pre-Unitary days.
- 3.7 The proposed scheme includes a programme of maintenance works with particular focus on the Silver Jubilee Bridge and approach viaducts. The intention is to carry out the programme of works over a three year period from April 2016 through to March 2019. Halton is seeking a contribution from the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Growth Fund towards the capital elements of the scheme.
- 3.8 To that end, a Major Maintenance Bid is being submitted to the Liverpool City Region essentially to provide gap-funding for capital maintenance works otherwise unfunded by the Formula Funding system.
- 3.9 One of the requirements of the bid process is that the proposed LCR contribution is partially matched funded, which in this instance would total £330,000. Whilst the Structures element of the Highways Block Grant is circa £1M, using this to provide the match funding would lead to

a disproportionate spend in the SJB Complex to the detriment of the other 213 structures that the Council is responsible for maintaining.

3.10 It is therefore proposed that the partial match funding required of £330,000 per year for each of the three years is funded from prudential borrowing, with the revenue borrowing costs of approximately £25,000 per annum being met from the Council's contingency budget.

3.11 It is also worth noting that whilst the Department for Transport has announced the Highways Maintenance Block Grant that Halton is entitled to for the next two years and indicatively for a further three years, this is subject to the LCR CA distributing the monies back to Halton. It was a requirement of the CA's Transport Protocol that distribution of this funding be reviewed to determine whether it should continue to be allocated to highway authorities according to the current formulaic basis or whether it should be distributed according to prioritised need. Work on this issue is currently underway and no conclusions have been reached to date. It could be the case in forthcoming years that the anticipated allocations are not fully received by HBC and are used somewhere else within the City Region. Consequently, there is still uncertainty around the size of the actual Block Grant that will be received in future years.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 It is proposed that the partial match funding required of £330,000 over the three years, will be provided from prudential borrowing, with the revenue borrowing costs of approximately £25,000 per annum being met from the Council's contingency budget.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'Children and Young People in Halton' priority

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton' priority

6.3 A Healthy Halton

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'A Healthy Halton' priority

6.4 A Safer Halton

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'A Safer Halton' priority

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'Urban Renewal' priority

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 A full risk assessment is not required for this proposal.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no direct equality and diversity issues associated with this report

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.