

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16 November 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director – Environment & Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Environment and Urban Renewal

SUBJECT: East Runcorn Connectivity Scheme

WARD(S) All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The Executive Board has previously received three reports on the ERC project, which is a defined scheme in Halton's Third Local Transport Plan:

- 17 June 2021 – East Runcorn Connectivity – Scheme Development
- 16 June 2022 – East Runcorn Connectivity Scheme
- 13 July 2023 – Transport Infrastructure Update

1.2 This report seeks approval of funding to complete the full business case in support of the ERC project elements that are deliverable within the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) 1 period (ending March 2027). These proposals comprise two of the four elements that constitute the ERC scheme and are:

- A56 major maintenance - A558 Junction to M56 Junction 11
- ERC Active travel routes (six in total):
 - Silver Jubilee Bridge to Shopping City
 - Runcorn East Station Access
 - Chester Road (A56) to Daresbury Park
 - Halton Brow, Main Street and Norton Lane
 - Bridge Street to Windmill Hill Avenue North
 - Leiria Way Connectivity Upgrades/Cycle Loop

1.3 The remaining elements of the ERC programme are expected to fall within the CR STS 2 funding cycle and will be the subject of separate funding bids.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: That

- **The Council accepts the funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement and the Capital Programme is amended accordingly.**
- **Mott MacDonald Ltd are retained as external consultant for the project, up to a value of £1.61m, via the Warrington Consultancy Framework.**
- **Delegate power to the Operational Director (PPT), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Environment and Urban Renewal, to procure and implement the necessary works to deliver the A56 East Runcorn Connectivity (ERC) Scheme and active travel routes within**

funding deadlines.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 East Runcorn represents an area of considerable physical growth in the borough, with large scale housing development, employment land allocations, and investment at Sci-Tech Daresbury. This planned growth is supported by transport network enhancements, and the ERC (East Runcorn Connectivity) project provides this infrastructure. To secure funding for this scheme, a full business case has to be developed to show the project offers value for money, is deliverable, and the need for the project is proven.

3.2 The ERC scheme is referred to in Halton's Local Transport Plan 3 and is justified by technical analysis work found in the East Runcorn Sustainable Transport Study and the recent Halton Local Plan Transport Network Impacts Study. These studies identified highway capacity improvements and sustainable transport improvements would be required to enable a successful delivery of the Local Plan land allocations.

3.3 The on-site delivery of the ERC project within CR STS 1 is likely to have costs in the region of £30m.

3.4 Mott MacDonald Ltd will be retained on the basis that they have completed the previous work undertaken on the business case, and this continuity will ensure that a robust business case for the A56 and active travel routes will meet the Government's Green Book and 'Webtag' appraisal mechanisms, together with meeting the objectives of the Liverpool City Region's Transport Growth Strategy.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The significant investment described in this report is directed by the Council's strategic policies of the Local Plan, the Mersey Gateway Plus Regeneration Strategy, Local Transport Plan 3, Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan, and aligns itself with the priorities of the Liverpool City Region.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The full ERC scheme is expected to be a 10 year project, split over two funding periods of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CR STS). Pre development funding has been obtained in the previous two years. Further LCRCA funding will be required from November 2023 to continue to develop the Business Case to deliver the A56 major maintenance and Active Travel Routes. An application for the cost to complete the business case work, £1.61m, has been submitted to the LCRCA and Halton is awaiting confirmation of this allocation from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA)

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Indirect benefits will stem from an improved physical environment for local communities and better transport connectivity and travel choices.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

New business investment and job creation provides a more resilient economy, and the ERC corridor will connect residents in Halton and the wider LCR to employment and learning opportunities at the Enterprise Zone and neighbouring business parks in Astmoor, Manor Park, and beyond.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The projects will deliver improved and new active travel linkages offering opportunities for modal shift and behavioural change that leads to healthier lifestyles.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Upon completion, the projects will provide a more resilient, safer, and well-connected routes within East Runcorn and our town centres for cyclists and pedestrians.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

The combination of projects will support an improved urban environment to existing and future residents, businesses, and visitors by enabling currently constrained areas to become more accessible.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 All large highway projects have associated project risks with uncertainty arising from various aspects of the process, such as securing funding, land acquisition, stakeholders, fluctuating prices, severe weather, consents, environment factors, ecology assessments. These risks may lead to increased project delivery timescales and costs. These risks will be identified as the scheme develops and highlighted in the development of the Options Appraisal Reports for the various elements. The project team will work to reduce and mitigate these as the detailed business case evolve.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising from this report

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Investment in active travel is fundamental to tackling climate change. A significant amount of carbon emissions and air pollution. Many local journeys are over short distances (less than 5km). The initiatives set out in this report ensure that people in Halton have a realistic sustainable choice in the way they travel.

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

<i>Document</i>	<i>Available</i>	<i>Contact Officer</i>
Local Transport Plan 3 (Adopted).	Online	Rebecca Taylor
https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/TransportPolicy.aspx		