

Report to Cabinet

13 March 2024

Subject:	City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Grants – Delegation of authority to accept grants
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Peter Hughes Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA,
Director:	Assistant Director - Growth & Spatial Planning Tammy Stokes Interim Section 151 Officer Brendan Arnold
Key Decision:	Yes Type (b) - an executive decision which is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure, the making of savings or the generation of income amounting to more than £1m. Type (c) – an executive decision which is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.
Contact Officer:	Andy Miller Strategic Planning & Transportation Manager andy_miller@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA and the Assistant Director – Growth & Spatial Planning in conjunction with the Interim Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer be authorised to accept City Region Sustainable Transport Fund grants from West Midlands Combined Authority under the Terms and Conditions contained in the Grant Agreements for the following schemes;



- Smethwick to Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor Transport Package
- Wednesbury Brierley Hill Extension Sustainable Access Measures
- A461 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor






2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) is a five-year capital settlement to enable the city regions to achieve their ambitions in terms of transport investment. The fund is overseen by the Department for Transport (DfT) and in the West Midlands it aligns with the emerging Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5). CRSTS commenced in 2022-23 and is the main source of transport capital funding for local transport schemes with a scheme cost of £50m or less.
- 2.2 Projects within the programme are reported to Cabinet individually. Each project must progress through the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Single Assurance Framework (SAF) process to enable funding to be confirmed and allocated to the Council through grant agreements. There are multiple stages to the SAF process corresponding with the submission of Strategic Outline Business Cases (SOBC), Outline Business Cases (OBC), and Full Business Cases (FBC). Early drawdown of funding can occur following approval of the SOBC meaning that separate grant agreements may be required at different stages in a project's progression. In addition, where projects are delivered in phases, each phase may require a separate FBC and subsequent grant agreement.
- 2.3 In order to avoid the need to bring multiple reports to Cabinet seeking approval to enter into these grant agreements, and to enable them to be turned around in a timely fashion without creating undue delay in scheme programmes, it is considered prudent to delegate the power to authorise officers to enter into grant agreements to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA.



2.4 Approval is therefore required to enter into grant agreements with the WMCA and accept grants for CRSTS funding to enable the projects listed to be further developed, including the submission of each business case stage, to enable detailed design to be carried out, and following full approval, for the schemes to be constructed.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p><i>People live well and age well:</i> The projects contained in the CRSTS programme contribute to safe and efficient roads for local people and visitors, and to the health benefits of sustainable active travel.</p>
	<p><i>Strong resilient communities:</i> Successful communities need access to jobs, services and facilities to enable them to remain healthy and vibrant. The transport network is an important enabler of this. The CRSTS programme is a key component in ensuring that the transport network meets the needs of the Borough's communities in the future.</p>
	<p><i>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods:</i> New and existing residential developments rely on good quality access and links to shops, services and leisure facilities in order for them to be successful. The CRSTS Programme will make a significant contribution to this objective.</p>
	<p><i>A strong and inclusive economy:</i> The provision of a high-quality transport network will reduce journey times and improve journey reliability for Sandwell business who rely on it to connect to their suppliers and customers.</p>
	<p><i>A connected and accessible Sandwell:</i> The provision of a high-quality, sustainable transport network catering for all modes is vital to enable Sandwell residents to access jobs, education, and services both within and beyond the Borough's boundaries.</p>



4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The approved WMCA CRSTS programme includes the following projects which are, either wholly or partially, located in Sandwell:
- Wednesbury Brierley Hill Extension Sustainable Access Measures
 - A461 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor
 - Smethwick to Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor Transport Package
 - A4123 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor
- 4.2 The first two of these projects were approved in principle at Cabinet on 6th December 2023, whilst the Smethwick scheme received a similar approval at Cabinet on 17th January 2024.
- 4.3 The A4123 project was approved at Cabinet on 7th February including a recommendation relating to the acceptance of grants which is similar to that contained in this report. This project therefore not covered by the recommendation at 1.1.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Authority to accept grants and enter into grant agreements could be sought from Cabinet for each agreement as they arise. However, this would result in multiple reports appearing on Cabinet agendas. As such, approvals would be ancillary to the main project approvals already granted by Cabinet – this option, therefore, is not considered to be an efficient approach.

6 Implications

Resources:	The projects will be funded through devolved allocations to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) as part of its City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. All fees, including SMBC staff time recharges, are including the estimated scheme cost and are thus covered by the grants.
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Legal and Governance:	The delegations described in this report are in accordance with paragraph 1.3 of Part 4 (Executive Procedure Rules) of the Constitution.
Risk:	The OBC and FBC for each project will include a full risk assessment. In addition, the Strategic Investment Unit will carry out appraisals of business cases prior to submission and its recommendations will be taken into account.
Equality:	There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report. An Equality impact Assessment will accompany the business case for each project. This is a precondition of funding.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no health and wellbeing implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.
Social Value:	There are no social value implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.
Climate Change:	There are no climate change implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report. However, decarbonisation of the transport system is central to the government's aims and objectives for CRSTS. It is also a principle theme within the West Midlands Local Transport Plan. All projects will need to demonstrate how they address climate change and contribute to decarbonisation through their business cases as a prerequisite of securing funding.
Corporate Parenting:	There are no implications for Corporate Parenting responsibilities arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

7. Appendices

N/A



8. Background Papers

Report to Cabinet - 06:12:23 WBHE Sustainable Access Measures

Report to Cabinet - 06:12:23 A461 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor

Report to Cabinet - 17:01:24 Smethwick to Birmingham Inclusive Growth Corridor Transport Package

Report to Cabinet - 07:02:24 CRSTS Update and Local Transport Settlement

