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Report to the Finance Strategic Policy Committee

Funding the Maintenance of Dublin City Council's Road Network

Executive Summary

This report sets out a brief business case for the purpose of securing additional funding for investment in the maintenance of Dublin City Council's road network arising from a council question from the Chairperson of the Finance Strategic Policy Committee.

Dublin City Council's Road Maintenance Services is responsible for the maintenance of 1,250km of public roads and streets throughout Dublin City, together with the associated footways, bridges and other structures. This maintenance work is carried out through a combination of Dublin City Council direct labour crews and external contractors.

For the purpose of maintaining this infrastructure, Dublin City Council received 'General Purpose Grants' from Central Government, up to and including 2014. This funding source was replaced by the 'Local Property Tax' in 2015. In 2011, €7.65 Million was received as 'General Purpose Grants', whereas in 2020, the sum of €5.78 Million was received by Dublin City Council from the national 'Local Property Tax' fund, to maintain the road network within DCC.

It is important to note that during the period 2011 to 2020, the *national construction tender price index* increased by approximately 50%¹; therefore the €7.65 million received in 2011 would require an investment of €11.5 Million in 2020, in order to maintain a similar level of investment, for road maintenance activity.

The Road Management Office (RMO), which operates under the aegis of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, completed visual condition surveys of Dublin City Council's road network, during the period between 2018 and 2019. The results of these surveys' highlighted that approximately 11% of the Regional road network in Dublin City Council's administrative area; or circa 27km, was found to be in poor condition and required '*structural restoration/ road reconstruction*' improvement works. A further 37% of the road network within Dublin City Council's jurisdiction or circa 90km, required '*surface restoration*'. In order to improve the condition of these roads surveyed and to prevent additional sections of the roads network deteriorating and falling into these categories; Dublin City Council will require significant additional investment, over and above what it is currently receiving on an annual basis.

The Road Maintenance Services (RMS), within Dublin City Council's Roads Division, operates a *Transport Asset Management System (TAMS)*. A review of the records contained within the system, demonstrates that there are significantly more defects and hazards being recorded on the road network, than there are repairs being carried out. In 2019, Road Maintenance Services

¹ Tender Price Index, published by Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland, July 2019.

recorded 7,085 discrete defects and hazards on the road network. Corollary, during the same period 5,148 defects and hazards were repaired and/or made safe by the RMS Division. Therefore, approximately 70% of the recorded defects and hazards, are being repaired/ made safe.

In the context of the transport modal shift within Dublin city, there has been a 20% increase in the number of buses crossing the Royal and Grand canals', between 2011 and 2018. During the same period there has been a 60% increase in the number of pedestrians and a 30% increase in the number of cyclists crossing the canals.² With this increased activity in sustainable transport modes is welcome, it is important to achieve the appropriate level of investment in the maintenance of our road infrastructural network, in order to promulgate more sustainable transport modes and in particular, to protect vulnerable road users, such as cyclists and pedestrians, from inevitable deterioration and damage to our roads and footpath network.

Continued under investment in the road and footway network will result in increasing levels of personal injury claims, which form a substantial amount of monies paid out from the Road Maintenance Services budget.

Given the positive prevailing economic conditions over the last few years, there has been a significant increase in development and construction activity, across and within the city realm and jurisdiction. This has resulted in increased movements of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), for the purpose of delivering materials to construction sites and removing construction and demolition waste and spoil from these locations, often to locations which are remote from the construction activity locations. While this construction activity is vital for the development of Dublin city and the attendant national economy, these works have a detrimental effect on the structural condition of the road network, which have a finite design life. This ongoing and enduring destructive impact on the road network, requires a steady state investment source and need, in order to carry out the significant remedial works required on the road network.

Dublin City Council received c. 13,500 traffic permit applications in 2019 versus c. 11,000 in 2011. This represents an increase of over 20%. The majority of these applications relate to Utilities, seeking permission to open the public roads to access their infrastructure, in order to carry out repairs and upgrade their services. These works compromise the integrity of the road and footpaths affected and in turn, reduce the overall design life expectancy. This additional demand on our road network necessitates additional frequent and reactive maintenance works to be carried out on these roads, which requires additional funding and resources to manage these complex stakeholder interactions within a busy city landscape. For example, safety management and safety implementation, present considerable challenges in enabling this type of reactive maintenance activity.

The Road Maintenance Services Division is responsible for a budget of €12 Million, for the delivery of the contracts element of its Works Programme in 2020. This will deliver c. 14km of resurfaced road, of which approximately 10% will be reconstructed/ structurally restored. This represent just over 1% of the City's road network. If investment were continue at this present level, it would take 100 years to resurface Dublin City Council's road network. The design life expectancy of a road and its attendant surface, can range from five to twenty-five years, depending on a number of factors, such as HGV usage, axle configuration and effective drainage systems etc. In order to ensure that roads are resurfaced and/or reconstructed within their life expectancy, it is imperative that Dublin City Council receives significant additional investment.

Dermot Collins
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APPENDIX A & B BELOW:

² 'Canal Cordon Report 2018 - Report on trends in mode share of vehicles and people crossing the Canal Cordon', published by the National Transport Authority and Dublin City Council, April 2019.

Appendix A

Map of Dublin City Council's Regional Road Network with the Pavement Surface Condition Index

Appendix B

Map of Dublin City Council's Local Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Roads with the Pavement Surface Condition Index