

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

A Highway Improvement Plan (HIP) is a method whereby KCC will consult with Parish Councils to create a plan for highway improvements in a parish area. The idea is for the Parish Council to list their ideas for improvements in priority order with as much information as possible to allow KCC officers to then investigate the ideas initially as a desk top study and then be able to discuss the ideas a little more in depth. The benefit of this approach is that there is then an agreed document setting out the various schemes and the recommended action going forward.

However, it is how these schemes are funded is where the issues arise. KCC have no specific allocation of funding for a HIP with any funding for a scheme having to enter a bidding process within KCC. Therefore, it is very likely that there will be no, or limited, funding available from KCC. KCC see it as an opportunity to work with Parish Councils with the potential for possibly jointly funding projects or looking to Parishes to fund a scheme possibly in conjunction with the local KCC Member and his grant fund. This idea of funding does not match the Council's previously expressed view that highway improvement schemes are KCC responsibility and therefore their responsibility to fund.

These schemes could be relevant for possible inclusion in a HIP and have been discussed

1. Speed of traffic in Bull Lane
2. Pedestrian Crossing in Tunbury Avenue
3. Possible closure of Forstal Road at entry to Aylesford Village
4. New Sandpit Entrance in Rochester Road

The options available to the Council are set out below.

Option 1 – Enter into a HIP with KCC and accept that to progress some schemes the Council would have to fully or partially fund them for any action to be taken. This could be done and limited by the amount of funds the Council would make available for these projects on an annual basis (£5k or £10K). However, this would be contrary to the view agreed by Members previously that KCC should fund all highway improvement schemes

Option 2 – To enter into a HIP with KCC in order to identify schemes for the Parish area but indicate right at the outset that the Council would expect KCC to fund the schemes in totality and that there would be no funding from the Parish Council. The downside of this approach is that no schemes might progress and the Council could get tarnished with KCC on non-deliverability of these schemes.

Option 3 – To not enter into a HIP with KCC and to raise any issues with them on an individual basis. In these instances, it is very likely that KCC will decide to take no action. However, in saying No they constantly say that the only option available to progress these schemes is the Parish Highway Improvement Plan. This pushes the lack of action back to the Parish and this is also the position they have adopted to responding to local residents suggesting to them that they contact the Parish Council and get their scheme put in the HIP.