

LIVING STREETS SCHEME

WORKING PLYMOUTH SCRUTINY MTG



OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

“Living Streets” was a pilot scheme launched by the Council in 2013, seeking to improve the way that local highway improvements are prioritised and delivered through greater Member involvement.

The scheme covers three key elements:

- Safer School Journeys and sustainable travel initiatives
- General neighbourhood schemes
- Disabled Driver Parking Spaces (DDPS)

Under the pilot scheme, the funding that was previously managed centrally by Officers has been allocated to each ward: Funding for Safer School Journeys and sustainable travel initiatives has been allocated based on the number and size of schools in each Ward and the funding for general neighbourhood schemes has been distributed equally between wards. A full breakdown of the funding available for each ward is attached as **Appendix A**. Unlike the Community Grant Scheme (CGS) funding, budgets allocated to this programme are ring-fenced to the Highway and specifically aimed at delivery of safety, sustainable travel and quality of life interventions.

Schemes delivered through this programme are expected to be minor interventions on local roads; larger schemes or those on strategic routes are covered by other funding streams (often bid for from DFT and/or other bodies) and are subject to other forms of Member approval.

Further guidance on the Scheme is available on the Council’s website at www.plymouth.gov.uk/livingstreets.

THE PROCESS

Each Ward is provided with a list of requests received by the Council suggesting or requesting improvements to the local road environment and to the safety of children’s school journeys in their Ward and Members are asked to consider, with their constituents, which improvements would most benefit the community.

Once a scheme had been identified Amey would have a maximum period of 6 weeks to prepare any design options or sketches that might be required, undertake underground service enquiries, detailed cost estimate and indication of programme for delivery, and present these to members for their approval. It should be noted that in order for a scheme to progress to delivery, it must be approved by all relevant Ward Members. This process is illustrated in the following flow chart:



When the scheme was launched in June 2013 it was intended that preferred schemes would be identified in the preceding year to delivery, i.e. works identified in late 2013/14 for deliver in early 2014/15.

COST OF SCHEMES

As part of the initial guidance for members, a table of indicative costs for general neighbourhood schemes was included as a rough guide, though it was noted that more accurate cost estimates would be prepared for each specific scheme as they were approved and taken forwards.

There has been some criticism from members regarding the cost of some schemes, particularly those involving Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), such as those for new or amended parking restrictions (including double-yellow-lines).

Often, the estimate for implementing such a scheme can appear disproportionate to the cost of works visible on the street, mainly due to the cost of advertising. As part of the statutory process for making or changing a TRO there is a requirement to advertise proposals in the local media, once as proposals and again once the TRO had been made. Depending on the complexity of the restriction and its wording, these adverts can be anything between £500 and £1,500. In order to keep costs to a minimum, Officers continually seek to pool requests with other TROs and advertise them together in a single advert.

Estimates for other schemes had previously been prepared by Amey's Commercial Team, who would normally be used to pricing much larger transport schemes. After an internal review, estimates are now being prepared by Amey's Operations Team (those managing and undertaking the works) and we feel that estimates are now much more reasonable and accurate.

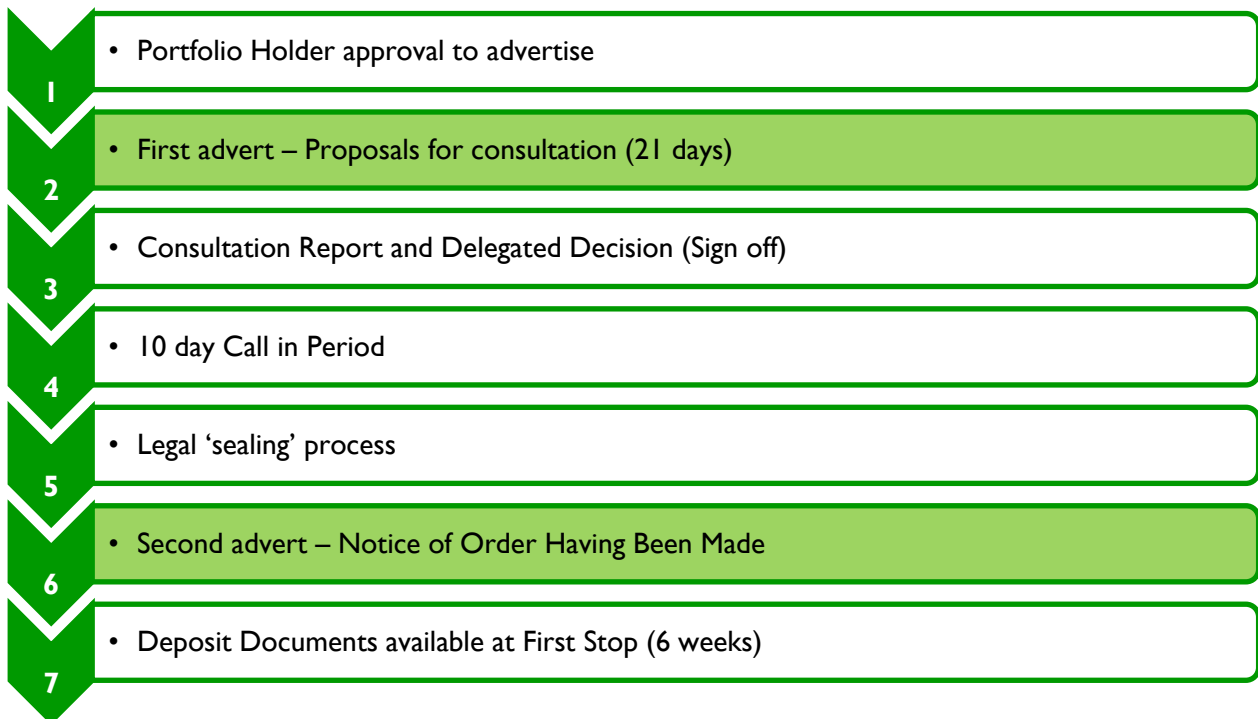
TIMELINESS OF RESPONSE AND DELIVERY

Take up of the scheme was relatively low initially, with all but four wards rolling at least 75% of their funding for 2013/14 over into 2014/15; 14 wards rolled over >90%.

In the last couple of months of 2014/15, we saw a significant increase in demand for works, as we approached the end of the financial year. Amey were, admittedly, not adequately prepared for this influx of requests, at what it already one of the busiest times of the year, and our ability to turn around quotes and deliver works on the ground, undeniably, fell behind.

In order to ensure that we can keep up with this increased level of Member demand, the process has been overhauled and we believe the situation is improving. Amey have brought in an additional resource and are focussed on delivering a 'personal service' rather than relying on email. We have also set up a weekly review meeting where Amey and PCC Officers meet to discuss progress on schemes and resolve any problems or challenges that might have arisen.

Requests that require a TRO can take several months to implement due to the statutory consultation and approval process that must be followed. This process is summarised in the following flow diagram:



In some instances, this time has been delayed further where officers have sought to pool requests with other TROs in order to keep costs to a minimum.

WHEN IT WORKS...

There have been 107 schemes delivered through the Living Streets Scheme since it was launched in 2013, with a further 60 schemes currently in progress or underway. Some examples of schemes delivered successfully, to members' satisfaction are shown below:

(↓) Footpath resurfaced between Molesworth Road and Seymour Road (Plympton St Mary)



New cycle parking installed at Crownhill Village (Eggbuckland) (↑)

(↓) Safety improvements outside Woodview School on Budshead Road (Budshead)



Access ramp installed to assist disabled access at Vermont Gardens (Ham) (↑)

(↓) New dropped kerbs installed outside Widewell School on Lulworth Drive (Southway)



Access protection markings installed at Severn Place (Efford & Lipson) (↑)

INITIAL FEEDBACK AND STEPS TAKEN

During the Working Plymouth Scrutiny meeting held on Wednesday 8th July, 2015, Members raised a number of concerns about the current process and highlighted areas where they felt improvements needed to be made.

These are summarised as follows:

- Constituents' requests being added to Ward Packs before members had any visibility or opportunity to review.
- General lack of information on Ward Packs, which members felt should include details of who made each request, and when.
- Lack of visibility or regular information on the cost of works delivered and the amount of funding left available.

Since this meeting, Officers have taken steps to start to address these concerns, as follows:

- The request process has been amended, such that new requests are presented to relevant ward members for their agreement on whether they should be added to their respective Ward Packs, or not.
- Officers have been briefed and standard responses updated such that members of the public are not directed to the Living Streets; instead they are sent a holding reply, whilst officers liaise with members in order to prepare a suitable response.
- Ward Packs have been reviewed and updated to include a greater level of detail. A financial summary has also been added to show clearly the values spent, committed and remaining for each ward. Example documents are attached as **Appendices B and C**, respectively.
- We are seeking regular ward meetings to allow the members to make decisions and keep track of progress.

Appendix A – Table of 15/16 funding available by Ward

Ward	15/16 Funding	Funding rolled over from 2014/15	Total Funding
Budshead	10,090	6,795	16,885
Compton	5,050	4,582	9,632
Devonport	8,410	15,106	23,516
Drake	5,890	8,767	14,657
Efford & Lipson	8,410	10,770	19,180
Eggbuckland	11,980	7,684	19,664
Ham	8,410	3,755	12,165
Honicknowle	7,780	9,577	17,357
Moor View	7,990	8,243	16,233
Peverell	8,410	7,141	15,551
Plympton Chaddlewood	6,100	6,286	12,386
Plympton Erle	7,150	3,719	10,869
Plympton St Mary	8,620	12,751	21,371
Plymstock Radford	7,570	10,311	17,881
Plymstock Dunstone	7,990	9,772	17,762
St Budeaux	9,880	13,111	22,991
St Peter & Waterfront	8,410	7,571	15,981
Southway	7,780	9,455	17,235
Stoke	8,200	8,698	16,898
Sutton & Mt Gould	5,680	5,930	11,610