

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 10 May 2023 at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT:

Cllr Roger Whyborn	Cllr Sajid Patel
Cllr Chris McFarling (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Dr David Willingham
Cllr Gill Moseley	Cllr Vernon Smith (Chair)
Cllr Alan Preest	

Virtual attendance: Cllr Susan Williams

Apologies: Cllr David Gray, Cllr Philip Robinson and Cllr Dom Morris

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2023 were approved as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

4. CO-OPTED MEMBERSHIP

Members approved the wording included in the agenda. Officers would now liaise with the Gloucestershire Youth Climate Group on the next steps.

5. SNOW CLEARING AND GRITTING PROGRAMME

5.1 The Chair invited Kathryn Haworth, Assistant Director of Highways and Infrastructure, and Jenny Goodson, Highways Operations Manager, to present this item. The report was taken as read and the following points were highlighted:

- This report was to follow on from the January Environment Scrutiny where an interim verbal update was provided on the winter 2022/23 adverse weather event.
- There was extensive national guidance followed by GCC when creating and implementing the Adverse Weather Plan, particularly around route hierarchy, decisions and treatments carried out.
- During the winter period of 2022/23 the crews carried out 234 grit runs altogether, which compared to an average profile of 156. This was one indicator that clearly showed the level of adverse weather experienced during that time, particularly in December and January.
- Officers were keen to highlight the hard work and dedication of the crews during winter months, as well as the community support through parish and town councils, community organisations and individual residents.
- After every winter period, there was a review of the Plan to see where improvements or changes could be made. The report highlighted particular issues had been identified in relation to gritting cycle ways and maintain safe

access to schools. Officers welcomed comments from members to feed into this year's review.

- 5.2 The Committee paid their thanks and appreciation to the crews and colleagues in Highways who worked tirelessly throughout the year, but particularly during the winter months to keep our road network safe and accessible.
- 5.3 It was noted that, where areas of the county had parish councils, officers at GCC would be in regular contact regarding creating their own 'Winter Action Plans' and the distribution, and maintenance of grit bins, but acknowledged this was more difficult in areas of the county that did not have parish councils. Officers were open to ideas from members about how best to build external resilience in these areas. GCC encouraged communities to, as far as possible, plan for their winter response in advance, which would avoid, for example, requests for salt mid-winter being delayed due to crews being focused on the emergency response.
- 5.4 The existence of a Plan would also help with the coordination of volunteers such as local snow plough operators and snow wardens, outlining clear roles and responsibilities. There was a request for officers to explore better communication channels with communities during emergency response to prevent. An example was given of a clearance delay in December to allow snow plough operators to go out on the network.
- 5.5 A member asked whether it would be possible for key points of contact (parish/community plough operators/snow wardens etc.) within each ward/division to be shared with Councillors in advance of the winter months. The overall aim was to have appropriate contact details included in the Local Winter Action Plans. There did need to be sensitivity around sharing volunteers direct contacts, particularly snow plough volunteers, as they could become overwhelmed with requests, and this would not be being managed centrally. The position of the Snow Warden could be key in acting as that key contact for the area, as well as filtering requests/information.
- 5.6 There was a discussion around the current primary and secondary route maps for grit runs. A member reported that there were whole swathes of their division that remained 'untouched' through last winter's weather event, and these were seen as important link routes for their community. This also caused the local bus route to be partially abandoned until the weather improved.
- 5.7 Officers acknowledged these comments and understood the frustration for members and residents. Members heard that the secondary routes were treated during prolonged cold weather where resource permitted within that area. If an area was particularly hard hit on its primary routes, there would be less resource available to move to secondary routes and it was therefore a judgment call at the time, rather than a planned response. Members were encouraged to feedback any specific key areas that they felt were missed during last winter for officers to review.
- 5.8 It was reiterated that the weather in December 2022 was very unique in terms of unpredicted levels of snow fall and prolonged minus temperatures, keeping primary routes open was a huge effort and a real success for the team. Even if resource had permitted, many of the secondary routes had thick ice being maintained by minus 10 temperatures. It was likely that crews would have found it almost impossible to remove in some areas with the equipment available.

- 5.9 In response to the suggestion that, where the weather was prolonged as in December 2022, there should be resource made available to treat secondary routes, officers advised that there was a balance of risk to consider. The primary routes were a published network that the Council committed to keep safe during adverse weather, moving resource away to treat secondary routes therefore carried a level of risk. The operational decisions made during the 2022/23 winter would be reviewed to ensure the risk balance was right, in the context of the prolonged period.
- 5.10 Officers agreed to produce a member briefing note on the grit bin rollout to ensure councillors knew who to contact to make use of this resource in their division.
- 5.11 A member raised that working with other county councils in this area was key. They had noticed the use of signs for example by Wiltshire County Council on roads subject to ice that gave an alternative route during adverse weather, and the use of an asphalt additive to treat cycle ways. In response it was advised that officers did a lot of benchmarking with other county colleagues and shared good practice as much as possible. There were a number of new technologies being advertised and trailed across the county and GCC were always very happy to explore these.
- 5.12 Officers advised there were a number of possible improvements they continued to explore, for example, securing smaller more flexible gritting equipment that could be distributed across the county, to schools for example, and used within the community, or, using Lydney Town Council as an example, working with communities to identify large, secure storage where they could store bigger quantities of grit salt to make it more easily accessible during cold weather.
- 5.13 It was noted that the quality of weather forecasting was improving. The Council had a forecasting contract which was built for Gloucestershire and measured 3 climatic zones across the county. This was a vital part of the response during the winter, where weather patterns would often change throughout the night. At the end of last year, the company had a 94% accuracy rate on forecasting.
- 5.14 It was queried whether there had been any analysis of road traffic accident data during adverse weather to help inform grit plans in the future. Officers confirmed they would explore this idea and see if there was enough data available to draw any useful conclusions.
- 5.15 A member suggested it would be useful for the Committee to see detail of any changes made due to this review of the Plan, particularly in relation to increasing resource and capacity. Cost benefit analysis of any changes would also be useful for members as a whole to be aware of and in time for the next budget setting round.

6. TRANSPORT HUBS

- 6.1 The Committee received a presentation on Gloucestershire's emerging interchange hub study as included in the reports pack.
- 6.2 A member raised concern about placing an Interchange Hub within the existing railway station at Cheltenham Spa. They noted that there was not much land left available around the station and described 'chaos' in trying to deal with the number of national partners already involved in the site. They suggested as an alternative

for a Hub to be created around the existing bus station in town, providing a regular link to the station and benefit for the wider area. Officers acknowledged these points and reassured that Cheltenham Spa was already classed as an Interchange Hub as it existed, there was no intention to build something completely new around the station, but rather review and build on the existing facilities. The map included in the report showed only the Interchange Hubs identified during the review of the Local Transport Plan last year and was not yet completed.

- 6.3 Members noted the recent 2023/24 Capital Programme funding commitment to allocate £1.2m over future years towards the development of interchange hubs, it was yet to be decided how this money would be allocated specifically, but it was hoped that the results of the current study and feed into the BSIP, would attract more external funding in the future and particularly so from Section 106 developer contributions. It was therefore important for GCC to build on working relationships with the district councils (as the planning authorities), and feed into their Local Plans through its role as a statutory consultee. It was stressed however that GCC had no power to require district councils to include, for example, Interchange Hubs in their Local Plans. Officer would keep the Committee up to date on the project's progress via the Executive Director's report.
- 6.4 It was confirmed that Market Town Hubs could consider adding in convenience facilities, but it was something that would need to be explored at each location, depending what residents wanted and the space/funding available. It may be that the Hub sought to link up with facilities already in place, or that there would be a short walk to access said facilities.
- 6.5 A member reiterated the need for urgency around this study and project, transport was one of the county's biggest carbon emitters and the Hubs would play a really big part in the decarbonisation journey. They were keen that rural areas did not miss out, and also benefited from its potential to improve access to tourism. It was reassured that officers recognised this study was a key cornerstone for decarbonisation, as well as its importance for rural communities. The idea for Hubs had initially arisen during the Council's application for the Department for Transport's Rural Mobility Fund and officers continued to prioritise its benefit for rural communities in the current study.

7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT: ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

- 7.1 The pre-submitted questions and response are attached as an appendix.
- 7.2 In response to a further question around the future of public transport provision, it was advised that general contact with the Traffic Commissioner around the Stagecoach withdrawals earlier this year had been positive, there was a clear message that any bus operator was required to keep within published timescales for service withdrawal. Pressure on the bus network continued, the report highlighted that further service withdrawals were on the horizon and members were concerned what the long-term plan was to ensure more people were not left without transport options.
- 7.3 Officers highlighted the interim solutions that had been put in place where Stagecoach had already withdrawn services, and that the Council would continue to consider options on a case-by-case basis. There was a wider question however

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

around the future of the bus network and this would form the basis for the Public Transport Network Review which was currently being drafted for Cabinet's consideration. The Review was an opportunity to give a status check around provision, future changes, GCC's ability to support future changes, financial pressures etc. and the aim of the Review would be to retain the most comprehensive network possible, as well as identifying alternative options to support provision where necessary.

- 7.4 A member questioned what GCC's response was to Great Western Rail recently withdrawing funding for an active travel link from the Honeybourne Line end at Cheltenham Spa Station to Shelburne Road and on to the A40. Officers expressed they were extremely disappointed this funding had been lost, as this left a 'missing link' in the overall 26-mile cycle spine and would be doing all they could to try and rectify the situation. At a minimum this would be to lobby the relevant organisations to try and find a solution, but also to explore any possible alternative funding options, for example, via the Community Infrastructure Levy funds held by district Councils.

8. WORK PLAN

- 8.1 A member made two suggestions which, due to the detail involved, the Vice-Chair (in the Chair) suggested the member began by submitting them as questions. It was agreed the councillor would email Democratic Services with their specific questions to be answered in writing and shared with the Committee in first instance.
- 8.2 It was queried whether the current Bus Improvements Task Group would be considering the Public Transport Network Review (as mentioned above) prior to it being considered by Cabinet.

ACTION: Democratic Services

- 8.3 Members noted that the scheduled update item on the Restoring our Rivers Task Group recommendations would need to be delayed. The Task Group had concluded its work in November and, due to a recent budget amendment to provide a resource to support the implementation of its recommendations, there was nothing yet to update at this stage. This item would therefore be put on the future items list for future consideration.
- 8.4 A member requested that the item to review the Traffic Regulation Order process and delivery be considered as a priority.
- 8.5 Due to Annual Council this month, and the potential for changes in Committee membership, members were advised that a work plan meeting with lead members would be arranged next month.

CHAIR

Meeting concluded at 12:50.

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

An Integrated Transport Network for Gloucestershire

- Interchange Hubs -

Luisa Senft-Hayward

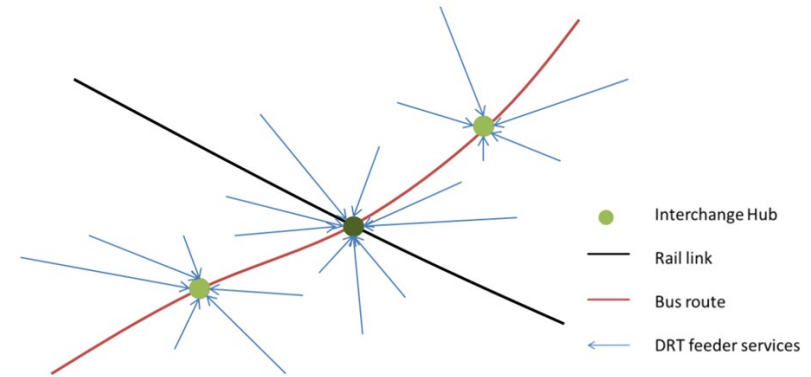
Transport Planning Team Manager

Gloucestershire County Council



Gloucestershire's vision for buses

- Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) in Gloucestershire's urban core
- Express Bus Services feeding into the MRT system and on inter-urban routes
- Interchange Hubs that link high frequency bus routes and rail to:
 - lower frequency bus routes
 - Demand Responsive Transport
 - Cars and Taxis
 - Walking and cycling



Interchange hubs

- Interchange hubs are places where passengers and cargo can be exchanged between vehicles and/or transport modes
- Interchange Hubs are referenced in both: the LTP and BSIP
- GCC has commissioned an interchange study to:
 - Review our existing interchange hubs
 - Review the strategic interchange hubs identified in the LTP
 - Develop an assessment tool to identify locations for interchange hubs
 - Provide indicative specifications and sketches for local interchange hubs
- Once completed, the work will inform the recent Council decision to invest £1.2 million in interchange hubs across Gloucestershire.



Interchange hub types - Strategic

Hub Type	Description	Example
Strategic Interchanges / City Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A high demand for transport – high passenger numbers for starting / ending journeys / transferring between modes. Potential to reduce car trips through better provision of sustainable modes and improving transport connectivity. 	Gloucester or Cheltenham Spa Railway Stations
Strategic Market Town/Village Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to national rail services or Tier 1 bus service If the space allows, the areas can be used to provide a wider range of services. 	Stonehouse Railway Station
Strategic Transport Corridor / Linking Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on linking high volumes of users to the core sustainable transport network. An opportunity to offer greater choice to people for the first/last minute trips. This type of hub can also be developed at P&R sites. Opportunity to attract high demand from pass by trips. 	Cheltenham Arle Court P&R

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Interchange hub types - Local

Hub Type	Description	Example
Transport Corridor Link Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local catchment linking residents to core transport network. Hub can be developed along very high/high frequency bus routes in urban/suburban and inter-urban areas. 	Old Chelt. Rd – 94 bus
Key Designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High density of users. Located in areas which attract regular sustained visitor numbers, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business parks, Hospitals, etc. 	Micheldean – Vantage Park Business Village
Mini Hubs or Community Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The transport offers are limited, and demand is lower. E.g.: car club spaces, bike share or secure parking or DRT drop off/pick up. Locations for mini hubs can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suburban settings New housing developments. 	The Redbridge mini hub (George Lane, London) – see report
Market towns / village hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the space allows: can be used to provide a wider range of services. Some small market town / village hubs can also serve as a tourism hub. 	High Street, Newent

Existing hub assessment

Assessment criteria based on CoMoUK's Mobility Hub accreditation process:

- I. Visibility and accessibility
- II. Choice of sustainable modes
- III. Safety
- IV. Practical facilities
- V. Visual, Social and Community Appeal
- VI. Ease of switching between modes

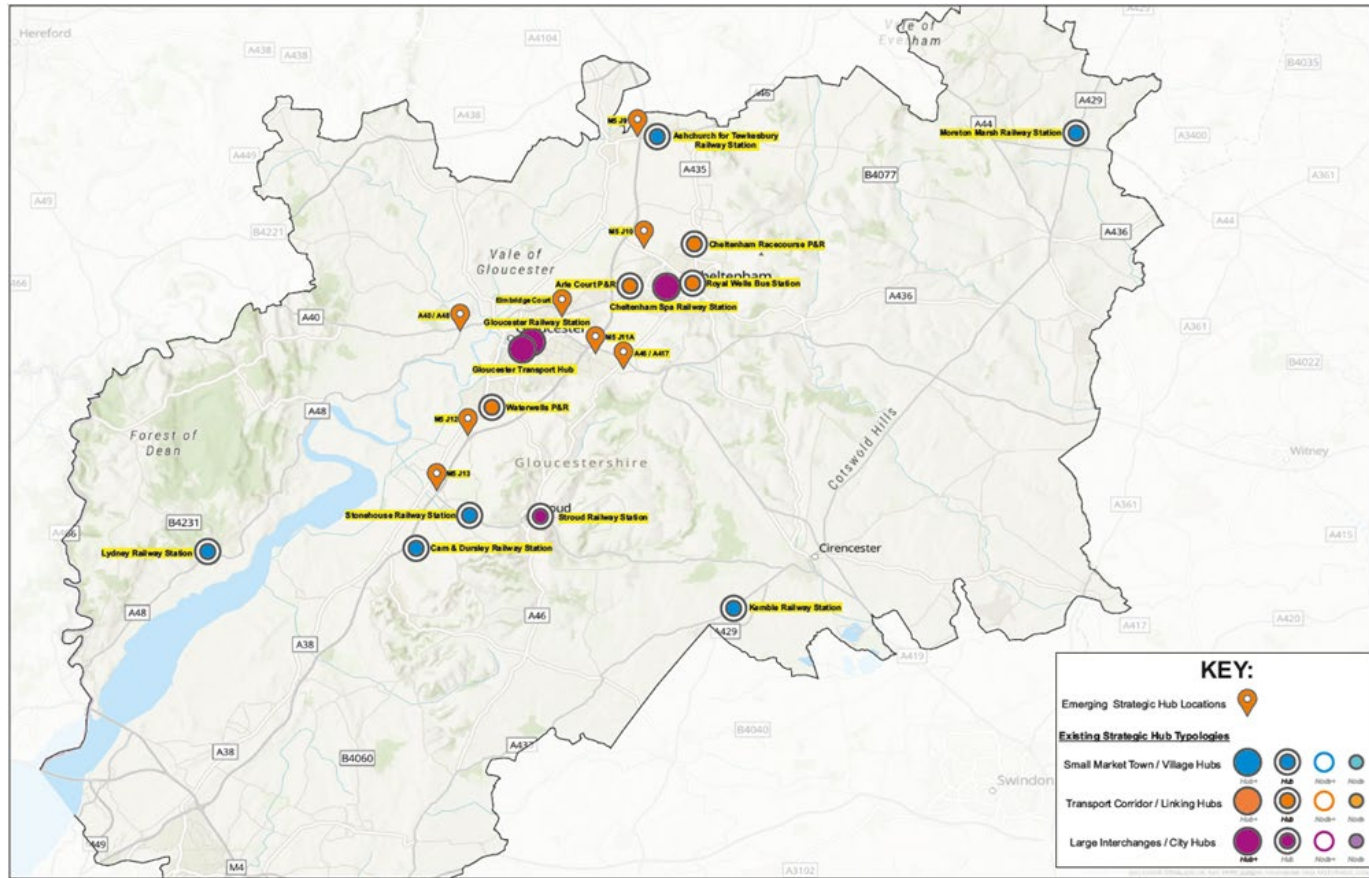
Common gaps in provision:

- A shared mobility option
- Clear signage
- Better information, incl. timetable
- Real time passenger information (RTPI)
- Way finding signage for walk trips
- Simple ticket purchase option
- Modern clean infrastructure (public realm)
- Staffed during core travel hours
- Safer crossings and pavement repairs
- Removal of hidden areas around the hub
- Street lighting, shelters, seating.



Review of future strategic hubs

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Living our values every day



Accountable



Integrity



Empower



Respect



Excellence



Identifying local hub locations

- Ongoing and will be advisory only.
- Based on the following criteria:
 - Existing bus/rail routes and use of facility.
 - Access to community transport/DRT schemes/provision.
 - Proximity to strategic cycle routes and services
 - Availability of local services and car parking.
- Aim: to develop a comprehensive, multi modal hub network that will help support, encourage and enable sustainable travel within Gloucestershire.



Indicative specifications & sketches

Sketch for a local transport link hub using obsolete bus layby

Specification

- Approximately 3m x 12m dimensions (To fit within a bus stop layby)
- Parallel to the highway.
- Totem / Smart information board.
- Covered seating area / bus stop.
- Low level planting.
- Parcel collection / bike lockers.
- E-scooter / E-Bike hire docks.
- Bike repair station.
- 3 no. covered bike stands/racks minimum

3.0m APPROX

12.0m APPROX

Sketch for a local market town/village hub

Specification

- Approximate area 200m²
- Parallel to the highway if on a bus route.
- Flexible design.
- Totem / Smart information board.
- Covered seating and/or bus stop.
- Low level planting.
- Parcel collection / bike lockers.
- E-scooter / E-bike hire docks.
- Bike repair station.
- 10no. covered bike stands/racks minimum.
- 4no. EV Charging / Car Club bays minimum.
- Public realm improvements / areas for community participation.
- Opportunity for a small convenience facility.

10.0m APPROX

21.0m APPROX

Conclusion and next steps

- By linking different ways of travelling, interchange hubs can:
 - Make sustainable transport modes more attractive.
 - Enable public transport modes to attract new customers or to be easier accessed by existing customers.
 - Extend the reach of active travel modes such as walking and cycling.
- The findings of the study will:
 - feed into the BSIP review
 - inform implementation
 - Feed into future funding applications,
 - Aid planning applications and S106/CIL negotiations



Pre-submitted Executive Director Report Member Questions

Cllr Roger Whyborn

1. Ref the Public Transport Network Review in the upcoming/forthcoming decisions, that's obviously a fairly wide-ranging title. What is the scope of the review please?

A full review of the transport network subsidised by GCC is required to ensure it is fit for purpose and that routes reflect the travel patterns of passengers. The proposed cabinet paper would detail the approach likely to be followed and the extent of public consultation that would be undertaken. These are connected issues as the level of change / impact affects the level of consultation that would be required. A recent announcement by the Department for Transport regarding its future bus related funding has significantly changed the context for this review and the report is now likely to be taken to July Cabinet. Officers are currently working through the detail of this and will bring forward a strategy for comment as part of that cabinet paper as soon as possible.

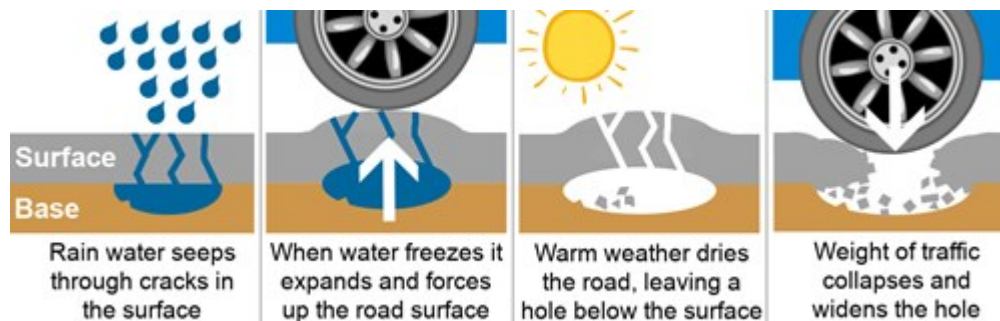
Cllr Chris McFarling

2. Could you advise as to whether there are any performance criteria/indicators on pothole fixing across the network please?

There are a number of key performance indicators included in the corporate data set which monitor the timeliness of safety defect repairs against required timescales, alongside indicators which show the total number of safety defects in each category and the winter gritting run numbers to provide some context.

3. Are there any 'tipping points' in pothole formation whereby pothole creation exceeds pothole fixing leading to an unsustainable and increasingly deteriorating road network?

Resurfacing schemes are the best long-term way to tackle potholes but with a sizeable network (over 3500 miles) this is challenging without significant additional investment. All roads deteriorate over time, but typically a newly resurfaced road will last 20-35 years depending on the level and type of traffic using it. Potholes can occur at any time of the year but most commonly form in the Spring. During the winter, water seeps through cracks in the road, freezes and expands. Later, once the water evaporates a gap is left below the surface of the road.



Groups of potholes forming, return visits etc. all indicate that the road is failing and needs a more significant intervention – this might be localised patching works, or full resurfacing. This data is used to help inform parts of the structural maintenance programme. However, the presence of multiple trenches or openings in the road, such

as those from utilities, can also accelerate the rate of deterioration as we tend to see potholes forming in those joints/cracks.

4. GCC are currently working with Birmingham University to develop plans to de-carbonise the developer road infrastructure we adopt. Early findings suggest that removing cement and steel by using “over the edge” drainage systems will result in the biggest saving. If GCC adopt this approach it would require a change to maintenance regimes in conjunction with the increased adoption of swales and other green infrastructure. Could you please explain and clarify what ‘over the edge’ drainage systems involve and how green infrastructure is needed to help de-carbonise the developer road infrastructure?

‘Over the edge’ drainage simply refers to the process whereby surface water drains over the edge of the carriageway into an open channel (effectively a swale) or ditch - as opposed to draining via a gulley or a kerb inlet into an underground pipe. The increased presence of ditches or swales can have a positive effect on the environment and increase the ‘greening’ of any road or development and therefore support the lower carbon / de-carbonisation aims of any development. As noted, this would require a change in traditional drainage management as current systems make greater use of equipment such as gulley emptiers and jetting machines.

Written response to questions received during Committee from Cllr Willingham

5G Highways Approvals

Based on various issues with the proposed siting of 5G masts in Gloucestershire, there are number of questions. I believe that GCC probably only have powers in relation to highway safety, but it would be useful to clarify and also identify who the partners are (Districts / OFCOM / etc)

1. What, if anything, can we demand in terms of camouflage, subterranean equipment, protection of grass verges, and other things to make these things less unacceptable in terms of visual and environmental impact?

Utility companies have national legislation that allows them to install utility equipment in the highway. GCC are bound by these national provisions. As you rightly say OFCOM are the governing body that would provide guidance to telecoms type utilities who are seeking to install inappropriate 'over-land' equipment – they are also the enforcement body here. In some instances, (for large masts etc) planning permission may also be required, which is through the District Councils – who similarly are the approvers / enforcers in this regard. Hence there is little that the Highway Authority can demand. As a CBC Councillor, Cllr Willingham may be well placed to speak to the Brough Council direct in their role as planning authority.

2. Can GCC do anything to get the companies to actually consult with County Councillors? (They consulted in St Mark's writing to the CBC councillors and omitting me).

There is no statutory provision so we cannot enforce this requirement. As part of the Highway Transformation work, we are looking to develop clearer guidance for utility companies regarding the levels of service and engagement we expect over and above the statutory requirements – of course this would remain voluntary once it is developed.

3. How can we get them to share facilities as required by the NPPF? (If you look at the junction of Princess Elizabeth Way with Bramley Road in Cheltenham, there are three masts in very close proximity. Why did no-one force the operators to share facilities?)

As per above, enforcement issues would be through OFCOM and planning contraventions through the district Council's.

Parking / parking permit policy

1. What do we do to ensure that "car free" developments are actually "car free" in permit zones? For example, refusing to issue the premises with permits except for blue badge holders. Examples 23/00625/FUL (CBC) will be entitled to 36 permits but makes provision for 9. 20/00273/FUL (CBC) would have change the property form having 2 permits to 8, while also losing off street parking. This doesn't seem a good way to deliver sustainable development.

Legislation around minimising car usage for new developments through the NPPF does not currently apply to individual owners of each of the properties once these have been purchased. Elements could be written into the property deeds, but inevitably this would limit the future use and flexibility of a property and therefore likely impact the long-term value of individual properties – not something that we

anticipate that a large developer would undertake voluntarily. Planning approvals here and for subsequent division of properties are taken by the district Councils and the examples given highlight CBC planning approval cases. As a CBC Councillor, Cllr Willingham may be well placed to speak to the Brough Council direct in their role as planning authority.

2. What can GCC do about having a tow-away policy for illegally parked vehicles during major events. E.g., Cheltenham Races, Football, Rugby, etc. E.g., getting better collaboration between GCC enforcement officers and the Police/CBC enforcement teams during race week. Having the tow away powers for vehicles left in stupid places e.g., the Bentley left in the taxi rank outside the Ivy?

Major events are generally managed by the event organisers through directly employed traffic management companies, the police are also heavily involved in the arrangements and have some enforcement powers in this respect. All major events are governed / guided by a Safety Advisory Committee (SAG) that sets and agrees the approach with the event organisers as part of the early event planning. SAG's are led and chaired by the relevant District authority for the event. As a CBC Councillor, Cllr Willingham may be well placed to speak to the Brough Council direct in their role as leading the SAG's for events such as the Cheltenham festival.