

Director's Report, Economy, Environment & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee Report

November 2020

This report summarises key areas likely to lead to decisions over the next 6 months, including updates on areas previously reported.

1.0 Decisions

1.1 Relevant forthcoming decisions, by date due:

- [The proposed adoption of the ULEV \(Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles\) Strategy and the procurement and installation of Electric Vehicle Chargers across Gloucestershire.](#)
(Between 16 November 2020 and 21 December 2020)
- [Gloucestershire County Council's partnership agreement with Gloucester City Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council in relation to the Joint Core Strategy](#) (Between 3rd August – 31st December 2020)
- [Proposed adoption of the Gloucestershire Local Development Guide 2020](#) (27 January 2021)

1.2 Pending Items not yet published on the Forward Plan:

- Gloucestershire Climate Change Strategy Annual Report & Action Plan
- M5 Junction 9

2.0 Highways

2.1 COVID19 Response

- We are working closely with partner organisations to ensure preparations are in place to provide additional resilience in highway operations and winter/emergency response over the coming months, and in the face of the national lockdown. The main focus will be on maintaining staffing levels to carry out emergency services.
- COVID19 testing sites in the county have been provided with supplies of bagged salt and locations have been aligned with the existing gritting network, in order to provide support through the winter season.

2.2 M5 Junction 10

- GDA signed with Homes England on 16th October for a maximum sum of £249.131m. This is a significant step forward.
- Non-statutory public consultation running from 14th October – 25th November
- Cabinet approved the use of CPO for land acquisition should it be required.

2.3 Highways Contracts

- Term maintenance/Professional Services - operating with some limited impact from COVID19. Annual programme of footway surfacing and surface dressing now complete. Performance on cyclical maintenance and defect repair remains above target. Ability to work collaboratively with all teams remotely remains challenging.
- Structural maintenance - delivery now ahead of schedule for 20/21 following concerted efforts to recover time lost due to COVID19 impacts. The website shows the current

schedule plus the interactive map for 20/21 works. Now moving towards the final year (21/22) of the additional investment period.

- Street lighting – delivery is largely business as usual. Skanska infrastructure business up for sale which will likely mean a novation of the street lighting contract to another provider – more detail to follow as it becomes available.
- Highways Skills Academy – work continues to support apprenticeships across Gloucestershire Highways with those already in place (over 15) and two new apprentices have recently been appointed to gain experience in the Major Projects team.

2.4 Highways Delivery

- Winter readiness – our preparations for winter are complete, with dry gritting runs completed last week – including 7 brand new gritters added to the fleet to replace 7 obsolete vehicles. Salt deliveries are complete. We are making contingency arrangements to ensure cover for this service if we are severely impacted by COVID19, including mutual aid arrangements with neighbouring authorities and contracts.
- Depots/property – 20/21 funding from MTFs for land acquisition for replacement depot, additional MTFs bid for works to Cirencester Depot where structural failure of outer building has occurred. Likely to be delayed because of response to COVID19.
- Ash die back programme – works proceeding well to fully utilise the £0.5m funding on addressing ash die back in 20/21. Significant tree removal works now being undertaken in target areas, and work progressing on the parallel works for replacement trees which will be aligned with the wider Council strategy for tree planting. Plans being made to enable the proactive work on removing diseased ash trees to continue in 21/22.
- Public rights of way work remains very busy responding to increased users during the COVID19 lockdown period.

2.5 Walking/Cycling Response

- Emergency Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 bid submitted for £10.5m – outcome from DfT is awaited. Priority within bid is the progression of a cycle route between Cheltenham and Gloucester via the B4063.

2.6 A419 Junction Improvements (Stonehouse)

- Construction substantially complete.

2.7 A38 Canal Bridges, Whitminster

- Works ongoing but on track to complete in November 2020.
- Following completion of the roundabout works, further works to connect the canal either side will be progressed.
- Cotswold Canal Trust and SDC successful in lottery bid for £8.9m, 4.5 miles of canal, (opening Thrupp through to Sharpness canal at Saul Junction) the funding will see huge benefits in terms of the economy, leisure, community, health, heritage and the environment, including the creation of 21 hectares of biodiversity land, planting 30,000 trees and shrubs, generating additional spending of £5.5 million per year in the local

economy, bringing health benefits estimated at £8 million a year, preserving the canal archives from the 1730s and involving up to 500 extra volunteers. GCC are a partner in its delivery.

2.8 West Cheltenham / Cyber £22M

- Work has now started on site for Phases 1 and 2, including the demolition of two properties adjacent to Arle Court roundabout.
- The contract for Phases 3 and 4 has been awarded.
- Ongoing issue re-timing / extent of Highways England's A40 / M5 'safety critical' works and delays associated with COVID-19, which will mean the original planned completion date will be delayed.

3.0 Community & Infrastructure

3.1 DfT Emergency Active Travel Fund – Tranche 1

- London Road cycle route: final sections of green surfacing being laid and parking enforcement has started, especially near takeaways. Positive feedback from cycling groups and university.
- Response sent to petitioners of 102-118 London Road, most of whom have private rear parking. We have provided dedicated bays in Denmark Road and are making lighting improvements to Royal Lane to improve security.

3.2 ITU Public and School Transport

- Following a very busy start to the autumn term home to school transport has settled down. ITU staff continue to work closely with schools and bus operators to ensure that protective measures are in place and to manage COVID-19 risks. Around 30 extra buses have been added to the network, which has ensured that sufficient vehicles are in place to meet capacity where it is required.
- Public transport services have returned to 100% of their pre-COVID timetables and passenger levels have been rising steadily to 40-60% of earlier levels. We have been using government funding to support bus operators with offsetting lost fare revenue and we continue to provide them with additional concessionary fares support.
- School and public transport services will continue to operate during the second lockdown.

3.3 E-scooters

- In October we launched a 12 month e-scooter trial in Cheltenham and in Gloucester. Demand has exceeded expectations and our operator, Zwings, has engaged constructively with the police, district councils and representatives of vulnerable groups to adopt extra measures, including incentives, to encourage responsible use. These measures have not been in place in other areas where issues have been reported.

3.4 School Streets

- The ThinkTravel team has launched streets pilots at two primary schools in Tewkesbury and Cheltenham. We have agreed to provide interim travel support to Kingsholm Primary School which has asked to defer its School Street until next year. School Streets aim to give priority to families choosing to walk, scoot or cycle; to reduce traffic congestion and pollution; to encourage an active lifestyle for children and families; and to create a safer, cleaner environment for the whole community. Leaflets have been distributed to schools and local residents with details of the schemes and signposting them to a travel survey where they can give us their feedback.

3.5 Highways Development Management

- In the first nine months of 2020 the number of statutory planning consultations handled by the HDM team averaged 194 per month. This is 11.5% higher than in the same period in 2018, and 7 % higher than the same period in 2019.

3.6 Network Management

- Since April the Streetworks team has been busy implementing a new Permit Scheme in Gloucestershire. This aims to manage disruption caused by roadworks and utility excavations in the highway. Despite the challenges of COVID restrictions the team has been able to recruit additional staff and train them on the new Street Manager system and permit regulations.

3.7 Sustainability

- In October Cabinet gave its support to Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership's Tree Strategy, recognising the significant potential of tree planting as part of our Climate Change Action Plan.

3.8 Pavements Motion 787

- The following table shows the recent spend on footways across the County. The figures originally reported to the Highways Advisory Group, and then the Scrutiny Committee did not include either minor works carried out from the depots, or works which were part of our major projects – such as the works on Metz Way, and Elmbridge Court.

Year	Footway maintenance programme	All footway works including major projects and minor works
2018-19	£725k	£2.7m
2019-20	£778k	£2.79m
2020-21	£2.8m	£4.43m

- There has been a major investment in the maintenance of the footway network in 2020/21 using extra funds that have been made available (£1.5M). This may increase further through the year as additional spend is made at a local level. Several of our major projects include improvements to footways. The focus on active travel and health and wellbeing, post COVID19 is likely to lead to increased use of footways, and a potential of additional investment in the area by central government.

4.0 Strategic Infrastructure

4.1 B4063 / A40 Highways England Cycling Scheme – Cheltenham to Gloucester

- Highways England (HE) are currently progressing their delayed major cycle scheme between Cheltenham and Gloucester, with GCC as a key partner. This project will need to link into the under construction GCC £22M transport improvement scheme to the west of Cheltenham. GCC officers have decided to take over the detailed design of this project, given the HE delays. This will have the key advantage of directly linking the project to the emerging £22M West Cheltenham Transport Improvement Scheme. A bid was recently submitted to the GFirst LEP for £5M towards this scheme, but this bid was not successful.

4.2 M5 Junction 9 and A46 (Ashchurch)

- The Strategic Outline Business Case for the M5 J9 / A46 scheme was submitted to the DfT in January 2020;
- Positive Government announcement in March 2020, stating that the scheme should progress to the next stage;
- This is to progress to the Outline Business Case – the cost of which is likely to be £2M-£3M – part of the funding will come from the approved £4M GCC funding for 'business case development' in 2020/21;
- Discussions re- possible future funding ongoing with both Homes England and Tewkesbury BC due to the links to the 'garden town'.

4.3 Improved rail connectivity

- Rail Strategy published March 2020;
- This will now feed into the emerging review of the Local Transport Plan, which has recently been subject to a public consultation – the results of which are currently being analysed.

4.4 Digital connectivity

- Cabinet considered and approved the latest, revised Fastershire Broadband Strategy 2019-2022 in December 2019;
- This will now be implemented with immediate effect, with a view to securing solutions for 'the final 3%'.

4.5 A417 Missing Link

- Preferred Route Announcement (Route 30) made March 2019;
- Further public consultation took place in Autumn 2019;
- A supportive officer-level response to this consultation (a joint response from CDC, TBC and GCC) was sent on 8th November 2019;
- Positive announcement in March 2020 stating that the scheme has secured funding and should progress to DCO later this year;
- Various issues, including National Trust (NT) withdrawing their support for some aspects of the scheme, have resulted in a need for the scheme to be redesigned. This will lead to a delay of 8-12 months to the scheme's timetable. The Leader has taken this up with NT.

- The revised proposals are subject to a public consultation, which started on 12th October 2020. An officer response will be sent by the deadline of 12th November 2020.

4.6 GSWB / Llanthony Road

- Planning permission granted April 2019;
- Ongoing negotiations with landowners / landlords re- 14 plots; contract now agreed with City Business Centre, work progressing well in relocation for businesses within this site
- The 'virtual' CPO Public Inquiry is now due to start on 24th November 2020.

4.7 Local Transport Plan (LTP)

- Adopted in 2016;
- Currently being reviewed;
- Draft LTP (pre- public consultation) agreed at 20th December 2019 Cabinet;
- Public consultation took place 16th January – 26th March 2020;
- The results of the public consultation are currently being analysed;
- GCC Cabinet will consider the final revised LTP in January 2021, before proposed adoption at Full Council in March 2021.

4.8 Minerals Local Plan

- The Plan has now been adopted.

4.9 Chepstow Transport Improvements

- Consultant's report outlined scheme options;
- Monmouthshire CC keen to progress the Business Case;
- GCC Lead Cabinet Members supported a GCC financial contribution of £20K (2020/21) towards Stage 2 of the Chepstow Transport Study.

4.10 Cinderford

- FoDDC yet to secure planning permission and funding for proposed extension of phase one of the road;
- FoDDC aiming to apply to themselves (via a Section 73 amendment) to vary the existing planning permission later in 2020;
- Until planning and funding is in place, no further action for GCC.

4.11 Local Plans / JCS

- Review of JCS now underway following an 'Issues and Options' consultation which ended in January 2019;
- Stroud Local Plan – Consultation on Draft Local Plan – closed 22nd January 2020. Significant officer-level concerns submitted to SDC – especially transport issues re- the significant proposed development at Sharpness. Another SDC consultation is currently underway with additional possible housing sites, which will be responded to in December 2020.
- Cotswold Local Plan – Adopted in August 2018;
- Forest of Dean Local Plan – Issues and Options consultation ended on 31st October 2019. FoDDC are currently consulting on a 'preferred option', with comments invited by 29th January 2021.

5.0 Libraries & Registration

5.1 Libraries

- Following the recent Government announcement and in line with new regulations, Libraries will be closing to public browsing with effect from Thursday 5th November 2020. Libraries will continue to offer their 'Off the Shelf', 'Reserve and Collect' and 'Ring and Read' services in line with Government legislation. There will also be limited public PC access for essential use.

5.2 Registration

- Following the recent Government announcement all wedding & civil partnership ceremonies are being suspended from Thursday 5th November to 1st December 2020 (inclusive). Face to face birth appointments will continue, together with essential notice of marriage appointments. Group citizenship ceremonies will also be suspended for the period.

6.0 Waste Management

- The announcement of a second national lockdown to reduce the spread of Covid-19 is expected to have limited impact on waste management services. Collections by district councils, and county council treatment, processing, and disposal operations should all continue to function. This includes Household Recycling Centres (HRCs), which will remain open with existing controls (particularly the appointment booking system) remaining in place.
- The HRCs switched to their winter opening hours on 25th October. Pyke Quarry HRC also reverted to six day opening (having been open seven days a week to help meet summer demand). The 10am till 4pm opening means that fewer booking appointments are available each day. There is a risk that waiting times for an appointment will initially increase, although the number of visitors to HRC sites does naturally reduce over the winter months. Waiting times will be kept under review. The waiting times for an appointment to visit by car the week before and after the hours change is shown below:

Site	Waiting time (as of Mon 19 th Oct)	Waiting time (as of Mon 2 nd Nov)
Fosse Cross	2 days	3 days
Hempsted	1 day	4 days
Oak Quarry	2 days	3 days
Pyke Quarry	8 days	10 days
Wingmoor	1 day	3 days

- The hourly throughput of vehicles at Pyke Quarry was increased (by a further eight cars per hour) to help reduce the impact of the shorter opening hours. A number of "no shows" had been noticed at this site with the number of appointments booked being higher than the number of visitors recorded on site.

- The Gloucestershire EfW completed its annual maintenance shutdown between 26th September and 11th October. Works were completed to schedule and District council waste deliveries were unaffected, with the bunker able to store the waste delivered during the outage period.
- The new Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Partnership met (virtually) for the first time on 1st October. Cllr Richard Cook of Gloucester City was appointed Chair with Cllr Jim Mason of Tewkesbury B.C appointed vice-chair. The main items of business were plans for the development of a new “Resources and Waste Strategy” for Gloucestershire and a new partnership communications plan. The first of its communications campaigns was launched on 21st September. The “Waste Less, Recycle More” campaign included the delivery of a [leaflet](#) to homes across Gloucestershire encouraging people to reduce food waste in particular, but also highlighted the other recycling services provided by the county and district councils.
- Plans for the temporary closure of the Fosse Cross HRC in November for some six weeks for groundwork and drainage repairs have been put on hold.
- Invitations to tender for the council’s Food Waste Treatment Contract have been issued, with the deadline for submissions being 2nd December 2020. New contract arrangements need to be in place by 1st October 2021. An eight year contract term is being offered, with an option to extend by up to two years. A revenue growth bid has been made for the new contract.

7.0 Employment and Skills

7.1 Adult Education Service

- AES’s contribution to the local skills support for economic recovery has been drafted and is being finalised for sharing with the GAB and stakeholders. This should help raise the profile of Service and stimulate further discussion with District Councils and community groups. This will help with further collaboration over the use of Adult Education Budget (AEB) with local colleges.
- Since the implementation of the new staffing structure (commenced 1st September), good progress is being made with staff being embedded into new roles. The transition from old to new is progressing very well despite COVID-19 related challenges. An internal full review of our current processes and procedures is underway to enable the Service to continue making improvements (streamlining, efficiency gains and cost savings).
- Online learning remains in place for community learning, skills and apprenticeship provision and will continue (alongside face-to-face delivery) as a means of dealing with the second lockdown. It is likely that longer-term the Service will retain more of a blended learning approach combining online and face-to-face learning, although this remains challenging with community learning but plans are underway to gradually provide more f2f delivery for those learners who are most deprived.

- REPORT END -