

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

January 2021

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:

- [Gloucestershire Economic Recovery 2021-24](#) (27 January by Cabinet)
- [Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan \(LTP\) 2020-2041](#)(27 January by Cabinet)
- [A435 Bishops Cleeve to Cheltenham Capacity Improvements – Contract Procurement](#) (Between 12 January 2021 and 2 February 2021)
- [The proposed adoption of the ULEV \(Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles\) Strategy and the procurement and installation of Electric Vehicle Chargers across Gloucestershire.](#) (January 2021 – Lead Cabinet Member)
- [B4063 GLOUCESTER TO CHELTENHAM CYCLE IMPROVEMENTS – Contract Procurement and Ancillary Orders](#) (Between 1 March 2021 and 29 March 2021)
- [Proposed adoption of the Gloucestershire Local Development Guide 2020](#) (24 March 2021 by Cabinet)

1.2 Pending Items not yet published on the Forward Plan:

- Review of GCC Fleet Management
- ITU Bus Contract Procurement
- Public Transport Strategy

2.0 Highways

2.1 COVID19 Response

- Preparations continue to ensure resilience in operations and winter/emergency response being maintained over the coming months. Working closely with partner organisations. Additional work around business continuity in this area continues to consider actions in the event of multiple scenarios such as high sickness levels combined with snow or flood event.

2.2 M5 Junction 10

- OBC submitted to MHCLG on 21st March 2019;
- Additional GCC revenue secured to progress this project throughout 2020/21;
- Positive decision made in March 2020 stating that our bid has been successful;
- Urgent work is continuing to progress the scheme, noting concerns re- COVID19 and the associated delays to the original planned timescales due to the 'late' Government announcement;
- Lead Cabinet Members are being updated on a monthly basis;
- The funding shortfall was subject to an approved Cabinet report on 17th June 2020;
- Authority to use CPO powers if necessary approved by Cabinet 22nd July 2020.
- The GDA is now signed; maximum sum value of £249M

- Non-statutory public consultation ran from 14th October – 25th November. Good response to the consultation has been received and the results will form part of the wider work to feed into the Preferred Route Announcement in Spring 2021.
- Land agents appointed to progress land acquisition and negotiations in partnership with GCC Property.
- Claims 1 & 2 have been made and include circa £4M of 'historic claim' claw back.

2.3 Highways Contracts

- Term maintenance/Professional Services - Resources operating with some limited impact from COVID19. Annual programme of footway surfacing and surface dressing now complete. Patching in advance of next year's surface dressing currently underway. Performance on cyclical maintenance and defect repair remains above target. Ability to work collaboratively with all teams remote is 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 sale to M Group now confirmed - will likely mean a novation of the street lighting contract – 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). The team are now also developing work on the possibility of delivering traineeships through the Skills Academy. Despite the difficulties in recruiting and training of new staff under pandemic restrictions the Skills Academy has managed to achieve its target of bringing eight more new apprentices into the business across GCC, Ringway and Atkins.

2.4 Highways Delivery

- Winter readiness – winter treatments have begun with a handful of gritting runs carried out during November and December. Contingency arrangements in place to ensure resilience for this service if impacted by COVID19, including exploration of 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.

2.5 A419 Junction Improvements (Stonehouse)

- Works are substantially complete with the exception of some planting works. We continue to review the scheme with local stakeholders alongside the post works evaluation that we undertake for all major projects.

2.6 A38 Canal Bridges, Whitminster

- Works are largely complete. This includes the completion of landslip works at Northleach on the old A40 where the removed spoil material from the canal project has been able to be utilised to stabilise the embankment supporting the road. This has been a positive benefit both financially and from a carbon footprint perspective, reducing the need to transport material over long distances.
- Following completion of the roundabout works, further works to connect the canal either side will be progressed.
- Cotswold Canal Trust and Stroud District Council successful in lottery bid for £8.9m, 4.5 miles of canal, (opening Thrupp through to Sharpness canal at Saul Junction). The funding also includes 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.

2.7 West Cheltenham / Cyber £22M

- Following December 2018 Cabinet approval, Outline Business Cases for all phases of the scheme have been drawn up; business Cases for Phases 1 & 2 were submitted, presented and agreed at the LEP Board on 10th December 2019; business Cases for Phases 3 & 4 were submitted, presented and agreed at the LEP Board on 9th June 2020.
- Work started on site for Phases 1 and 2 in June 2020 and works are currently on schedule to be completed by Summer 2021.
- The Phase 3 and 4 Design and Build contract is progressing well with design due to be complete imminently, construction is anticipated to start in early 2021 and be complete by the end of 2021.
- Highways England's safety critical works at Staverton Bridge and M5 Junction 11 works have now commenced with Arle Court forming part of the M5 J11 diversion route, whilst this has resulted in an increase in stakeholder contact there has been no impact on the Phase 1 & 2 works programme.

2.8 Ashchurch Bridge over Rail (Delivery for Tewkesbury Borough Council)

- Planning permission for the bridge has been submitted. It is anticipated this will go on the agenda for the January planning Committee.
- Works continue with Tewkesbury Borough Council and Network Rail to understand the complexities of the legal agreements required for the construction phase.
- Detailed design continues (Atkins).

3.0 Community & Infrastructure

3.1 DfT Emergency Active Travel Fund

- EATF Tranche 1 (London Road cycle route): Detailed design underway for 140m of cycle lane between Tesco and Great Western Road, for construction early 2021.

- In November 2020 £864k was secured from an EATF Tranche 2 bid from the Department for Transport, which will part fund a section of the B4063 Chelt-Glos cycle route.
- Consultation plan summary for the B4063 Chelt-Glos cycle route has been submitted to DfT and published on the council's website together with evidence of how the scheme will comply with the government's new guidance on cycle infrastructure standards (LTN 1/20).

3.2 ITU Public and School Transport

- New national rules mandating the wearing of masks on school buses have been introduced smoothly and have been appreciated by schools, parents and bus operators.

3.3 E-scooters

- Continued excellent uptake. Total distance travelled now 47,748 kilometres, equivalent to riding 1.25 times around the world.
- Reduction in anti-social behaviour: while some anti-social behaviour has occurred, it has reduced in frequency and severity.
- Positive press coverage about PCSO using a Zwings e-scooter to apprehend an offender.
- Excellent uptake of free rides for NHS workers - over 150 key workers made free rides.
- Excellent COVID-19 response with vehicles fully sanitised on a daily basis.

3.4 School Streets

- Positive early feedback from parents and children about the School Streets pilots in Tewkesbury and in Warden Hill (Cheltenham). These are being managed and monitored by a project team from ThinkTravel, Highways, Parking and the Police. A decision on further school streets pilots will be taken in summer 2021, to allow us to apply lessons learned from the first phase.

3.5 Sustainability

- In December Cabinet agreed the council's first annual report on progress delivering the council's Climate Change Strategy. This includes updates to the rolling 5 year programme.
- £222k of bids submitted to the government's Low Carbon Skills Fund to help identify ways of reducing carbon emissions from the council property assets and inform future bids for the decarbonisation of heat.

3.6 Highways Development Management

- Four new members of staff join in January and February: the HDM Manager, two Principal Development Coordinators and one Principal Development Engineer.

4.0 Strategic Infrastructure

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

This project will need to link into the under construction GCC £22M transport improvement scheme to the west of Cheltenham. The original HE scheme, in order to fulfil funding criteria, needed to be completed by March 2020. This, however, was subsequently extended to construction starting in 2021, as part of the RIS2 process. Given the limited progress to date, the original date was increasingly impossible to adhere to. GCC officers continue to engage with HE's Route Manager to attempt to ensure everything is 'joined up'. GCC officers have decided to take over the detailed design of this project, given the HE delays with the design fully underway and expected to be complete in Spring 2021. This will have the key advantage of directly linking the project to the emerging £22M West Cheltenham Transport Improvement Scheme (WCTIS) providing a continuous link between Gloucester and Cheltenham Station once complete and include the recently successfully delivered Emergency Active Travel Scheme on London Road in Gloucester. A bid was recently submitted to the GFirst LEP for £5M towards this scheme. Despite scoring well, the scheme was not shortlisted by the LEP for funding. The GFirst LEP Board, in December 2020 agreed that any future underspend on the £22M WCTIS would be ringfenced to the B4063 cycle scheme.

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 (LTP), which has recently been subject to a public consultation – the results of which have now been analysed and the LTP is scheduled to be considered at Cabinet in January 2021.

4.4 Digital connectivity

- Cabinet considered and approved the latest, revised Fastershire Broadband Strategy 2019-2022 in December 2019;
- This is now being implemented, 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 were subject to a recent public consultation, which started on 12th October 2020. A detailed officer response was sent, meeting the external 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
- Planning application in with GCC for change of use (part of City Business Centre to become car park for displaced parking)
- The 'virtual' CPO Public Inquiry took place on 24th November 2020 – 2 objectors remain. Neither of which were represented at the Inquiry.

4.7 Local Transport Plan (LTP)

- Adopted in 2016;
- Currently being reviewed, with a view to adopting the revised Plan in early 2021;
- 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 have been 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 2020/21;
- Until planning and funding is in place, no further action for GCC.

4.11 Local Plans / JCS / CIL

- Review of JCS now underway following an 'Issues and Options' consultation which ended in January 2019;
- GCC's signing of the JCS Partnership Agreement has now been paused and it currently depends on the outcome of the JCS CIL review (see below);
- There was agreement with JCS officers in October 2019 that there should be an immediate review of the JCS CIL. GCC had agreed to financially contribute £25K towards this and the review was progressing. In Spring 2020, JCS officers informed GCC that this CIL review will be paused due to (i) COVID-19 and (ii) lack of secured funding from the District Councils;
- GCC education and library contributions continue to be challenged and 'declined' by some District Councils and developers. We have now failed to secure several millions of pounds worth of essential infrastructure;
- To date GCC has not received any monies generated through CIL from any of the JCS authorities;
- That said, negotiations continue with some positive progress made and Lead Cabinet Members have been updated;
- 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 took place with additional possible housing sites, which was 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' – the closing date for comments is 29th January 2021. GCC officers will comment before this deadline.

5.0 Libraries & Registration

5.1 Libraries

- Libraries continue to adjust the services offered inline with national COVID-19 restrictions. Agreement has been received to roll out the Innovation Lab concept to the 6 districts. Work will begin on this project in the New Year.

5.2 Registration

- The backlog of birth registrations is now under 300. The team have made significant progress on the huge backlog and we are now reverting all offices back to mixed appointment availability. Registration services continue to adjust their provision in line with national COVID 19 restrictions and changes in demand.

6.0 Waste Management

- Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) will remain open during the latest national lockdown (announced on 4th January 2021), with social distancing facilitated through

an online appointment booking system. Waiting times for an appointment to visit a HRC remain low. Waiting times have reduced at Pyke Quarry since the last update:

Site	Waiting time 2 nd Dec	Waiting time 16 th Dec
Fosse Cross	1 day	1 day
Hempsted	5 days	5 days
Oak Quarry	1 day	1 day
Pyke Quarry	13 days	9 days (excludes Christmas Day and Boxing Day closure)
Wingmoor	1 day	1 day

- General and clinical waste management arrangements for the COVID-19 mass testing pilot at the RAU, Cirencester have been paused following the recent announcement that the majority of university students will not return to colleges until at least mid-February. Support for the Gloucester testing site is being arranged, effective from 13th January.

7.0 Employment and Skills

7.1 Adult Education Service

- AES's contribution to the local skills support for economic recovery has been completed and has been shared with the GAB and stakeholders in October. This should help raise the profile of GCC Adult Education and also stimulate further discussion and provision with District Councils, community groups, etc. and 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. 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.
- Performance 1st Quarter (Learner enrolments, Income from ESFA, Exam passes, Retention Rates, etc.) remain strong in most areas despite Covid-19 related challenges.
- Sarah Carne, the new Head of Adult Education started work on the 4th January.

- REPORT END -