

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

March 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:

- [The proposed adoption of the ULEV \(Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles\) Strategy and the procurement and installation of Electric Vehicle Chargers across Gloucestershire.](#) (Between 16 Nov 2020 and 21 Dec 2020 by Cabinet Member - Environment and Planning)
- [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 3 Aug 2020 and 31 Mar 2021 by Cabinet Member - Environment and Planning)
- [A435 Bishops Cleeve to Cheltenham Capacity Improvements – Contract Procurement](#) (Between 12 Jan 2021 and 19 Mar 2021 by Cabinet Member - Highways and Flood)
- [B4063 GLOUCESTER TO CHELTENHAM CYCLE IMPROVEMENTS – Contract Procurement and Ancillary Orders](#) (Between 1 Mar 2021 and 29 Mar 2021 by Cabinet Member - Environment and Planning)
- [M5 Junction 9/A46 \(Ashchurch\) Transport Scheme](#) (24 March by Cabinet)
- [GCC Infrastructure Recovery Strategy](#) (24 March by Cabinet)
- [Proposed adoption of the Gloucestershire Local Development Guide 2020](#) (24 March by Cabinet)
- [Tender and Award of Materials Recycling, Reuse and Recovery Services under the Dynamic Purchasing System for Household Recycling Centres](#) (24 March by Cabinet)

1.2 Pending Items not yet published on the Forward Plan:

- Highways Public Notices and Advertising
- Tender and Award of Recyclate Services under the Dynamic Purchasing System for HRCs
- Proposed adoption of the Gloucestershire Local Development Guide 2020
- M5 J10 Infrastructure Recovery Strategy
- Proposed nomination for open call for a community to host a world first fusion power plant and associated opportunities

2.0 Highways

2.1 COVID19 Response

- Most elements of delivery are continuing to operate at normal levels despite impacts from some staff absences being greater at present. Critical worker letters have been issued where appropriate.
- Works are ongoing to try 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 has focused on actions in the event of multiple scenarios such as high sickness levels combined with snow or flood event.

2.2 M5 Junction 10 / HIF bid

- 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 had been successful. The funding shortfall was subject to an approved Cabinet

report on 17th June 2020; and authority to use CPO powers if necessary approved by Cabinet 22nd July 2020.

- The GDA is now signed; maximum sum value of £249M
- Lead Cabinet Members are being updated on a monthly basis.
- 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 to date total just over £6m including 'historic claim' claw back.

2.3 Highways Contracts

- Term maintenance/Professional Services - Resources operating with some limited impact from COVID19. Performance on cyclical maintenance and defect repair remains above target. Ability to work collaboratively with all teams remote 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 – Skanska sale to M Group now confirmed - will involve 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/emergency – significant emergency response over the Christmas period with flooding incidents, Storm Bella and snow affecting the county. A seasonal peak in reported potholes and safety defects is now occurring but performance on repair times and levels remains satisfactory and additional gangs have been deployed to the network.
- 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. A tree planting strategy for the replacement of those felled has been agreed where two trees will be planted for each one felled. 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. 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, and 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 started in January 2021 and is due to be complete by the end of 2021. A contractor share event is planned for February 2021.
- Highways England's safety critical works at Staverton Bridge and M5 Junction 11 are underway with Arle Court forming part of the M5J11 diversion route, whilst this has resulted in an increase in stakeholder contact there has been no impact on the Phase 1 & 2 works programme, largely due to reduced traffic volumes during covid restrictions.

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

- Planning permission for the bridge has been submitted. The latest update is that this will now go on the agenda for the March 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

- London Road cycle route: Detailed design is underway for 140m of cycle lanes between Tesco and Great Western Road (past the Nepalese Chef). Consultation is underway on footway improvements including a raised table crossing on Claremont Road at its junction with London Road. This will help pedestrians and enable shop deliveries to take place off the main road, keeping the cycle lanes clear.
- Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 (B4063 Chelt-Glos cycle route): Public consultation has started on proposals for an off road segregated scheme between Arle Court (Cheltenham) and Elmbridge Court (Gloucester) via Staverton and Churchdown. The response rate to date has been high.

3.2 ITU Public Transport and School Transport

- Following the government's announcement that schools and colleges will return on Monday 8 March officers have been working with schools, colleges and bus operators to ensure that sufficient capacity is in place for entitled pupils to travel to school. In recent weeks the ITU has also been assisting transport operators with implementing additional testing and vaccination for their staff who work closely with vulnerable people.
- GWR has given assurances that all key school and college rail services will be operating from this date. Over the last year, GWR have worked closely with colleges and schools to map these services. Many are already running, but where they are not, GWR will have them reinstated in time to support students, pupils and returning staff.
- As restrictions ease over the course of the coming months and more passengers return to the railway, GWR will continue to restore services to their timetable.

3.3 Electric Vehicles

- A cabinet member decision is planned for March to approve the ULEV Strategy and procurement of a provider to implement a countywide investment in EV charging points. These will primarily serve residents in areas where households lack private drives/garages which could be used charge vehicles overnight.

3.4 School Streets

- Officers are evaluating feedback from a survey of School Streets pilots in Tewkesbury and in Warden Hill, Cheltenham. By making the changes under Experimental TRO legislation the council has flexibility to make modifications during the first 6 months. A high number of responses were received from both school communities.

3.5 Sustainability

- The 2021/22 Council budget includes funding to support the decarbonisation of transport and to create in-house capacity to support the delivery of active travel, public transport, road safety and traffic management schemes.

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. Prior to this, 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 works. This settlement is currently being challenged.

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 was approved at Cabinet on 27th January 2021, prior to proposed adoption at Full Council on 17th March 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 public consultation, which started on 12th October 2020. A detailed GCC 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. The DfT's target date for a decision remains as the 13th April 2021.
- Advance preparatory works are scheduled to commence during the week commencing 1st March at Llanthony Priory, signage will be in place to highlight the start of preparatory works and a press release is in the process of being drafted
- Arrangements are being made to prepare tender documents for the City Business Centre demolition contract

4.7 Local Transport Plan (LTP)

- Adopted in 2016;
- Currently being reviewed;
- Public consultation took place 16th January – 26th March 2020;
- GCC Cabinet approved the revised LTP on 27th January 2021, before proposed adoption at Full Council on 17th 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. Earlier this year, JCS officers informed GCC that this CIL review will be paused due to (i) CV-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;
- GCC continues to not receive a penny of 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 recently consulted on a 'preferred option' – the closing date for comments was 29th January 2021. GCC officers commented before this deadline.

5.0 Libraries & Registration

5.1 Libraries

- Libraries continue to offer click & collect services and limited PC use. If conditions allow libraries will be permitted to re-open for browsing no earlier than 12th April. Plans are in place for re-introducing browsing.
- Following agreement at full Council to fund the rollout of Innovation Labs an initial meeting is set up to create a project plan and finalise locations of the new labs.

5.2 Registration

- The UK Government's routemap has given detail around wedding and civil partnership ceremonies with restrictions easing and numbers increasing through to 21st June 2021.
- The regulations were laid before Parliament on 22nd February 2021 to introduce the Marriage Schedule System. This would make the legal record electronic rather than the current paper registers and makes changes to who can be recorded on a marriage certificate. Whilst this is a welcome step it will mean that processes and procedures within Gloucestershire Registration Service need to be changed, which will be very time intensive whilst the service is dealing with backlogs and increased wedding ceremonies.. It is anticipated that the new system will be in place from 4th May 2021.

6.0 Waste Management

- Waiting times for an appointment to visit a Household Recycling Centre (HRC) remain low, but there may be some increased demand as the weather begins to warm up and the country's route out of lockdown begins to take shape. Waiting times remain longest at Pyke Quarry:

Site	Waiting time 18 th Jan 21	Waiting time at 23 rd Feb 21
Fosse Cross	2 days	2 days
Hempsted	5 days	6 days
Oak Quarry	1 day	2 days
Pyke Quarry	11 days	13 days
Wingmoor	1 day	2 days

- The HRCs will move to their summer opening hours of 9am until 5pm on 28th March. This will increase daily opening hours by 2 hours per day. Sites are open six days per week.
- Evaluation of bids for the council's Food Waste Treatment Contract has been completed and a contract award offer will be made in the first week of March. New contract arrangements need to be in place by 1st October 2021.
- General and healthcare waste management arrangements for the Covid-19 mass testing sites at the Friendship café in Gloucester and at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester have been set up and are operating smoothly. Plans are also in place to support the site opening in Cinderford on 17th March. As a fall-back, agreement has been reached with the Environment Agency that the healthcare wastes associated with lateral flow device testing can be treated at the Gloucestershire Energy from Waste facility if necessary. This is in response to known capacity issues within the clinical/healthcare waste market at present.
- A report will be considered by Cabinet in March to seek authorisation to reprocure contracts for the off-take of (the twenty plus) materials collected and recycled at HRCs. The new agreements will commence 1st September 2021.
- Work is underway on the development of a new contract for the management of the HRC service with Ubico. Cabinet agreed in July 2020 to award a new five plus two year contract to Ubico without further competition. The new agreement will take effect from 1st September 2021.
- Work has commenced with district council partners on the development of a new Resources and Waste Strategy for Gloucestershire. The Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Partnership hopes to conduct a public consultation exercise on strategy options in the autumn of 2021.

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 helps with further collaboration over the use of Adult Education Budget (AEB) with local colleges. This is a live document that we will continue to update based on local skills need, LMI and claimant count.
- 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). Full impact of the changes will not be shown from a working point of view until full service is up and running post Covid restrictions but so far staff are embracing the process well.
- 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, we continued through the second and current lockdown to provide face to face learning to those most vulnerable and facing digital poverty, which has seen all classes at capacity with 6 learners (socially distanced).
- Performance 2nd Quarter (Learner enrolments, Income from ESFA, Exam passes, Retention Rates, etc.) remain strong in most areas despite Covid-19 related challenges. New HOS has reviewed all plans and is confident that forecasts are achievable and accurate at this time.
- Since the return (enabling a combination of office-based and home working each week for staff through 'split working rota bubbles'), motivation and morale has significantly improved. Some staff remain working solely from home.
- Subcontractors' bids have now been finalised and verbally accepted, call off agreements have now been sent to each provider for signing.

- AES are currently at a low risk with regards to any shortages of staff (capacity and Covid-19 based). This is monitored on a daily basis including a monthly review meeting between senior staff in AES.
- Plans to gradually open the centre up for more face to face delivery are being put into action following the latest update from Boris Johnson and strictly following the government Covid regulations.

- **REPORT END** -