

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

May 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's Community Renewal Fund Submission](#) (Between 11 Jun 2021 and 17 Jun 2021 by Cabinet Member - Economy, Education and Skills)
- [Rural Mobility Fund – update](#) (June 23 Cabinet)
- [A435 Bishops Cleeve to Cheltenham Capacity Improvements – Contract Procurement](#) (Between 12 Jan 2021 and 30 June 2021 by Cabinet Member - Highways and Flood)
- [The proposed adoption of the ULEV \(Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles\) Strategy and the procurement and installation of Electric Vehicle Chargers across Gloucestershire.](#) (Between 17 Mar 2020 and 30 June 2021 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 30 June 2021 by Cabinet Member - Environment and Planning)

1.2 Pending Items not yet published on the Forward Plan:

- Community and Adult Skills Programme 2021/22
- GCC Infrastructure Recovery Strategy
- J10 Arle Court Transport Hub
- Food Waste

2.0 Highways

2.1 Highways Contracts

- Term maintenance (Ringway) – Third year of contract underway. Some focus now required on progressing collaborative working relationship. Performance on cyclical maintenance and defect repair remains on target.
- Structural maintenance (Tarmac) – Last year of current contract. Continued good performance and final year of £150m investment commenced. Procurement of next surfacing contract to be considered over next 6 months in readiness for April 2022.
- Street lighting (M Group) – Now novated from Skanska for remaining term (potentially up to 6 years). Capital investment period virtually complete and largely maintenance activities being undertaken. Performance on key indicators remains satisfactory.
- Highway Skills Academy – Covid19 restrictions/remote working has had a distinct impact on bringing new staff into all the Gloucestershire Highways businesses effectively and with appropriate support. However, the overall success rate has been extremely good but where apprenticeships have not worked out there are actions which have been identified to try to improve the success rate for the future. Attention is now turning to how to maintain a development/career path for those staff which are progressing through their apprenticeships in order that GCC retains the investment in time, funds and skills.
- Awards – submissions made for CIHT Active Travel (London Road), CIHT Structures (A38 Canal Bridges) and ICE Structures (A38 Canal Bridges) awards. A38 Canal Bridges shortlisted for the ICE award.

2.2 Highways Delivery

- Winter/emergency – teams are currently working their way through a seasonal spike in highway defects and an impact on network condition has been seen following the winter and flooding events. Additional gangs continue to be funded to enable Ringway to maintain repair defect performance. Winter operations are easing off now (although gritting runs and snow events continued during April); the total number of runs at 1st April was 237 compared with the profile to end April of 153.
- Depots/property – development of strategic plan for highways depots included in 21/22 Service Plan in order to ensure facilities are fit for purpose.
- Ash die back – continued programme in 21/22 with a view to upscaling the planting programme to ensure that two trees are planted for each one felled with ash die back disease. Discussions are underway with external organisations such as National Trust and others to identify larger woodland planting schemes off the public highway.

2.3 Major Projects

J10

- Non-statutory public consultation results now published. Timeline now working towards Preferred Route Announcement in May/June.
- Land agents appointed to progress land acquisition and negotiations in partnership with GCC Property.
- Claims to date total just over £7m (with further £1.7m in April forecast) including 'historic claim' claw back.

A38 Canal Bridges, Whitminster

- Works complete

A46 Coopers Hill

- Works complete

A435 Capacity Improvements

- Preparing to go out to tender on capacity improvements on A435 between Cheltenham and Bishops Cleeve. Funding/need associated with local housing developments.

A435 Charlton Hill

- Preparing to go out to tender on geotechnical solution to landslip on A435 between Cheltenham and Seven Springs.

A419 Junction Improvements (Stonehouse)

- Works are substantially complete.

Ashchurch Bridge over Rail (Delivery for Tewkesbury Borough Council)

- Planning permission for the bridge has been granted.
- 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).

GSWB / Llanthony Road

- Planning permission granted April 2019;
- Public Inquiry decision announced in early April by the DfT for the CPO process – this is subject to a 6 week Judicial Review Period and a Notice of Intent Period which extends until the 28th August.
- Advance preparatory works have commenced and signage is in place for information.
- Planning application in with GCC for change of use (part of City Business Centre to become car park for displaced parking)

- Arrangements are being made to prepare tender documents for the City Business Centre demolition contract

West Cheltenham / Cyber £22M

- 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.
- 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.

3.0 Community & Infrastructure

3.1 DfT Emergency Active Travel Fund

- Tranche 2: (B4063 Chelt-Glos cycle route): Following criticism last summer of (historic) plans for this route further design work has been done by the council's consultants, Atkins. The amended plans are more compliant with recent government guidance on designing for cycling (LTN 1/20) and were well received in a public consultation in February and March. To make the route as attractive as possible we have invited a critical friend panel to review the design. This work is underway.
- A £231k revenue bid has been submitted to the DfT's Local Authority Capability Fund for a programme of active travel activities in 2021/22. This will support the development of an ambitious and high-quality local cycling and walking infrastructure plan (LCWIP) compliant with LTN 1/20, work on a pipeline of schemes and engagement with communities including employers and schools.

3.2 ITU Public Transport and School Transport

- As part of its "Bus Back Better" strategy to increase the proportion of trips made on public transport the government has committed to extending the Commercial Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG) scheme for bus operators whose incomes have been hit hard by Covid travel restrictions and social distancing rules. Grant funding is conditional upon entering into a formal partnership with the local authority and making commitments to improving local services. Officers have secured £100k of capacity funding from the DfT to support development of a Bus Service Improvement Plan and formal partnerships with bus operators.
- Arle Court Transport Hub – Constructive discussions have been held with CBC Planning and with stakeholders and the project is nearing the design freeze stage. A core level of parking capacity will be required during the construction period to support the continued operation of park and ride and NHS services. Options are currently being explored with the designers and with bus operators and the remaining spaces will be prioritised for bus users.

3.3 Network Management (Road Safety and Parking)

- A new interim Road Safety and Data Manager has joined the team, replacing the former manager who recently retired.

3.4 e-Scooter trial

- Zwings are deploying Brand Ambassadors in Cheltenham and Gloucester to promote e-scooter use, look out for anti-social riding and answer questions from members of the public.
- Rides in Gloucester are up by 11.8% from the week before to 407 – 1.21 rides per scooter and 208 riders. Rides in Cheltenham down slightly by 0.7% from the week before to 1273 –

3.31 rides per scooter and 648 riders. This is the 2nd highest number of rides in a week in Cheltenham, only beaten by the previous week.

3.5 Sustainability

- A National Management Trainee graduate placement has started working in the team, for six months, to focus on development and implementation of measures in the Climate Change Action Plan. These include the Tree Strategy, funding bids and supporting green fleet and EV charger projects. The team will be advertising for a new Climate Change and Air Quality officer post this summer.

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. GCC officers continue to engage with HE's Route Manager to attempt to ensure everything is 'joined up'. GCC has decided to take over the detailed design of this project, given the HE delays with the design fully underway with the East part of the route designed and consulted upon in Spring 2021, an independent audit is now underway from a leading industry expert to ensure we provide the best possible facility we can within the constraints, with works expected to start in late 2021. This scheme 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. 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. We are seeking to bid for additional funding from the DfT Levelling Up fund (subject to Lead Cabinet Member support) to deliver the scheme in its entirety.

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 came from the approved £4M GCC funding for 'business case development' in 2020/21;
- The progression of the scheme was considered and approved by GCC Cabinet on 24th March 2021;
- Discussions re- possible future funding ongoing with both Homes England and Tewkesbury BC due to the links to the emerging 'garden town';
- Ongoing discussions with HE to secure approval of options for Junction 9;
- Detailed HE feedback has been received in March 2021 and is currently being analysed by officers and Atkins.

4.3 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%’.

4.4 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;
- Revised proposals were subject to a further public consultation, which started on 12th October 2020. A detailed GCC officer response was sent, meeting the external deadline of 12th November 2020;
- Ongoing officer discussions re- Barrow Wake car park and biodiversity net gain;
- The DCO planning application is expected to be submitted end May 2021.

4.5 Local Transport Plan (LTP)

- The LTP was adopted at Full Council on 17th March 2021.

4.6 Chepstow Transport Improvements

- Consultant’s report outlined scheme options;
- Monmouthshire CC keen to progress to Full Business Cases;
- GCC Lead Cabinet Members supported a GCC financial contribution of £20K (2020/21) towards Stage 2 of the Chepstow Transport Study;
- A possible further GCC financial contribution for 2021/22 is currently being considered.

4.7 Cinderford

- FoDDC yet to secure planning permission and funding for proposed extension of phase one of the road;
- A Section 73 amendment to vary the existing planning permission has been submitted in April 2021 and is awaiting determination by FoDDC;
- Until planning and funding is in place, no further action for GCC.

4.8 Local Plans / JCS / CIL

- Review of JCS now underway following an ‘Issues and Options’ consultation which ended in January 2019;
- The JCS Reg.18 consultation is anticipated in Autumn 2021;
- Progress has been made with the JCS authorities to review the JCS CIL March 2021 onwards;
- 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;
- 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. The next public consultation stage (pre-submission consultation) is anticipated in late Spring 2021;

- Cotswold Local Plan – Adopted in August 2018;
- Forest of Dean Local Plan – Issues and Options consultation ended on 31st October 2019. FoDDC 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 re-opened to the public w/c 12th April 2021. Opening hours are still reduced from those pre March 2020 as additional staff are required to undertake the cleaning and test and trace elements of the service. We are looking at ways we can introduce some of our support groups using external spaces.
- Plans are progressing to install the first of the additional 4 innovation labs into Tewkesbury Library; this will also involve an upgrade to the library space upstairs in order to provide an enhanced offer from this library.

5.2 Registration

- Training is taking place to train staff in the new Marriage Schedule System which is implemented from 4th May 2021. Plans are being drawn up to recover all Church registers for storage within the Heritage Hub.

6.0 Waste Management

- Waiting times for an appointment to visit a Household Recycling Centre (HRC) by car have decreased since last month. Waiting times remain longest at Pyke Quarry. Next day appointments are currently available at three of the five sites.

Site	Waiting time at 23rd Mar 21	Waiting time at 22nd Apr 21
Fosse Cross	6 days	1 day
Hempsted	6 days	6 days
Oak Quarry	5 days	1 day
Pyke Quarry	11 days	12 days
Wingmoor	2 days	1 day

- Solutions for reducing the waiting times further, particularly at Pyke Quarry and Hempsted, are currently being explored. One potential approach is, in light of relaxing Covid-19 restrictions, to open up parking bays at the HRCs that have been coned off to promote social distancing. A number of neighbouring councils have started taking this approach. It offers potential to provide additional appointments with no additional management costs. Waste processing costs may, however, increase as a result of higher tonnages.
- The improvement to the booking system that allows users to amend or cancel their bookings has now been rolled out to both the car and van booking platforms.
- With the new Food Waste Treatment Contract now awarded, there is a requirement to secure new food waste haulage arrangements from district council tipping locations to the treatment facility. Ubico Ltd has been approached to see if it can fulfil this requirement. If it can, then it is proposed that a Cabinet/ICM decision paper be prepared recommending a direct award without further competition to Ubico. The Waste management team would specify the service requirements and an affordability envelope (based on our known current prices). There are potential efficiencies from including this haulage work with the existing HRC waste haulage undertaken by Ubico.

- Work continues on the development of a new contract for the management of the HRC service with Ubico. The new agreement will take effect from 1st September 2021. The draft Agreement and response document will be issued to Ubico by the end of April.
- Work is also getting underway to procure new materials off-take contracts for the various waste streams collected for reuse, recycling and recovery at the HRCs. There are currently 28 different contracts in place, which are to be retendered and awarded ahead of contract commencement on 1st April 2022. The duration of these new contracts will be synchronised with the duration of the new Ubico management contract.
- The Energy from Waste facility at Javelin Park continues to perform well, with turbine availability during March at 100%. Health, Safety and Environmental performance also remains good (currently 181,219 RIDDOR Free Man-hours have been worked).

7.0 Employment and Skills

7.1 Adult Education Service

- 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 still 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 is embracing the process well.
- Staff Questionnaire was sent out to all AES staff to ascertain how they felt about returning to work post Covid restrictions and with a view to continuing AGILE working. Majority of staff are keen to return to 3 days a week in the office and 2 days a week working from home. This will work well for the provision provided there is enough desk space in the office to allow for this post Covid. The office was visited this week by the ICT team to look at whether more desks can be set up for staff return to the office post June 21st, they are still looking at whether this meets covid restriction rules and regulations.
- Online learning remains in place for skills as well as community learning and the apprenticeship provision but as venues gradually open up we will be able to move to an increased amount of face to face learning. 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 third lockdowns 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). The third lockdown has meant that 80% of our provision is now be online, with only 20% of courses taking place face to face to support those who are facing extreme vulnerability with digital skills and mental health/wellbeing. As of 8th March, face to face delivery has been increased within the centre to include cooking and ICT courses 4 sessions a week with a maximum of 6 learners at a time to allow for social distancing.
- With libraries starting to open up again we are keen to work with them to responsibly deliver our Community learning programmes in those venues (these are key delivery areas for us within many local communities).
- Apprenticeship exams took place throughout lockdown but all other skills exams are now going to be Assessment based as per instructions from the Department of Education, Ofqual and the awarding body (Pearsons). All other exams are cancelled and learners will be awarded grades based on their course work and assessments so far.
- Monthly budget review meetings have been set up by the new HoS with Finance and department budget holders to create a finance recovery plan with accurate forecasting tools to ensure we are on track with all progress and potential income/expenditure.
- Full process review is being undertaken by the new HoS to standardise procedures across the department, this includes new observation, enrolment and course development procedures and processes to allow for better Ofsted and Matrix readiness.
- Our current subcontractor framework is due to end with our 5 current subcontractors on July 31st 2021, and we would now like to go out to tender again. Documents have been

prepared for Cabinet review at the June meeting to ensure that this process is completed by the deadline and service is not disrupted.

- **REPORT END** -