

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

November 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:

- [A417 Missing Link Development Consent Order \(DCO\)](#) process Between 1 Sep 2021 and 17 Nov 2021
- [Programme Change to Fastershire Delivery](#) Between 30 Nov 2021 and 7 Dec 2021
- [Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground - Strategic Planning](#) 22 Dec 2021 by Cabinet
- [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 Dec 2021 by Cabinet Member - Environment and Planning

1.2 Pending Items not yet published on the Forward Plan:

- Electricity Contracts
- Climate Change Strategy Annual Report & Action Plan

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. Defect numbers for September were just over 2500 but October's outturn is looking slightly higher at nearer 3000. Parts of the network which have not yet been addressed with long term solutions such as resurfacing remain fragile.
- Professional services (Atkins) – Third year of contract underway.
- Structural maintenance (Tarmac) – Last year of current contract. Continued good performance and final year of £150m investment commenced. The procurement of the Structural Maintenance contract is the subject of a cabinet decision in November 2021.
- Street lighting (M Group) – Performance on key indicators remains satisfactory.
- Highway Skills Academy – Current focus is on the formation of 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. Our first cohort of Level 4 (HNC equivalent) Apprenticeships of 12 staff will start this month (September) with a second cohort planned to follow next year with the large level of interest from existing staff. Highways have also welcomed some participants from the Kickstart programme into the teams.
- Awards – A38 Canal Bridges won two awards at the ICE SW Awards in both the 'People's Choice Award' and 'Project Under £8m New Build Award'.
- Roadworker assaults – following continued incidents of assaults on roadworkers/staff working on GCC's highway network directly, or via contracted providers, a letter to the PCC outlining

the issue has been positively received with confirmation of positive support on this important issue.

2.2 Highways Delivery

- 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 including 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

M5 J10

- Non-statutory public consultation results now published. Preferred Route Announcement took place on 16th June 2021 along with associated communications and publication via GCC website.
- Land agents progressing land acquisition/negotiations in partnership with GCC Property.
- Claims to date total just over £13.5m.
- Consultation currently underway for A38/A4019 Coombe Hill package of works.
- Statutory public consultation for J10 will run from December 2021 to February 2022.

A435 Capacity Improvements

- Works currently out to tender to delivery capacity improvements associated with local housing developments. Project will also provide some enabling works for future cycle route between Cheltenham and Bishops Cleeve.

A419 Junction Improvements (Stonehouse)

- Works substantially complete with Downton Road junction amendments underway.

Ashchurch Bridge over Rail (Delivery for Tewkesbury Borough Council)

- Planning permission for the bridge has been granted. Detailed design continues (Atkins).
- Legal agreement is underway. Ground investigation completed.
- Project delivery through Design and Build contract likely.
- Works continue with Tewkesbury Borough Council and Network Rail to understand the complexities of the legal agreements required for the construction phase.
- Construction works estimated for 22/23-23/24.

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 Autumn 2021.
- All premises are now owned by GCC. Work is underway to complete all utility disconnections.
- Planning application in with GCC for change of use (part of City Business Centre to become car park for displaced parking)
- Preferred contractor in place for City Business Centre demolition contract, awaiting necessary consents and planning application resolution.
- Levelling Up Fund bid successful at £12.822m

West Cheltenham / Cyber £22M

- Work started on site for Phases 1 and 2 in June 2020 and works will be completed by 5th November. The Phase 3 and 4 Design and Build contract started in January 2021 and is on programme to be completed in early Spring 2022.
- National Highways' safety critical works at Staverton Bridge and M5 Junction 11 are underway with Arle Court forming part of the M5J11 diversion route – with Phase 1 and 2 works virtually complete this is no longer causing a major impact.

Gloucester Station Access Works (Delivery with Gloucester City Council)

- New access/egress at Metz Way nearing completion, subject to Great Western Rail sign off process. Revised Bruton Way access underway including additional drainage works, anticipated completion January 2022.

Geotechnical Schemes

- Blakeney West – Detailed design complete and contract out to tender. Market engagement event scheduled at end October. Contract award anticipated in December with mobilisation in January 2022 with construction works planned for February 2022.
- Rushmire Hill – investigation works ongoing to determine slip and failure mechanism to inform design.
- Badgeworth Road – design works underway during 2021/22
- Tintern Bridge – design works underway and accelerated construction programme being prepared. Ongoing co-ordination with Monmouthshire CC who jointly have responsibility for the bridge.
- Walk Bridge – tendering Design and Build contract for Stroud District Council. Preliminary early contractor involvement to investigate possible construction options prior to tender process.

3.0 Community & Infrastructure

3.1 DMMO Update:

Recent Statistics: (to 18 Oct '21)

The DMMO team faced significant demand pressure of a 2026 cut off date being enacted in law.

New 'min.14(1) compliant' applications received in 2021 (up to 18th Oct) 12
Number of applications 'resolved' so far in 2021 8
Currently resolving, on average over the past 5 years, 8 applications a year.

Number of all 'undetermined' applications, as at 18 Oct 21:

	Undetermined	Undet-Archived	Undet-Non14(2)
No.	21	52	62

("Archived" applications are whereby the intended effect of the application is essentially nulled by a subsequent change in legislation (for example, the NERC Act); "Non14(2)" applications have not been 'fully made' but are still valid applications in terms of needing determination.)

Number of all unresolved 'determined' applications, as at 18 Oct 21:

No.	Apps at publication/ confirmation stage	Apps with unresolved objections	
		Submitted to SoS	Awaiting submission
	3	2	31

Recent CROWC determinations:

Last CROW Committee	1 App on 7 June - decision to make Order for additional FP 1 App on 5 Oct - decision to make Order for additional FP
Next CROW Committee	In December

3.2 DfT Emergency Active Travel Fund

- Tranche 2: (B4063 Chelt-Glos cycle route): Work has started on the construction of part of the route between Arle Court and the M5 bridge. A lower speed limit is in place to allow for safe working and in preparation for the new design, which will reallocate road space to create a safer route that enables cyclists to ride away from the traffic.
- The DfT has agreed our £231k revenue bid submitted to the DfT's Local Authority Capability Fund earlier in the year. This programme of active travel activities 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.

3.3 ITU Public Transport and School Transport

- Cabinet has agreed the council's Bus Service Improvement Plan to support the economic recovery and measures to tackle climate change and social exclusion in rural areas. Our bid will enable the council to bid for significant government funds to deliver high quality urban and rural public transport services over the next three years.
- Public transport service disruption – Stagecoach have reduced service frequencies in Cheltenham and Gloucester to enable drivers to be redeployed to areas of the county where there is a driver shortage, notably the Stroud and Dursley area. Stagecoach is apologising to customers for disruption caused by late cancellations.

3.4 Network Management (Road Safety and Parking)

- In consultation with the police and cabinet members officers have developed guidance for communities on the use of ANPR cameras to address concerns about speeding. This will be published on the council's web site and set out the factors that need to be taken into consideration when applying for such cameras.
- The Invitation to Tender for Electric Vehicle Charge Points has been published on the council's procurement portal. This is a key milestone in enabling the council to invest in 1000 EVCP's over the next four years.
- The council has been successful in bidding for £250k from the Department for Transport for investment in traffic signals that will help to improve detection and pedestrian safety.

3.5 e-Scooter trial

- The government is looking to extend local trials to November 2022, by when permanent legislation is expected to be in place for the use of e-scooters on the public highway. In the first year since the start of the trial in Gloucestershire over 50,000 individuals have used the e-scooters, travelling to the moon and back, and saving over 20 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

3.6 Sustainability

- The council has been successful in securing £600,000 towards implementation of its tree strategy following applications for funding from the Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission. This includes funding to recruit a Tree Officer who will take forward this work in partnership with district councils, the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership and broad range of voluntary organisations over the next three years. To support this work we have put out a call to the public for 'land for trees' and officers are reviewing suggestions to identify sites for suitable planting this winter.

- As part of the Queens Green Canopy initiative a ceremonial tree was planted on 11th October at the Moat School in Matson, Gloucester to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee this year. This was arranged through the office of the Lord Lieutenant for Gloucestershire.
- Three new starters have joined the Sustainability and Waste teams to help deliver our Climate Change, Air Quality and Waste strategies and engage communities. Since starting they have been working with the Gloucestershire Climate Change Coordinator and the Comms team to create the Greener Gloucestershire web pages showcasing sustainable work happening in councils, businesses and communities in the run up to the COP 26 international climate change conference in Glasgow.
- The new Air Quality and Climate Change Officer has worked with Environmental Health teams in Gloucester and Cheltenham to submit a bid from GCC to DEFRA for over £140k of funding to improve air quality in Air Quality Management Areas in both towns. The bid covers air quality monitoring, a single web site for all AQ information in Gloucestershire, interactive signs, educational engagement with local schools and a last mile e-cargo bike pilot in partnership with local businesses. An announcement is not expected until March 2022.

3.7 Highways Development Management

- The HDM Improvement Plan is being implemented with vertical teams delivering a personal geographic service to the LPA's. Following job evaluation of several roles work is now underway to recruit to new permanent posts in the planning and legal agreement/adoptions teams.

4.0 Strategic Infrastructure

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

- 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, with the design fully underway with the East part of the route designed and consulted upon in Spring 2021, an independent audit has now been completed by a leading industry expert to ensure we provide the best possible facility we can within the constraints. The audit findings have led to extensive enhancement of the provision, which have been heavily endorsed by Sustrans to the extent that they are due to become a major funding provider for the scheme. The revised proposals for the East part of the route between the M5 overbridge and Arle Court have now been published on the County Councils website reflecting the feedback received to date.
- Works started in October 2021, delivering the east part of the route first.
- 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 rail 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 (DfT), which will part fund a section of the works. We have submitted a DfT Levelling Up fund 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 and is currently being analysed by officers and Atkins.
- Public consultation anticipated in Summer / Autumn 2022.

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%’.
- Complete Utilities (CU) announced on the 31st October that it was ceasing trading with immediate effect. Gigaclear was informed immediately of this decision. There was no prior warning or indication of this act. Complete Utilities are not the sole contractor for Gigaclear, so active discussions have taken place since the news, in order to re-issue the work to their other suppliers, as well as Gigaclear own direct labour term, which they will bolster. As part of this, they and suppliers are looking to take on some of the CU individuals/gangs who have worked on the contract. GCC released a media statement regarding the news and stated it would do all it could to offer support to staff. GCC have alerted other GCC colleagues who deliver employment and skills programmes, and LEP/JCP who provide a co-ordinated redundancy support programme, who will be ready to respond to help individuals impacted by CU ceasing to trade, once the position is clearer.

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;
- The DCO planning application has now been submitted in June 2021 and is currently being considered by the Planning Inspectorate;
- An Individual Cabinet Member decision is proposed in October / November 2021 to seek authorisation to formally delegate to officers authority to represent the Council through the DCO process.

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 was submitted in April 2021 and is awaiting determination by FoDDC;
- FoDDC are holding a Cinderford Northern Quarter Scrutiny Inquiry early November 2021, with GCC officer input;
- Until planning and funding for the road 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 public consultation has now been delayed to 2022;
- Progress has been made with the JCS authorities to review the JCS CIL – consultants are now undertaking this task in liaison with GCC officers;
- GCC education and library contributions continue to be challenged and declined by some District Councils and developers – these are in the process of being reviewed by GCC;
- 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 most recent public consultation stage (pre-submission draft consultation) ended on 21st July 2021. GCC officer comments were submitted prior to the deadline.
- 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

- The library service had a successful Summer Reading Challenge with the theme Wild World Heroes. The challenge, in its 22nd year, for children aged 4-11 borrowing 6 books over the summer to maintain reading levels and getting certificates and a medal on completion. Pre-covid we would have seen a completion rate of around 61%, however this year we had a completion rate of 75.6%. In addition to this the service distributed packs to 263 looked after children and 1,000 community children reached through local foodbanks.
- The winner of the 2021 David Vaisey Prize was announced during the Cheltenham Literature Festival. The awards were presented by Bernadine Evaristo in a ceremony at the Queens Hotel. The winning initiative was Matson Library who operated pop up libraries in local community venues whilst the library was being refurbished. Through these pop ups they were able to engage with people in the community who had never used a library before and are who are now active users. The model is being replicated elsewhere.

5.2 Registration

- Demand for Registration services is still high and for the 4th month in a row the team have delivered a significantly high number of wedding and civil partnership ceremonies. In October the average number of ceremonies is 277 but in October 2021 the team conducted 455 ceremonies.

6.0 Waste Management

- HRCs moved to their shorter winter opening hours on Sun 31st Oct. Sites are open 10-4, six days per week over the winter months.
- The Fosse Cross HRC has closed for a period of approximately three weeks through November for essential repairs. The booking system ensures that no one can book a visit during the closure period. A communications plan was developed in consultation with our Lead Cabinet Member. Pyke Quarry is open seven days a week during this short period in order to provide some additional capacity. Work at Fosse Cross is progressing well.
- Waiting times for an appointment to visit a Household Recycling Centre (HRC) by car remain low. Next day appointments are currently available at each of the four sites that are currently open.
- The council has a long standing arrangement with Warwickshire County Council (WCC) whereby Gloucestershire residents can use the HRC at Shipston on Stour. An annual payment of approximately £20k/yr has historically been made. Since introducing a booking system at the HRC, WCC has ascertained that 1 in 3 site visitors are from Gloucestershire and are seeking to increase the contribution paid by GCC to approximately £70k from next year. A late revenue growth bid will be made to meet this additional cost.
- The new contract for food waste treatment with Andigestion commenced on 1st October.
- The new contract for food waste haulage with Ubico commenced on 1st November.
- Work continues on the procurement of 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 HRC management contract.

7.0 Employment and Skills

7.1 Adult Education Service

- Online learning remains in place for some of the skills provision, feedback from learners was taken into account when planning the new academic year. ESOL learning is predominately taking place face to face in the centre and other community settings due to the learners expressing the need to mix with other learners and to learn face to face. Functional skills is taking place mainly online as we found this allows for more flexible course delivery, learners are able to complete courses in the evenings to fit around their work patterns. Some functional skills courses are running face to face as not all learners like online learning and it is better to have face to face classes for them. All apprenticeship provisions are now back to face to face with employers now happy for us to go to their premises to carry out assessments and support sessions. Most of the community learning is now back to be being delivered face to face as many of these learners struggle with technology or live in rural areas that do not have good internet connections. Most of the venues we were using pre-Covid are now open and back to normal capacity, this makes our community learning delivery easier.
- We submitted 350 TAG's (Teacher Assessed Grades) in accordance with the instructions from the Department of Education, Ofqual and the awarding body (Pearsons). All grades were upheld by Pearsons and we were praised by them for our accurate recording of learner information and progress throughout their learning programmes.
- The Final ESFA end of year for 2020/2021 was submitted on 2nd November – we have no concerns over the allocation spend as we have exceeded our minimum requirement of 90% spend for this period as a service, hitting a total spend of just under 97%.
- Monthly budget review meetings continue to take place with Hos/Finance and Budget Managers to ensure that forecasting is more accurate and cost savings are looked at regularly. We have made some good cost savings and are in a good financial state as a service now.

7.2 Skills and Employment Hub

- The purpose of the Skills and Employment Hub is to support: - workers who are coming off furlough and facing redundancy; school/college leavers; apprenticeship candidates across the county from one central Skills and Employment Hub. The S&E Hub brings together GCC and GFirst LEP support whilst working with key stakeholders across the county to strengthen the offer to anyone in need of skills and employment support.
- The team moved into a central hub location in the Adult Education building on Commercial Road on 1st September 2021.

- REPORT END -