

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

January 2022

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:

- [Gloucester South West Bypass \(GSWB\) Llanthony Road Improvements – Contract Procurement](#) Between 17 Dec 2021 and 7 Jan 2022 by Cabinet Member - Highways and Flood
- [M5 Junction 10 Improvements Scheme – Delegating Authority](#) Between 30 Dec 2021 and 10 Feb 2022 by Cabinet Member - Environment and Planning
- [The procurement of highway services and construction phase works in connection with the delivery of Tintern Bridge Refurbishment Scheme](#) Between 11 Jan 2022 and 8 Feb 2022 by Cabinet Member - Highways and Flood
- [Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground - Strategic Planning](#) 30 Mar 2022 by Cabinet

1.2 Pending Items not yet published on the Forward Plan:

- Bus Back Better - The Enhanced Partnership
- Agency Staff Contract (Highways)

2.0 Highways

2.1 Highways Contracts

- Term maintenance (Ringway) – Third year of contract underway. Performance on cyclical maintenance and defect repair remains on target. Defect numbers for November were around 3500. Parts of the network which have not yet been addressed with long term solutions such as resurfacing remain fragile. Winter maintenance operations have now begun with a higher than average number of runs being carried out in November, fewer in December so far. Further commercial discussions underway to address retention/recruitment challenges in construction sector.
- 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. Tender documents issued in November 2021 with a view to awarding new contract early in 2022 for mobilisation from April 2022.
- 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 have started 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'.

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. Programme for 22/23 being planned.

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.
- Successful bid for £35k Capacity Funding from Homes England to support local planning authorities in both their statutory and non-statutory functions in respect of the Development Consent Order process.
- Claims to date total just over £15m.
- Next steps will be around ongoing land acquisition negotiations and moving into the Statutory Public Consultation running from 8th December 2021 to February 2022. Member briefings and first two consultation events have been held. Further events to follow in 2022.

A435 Junction Improvements

- Works have been tendered and contract awarded to deliver capacity improvements associated with local housing developments with works due to start in early 2022. Project will also provide some enabling works for future cycle route between Cheltenham and Bishops Cleeve.

A435 Cheltenham to Bishops Cleeve Cycleway

- Preliminary design work is now progressing of the cycle route following an initial concept design.

A419 Junction Improvements (Stonehouse)

- Works substantially complete with Downton Road junction cycle improvements completed in November 2021 and further cycleway alterations planned at Horsetrough Roundabout in early/mid 2022.

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;
- All premises are now owned by GCC. Work is underway to complete all utility disconnections.
- Planning application for change of use (part of City Business Centre to become car park for displaced parking) has now been approved

- Scheme includes segregated footway and cycleway facilities that are compliant with latest government design guidance from the DfT.
- Preferred contractor in place for City Business Centre demolition contract, with surveys underway and demolition scheduled to start early in 2022
- Levelling Up Fund bid successful at £12.822m allowing the main highway works to start in Spring 2022

West Cheltenham Transport Infrastructure Scheme / Cyber

- Work started on site for Phases 1 and 2 in June 2020 and has been substantially completed with traffic management now fully removed and new traffic signals expected to be commissioned imminently. The Phase 3 and 4 Design and Build contract started in January 2021 and is on programme to be completed in 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 works including additional drainage works will commence when Metz Way access/egress is opened, anticipated completion February/March 2022.

Structures/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 Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) Update:

Performance up to 20 Dec '21

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

Total number of 'unresolved' applications: 180 (up from 171)

No. of new 'min.14(1) compliant' applications received in 2021 up to 20th Dec: 20 (up from 13)

Number of applications 'resolved' in 2021: 10 (up from 9)

Currently resolving, on average over the past 5 years, 8 applications a year.

Number of all 'undetermined' applications, as at 20 Dec 21:

	Undetermined	Undet-Archived	Undet-Non14(2)
No.	29	52	63

("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 20 Dec 21:

	Apps at publication/ confirmation stage	Apps with unresolved objections	
		Submitted to SoS	Awaiting submission
No.	2	2	32

Recent CROWC determinations:

Last CROW Committee	1 App on 5 Oct - decision to make Order for additional FP 1 App on 2 Dec - decision to make Order for additional FP
Next CROW Committee	In March 2022

3.2 DfT Active Travel Fund

- Tranche 2: (B4063 Chelt-Glos cycle route): Construction started in October on part of the route between Pheasant Lane and the M5 bridge. A lower speed limit is in place to allow for safe working and the new design reallocates road space to create a safer route for cyclists to ride away from the traffic.
- Construction works were completed in December on extensions to the continuous cycle lanes on London Road, from its junction with Claremont Road to its junction with Great Western Road. This included the provision of alternative loading bays in Claremont Road and Oxford Street and the resurfacing of footways.

3.3 ITU Public Transport and School Transport

- ITU has recruited interim officer support to assist with developing the Enhanced Partnership agreement.
- Following the award of £1.3m Rural Mobility Fund grant last year orders have been placed for four accessible vehicles to operate demand responsive bus services in the Forest of Dean and north Cotswolds. These will be owned by the council and bus operators have been invited to tender to operate the new services in the early spring.
- ITU officers are in regular contact with Stagecoach regarding managing the impact of driver shortages on bus services. This is not within the council's direct control however Stagecoach have a full programme for training new drivers and are seeking to limit the impact especially on infrequent services.

3.4 Network Management (Road Safety and Parking)

- A separate report provides members with an update on progress with the actions arising from the Motion calling for the widespread introduction of 20mph maximum speed limits, which was considered by the committee on the 9th September 2021.
- A parallel workstream is underway reviewing the council's road safety policies and targets. This included a stakeholder workshop in December with representation from local groups, parishes and external speakers. As part of our consultation process we will bring draft proposals back to this committee in May.
- The Tender for Electric Vehicle Charge Points has now been evaluated and a contract award decision will be made this month. This is a key milestone in enabling the council to invest in 1000 EVCP's over the next four years.

3.5 e-Scooter trial

- The council is extending the local trial in Cheltenham and Gloucester to align with and support government plans to extend national trials to November 2022. By then permanent legislation is

expected to be in place for the use of e-scooters on the public highway. The agenda for the January committee includes a presentation by Zwings, the operator of the Gloucestershire scheme, followed by the opportunity to ask questions.

3.6 Sustainability

- We have now secured £1m (60% grant funded) to deliver the council's tree strategy and target of 1million trees by 2030. In December we appointed to the new tree officer post which will manage this ambitious project. This person will be responsible for engaging land owners, developing bids for further tree planting schemes and working with our partner organisations. Our call out to the public for 'land for trees' has so far generated interest in planting over 100,000 trees.
- Officers are finalising arrangements for Climate Literacy Training for over 80 staff and members in February/March. This will initially be for some elected members, senior leaders and managers. We will then review feedback on the effectiveness of the training before making a decision on how best to cascade this more widely through the organisation. This is key to ensuring that climate change is considered in all the council's decisions.

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 Council's website reflecting the feedback received to date.
- Works started in October 2021, delivering the east part of the route first between the M5 and Pheasant Lane which is expected to be completed in Spring 2022 and will be directly followed by subsequent phases.
- 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.
- The County Council has recently successfully secured DfT Levelling Up funding to extend the route through Gloucester City Centre and Gloucester Docks providing linkage to the Gloucester Canal Towpath

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.
- Baroness Vere has confirmed support for the project in November 2021.
- Non statutory public consultation anticipated in September 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 2021 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. CU are not the sole contractor for Gigaclear and other suppliers, as well as Gigaclear’s own direct labour team, have had works re-assigned to them. 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.

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 December 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 held a Cinderford Northern Quarter Scrutiny Inquiry in November 2021, with GCC senior 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 Autumn 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. The Plan has now been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration.
- 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

- As part of the ongoing commitment to supporting businesses, Gloucestershire library service has launched their new intellectual property information service on 22nd November. This is a new service aimed at helping to safeguard the rights of businesses, inventors and entrepreneurs. Staff will provide free advice on a wide range of aspects of intellectual property, such as trademarks, patents, designs and copyright, along with information on how to identify and protect it.

5.2 Registration

- No new update.

6.0 Waste Management

- Authorisation was granted by Cabinet in December 21 to retender the contract for the sale of electricity generated by the Gloucestershire Energy from Waste facility at Javelin Park. The report also authorised the retendering of the council's energy purchase contracts (via a Central

Purchasing Body). A procurement exercise will commence in January 22, with the aim of having new contracts in place by September 22 to allow the forward trading of energy. All energy sales from the Gloucestershire EfW have been fixed until Oct 23 (the end of the existing contract term with our current off-taker, EDF).

- The Fosse Cross HRC reopened in December following a temporary closure through November for essential repairs. Pyke Quarry opened seven days a week during the closure period to provide some additional capacity. Next day booking was maintained across the HRC network throughout. Whilst work at Fosse Cross is substantially complete, there has been a continued delay to the delivery of an interceptor tank meaning that the lower level of the site remains closed to the public. This means that some materials (soil, rubble and asbestos) cannot be accepted at this site at present. Suitable communications messages have been issued.
- Bids have been received for the materials off-take contracts for the various waste streams collected for reuse, recycling and recovery at the HRCs. These are currently being evaluated. There are currently 28 different contracts in place, which are to be retendered and awarded ahead of contract commencement on 1st April 2022.
- The Visitor and Education Centre at the Gloucestershire Energy from Waste Facility has temporarily closed due to increasing rates of Covid-19 infections. Any non-essential visits to the site have been postponed to reduce the risk of infection for site staff.
- A “Greener Christmas” communications campaign was run through December in partnership with district councils. The campaign provided information and advice on how residents could reduce, reuse and recycle more over the festive period; a time of year which typically results in more household waste being generated. The next communications campaign to be delivered by the Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Partnership will be in the spring and will focus on reuse and repair.

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.
- Exams officer job vacancy is now live – exams are due to take place this year instead of the TAG’s that have taken place the past 2 years.
- Learning Co-ordinator and administrator posts are also now advertised with a view to having these posts filled and started by January.

- The Final ESFA end of year for 2020/2021 was submitted on 5th November – our final submission was 96.5% which was over the required 90% ESFA spend and means we are not required to repay any of our allocation.
- 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 -