

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

January 2023

This report summarises key areas likely to lead to decisions over the next 6 months, including updates on areas previously reported.

## **1.0 Decisions**

### **Relevant forthcoming decisions, by date due:**

- [M5 J10 - Approval to move to DCO submission to seek Secretary of State consent for the scheme](#) | 25 Jan 2023 by Cabinet | Councillor David Gray
- [Gloucestershire Climate Change Strategy 3rd Annual Report & 5-Year Action Plan 2022/23 – 2027/28](#) | 25 Jan 2023 by Cabinet | Councillor David Gray
- [Approval to spend the allocated funding from Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee \(GEGJC\) taken from SEDF \(Business Rates retention\) on Mass Transit development work](#) | Between 11 Oct 2022 and 31 Jan 2023 | Councillor David Gray
- [Waste Bulking and Transfer Contract Extension](#) | Between 3 Jan 2023 and 31 Jan 2023 | Councillor David Gray

### **Pending items for publication**

- A435

## **2.0 Highways**

### **M5 J10**

- Land agents progressing land acquisition/negotiations in partnership with GCC Property.
- Procurement for main works contract with contract award Feb/March 2023.
- Work continues on the draft DCO documents - submission planned for Spring 2023.
- Arle Court Transport Hub – Kier Construction now engaged under Design and Build contract for the MSCP - value engineering underway.
- A38/A4019 Coombe Hill – awaiting planning application determination - likely planning committee date is now January 2023. Land acquisition and negotiations continue.
- A4019/Link Road - Work continues on detailed design, alongside land acquisition and local engagement.

### **West Cheltenham Transport Improvement Scheme**

- Work substantially complete.
- Some small-scale interventions planned for later this year with design ongoing for St. Marks area as part of ATF4 bid.

### **Gloucester SW Bypass / Llanthony Road**

- Works commenced in July 2022 with an expected completion of late Summer 2023.

### **A435 Cheltenham to Bishops Cleeve Cycleway**

- Review undertaken with Sustrans on preliminary design, awaiting Active Travel England review.

### **A419 Junction Improvements (Stonehouse)**

- Proposed 30mph speed limit restriction currently being consulted upon for Horsetrough Roundabout.

### **B4063 Cheltenham to Gloucester Cycle Scheme**

- Construction on the Pheasant Lane to Arle Court section is due to be completed by the end of this year. Works awarded to Knights Brown for section between the M5 and Elmbridge Court. Work is being coordinated with National Highways works at Brookfield Road and Bamfurlong Lane Bridges.
- Consultation recently completed on the Elmbridge Court to Estcourt Road section of the route with proposals generally well received.
- Design for Estcourt Road roundabout being developed.
- Local concerns raised about volume of works on B4063 affecting residents.

### **Structures/Geotechnical Schemes**

- Blakeney West – Weather sensitive activities still outstanding but target completion Dec 2022.
- Tintern Bridge – Construction ongoing and progressing well. Completion Spring 2023.
- Walk Bridge – working with Stroud District Council. Aiming for construction 2024 with ecology surveys and mitigation in 2023.
- Charlton Hill – Planned to be on site 2023, with public share event in Feb/Mar.

### **Ashchurch Bridge over Rail (Delivery for Tewkesbury Borough Council)**

- Planning permission for the bridge has been granted.
- Detailed design being undertaken by GCC in parallel.

### **Highways Contracts/Delivery**

- Term maintenance (Ringway) – Fourth year of the contract has now commenced. Cyclical maintenance and defect repair performance remains on target.
- Professional services (Atkins) – Fourth year of contract underway.
- Structural maintenance (Tarmac) – First year of four-year contract - delivery of capital resurfacing programme on track.
- Street lighting (M Group) – Performance on key indicators remains satisfactory. Depots/property – ongoing programme of minor improvement works across depots.
- Ash die back – latest inspections indicate that the disease is spreading quickly and risk is increasing.

## **3.0 Traffic and Transport**

### Recent DMMO Statistics

Total number of 'unresolved' applications:	210	
No. of new 'min.14(1) compliant' applications received in 2022 to date	35	(21 in 2021)
Number of applications 'resolved' in 2022 to date	5	(10 in 2021)
Number of routes added to DM&S by 'other means' in 2022 to date	4	(3 in 2021)

Currently resolving, on average over the past 5 years, 7.2 applications a year (between the 2 Officers, plus support from 1 Technician).

Number of all 'undetermined' applications, as at 15 December 2022:

	Undetermined	Undet-Archived	Undet-Non14(2)
No.	50	52	72

*("Archived" applications are whereby the intended effect of the application is likely to be 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 15 December 2022:

No.	Apps at publication/ confirmation stage	Apps with unresolved objections	
		Submitted to SoS	Awaiting submission
1	1	1 - on 30/6/2022	34

Recent CROW Ctte / Internal Officer Panel determinations:

Previous CROW Ctte / IOP in 2022	<p>1 App on 29 March - decision to make Order for additional FP - objection received</p> <p>1 App on 16 May - decision to make Order for additional FP - objection received, but now withdrawn - Order now being confirmed.</p> <p>1 App on 4 Oct 2022 - decision to make Order for additional RB and FP - Made Order published and in objection period.</p> <p>1 App on 14 Dec 2022 - as application was superseded by S25 Creation Agreement, DMMO resolved not to make additional Order</p>
Next CROW Ctte/IOP	<p>March 2023 - next CROW Committee</p> <p>Jan 2023 - proposed Internal Office Panel to determine 2 applications (subject to change)</p>

## Public and School Transport

- In November Stagecoach implemented service withdrawals and reductions across the Forest of Dean (20<sup>th</sup> Nov) and Cheltenham (27<sup>th</sup> Nov). The changes confirmed in early October included the complete withdrawal of well used commercial services such as the F (Hesters Way – Cheltenham town centre – hospital – Leckhampton) and Arle Court Park & Ride. In total the services withdrawn and reduced accounted for 500,000 passenger trips a year. Over the following 6 weeks the ITU put out tenders for replacement services and invited bus operators to submit alternative timetable bids. As bids were received for only 3 out of 10 routes by the end of October this included approaching operators directly to generate greater interest. Whilst replacements were found for several services a number of communities in the Forest, Woodmancote and St Marks no longer have a service. ITU will continue to engage with bus operators to seek solutions, although this will be difficult whilst fundamental issues remain such as a driver shortage, high inflation and limited competition in the market.
- In October the council launched a new demand responsive transport service, The Robin, serving isolated communities in the Forest of Dean and Cotswolds. Funded by a £1.3m grant from the Department for Transport, this type of service may be the answer to how councils help residents in areas that are hard to serve using conventional fixed route, fixed timetable bus services. Feedback from users has been very positive.
- Following a Cabinet decision in November council officers are procuring the services of Edge Public Solutions to implement a 3 year transformation programme within Home to School transport with the aim of improving service outcomes for users and securing

better value from the council's SEND and mainstream school transport budgets which are under significant pressure.

### **Network Management (Road Safety Partnership and Parking)**

- In November Cabinet agreed a new Road Safety policy and strategy which set out our ambition to reduce road casualties to zero by 2050 'Vision Zero' and aims to halve the number of people killed and seriously injured on Gloucestershire's roads between 2022 and 2032. Successful delivery of this strategy hinges on a cooperative approach between communities and statutory bodies and coordinated investment. To enable this the council, OPCC and Police formally launched the Gloucestershire Road Safety Partnership on 2<sup>nd</sup> December at a meeting chaired by the Cabinet Member for road safety policy and attended by key stakeholders from across the county. Delegates also received an update on significant progress made delivering phase 1 of the £600k Community Safety Fund and were encouraged to submit bids for phase 2 which ends on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023.
- Following cabinet approval in the autumn and a six week public consultation the council submitted a formal application to the Department for Transport to apply for Moving Traffic Offence enforcement powers. This was supported by 73% of respondents and had the support of the Council's Chief Executive and the Chief Constable of Gloucestershire Constabulary. The DfT will review applications by the end of January and, subject to the approval of Parliament we are anticipating that the Designation Order will come into effect in July 2023 at which point councils will be legally able to start enforcement.
- Kingsholm and East of Cheltenham parking review areas have completed formal consultation. Based on feedback from the public, each scheme has resulted in a handful of modifications, which will be consulted on over the coming weeks. Build due Spring 2023.
- In November officers from Parking and ThinkTravel met local residents in Warden Hill to understand their concerns and hear their support for the School Street in place in Durham Close. Officers were able to explain how the TRO works and provides residents with legal exemptions for access and will continue to work with the school to improve the management of the scheme and ways to assist residents.

## **4.0 Planning and Economic Development**

### **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;
- GCC Cabinet report (re- future expenditure on M5 J9 / A46) was considered and approved on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022.
- Strategic Outline Case (SOC) submitted to DfT on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2022.
- An external Gateway assessment of the project recommended that the options analysis be refined further and the numbers of potential route options reduced. Officers have, therefore, with the support of NH and DfT, adopted this recommendation.
- Public consultation is now anticipated in 2023.

### **Fastershire**

- **Fastershire Partnership Agreement** – The Fastershire project is nearing its conclusion with 97% of the county having the opportunity to access Superfast Broadband. Discussions with Herefordshire Council regarding the project continue to be

positive and there is an agreement in principle to extend the Fastershire Partnership Agreement until the 31 March 2024. Although this will be subject to a formal ICM decision report being progressed early 2023. The proposed one-year extension to the partnership agreement will ensure the Fastershire Team remains in place to manage the closedown of existing delivery contracts with Gigaclear and support the delivery of community & business grants.

- **New Fastershire grant schemes** – From 1 January 2023 a revised set of grants will become available to support households and certain business premises in Gloucestershire that do not have access to superfast broadband services. The maximum financial threshold of the existing Fastershire Community Grant Scheme has increased from £5,000 per premise to £7,000 per household premise. A new Fastershire Business Grant scheme has been created where the maximum grant will be £20,000 per qualifying business where there is a 20% match funding contribution from the business. Both Grants will be available to support households and business premises with download speeds under 30Mbps until the 31 August 2023.
- **New Gloucestershire Digital Household Grant** – Work has commenced on the introduction of a new Digital Household Grant which will support improved digital connectivity based on 4G technology by supplying and installing a 4G Directional Antenna and the external 4G router. Once launched later in Spring 2023 this grant will be open to all residential properties with download speeds under 30Mbps that are unable to apply for the Fastershire Community Grant.
- **Project Gigabit** – Discussions with BDUK are ongoing regarding the preferred procurement route for the delivery of Project Gigabit across the county. BDUK will manage the procurement process which is set to start 2023/24 with an anticipated contract start date commencing in 2024/25.

#### **A417 Missing Link**

- Preferred Route Announcement (Route 30) made March 2019;
- The DCO planning application was submitted in June 2021 and the Planning Inspectorate's Public Examination concluded on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2022;
- The Secretary of State for Transport approved the planning application for the scheme in November 2022, which will now proceed to construction in 2023.

#### **Local Transport Plan (LTP)**

- The LTP was adopted at Full Council on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021. A review of the LTP is currently being considered in 2023. Government guidance is currently awaited.

#### **Chepstow Transport Improvements**

- Consultant's report outlined scheme options;
- GCC Lead Cabinet Members supported a GCC financial contribution of £20K (2020/21) towards Stage 2 of the Chepstow Transport Study, with a further GCC financial contribution of £30K for 2021/22 made to Monmouthshire CC;
- Supporting letter sent to Monmouthshire CC in August 2022, with future meetings scheduled.

#### **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.

### **Local Plans / JSP / CIL**

- Review of Joint Strategic Plan (JSP – formerly known as the JCS) now underway following an ‘Issues and Options’ consultation which ended in January 2019;
- The JSP Reg.18 public consultation has now been delayed to June 2023;
- Progress has been made with the JSP authorities to review the JCS CIL – consultants are now undertaking this task in liaison with GCC officers and stakeholders;
- 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 JSP authorities and Cotswold District Council;
- Bids and Expressions of Interest have been submitted to Stroud District Council to secure CIL funding in 2023/24;
- Stroud Local Plan – The Local Plan has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration. GCC officers and consultants will be actively involved in the future Public Examination in 2023 and have secured approval to do so.
- Cotswold Local Plan – ‘Issues and Options’ consultation recently ended – the deadline for comments was 20<sup>th</sup> March 2022. GCC officers submitted representations prior to the deadline on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2022.
- Forest of Dean Local Plan – FoDDC consulted on a ‘preferred option’ – the closing date for comments was 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021. GCC officers commented before this deadline. The Forest of Dean District Local Plan Second Preferred Option was recently subject to public consultation (ending 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022). GCC officers formally responded prior to the deadline.

## **5.0 Libraries & Registration**

### **Libraries**

- Libraries Warm and Welcome scheme has been positively promoted and is up and running in all libraries. The offer of hot drinks has received positive feedback with staff reporting that people are staying longer when they visit.
- Libraries “Greener Together” programme which supports the Council’s climate change agenda is continuing to expand. Funding has been received to enable the library service to update their climate change and sustainability book stock, provide further activities around climate change and sustainability and create a community garden within the new Oakley Immersive Storytelling centre.

### **Registration**

- The Registration service has now re-instated the last of their services which were impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic. Individual citizenship ceremonies and enhanced ceremonies at Cheltenham Registration Office will commence in the New Year.

## **6.0 Waste Management**

- Draft legislation for the Electricity Generator levy has just been published (20<sup>th</sup> Dec). The team will review the legislation and seek a legal opinion on any implications for GCC’s Energy from Waste contract.

- An internal audit of the Energy from Waste contract has been completed and will be reported to the council's audit committee in January. The audit evaluated the level of compliance with the Council's Contract Management Framework; and verified that payments made to UBB are in accordance with the contract terms and conditions. An acceptable level of assurance was found with three medium priority recommendations made. These recommendations are:
  - for Strategic Procurement to update the council's contract management framework for the contract annual report to be shared with members in some capacity, and
  - to continue to develop a process for monitoring of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, which will be dependent on regulation and guidance from the Environment Agency.
- The annual HRC Customer Survey has been completed with some very encouraging results: 88% of visitors support the continuation of the booking system and 90% found it easy to use. Satisfaction with the sites and staff was over 95% for all measures. 1,344 site visitors were surveyed across each of the five sites.
- The public consultation on a draft interim Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Strategy closed on 9<sup>th</sup> December. Findings are currently being reviewed and will inform a revised draft strategy which will be developed for adoption in the New Year.
- An Officer Decision Report to extend the waste transfer contract for Forest of Dean and Cotswold Districts by three years has been published. If there are no representations then the decision will be made on 30<sup>th</sup> December.

### **Sustainability/Climate Change**

- The tree planting season is now underway, with around 80,000 planting opportunities currently identified.
- The Climate Change Strategy annual report and action plan update is scheduled for Cabinet in January. The report reflects feedback from Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which considered the draft report in November and from the Gloucestershire Youth Climate Group (GYCG)
- At the request of the Green Party, the GYCG will also be asked for its views on the Council's draft budget, with their feedback forming part of the budget consultation process.
- A restructure of the council's Sustainability team is underway with the aim of creating greater management capacity and focus on key areas of the council's climate change strategy. Any increased staffing costs will be funded from the existing base revenue budget for climate change.
- There have been two recent resignations with Julian Atkins, Climate Leadership Gloucestershire Coordinator and Hannah Jacobs, Air Quality and Climate Change Officer both leaving for new opportunities in the New Year.

### **Travellers Service**

- The Team has supported Property colleagues this month to remove an illegal encampment from GCC land near Junction 11 of the M5.

## **7.0 Employment and Skills**

### **Co-Ordination of E & S Priorities in Gloucestershire**

#### **Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)**

- Project underway and HoS attending Advanced Engineering & Construction workshop with LSIP team on 24<sup>th</sup> January.

## **Careers Support**

- Careers Hub – HoS and Director of Education meeting 18<sup>th</sup> January to develop a business case for the transition to within the E & S Hub.
- National Careers Service (NCS) – local KPIs agreed with SeeTec Pluss have gone to DfE for sign-off and HoS joining the Local Area Board for first meeting 17<sup>th</sup> January.

## **Social Value**

- No further progress this month.

## **Specific Employment & Skills initiatives**

### **‘Green’/sustainable skills**

- Resource requirements/‘ask’ on green/sustainable skills to be developed, based on the proposals made to CLG in the skills paper. HoS working with GFirst LEP on this.

### **Provision for NEETs and preventing young people becoming NEET**

- HoS, VW and Sarah Poultney have highlighted concerns with current Youth Support Services contract delivery and proposed contract extension. This is an opportunity for GCC to commission some ‘upstream’ NEET prevention work that could result in service savings across GCC and partners in future.

### **Presentation to Economic Scrutiny Committee**

- HoS has been asked to present at the 18<sup>th</sup> January meeting to consider ‘the challenges of the labour shortage and what could be done to address the issues, including provision of education and training, and encouraging migration to key sectors’.

### **Adult Education Service**

- Ofsted inspection likely in February/March 2023 so focus on preparations for this
- Combined Adult Education and E & S Hub bids to provide subcontracted delivery under the new Home Office Refugee Employability Programme (REP).

### **Multiply**

- Implementation plan for year 2 being prepared
- 2 internal staff seconded for part-time work on Multiply and new staff being recruited

## **Employment & Skills Hub**

### **Employment Programmes**

- The Employment & Skills Hub Outreach (ESHO) Project is underway and project manager in place
- 499 people have been referred to the Employment and Skills Hub to date
- VW has contributed to the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) Strategy to ensure employment is included in this
- The Hub team supported DWP with a Disability Confident event which was well attended by senior management and customers.

**- REPORT END -**