

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

February 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:

- [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 March 2023 by Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning | Councillor David Gray
- [Gloucestershire E-Scooter Trial](#) | Between 7 February and 31 March 2023 by Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning | Councillor David Gray
- [Extension of the Fastershire Partnership agreement with Herefordshire Council to 31 March 2024](#) | Between 7 February and 31 March 2023 by Leader of the Council | Councillor Mark Hawthorne
- [Addressing Health Inequalities and widening participation across the ICS – Employment and Skills](#) | Between 14 February and 31 March 2023 by Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Bus Transport | Councillor Philip Robinson

Pending items for publication

- A435 Cheltenham to Bishops Cleeve Cycle Spine – Contract Procurement – Jason Humm / Richard Lane
- Gloucestershire Cycle Spine: Gloucester City Centre – Contract Procurement – Jason Humm / Alex Haworth
- Transport Business Case Development 2023/24 – Jason Humm / David Land
- Procurement of New Vans for Gloucestershire Industrial Services (GIS) – John Townsend / Colin Chick

2.0 Highways

M5 J10

- Land agents progressing land acquisition/negotiations in partnership with GCC Property.
- Procurement for main works contract; contract award planned for March 2023.
- Work continues on the draft DCO documents.
- 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 – Works on site complete and road reopened.
- Tintern Bridge – Construction ongoing and progressing well. Completion Easter 2023.
- Walk Bridge – working with Stroud District Council. Aiming for construction 2024 with ecology surveys and mitigation in 2023.
- Charlton Hill – Out to tender. Planned to be on site 2023, with public share event in Feb/Mar. Programmed to be off site by Autumn 2023 to co-ordinate with A417 Missing Link works.

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. Currently high volume of safety defects but comparable with normal seasonal peak at present, additional resources in place to tackle the volume.
- 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. However, there is positive news about the areas which have been treated and the increased levels of biodiversity being seen as different species are now establishing in those areas.

3.0 Traffic and Transport

Recent DMMO Statistics

Total number of 'unresolved' applications:	211
No. of new 'min.14(1) compliant' applications received in 2023 to date	0 (21 in 2021, 35 in 2022)
Number of applications 'resolved' in 2023 to date	0 (11 in 2021, 5 in 2022)
Number of routes added to DM&S by 'other means' in 2023 to date	0 (3 in 2021, 4 in 2022)

Currently resolving, on average over the past 5 years, 7.6 applications a year (between the 2 Officers, plus support from 1 Technician).

Number of all 'undetermined' applications, as at 1 February 2023:

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

("Archived" applications are whereby the intended effect of the application is likely to be nullified 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 1 February 2023:

	Apps at publication/ confirmation stage	Apps with unresolved objections	
		Submitted to SoS	Awaiting submission
No.	1	1 - on 30/6/2022 1- pending in Feb'23	34

Recent CROW Cttee / Internal Officer Panel determinations:

Previous CROW Cttee / IOP in 2022	1 App on 4 Oct 2022 - decision to make Order for additional RB and FP - Made Order published. No objections received. Confirmation Order being processed. 1 App on 14 Dec 2022 - as application was superseded by S25 Creation Agreement, DMMO resolved not to make additional Order. Now resolved.
Next CROW Cttee/IOP	(subject to change if late rebutting evidence is submitted) Feb 2023 - Internal Office Panel to determine 2 applications March 2023 - CROW Committee to determine 1 application

Public and School Transport

- In November Stagecoach withdrew and reduced several commercial routes in the Forest of Dean and Cheltenham. It also terminated some of its bus contracts with the council. The council was able to procure some replacement services (service F to Leckhampton - now called L - and Arle Court Park & Ride) at significant additional expense. However, the availability of alternative services and lack of interest from bus operators resulted in other routes not being replaced.
- Since then, officers in the ITU have awarded a contract to Swanbrook to run service K in south west Cheltenham from 20th February. This service was subsidised by the council and previously run by Stagecoach. The new service will be part-funded using developer section 106 contributions. The ITU has also contracted Pulhams Coaches to extend service 656 to Woodmancote on Mondays and Fridays after the local community was left without a bus service to Bishops Cleeve when Stagecoach cut service E in November.

- In January Stagecoach announced further cuts and changes to commercial services in the Stroud area from 19th February. These mainly comprise reduced frequencies and the removal of Sunday and evening journeys. Officers are liaising with the West of England Combined Authority regarding proposals for their subsidised network which include the 84/85 services to Wotton-under-Edge.
- Stagecoach has also served notice to terminate contracts with the council for bus services in Cirencester and east Cotswolds in May.
- In light of the inflationary and other cost pressures on the council's transport budgets, proposals for additional funding were included in the draft budget for 2023/24. £398k was included for extraordinary contract inflation.
- Staff from Edge Public Solutions have started work on a 3 year programme designed to improve service outcomes for users and securing better value from the council's SEND and mainstream school transport budgets which are under significant pressure.
- In February ITU welcomed a new member of staff to take forward bus priority schemes and designs, bringing with him significant experience of traffic modelling and engineering.
- Following the Cabinet decision last year to procure a new concessionary fares management system the ITU's new service provider will soon start mobilising in readiness for the new contract starting in July. Around 100,000 Gloucestershire residents of pensionable age or with a disability have a bus pass which entitles them to free off-peak travel on local buses anywhere in England.

Corporate Fleet Unit

- The transfer of GCC fleet functions from the ITU to the new Corporate Fleet Unit is on course to be completed by the end of the financial year (31st March). In the past two months several key vacancies have been filled. Officers are also progressing the procurement of a new fleet management system which aims to improve safety and efficiency by streamlining the way the council manages data about its fleet. In parallel considerable time is being spent on the procurement of new and greener vehicles across the authority. This is closely linked to a multi-year programme within the 2023/24 budget and MTFs for the installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure on council premises such as fire stations, highways depots and some libraries.

Road Safety Partnership, ThinkTravel 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. In December the council, OPCC and Police formally launched the Gloucestershire Road Safety Partnership at a meeting chaired by the Cabinet Member for road safety policy and attended by key stakeholders from across the county.
- To date 190 bids have been received from communities for local road safety measures under the £600,000 Community Speedwatch Fund. These cover measures such as speed surveys, vehicle activated signs, Speedwatch cameras, bin stickers and a visit from a road safety officer. In phase 1 we received 119 bids and in phase 2, which closed on 31st January, we received a further 71 bids.
- The ThinkTravel team's support for schools, with businesses and across communities is set to grow following an increase in DfT Capability Fund grant to the council in 2023/24. This work forms a key strand of the council's strategy to tackle climate change by reducing emissions from transport through behaviour change and skills. The ThinkTravel team enable people to make more journeys by active travel (on foot, by bike, scooter etc) and using public transport by equipping them with essential cycle skills, signposting them to sources of travel information and by applying motivational

techniques including team activities and gamification. This complements other work by the council such as the provision of high-quality cycle infrastructure on the B4063 cycle spine linking Cheltenham and Gloucester. More details on the breakdown of this funding will follow in the next update.

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 22nd June 2022.
- Strategic Outline Case (SOC) submitted to DfT on 16th 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 16th 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 17th 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 20th March 2022. GCC officers submitted representations prior to the deadline on 18th March 2022.
- Forest of Dean Local Plan – FoDDC consulted on a 'preferred option' – the closing date for comments was 29th 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 7th October 2022). GCC officers formally responded prior to the deadline.

5.0 Libraries

- A successful joint staff training day was held at Gloucester Library on 5th January 2023. This brought together the public library and university library staff to start planning for the move of Gloucester library to the new City Campus.
- Gloucestershire Libraries will be moving away from the Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge and will be delivering their own version. This will be called The Library Challenge and will still focus on maintaining reading levels over the summer holidays. In addition, the challenge will highlight other library services that are available.

6.0 Registration

- No update.

7.0 Waste Management

- Preparations are underway to cease collecting tyres at the HRCs. This will be introduced from 1st April as a budget saving measure (saving an estimated £50k/yr).
- A new closed landfill monitoring contract has been awarded (to the in-house team at Worcestershire C.C) delivering an annual saving of around £15k.
- Changes to the way that upholstered furniture is collected and treated will become necessary because of recent guidance issued by the Environment Agency. This is due to concern that soft furnishings may include Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). These are now banned from landfill and should be collected separately from other waste. The most significant impact will be on bulky item collections by districts and at HRCs, where the requirement to keep items containing POPs separate from any other items will cause major disruption to collection systems. The waste industry and local authorities are pushing back on this requirement, as wastes are of course mixed again once tipped at an energy from waste facility (which is now the required form of waste treatment/disposal for items containing POPs).
- Government has confirmed that a Deposit Return System (DRS) for drinks containers (plastic bottles and cans) will be introduced in 2025. Glass bottles will be excluded. A Deposit Management Organisation (DMO) will be set up to administer the scheme, which will be funded by a combination of revenue from the material it collects and sells to reprocessors, producer registration fees and unredeemed deposits.

Sustainability/Climate Change

- The tree planting season is well underway, with around 90,000 planting opportunities currently identified. The council has worked with dozens of different delivery partners and communities across Gloucestershire, using funding awarded by the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust together with its own revenue budget
- The Climate Change Strategy annual report and action plan update was agreed by Cabinet in January. The report reflected feedback from Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which considered the draft report in November and from the Gloucestershire Youth Climate Group (GYCG)
- 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.
- Julian Atkins, Climate Leadership Gloucestershire Coordinator and Hannah Jacobs, Air Quality and Climate Change Officer have both now left for new roles, meaning that capacity within the team is much reduced at present.

Travellers Service

- A bid to improve and decarbonise Traveller Site accommodation made to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities was unsuccessful. Alternative funding plans will now need to be developed.

8.0 Employment and Skills

Co-Ordination of E & S Priorities in Gloucestershire

Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

- HoS attended the Advanced Engineering & Construction workshop with LSIP team on 24th January. This included initial cross-sector findings. HoS working with LSIP team to organise a specific briefing and discussion with GCC over initial findings.

Careers Support

- National Careers Service (NCS) – Local Area Board postponed from 17th January because of SeeTec Pluss staff sickness. Data sharing and customer journey work with Ad Ed and E&S Hub underway.

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 ready to contribute to the review of the current Youth Support Services contract delivery and proposed contract extension. Awaiting further details from Childrens Services colleagues.

Presentation to Economic Scrutiny Committee

- HoS presented at the 18th 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’. The Committee asked a wide range of questions and acknowledged the extensive work being done by GCC and GFirst LEP to assist with the situation.

Adult Education Service

- A series of Leadership & Management workshops have been delivered to staff and included inputs from Cllr Phil Robinson, Colin Chick and David Owen. These were very well received by staff who appreciated understanding better the links with other teams within EE&I and across GCC.
- Ofsted inspection remains likely in February/March 2023 so preparations for this continue.

Multiply

- Implementation plan for year 2 being prepared
- Two new staff recruited to start in February. Initial external delivery has started.

9.0 Employment & Skills Hub

Employment Programmes

- The Employment & Skills Hub Outreach (ESHO) Project is underway and has achieved its first job outcomes through supporting refugees into work.
- Over 600 people have been referred to the Employment and Skills Hub to date.
- Officers led on the 'employment' theme and workstream within the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) Strategy and presented this to ICP partner organisations in January.
- Officers are working with colleagues in DWP to draft a partnership agreement between GCC and DWP that will form the basis of the links between the two organisations within any County Deal. Aiming for initial draft to be completed for consultation within GCC by end of Feb 2023.

- REPORT END -