

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

April 2023

## **1.0 Upcoming decisions**

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

- Community and Adult Skills Programme for 2023/24 [pending publication]
- Public Transport Network Review – Consultation [pending publication]
- Dynamic Purchasing System for Transport [pending publication]
- Street Lighting Contract [pending publication]

## **2.0 Highways**

### **M5 J10**

- Land agents progressing land acquisition/negotiations in partnership with GCC Property.
- The DCO is now being targeted for August submission.
- J10 & A4019/link road main works – Work continues on the draft DCO documents, as well as detailed design, land acquisition and local engagement.
- 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. Land acquisition and negotiations continue.

### **West Cheltenham Walking & Cycling Infrastructure**

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

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

- Works commenced in July 2022. Work is progressing well and completion is still expected in late Summer 2023. Planning amendment for working evenings and weekends has been granted.

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

- Design progressing well.

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

- Proposed 30mph speed limit on Horsetrough Roundabout has been successfully consulted upon with local member and police support. Alongside this will be minor amendments to Downton Road junction traffic merge to be completed later this year.

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

- Works on the two phases between the M5 and Brickhampton Golf Course are now underway and expected to run until Spring 2024. The ATF4 funding announcement will allow the Elmbridge to Estcourt Road section to be tendered with works expected to start late Summer 2023.

- 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.

### Structures/Geotechnical Schemes

- Tintern Bridge – Construction ongoing with new deck being completed as final element. Construction due to complete early summer 2023.
- Walk Bridge – working with Stroud District Council. Aiming for construction 2024 with ecology surveys and mitigation in 2023.
- Charlton Hill – Work started on site March 2023 and currently progressing well. Programmed to be off site by Autumn 2023 to co-ordinate with A417 Missing Link works.

### 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 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.

## 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	4 (21 in 2021, 35 in 2022)
Number of applications 'resolved' in 2023 to date	3 (11 in 2021, 5 in 2022)
Number of routes added to DM&S by 'other means' in 2023 to date	1 (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:

	Undetermined	Undet-Archived	Undet-Non14(2)
No.	52	51	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:

No.	Apps at publication/ confirmation stage	Apps with unresolved objections	
		Submitted to SoS	Awaiting submission
1	1	1 - on 30/6/2022 1 - on 08/03/2023	33

#### Recent CROW Ctte / Internal Officer Panel determinations:

Previous CROW Ctte / IOP	<p>1 App on 8 Feb 2023 - decision not to make an order, on the grounds that public motor vehicle rights have not been retained under NERC2006. Now resolved.</p> <p>1 App on 8 Feb 2023 - as application was superseded by S119 Diversion Order, DMMO resolved not to make additional Order. Now resolved.</p> <p>1 App on 28 Mar 2023 - decision to Make an Order. Order now out to consultation.</p>
Next CROW Ctte/IOP	<p>(subject to change if late rebutting evidence is submitted)</p> <p>6 June 2023 - CROW Ctte to determine 1 application</p>

#### Highways Development Management

- The volume house builders are slowing housing completions, although workloads continue to increase as developers focus efforts on longer term strategic allocations or varying existing commitments to reduce costs. In particular West, North-West Cheltenham and Ashchurch are progressing swiftly and a new Robert Hitchens growth area has come forward at Whitminster adjacent to Junction 13 on the M5.
- The team are currently heavily involved in Stroud Local Plan examination in public; GCC are objecting to the Sharpness new town allocation due to sustainable transport concerns. GCC are also pressing for changes to the Whaddon allocation on Gloucester fringe to improve accessibility and mitigate impacts at St Barnabas roundabout. Stroud DC's spatial strategy is such that it necessitates infrastructure improvements at Junction 12 and 14 of the M5, which is causing issues about funding apportionment, viability and phasing of growth and mitigation.
- GCC are currently working with Birmingham University to develop plans to de-carbonise the developer road infrastructure we adopt. Early findings suggest that removing cement and steel by using "over the edge" drainage systems will result in the biggest saving. If GCC adopt this approach it would require a change to maintenance regimes in conjunction with the increased adoption of swales and other green infrastructure.

#### Public and School Transport

- Stagecoach has also served notice to terminate contracts with the council for bus services in Cirencester and east Cotswolds in May. These terminations have now been delayed until September – discussions to avoid this are on-going.
- WECA are going to remove their subsidised bus service 84/85 from early June. This terminates in Wotton-under-Edge and essentially will leave them without a direct link to Yate. Connection is available by transferring at Thornbury. WECA are rolling out demand-responsive transport to cover areas previously served by timetabled buses. We have requested that they slightly expand their area of operation to include Wotton but this is unlikely. No extension to the 84/85 has been agreed by WECA so these changes are now almost certain to go ahead.
- The programme with Edge Public Solutions is focused on delivering as much in-year savings to the school transport budget as possible. There are some potential changes in the method of procurement being discussed in detail, if they go forward they will likely reduce the recent price rises and ideally in time for the procurement of new contracts for September 2023.
- 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.

- Work has begun at Arle Court Transport Hub on the new facility. Kier are in place on site to begin the building of the multi-storey car park. This is a project with several phases given the complexity of building a new facility and keeping the park and ride open at the same time. Capacity is reduced but the service is being used.

### **Corporate Fleet Unit**

- Over the past quarter the team has succeeded in filling a number of vacancies for admin and supervisory roles. Another new starter will be joining in June. This capacity has been critical to enabling the transfer of admin functions from the ITU to the Corporate Fleet Unit, and updating information to direct internal clients to the new team.
- Two significant procurements are drawing to a conclusion. The Fleet Management System is a single ICT system to replace two legacy systems used by GFRS and ITU. The other procurement is for ten fire appliances for GFRS. Both contract award decisions are expected in May.
- Following the approval of capital funds in the 23/24 budget work is underway to implement a multi-year programme of electric vehicle charging infrastructure on council premises such as fire stations, highways depots and libraries. This includes chargers at the GIS site in Hempstead to support the recent Cabinet decision to replace the GIS fleet of diesel vans. Initially 10 electric vans will be ordered.
- Considerable work is underway replacing over 60 vehicles used by GFRS and other council service areas including GIS. This includes specialist fire and community safety vehicles, pickups, vans and cars. A common theme is the focus on reducing fleet carbon emissions by switching to battery electric power and using new technologies such as solar photovoltaics fitted to the roof to reduce fuel consumption and extend battery life. This is being done hand in hand with the EV charge point programme outlined earlier. In the past month the team has also started to explore greener options for replacing cars used by the council's parking contractor. This will explore how the current fleet of petrol hybrid cars could be replaced by a fleet of battery electric cars when leases expire in 2024.

### **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.
- In March the Thinktravel team delivered an extensive Active Travel programme as part of the *Big Walk and Wheel* campaign. The team coordinated and led a range of initiatives designed to motivate, skill up and inspire young people to participate in Sustrans' biggest Schools Challenge: [Big Walk and Wheel](#). Additional initiatives were funded through the DfT's Capability Fund, the council's Safer Routes for Schools Programme, Bikeability Trust and Thinktravel enabling us to invest £2.50 per pupil. As a result the council, significantly exceeding the Capability Fund targets, agreed with the DfT. Overall, 38,192 active travel journeys were logged across 25 Gloucestershire

Schools in just 10 days, up 25% on 2022. 80% of schools taking part had over half their pupils logging active journeys. Feedback has been hugely positive. A few numbers illustrate how busy everyone has been: 20 assemblies to over 5,000 pupils, 4 adapted cycling sessions, 8 Smoothie Bike sessions, 5 Histronics Hiking with a Viking events, 7 Scootability sessions, 7 Skateboarding sessions, 1 Treasure Hunt Walk, 2 Led Cycle Rides (including 46 pupils over 2 days at Warden Hill), and 4 Dr Bike sessions (including 41 bikes serviced at Kingsholm CofE Primary).

- Streetworks/Utility Issues: The regulations were announced on the 31st March, with a go live of 3<sup>rd</sup> April. This has caused confusion for highway authorities and utilities and the system providers we use.

#### **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;
- Strategic Outline Case (SOC) submitted to DfT on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2022.
- GCC Cabinet report (re- future expenditure on M5 J9 / A46) was considered and approved on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023.
- 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 Summer 2023.

##### **Fastershire**

- **Fastershire Grants** – As the Fastershire project nears its conclusion, a deadline for applications to the Community and Business Grants in Gloucestershire has been identified as the 31 August 2023. For more information on these grants please use the following links - [Business Broadband Grant - Welcome to Fastershire](https://www.fastershire.com/rollout/community-broadband-grant/)
- **Digital household grant scheme** – Gloucestershire’s new Digital Household grant will be launched later this year. The procurement for the suppliers of the 4G digital solution is underway. It is anticipated that the implementation of the grant scheme will be phased. Phase 1 will be open on those communities in the Forest of Dean that were removed from existing Gigaclear delivery contracts before Phase 2 launches the scheme countywide.

##### **Economic Strategy**

- The development of an economic strategy for the county will provide a clear narrative through both a short-term lens, considering the priorities of the next 5-years, and a long-term perspective which takes a view to 2050. It will provide a strategic overview of the county’s economy and develop a set of countywide priorities and actions to deliver a strong and inclusive economy.
- Once the strategy is completed it will include an action plan and monitoring mechanism. The strategy will be a joint GCC and LEP document and it will be completed by December 2023 with consultation through the summer.

##### **A417 Missing Link**

- The Secretary of State for Transport approved the planning application for the scheme in November 2022, which will now proceed to construction later 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 later in 2023. Government guidance is currently awaited.

### **Waste Local Plan (WLP)**

- A new WLP is currently being prepared. The target date for adoption is Summer / Autumn 2026.

### **Mass Rapid Transit**

- GCC's Cabinet approved the future (2023/24) expenditure on this project on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023. The relevant Business Cases will be produced 2023/24 onwards.

### **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 later in 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 are in the process of being reviewed by GCC;
- Correspondence sent to all six District Councils outlining the GCC position, with offer to work collaboratively in the future;
- GCC continues to not receive a penny of CIL from any of the JSP authorities and Cotswold District Council, although Cotswold District Council has recently asked for bids from GCC, which are currently being drafted;
- Bids and Expressions of Interest are currently being drafted to submit to Stroud District Council to secure CIL funding in 2024/25;
- 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 Public Examination and have secured approval to do so. The Public Examination started on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and is ongoing.
- Cotswold Local Plan – 'Issues and Options' consultation period ended on 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 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 new Oakley Immersive Centre will open in May. The site had a visit from Arts Council England's Chief Executive, Darren Henley on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

### **Registration**

- No update.

## **6.0 Waste Management**

- HRCs ceased collecting tyres on 1<sup>st</sup> April as a budget saving measure (saving an estimated £50k/yr). This has gone smoothly with few public complaints. Districts have expressed concern over fly-tipping so a baseline figure has been established and trends will be monitored.
- Work continues on the development of a new short-term (3 yr) Resources and Waste Strategy for the county. A revised draft has been produced following public consultation, which will be taken to the next meeting of the Resources and Waste Partnership on 25<sup>th</sup> April.
- A number of urgent repairs are being made to the HRCs following a condition survey. A capital bid will be prepared for a major refurbishment and renewal programme as the centres are now ageing and in increasingly poor condition. The refurbishment programme will make them fit for purpose for a further generation. A paper on this is being taken to the council's Property Board on 25<sup>th</sup> April.

### **Sustainability/Climate Change**

- The tree planting season has now drawn to a close with over 100,000 trees planted. 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 team is currently delivering a "Greener Coronation" communications campaign to encourage residents to celebrate the king's coronation in an environmentally friendly way. This campaign follows an energy efficiency campaign delivered last month, with a biodiversity campaign to be launched in May.
- Staffing capacity within the team remains challenging with a number of open posts to be recruited.

### **Travellers Service**

- New meters are being introduced at the GCC Traveller Sites to allow easier "top up" payments by residents and also to reduce the risk of fraudulent use. Three of the four sites have now been converted.

## **7.0 Employment and Skills**

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

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

- Initial findings showing skills needs of employers have been published by Business West <https://www.businesswest.co.uk/business-west-local-skills-improvement-plan-priority-findings>, with a full report by end of May. HoES is currently reviewing the preliminary findings with a view to ensuring the Digital Skills provision from Adult Education is further enhanced to meet employers needs as communicated through the LSIP. Further implications for the E & S Hub and for the wider work of GCC will be explored at a meeting with the Business West LSIP team on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. This will include Lead Cabinet Member and Director of Economy and Environment.

#### **Careers Support**

- National Careers Service (NCS) – Still no clarity from SeeTec Pluss on data sharing and customer journey work and SeeTec Pluss also now seem to be aiming to operate support for ex-offenders, refugees and asylum seekers. This is overlapping with E & S Hub work so is being explored in more detail.

## **Social Value**

- No further progress this month. HoES taking part in TOMS workshop on 24/04/23.

## **Specific Employment & Skills initiatives**

### **‘Green’/sustainable skills**

- No further progress this month.

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

- Very limited sources of external funding for NEET prevention/provision remains a significant concern.

### **Support for refugees and asylum seekers**

- HoES has joined the newly-formed Strategic Migration Partnership to ensure the employment and skills needs of these groups are supported wherever possible. Adult Education is already delivering courses to support refugees with ESOL courses and asylum seekers with arts and crafts, English and employability skills to help with progression into volunteering. Further provision, including wellbeing, cooking and further ESOL contracts via DWP and Home Office is being explored. The E&S Hub is also supporting the employment of refugees and exploring the possibility of providing a service for employers to assist with this.

### **Adult Education Service**

- Following on from the series of Leadership & Management workshops we are launching monthly “Thursday Talk Time” sessions run by the quality team and the HoS to keep the Ofsted themed discussion and training ongoing and topical. These are open to all staff and sub-contractors to attend and will be recorded for those that cannot attend or want to review the sessions afterwards. – first session will run on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April with future sessions built and ready to run.
- Sector routeway courses are underway with the first Health and Social care course having just ended with all 9 learners starting and completing the course. The next course is planned for May with a full cohort ready and waiting. A full catalogue of sector routeway courses are in the process of being designed and will be rolled out in the coming months.

### **Multiply**

- Year 2 – DfE has formally accepted the GCC investment plan, grant offer has been accepted and will be paid to GCC in 4 quarterly instalments.
- Multiply staff are now in place and year 2 is getting under way well, delivery partners across the county have been allocated their year 2 grant paperwork and there is a great deal of interest in planned courses and provision.
- Tutors continue to be recruited to the programme, with a view to delivering Maths through stealth in a contextualised manner.
- Partner grant letters are being sent out by 21<sup>st</sup> April 2023 for Year 2 provision, all partners are trusted local providers across the county ranging from charities to commercial training companies.
- National Numeracy Day (17<sup>th</sup> May) will see the launch of the Multiply Champion Campaign across GCC, this is a programme that will run via the National Numeracy Trust and will encourage GCC staff to become numeracy champions. This offer will also be rolled out to NHS and care industry staff in the coming months.

## **Employment & Skills Hub**



## **Employment Programmes**

- We are currently working with DWP to develop a “Partnership Agreement” which will further strengthen our relationship with them locally, with a view to taking a shared approach to both delivering outcomes for people who are unemployed or economically inactive and influencing upcoming commissioning decisions.
- We held two virtual sessions for employers to ask for their help in shaping our Employer Engagement Strategy. The sessions were well attended and we had 18 employers express an interest in being part of an ongoing forum which will meet for the first time face to face in June.
- Several employers have already shown their commitment to the 50/50 Challenge which will launch in May. We held 3 virtual information sessions and have already received positive reactions from 20 employers who attended these sessions and several more who would like more information.
- We are entering our final month of GEM funding. We are on schedule to complete close down actions and to complete the NLCF and DWP audits.
- The Employment and Skills Hub Outreach Project (ESHO) funded through COMF is making steady progress with over 120 referrals in the first quarter and around half of those participants achieving outcomes.
- A temporary restructure of the Hub is now underway with a Service Manager appointed. This will allow further work around the health and inequalities and levelling up agendas.

**- REPORT END -**