



Committee and Date

Council
16th July 2020

Item

Public

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORT – COUNCILLOR STEVE DAVENPORT
FOR HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT**

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This report provides information on key achievements and developments during the previous year financial year 2019/2020, as well as highlighting strategic priorities for the forthcoming year within the remit of the Highways and Transport Portfolio Holder Councillor Davenport.

2.0 Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4).

- 2.1 The Transport Act 2000 placed a requirement on all local transport authorities in England, outside of London, to produce a Local Transport Plan (LTP).
- 2.2 The Local Transport Act (LTA) 2008 gives local authorities the power to review and propose their own arrangements for local transport governance to support more coherent planning and delivery of local transport. This Act retains the statutory requirement to produce and review Local Transport Plans and policies however the amendments under the LTA 2008 were intended to enable authorities to prepare LTPs that best meet their area's needs.
- 2.3 Authorities are expected to review their LTP to make sure that it remains up to date. Initially this was every five years, but the 2008 legislation enabled Local Authorities to set their own time span for renewal of LTPs. Shropshire Council last produced a provisional LTP in 2011.
- 2.4 The next (fourth) version of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) will cover the period up to 2035/36. It will address all aspects of transport and highways, including walking, cycling, public transport, carbon reduction via transport, car-based travel, freight, and the management and maintenance of highways. It will look establish links to wider Council policies and strategies where transport and highways have a strong influence such as economic growth, climate change and health.

2.5 The development of LTP4 has been reviewed in light of COVID-19 and the changing national agenda, to incorporate key emerging issues such as enhanced park and ride, movement strategies, key infrastructure developments, green issues, this now means a draft of LTP will be expected later this financial year. A draft strategy will be presented to Cabinet later this year for consideration and then approval for formal consultation in early 2021.

3.0 20mph speed restrictions

3.1 Shropshire Council's current approach for dealing with 20mph speed restrictions is embedded in Shropshire Council's Road Safety Policy and is based upon supporting the delivery of appropriate and achievable traffic management interventions in locations where the potential benefits are greatest.

- Outside schools or where there are high numbers of vulnerable road users.
- On urban residential streets in specific cases (where wide community support can be demonstrated, where there is evidence that streets are being used by people on foot and on bicycles and where the characteristics of the street are suitable) and,
- On town centre streets / pedestrian dominated areas.

3.2 20mph speed restrictions must be implemented with clear objectives and with an understanding of potential future liabilities. In particular, this means consideration of whether a 20mph speed restriction the most suitable measure to implement to address a defined problem, whether it would have a measurable and positive speed reducing effect, whether additional physical measures would be required to promote self-compliance and whether there are any climate or aesthetic factors in a given location.

3.3 At its meeting on 19th December 2019, Shropshire Council passed a motion to support the principle of a 20-mph speed limit outside all schools in the county and asks officers to bring a report to Council within 6 months to consider how this could be implemented. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this report is due to be presented for consideration at September's Full Council 2020.

4.0 Woore HS2

4.1 Detailed meetings held to assist with identification of HGV mitigations, SC updating detail on mitigations and will share with WPC and HS2 for further discussion, HS2 have stated that there is still an open door on possible use of an alternative HGV route – SC and WPC would rather see alternative routes given greater consideration. SC represented on both the Phase 2a Highways and Planning subgroups.

4.2 Joint working with HS2 and Woore Parish continues as the impact on HS2 for the village is recognised and the development of local infrastructure and improvements delivered from HS2 is beginning to be finalised.

5.0 Re opening of High Streets / Social Distancing

- 5.1 During March 2020, the Highways and Transport service started to prepare for the reopening of High Streets and Social Distancing, this work was planned and several grants, funding opportunities and government guidance from numerous arms of government was received.
- 5.2 The work was designed to support the return to highstreets by making them feel safe, of which the physical work was delivered in May 2020 with temporary road closures, temporary wider footpaths, information signs, spray painted stencils on major routes.
- 5.3 Work across the council to develop support for our high streets continued with the development of the council wide town centres recovery group consisting of highways and transport, Economic Growth, Public Protection and Public Health to provide a response, guidance, and support. This group continues to meet and wider initiatives such as the support packs, trading on the pavement and maximising available space from social distancing measures to business etc were delivered.

6.0 A529 Scheme

- 6.1 Agreed allocation of funds to Cheshire East for the length of the A529 between the county boundary at Swanbach and the A525 at Audlem.
- 6.2 Various maintenance issues have been considered and prepared alongside the SRF works to make best value use of site works and road closures. Likewise, CIL funding for schemes associated with the route have been forwarded for specific areas.
- 6.3 Delivery of the works has been broken down into 12 scheme packages (A – L) for ease of design and construction. Target for completion of site works is mid-2022.

7.0 Accident data led schemes

- 7.1 Accident cluster sites are identified annually using police data on reported road traffic accidents and Shropshire Council's spatial accident data. A cluster site is where three or more:
- accidents occur within a 50m radius of each other over the past three-year period. The Highways Department carries out this process to fulfil its statutory duty under the Road Traffic Act 1988 to conduct studies into accidents on roads, other than trunk roads, within the local authority area and take appropriate measures to prevent such accidents.
- 7.2 Phase 1 of the annual accident cluster work uses a detailed process to identify a ranked list of sites on Shropshire's highway network. Each site is validated and those

sites that would benefit from a more detailed investigation and analysis as part of Phase 2 were determined. A key consideration is whether the road environment has been recorded as factor.

- 7.3 Phase 2 of the process considers any trends in terms of cause, casualty type and severity. This information is used to determine whether further highway design work may be required and feeds directly into the forthcoming design programme.
- 7.4 The council has a statutory duty from its LTP funds to assess highways improvements were Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) issues or data demonstrated an apparent need and this information is collected and informs any traffic improvement work coming forward and is often utilised to inform town or parish councils if local concerns are raised.

8.0 North West Relief Road (NWRR)

- 8.1 There is now ongoing pre planning engagement with key stakeholders, and these include The Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water, Highways England, and Natural England. In order to reduce planning objections from these parties, there are numerous in principle approvals currently being sought at this time.
- 8.2 Negotiations have formally commenced through SC Estates with all affected landowners in order to negotiate the purchase of the required land to construct the road. This is currently expected to be undertaken through negotiation and agreement, although in order to remove programme and financial risks, the CPO process is also running in parallel behind this in order to guarantee land availability. There is also a re-costing of the land acquisition process (revisiting the original assumptions in the OBC), that will in due course give a more robust forecast on the project costs.
- 8.3 A further paper to Council is proposed in September 2020, when the more fully estimated budget outturn, and the local developer contributions and match funding options to meet the local match obligations are more fully resolved.
- 8.4 A Full NWRR Planning Application is currently due at the end of July. As part of this will be the full supporting documentation required as regards Environmental Impact Assessment, Designs, and a full NWRR Carbon Account report. These will be put in the public domain as a requirement at that time.
- 8.5 Work continues at pace in order to look for synergies and joint delivery benefits around the NWRR river crossing and the ambition within EA to develop a flood management scheme for the River Severn catchment area. The NWRR project, with is now undertaking regular meetings with the EAs Senior Management, design, and policy team in order to assess the feasibility of this joint approach.

9.0 Street Works

- 9.1 “Street Manager” was successfully implemented on the 1st July 2020. This is the new transfer of information / application system that all Highway Authorities (including Highways England) and statutory undertakers / Utilities have to use from the Department for Transport. This replaces the old Eton (electronic transfer of information) system which we previously used.
- 9.2 The Street Works team manage the permit system which delivers high levels of income that is reinvested back into the network. This “income” is derived from Fixed Penalty Notices or other enforcement action taken against works providers on the highway. The performance of this team and its work is ensuring that works on the highway are planned and managed effectively.

10.0 Strategic Drainage

- 10.1 Severe Weather Plan: A severe weather working group has been established and a Highways Severe Weather plan is being developed.
- 10.2 Shropshire Flood Barriers Plan: A review of this plan is being undertaken prior to the next flood season in November. Work had begun on this pre-COVID but resource from other agencies (EA, STW, SC) has been limited.
- 10.3 The Property Flood Resilience Recovery Support Scheme is being implemented which will coordinate actions for affected communities.

11.0 Passenger Transport

- 11.1 Passenger Transport continue to provide transport to school pupils who are attending the various primary and secondary schools within Shropshire, with the majority remaining open to allow access for children whose parents are keyworkers and those who are classed as vulnerable. Whilst the number of pupils is significantly lower than normal, we are at the same time continually adjusting the network to reflect this, which included providing transport over the Easter holidays and transport to alternative placements.
- 11.2 Using community car drivers to deliver prescriptions or organising taxis to deliver food bank parcels around the Shrewsbury area.
- 11.3 Some of the community transport groups within Shropshire are being inundated with requests for help and to free up some capacity for them we are utilising commercial operators who would normally have been providing school transport to provide medical journeys and shopping deliveries to assist.

- 11.4 Through liaison with Shire Catering we are currently developing a network to deliver hot meals to people housed in temporary accommodation around the county, utilising our own internal fleet for the larger deliveries and our commercial transport operators for smaller county wide distribution.
- 11.5 A review of the Shrewsbury Park & Ride service has taken place over a number of months and a strategy developed taking into consideration best practice elsewhere in the Country, trials undertaken on the service itself, which included a 10 minute frequency, the deployment of electric buses and fare incentives, which were all very well received by the public.
- 11.6 Following this review Park & Ride will be developed into the Shrewsbury Connect service which will provide for a semi-express link from three strategically placed sites across the outskirts of Shrewsbury to the town centre, ultimately giving passengers a greater choice of destinations within the town and the ability to interchange with other services.
- 11.7 This strategy includes creating true interchanges at current and new strategically placed sites where passengers can catch services to access wider Shropshire or travel into Shrewsbury on sustainably powered electric vehicles. Over a number of years Park and Ride patronage has fallen for a number of reasons, which this strategy not only intends to address but at maturity increase patronage significantly above levels previously achieved.
- 11.8 To compliment this strategy the Council have submitted an expression of interest that potentially could attract a £40 million funding package to the DfT under their Electric Bus Town funding program and if successful this would not only provide Electric vehicles for Shrewsbury Connect, but also for the wider bus services within the Town. The process is still at its expression of interest stage and details will follow if the project progresses.
- 11.9 An expression of interest has also been submitted to the DfT for funding to support a rural Demand Responsive Service that would integrate with the Public Bus network to provide essential journeys for residents and access to health services, if successful this bid would realise funding of £1.1 million.
- 11.10 In addition to the funding submissions above we were also successful in March with an application of funding for £319k to support an extension to the Park & Ride operating hours and the creation of a bus service linking the two main hospitals in Shropshire, both of these projects will be developed once the impact of Covid-19 on the bus industry reduces

12.0 Reports and Scrutiny

- 12.1 A number of Highway and Transport reports have been presented to Scrutiny during 2019/20 to provide updates to members and support improvements to systems, process and recommendations from Audit reports.

13.0 Highway Maintenance

13.1 In January 2020, the Council commissioned the services of a Highways Consultant to help the Council make further improvements to the Highways Service. The Consultant undertook a detailed review of the Service and identified 10 key issues where improvements should be made and recommended 57 key actions be undertaken to improve the Service as part of a Highways Improvement Plan linked to the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan.

13.2 The Highways Improvement Plan was launched at two Member workshops on 2 & 6 March 2020. Progress on implementing the actions within the Improvement Plan is closely governed and monitored by the Highways Improvement Board which meets every 2 weeks.

13.3 The Highways Improvement Plan has delivered dramatic improvements to the Highway network.

- By changing the way defects are identified, ordered and repaired we have improved the timeliness and quality of repairs and reduced costs.
- We have increased permanent repairs of potholes to 95%.
- We have repaired approximately 12,000 potholes since the beginning of March.
- We repair potholes adjacent to others previously identified for repair
- A new Governance Framework has been introduced to improve management of the Contract with Kier.
- We have commenced the planning and delivery of works within 16 Place based Parish areas making works more visible and effective for residents, Local Councils and Members.
- We are developing a new suite of KPI's into our Contract with Kier to incentivise high performance and hold them to account.
- We have updated our winter maintenance processes to improve decision making and reduce costs. Further improvements will be implemented for winter 2020.
- Between March and 31 May, we reduced the backlog of highway defects from 5259, (and increasing), to under 1,000.
- By implementing our own Find and Fix lengthsman gang directly we have dramatically reduced the costs of repairing defects by up to 90%.
- We have introduced new alternative innovative pothole repair methods.
- We have delivered low cost drainage interventions which have resolved long standing issues and will extend the life of our roads and prevent flooding issues.
- We have instigated a mixed local economy and reinstated ditching and grip clearance using local contractors reducing future damage upon road surfaces.
- The front face of the service has been transferred to the Council's Customer Service Centre and residents enquires have reduced from over 1,400 a week by approximately 90%.
- The Members portal has been launched and enquiries have reduced by approximately 80%.

- A new Highways Customer Engagement and Liaison Strategy has been launched and a Highways Customer Panel is being established with SALC.
- New Highways Staff and Team Leader Forums have been established and a customer focused Vision for the service has been agreed.
- The Highways Service is being restructured, a new Assistant Director of Infrastructure and Head of Highways have been appointed. The remaining restructure will be implemented during the next few months.
- The Highways Forward Capital Programme is visible Council's website.

13.4 The Highways Improvement Plan will continue to be used to deliver further improvements to the service ensuring maximum benefits are provided to Shropshire's residents, Local Councils and Members.

14.0 Reactive Maintenance

14.1 Since the launch of the Improvement Plan, the Highways Service have implemented a number of changes which have delivered dramatic and visible improvements to the way highway defects and potholes are actioned. These have dramatically reduced the size of the backlog whilst improving the quality, timeliness and cost of the service to our communities of which:

- We instructed Kier to increase the number of gangs to 40 to deliver immediate improvements to the numbers of defects being repaired. We have repaired approximately 12,000 potholes since the beginning of March.
- Using the new forms of data collected on network condition, performance and productivity, we used this as evidence to "right source" and trial new ways of working to improve the quality, timeliness and productivity of services.
- Our inspectors are now undertaking emergency repairs themselves improving both the effectiveness and efficiency of repairs. The repair material is an accredited permanent standard repair product.
- We have initiated our own find and fix lengthsman gangs who have undertaken urgent repairs ourselves in advance of inspections on less trafficked roads before they are identified or reported. This has delivered average defect repair costs at approximately half the cost of the National average. *These repairs are being carried out using an accredited permanent repair product and prevents defects from being added to the backlog of outstanding and overdue defects and also allows them to be inspected. Repairs are uploaded onto Confirm immediately by the gang, so all are recorded as previously. As our carriageways are returned to a better condition, these gangs will move onto other parish-based activities such as small Parish improvements and sign cleaning.*
- We directly took control of 5 gangs to undertake emergency and 1-day defects alongside any other works we direct. *We identified all the locations where we wanted to direct the gangs to work and improved the productivity of the gangs so emergency repairs were not. These have now been returned to Keir's control.*

- We have introduced alternative repair methods including Texpatch, thermal treatment and jet patching gangs. *We have identified the locations, specify the treatments required and direct the most appropriate gangs which were previously undertaken by Keir's 2-man gangs.*
- Between March and May 2020, we updated our inspections policy to prioritise emergency and 1-day defects and ensure the network was kept safe. *Since 1 June we have reverted back to our previous policy.*
- Reactive gangs now work in 16 Parish based Place areas. *This means we know where gangs will be to better programme work and audit the quality of works undertaken. Programmes will be placed on the Council's website as soon as possible.*
- Working with our legal, procurement, audit and transport colleagues, we have brought in 2 of our own direct delivery gully cleaning wagons with gangs. These also include cameras and root cutting equipment. This has enabled us to address difficult issues which have remained unresolved for over 2 years under the previous arrangements. These have provided us with a high-quality service, with added flexibility, availability and at a cost saving of approximately 60%.
- We have commissioned local contractors to deliver cost effective ditching and grip clearing. These works prevent water draining onto our carriageways and eroding the surfaces.
- We have set up a joint improvement team with Kier to review weekly performance data of reactive maintenance gangs and take actions to improve productivity. This has identified areas of both good and poor performance enabling improvements to be implemented.

15.0 Customer Service

- 15.1 The front face of customer enquiries has now been transferred to the CSC and colleagues have been provided with the necessary accesses into Confirm to be able to view orders and statuses. This enables the CSC to log and monitor requests, respond quicker, manage multiple enquiries to the same issue and provide residents and Members with an improved service.
- 15.2 The service is now focussed on responding and/or actioning existing enquiries and new ones received. During June 2020, *residents' enquiries have reduced by approximately 90%* to between 100-150 a week and the backlog has reduced by over 70% to approximately 1,600.
- 15.3 During February and March 2020, 615 Highway enquiries were received from Members by the CSC and service combined peaking in March. 295 of these were received by the service directly and were not logged on the reporting system and were therefore unable to be tracked.
- 15.4 More than half of Councillors attended the Highways workshops in Shire Hall at the beginning of March. Members were shown how to send all enquiries to the CSC online who will log their enquiries, respond directly where they can, assign to a technical officer for further details or to raise an order, and respond and close down

requests. The Members' Portal has been launched and Members have been trained on its use. The Portal enables Members to log enquiries quickly and also be able to track and trace actions. This is now being developed further to enable Members to view details of work undertaken in their Wards together with forthcoming works and details of customer enquiries. It will also include a map showing the location of all known defects and their status towards repair. A new feature is being placed on its front page to highlight completed and future programmes of works.

- 15.5 During June 2020, *Members' enquiries have reduced by approximately 80%*, with nearly half of those logged and tracked through the Members portal.
- 15.6 Enquiries from MP's and those directed and escalated to the Chief Executive are now forwarded to the CSC to manage. These have now been reduced to a very small amount as enquiries are responded to more effectively.
- 15.7 A working group has been initiated between the CSC, IT and Highways to improve the whole customer journey between enquiry made and closure. This will ensure that the right actions are taken at the right time to resolve concerns raised and that the correct form of response is provided to customers throughout the whole process. Currently a large proportion of the highway service customer service interaction sits on the Council's old Darwin system which doesn't allow the same service to residents as the new 365 system. IT are prioritising the transfer of the remaining services as quickly as possible in order that residents receive a consistent service in response to enquiries.
- 15.8 The Council's website is being updated and once complete will enable the Highways Service to make improved information available, such as upcoming planned and programmed works, for residents to view themselves and thereby reduce the need to raise enquiries to the Council.
- 15.9 A new Customer Engagement and Liaison Strategy has been developed through consultation with staff, Team Leaders and the Shropshire Association of Local Councils, SALC. A "Highways Customer Panel" of representatives chosen by SALC from local Town and Parish Councils is being established to review the customer satisfaction results and to help prioritise actions to improve our highway services to address any areas of dissatisfaction.

16.0 Asset Management

- 16.1 A Value for Money assessment was been undertaken by Proving Solutions in February 2020 to evaluate the performance of the service against other Councils. Its recommendations to improve our Value for Money and place us within the highest performing Councils in the Country were incorporated within the actions of the Improvement Plan.
- 16.2 The Council's Asset Management Policy and Strategy have been reviewed. Recommendations have been provided to enhance the documents into a new Asset Management+ which will place Shropshire residents at the heart of the future service and ensure flexibility in allocating budgets more effectively to different asset groups.

Immediate improvements have already been implemented this financial year with increased allocations provided to rural roads, drainage and preventative maintenance, such as ditching and surface dressing, to help arrest the deterioration of roads in the County.

- 16.3 The Highways Capital programme has been placed on the Council's website to provide forward visibility to Residents, Local Councils and Members. Longer term 3- or 5-year programmes are being developed and will be uploaded as soon as they completed.
- 16.4 A Highways Severe Weather plan is being developed including input from Highways Team Leaders to enable the Council and its partners to plan and respond to severe weather events effectively and efficiently in the future.

17.0 Capital Works

- 17.1 Using the 16 reactive maintenance Place Based Parish areas, programmes of work are being developed with communities at their heart. Minor works, which have historically been difficult to deliver within the existing contract constraints, have been improved and a new process has been agreed with Kier which will enable improvements to be delivered. Additionally, with Legal, Procurement and Finance colleagues, new ways of commissioning minor works have also been established using local contractors to deliver a more effective and efficient service when needed.

18.0 Contract Management

- 18.1 Improved contract management capacities, capabilities and processes are being developed into the new structure with new posts being created to focus on this critical area.
- 18.2 A new suite of 9 Key Performance Indicators has been developed to supplement the existing Contract indicators which are being proposed to be written into the Environment and Highways Term maintenance Contract as a variation. The indicators incentivise Kier to deliver an improved performance on the parts of the service which are most critical to the Council and provide evidence to hold them to account. The KPI's are focussed on.

1. Reactive Maintenance.
2. Routine and Planned Maintenance.
3. Highway Projects and Schemes.
4. Financial Management.
5. Forward Plans and Programmes.
6. Performance Information.
7. Applications for Payment.
8. Customer Satisfaction.
9. Winter Service.

- 18.3 An enhanced programme of audit inspections of highways works undertaken has been implemented. This is being developed further within the new structure and responsibilities of staff to ensure maximum effectiveness and efficiencies.
- 18.4 All recommendations from the Council's 2019 Audit review of the contract management of the term maintenance contract have been actioned and closed.

19.0 Service Providers

- 19.1 A review into the retained monies from the previous contract with Ringway has been undertaken. No anomalies were identified, and the report has been shared with the Council's Audit team.
- 19.2 The Service has commenced developing a new mixed local economy for highway services. A trial is being undertaken with a local contractor to undertake ditching works in the South of the County. Early indications are that this is providing greater effectiveness and efficiency than previously received through the Term Maintenance Contract. If proven successful, this could be extended wider and to other services as appropriate.
- 19.3 An external audit on the Highway Service's management of the Professional Services Contract has been undertaken. The results will be presented to a future Audit committee meeting and recommendations incorporated into the Improvement Plan.

20.0 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 20.1 This report identifies several issues across a wide and diverse areas, each one of these areas has a reputational and financial risk to the council and the wider communities across Shropshire. As this report is a retrospective update of key issues and aspects of work there is minimal risk to consider.

21.0 Financial Implications

- 21.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

22.0 Legal Implications

- 22.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

22.0 Climate Change Appraisal

- 23.1 There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Previous report of the Portfolio Holder:

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/documents/s19443/Portfolio%20Report%20-Highways%20and%20Transport.pdf>

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Councillor Steve Davenport, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport

Local Members –

All local members for update on the Portfolio.

Appendices

None