

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)

Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
John Fairclough	Cabinet Member Locality Services	June 2021

Strategic Transport

Port Access

- Work on the doubling of the rail line into the Port has been delayed several times but the first phase of this has now been completed. The second phase is being carried out over three separate weekends in April, June and September. Improvements to signals at Earlestown West are being incorporated into the works associated with transferring the control of signals from Warrington to Manchester, which is not due to happen until 2029.
- The Port of Liverpool Access scheme being proposed by Highways England has been significantly delayed. It is now expected that the formal consultation will not take place until the middle of 2022, which will affect the potential date for Highways England to submit their application to the Planning Inspectorate.

LTP and Growth Plan

- Sefton is continuing to work with the LCR Combined Authority/Merseytravel and the other local authorities on the delivery of the transport capital programme. In response to the Council's climate emergency declaration and an increased focus on active travel measures, work is continuing on the development of a Low Carbon and Active Travel Strategy for the Borough.
- The completion of the North Liverpool Key Corridor scheme on the A565 Derby Road has been affected by a high profile dispute between Liverpool City Council and one of its main contractors. This eventually led to the termination of the contract and Liverpool CC are in the process of identifying a new contractor to complete the remaining works.
- Work is continuing on the sustainable transport intervention proposals for Years 3-6 as part of the City Region programme. Sefton has three schemes in the programme, amounting to almost £3m of allocated funding. This consists of three phases of improvements on the A565, in Seaforth, Waterloo and Thornton, as well as a cycle route between Maghull and Kirkby and East-West cycle improvements in Southport. The Maghull to Kirkby cycle route is nearing completion. The Southport E/W Link scheme is largely complete, except for some remaining work on the Coastal Road that has been postponed until the autumn to avoid disruption during the summer months. Work is also nearing completion on the first phase of the scheme to deliver a cycle route on Great Georges Road. Further discussions will be held with the residents about the arrangements for the western (Marine Terrace) end of the route.

- The CA is providing funding for the development of Full Business Cases for the Southport Eastern Access and the Maritime Corridor projects. Public consultation on the Maritime Corridor proposals has been carried out earlier this year and elements of the scheme have been included in the CA transport bid to the Levelling Up Fund. The initial proposals and traffic modelling for the Southport Eastern Access scheme are being reviewed and a consultation will take place later this year.
- Improvements to the junction of the A59 Northway with Damfield Lane, the next stage in a series of improvements along the A59 Northway, have been completed. Design work has started on the junctions at Kenyon's Lane and at Hall Lane, the next two junctions to be improved.
- In Southport, additional funding from the Government has been used to deliver the required re-construction of parts of Marine Drive. Improvements to Scarisbrick Avenue in conjunction with the Townscape Heritage Initiative have been delayed until after the summer to avoid impacting on the businesses.
- Funding provided by Central Government through the Combined Authority from Tranche 1 of the Active Travel Fund was used to deliver new cycle routes in Bootle and Southport town centres. These routes have been reviewed and further work on the routes is being planned. The funding for Tranche 2 of the Active Travel Fund schemes has been confirmed and public consultation on the proposals for further routes in Southport is being carried out.
- Proposals for a 'Liveable Neighbourhood' area in Southport are being developed in conjunction with the active travel charity Sustrans. The proposals are now in the co-design stage and two public open days were recently held to enable the local community to engage in the design process.
- Some modelling and feasibility work is under way in Southport in support of the aspirations within the Towns Fund bid.

Local Transport Schemes

- The Transportation Capital Programme for 2021/22 is being finalised and is expected to be agreed with Cabinet Member in June 2021.

Sustainable Transport

- The European Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) funding for two major cycling schemes was approved in December 2018. The design of a new, inland pedestrian and cycle route at Crosby Coastal Park, which will avoid the issue of wind-blown sand on the promenade, has been completed and public consultation is currently being carried out. Planning approval will be required with works programmed to start later in 2021. Work on the Coastal Road cycle route is being delivered in conjunction with the Southport East West Cycle Links scheme and this will be completed later this year.

Highway Development and Design

Planning Applications

- In January to May 2021, the team processed 356 planning applications despite ongoing challenges associated with the impact of the pandemic. This includes applications for sites identified in the Council's adopted Local Plan. This continues to involve close liaison with case officers from the planning department.

Section 38 Highways Act 1980 legal agreements

- Submissions for s38 agreements have continued requiring the subsequent processing of these at times, lengthy and complex applications, particularly following the approval of planning applications for Local Plan sites.
- The report is as follows: -
 - No of live s38 and current developments subject to a s38 application – 37 taking in to account new and adopted sites.
 - No of stalled or no activity (on the part of a developer) – 2 and developers continue to be followed up on these
 - Number of development sites adopted within the last 3 months - 2
 - No of submissions awaiting technical approval - 7
 - Number of new and recent submissions awaiting administrative set up - 2

Section 278 Highways Act 1980 legal agreements

- The numbers of this type of application remains high, generally due to the approval of planning applications for Local Plan sites. The team are currently managing 66 live s278 HA 1980 highway works schemes in various stages of development on behalf of the Council. The successful delivery of these schemes is dependent on close liaison with the Legal, Finance and Planning Departments.
- In terms of Minor Works agreements, 4 were completed between December 2020 and May 2021, there are 6 current Minor Works schemes on going, with a further 5 awaiting payment from the developer before they can be delivered.

Public Rights of Way (PROW)

- England Coast Path/Coastal Access – Natural England published the reports identifying the route and the margin and have completed the public consultation period. The reports for all three sections have been submitted to the Secretary of State for consideration. Formal approval for report 5, which is the middle section within Sefton was granted in April, decisions on the other two sections are still outstanding. The work to deliver the route establishment, including contract procurement has commenced for the section covered by report 5 with a delivery scheduled completion date of December 2022.
- Three Definitive Map Modification Orders have been made and published relating to applications for paths within the Ravenmeols area of Formby. The Orders include 12 paths with the majority having the status of Byway. The consultation period for the Orders will run until mid-June 2021.

- A dedication agreement with has been made between Sefton and the National Trust for 7 paths being 2 Restricted Byways, 1 Bridleway and 4 Footpaths on and in the vicinity of Alexandra Road and Albert Road in Formby.

Strategic Highways Development and Future Planning

- The team is continuing to work closely with the Planning Department to provide a strategic approach to development to ensure that the necessary new transport infrastructure is in place to support new developments coming forward in future years.
- The team is continuing to request construction traffic management plans for new developments so that we can manage the highway network efficiently and effectively with minimum disruption to users of the highway and with the important benefit of highway safety. Once plans have been agreed, the team is working closely with colleagues in network management and planning to ensure that the plans are being adhered to.

Highway Design

- The team has continued to provide the design and delivery of strategic transport investment schemes, including major highway schemes, STEP programme schemes and provide assistance in the planning and development of future strategic schemes led by the STPI team.
- In addition, the team continues to support the Development Control function undertaking Transport Assessments and Technical Approvals for the Highways Act S38 and S278 submissions and the design and delivery of some Highways Act S278 and minor works schemes.
- The team also has responsibility for the revenue and capital bridge maintenance programme and has managed the maintenance scheme on Hightown station footbridge as well as a number of minor bridge maintenance schemes.
- The main current schemes currently being undertaken by the team include:
 - A59 Northway/Damfield Road junction improvements – design, procurement and supervision of the scheme to improve capacity and improve accessibility along the A59 through Maghull, at the Damfield Road junction with the installation of a new signal junction.
 - Great Georges Road walking and cycling improvements - design, procurement and supervision of the scheme, which also includes the waterproofing of Waterloo Bridge.
 - The Kirkby to Maghull cycle route scheme - design, procurement and supervision of the STEP programme scheme.
 - The Crosby Coastal Park scheme cycle route scheme - design, procurement and supervision of the STEP programme scheme.
 - A59 Northway/Kenyon's Lane and Hall Lane junction improvements – design, procurement and supervision of these two schemes to improve capacity and improve accessibility along the A59 through Maghull.

Highways Maintenance

We have been informed that there will be funding via Liverpool City Region to upgrade our traffic signals to LED, this will make the systems more resilient and all reduce our carbon emissions by 1% (based on the 2019/20 baseline).

We will commence upgrading of street lighting to LED this month. This will be a four year project that will result in a reduction of carbon emissions of 16% (based on the 2019/20) baseline. We have yet to put the project team in place for the delivery of this project.

We are working in partnership with our contractor to address some shortcomings in the maintenance of our highway drainage. This should see a reduction in highway flooding that we currently experience during heavy rainfall events, especially short sharp storms that with climate change we will expect to experience more of. It should also result in a reduction in the number of complaints in relation to this service area.

Our planned maintenance is progressing with the completion of schemes such as the Coast Road and significant progress made on the preparation and delivery of this years programme. However, there is a backlog of works of £30m and this is increasing year on year. We will be undertaking some surveys this year to update our understanding of the backlog and our priorities and in particular updating our information regarding footways for which there has been an increasing need for reactive maintenance.

We will be moving to an updated approach to our highway safety inspections in June and July which will focus on being risk based, this allows us to focus resources on those areas of highest risk and priority and reduce the frequency of inspections from four to three a year on lower risk areas such as residential roads. The volume of works being generated from these safety inspections has been increasing year on year and as the backlog on planned maintenance increases we can expect this trend to continue.

Our Highway Maintenance contractor (Viam, formerly Kings) has appointed an administrator. The contract with them was for the provision of reactive maintenance and they have ceased to provide this service. The reserve contractor has stepped in to make safe any urgent issues and officers are in the process of dealing with administrative and legal issues to appoint them to undertake reactive highway maintenance for the Council.

CLEANSING SERVICES

Weeds

Street Cleansing are continuing to make good progress in the borough with the weed removal programme. We have completed Linacre and Derby wards and are currently finishing off in Litherland and making progress into Orrell.

Kickstart staff currently stand at 7, hopefully progress will continue to ensure we have optimum levels. Until such time Agency staff will continue to be utilised.

New Refuse Fleet

Cleansing have taken receipt of 6 x Roto press vehicles and 4 x of the Dennis Eagle vehicles. Work is currently in progress to have these vehicles fitted with the necessary

telematics and we hope to have them on road within 2 weeks. The remaining renewals will be delivered over the next 3 months. We hope to have the new fleet fully operational by September of this year.

Transport & Vehicle Maintenance

T&VM are in the process of implementing the new Fleet Management System. This will contribute significant improvements to both management of and compliance within the full Council fleet. The system is better tailored to all our service requirements.

School Crossing Service

The service is currently recruiting for staff. The recent Covid pandemic has had a detrimental effect on this service and staff numbers have reduced. The service is currently working with schools and our internal Comms department to fill current vacancies within the service.

BURIAL AND CREMATION UPDATE

The Service Manager left the Council earlier in the year and the post is currently filled by a part-time interim manager. Recruitment of a permanent replacement is underway.

Increased deaths during the Covid pandemic created a marked increase in cremation demand. This started in the first “wave” of the pandemic in early 2020 and continued through into the first quarter of 2021. During this time the burial and cremations service has been largely focussed on continuing to meet that demand and enabling services to happen safely and with dignity. This placed the service under a lot of strain at times and required additional staff during the busiest periods.

Other services, such as ash burial and scattering and memorialisation have needed to be suspended for significant periods during 2020 and 2021 and this has resulted in many people unfortunately still waiting for this important part of the bereavement process to be completed. The service has prioritised ash burial and scatters in its recovery plan and progress has been made, but limited staff capacity is meaning that this is slower than planned and desired. The service has attempted to recruit additional staff to support this aspect of service delivery but at the time of writing has so far been unable to do so.