

# CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)

Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
John Fairclough	Cabinet Member Locality Services	March 2022

## Strategic Transport

### Port Access

- The new double track section of the rail line at the Port entrance has been operational since September 2021. Improvements to signals at Earlestown West are included in 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 National Highways remains significantly delayed. Site investigations, environmental surveys and scheme design work are being planned for 2022. The statutory public consultation in advance of the DCO application to the Planning Inspectorate will take place once those investigations have been completed and this may not be until 2023.

### 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. Following the Government announcement of £710m over the next 5 years for the Liverpool City Region from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, discussions have been ongoing with the CA about the expected 5 year allocation for Sefton. The programme for 2022/23 is being finalised for approval by the CA, but it provides a significant uplift in funding for transport infrastructure, particularly for highway maintenance.
- 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 continues to be delayed following the dispute between Liverpool City Council and one of its main contractors. Liverpool CC appointed a new contractor to complete the remaining works, which is now under way.
- The development of Full Business Cases for the Southport Eastern Access and the Maritime Corridor projects funded by the CA is continuing. Consultation on the Eastern Access scheme will be starting soon. Both schemes are included in the CA's programme for delivery in the next 5 years.

- Design work is continuing on improvements the junctions at Kenyon's Lane and at Hall Lane on the A59 Northway. A package of funding including Government grant funding for improvements to traffic signals, developer contributions and Sefton transport capital programme will be used to deliver these improvements.
- In Southport, improvements to Scarisbrick Avenue in conjunction with the Townscape Heritage Initiative are planned to start early in March 2022.
- Work on the movement, access and public realm project within the Southport Town Deal (*Les Transformation de Southport*) has continued. Consultation started in February 2022 on the proposals to improve access and connectivity in the town centre and provide safer and more attractive public spaces.

### **Local Transport Schemes**

- The Transportation Capital Programme for 2021/22 has been finalised and agreed with Cabinet Member.

### **Sustainable Transport**

- The European Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) funding for two major cycling schemes was approved in December 2018. The design of a new pedestrian and cycle route through Crosby Coastal Park has been completed. Public consultation was carried out and the design has been revised in response to comments received and reported to Cabinet Member. The planning application has been submitted. Work on the Coastal Road cycle route has been completed.
- The results of public consultation on the proposals for cycle routes in Southport to be funded through Tranche 2 of the Active Travel Fund have been reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to Cabinet Member. The consultation raised numerous issues relating to the scheme so alternative proposals are being developed and discussions are ongoing with Government about funding the alternative schemes.

### **Highway Development and Design**

#### **Planning Applications**

- The team continue to process large numbers of planning applications despite ongoing challenges associated with the impact of the pandemic. These include applications for sites identified in the Local Plan and 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 – 34 taking in to account new and adopted sites.

- No of stalled or no activity (on the part of a developer) – 1 which is close to completion
- Number of development sites adopted within the last 3 months - 0
- No of submissions awaiting technical approval - 9
- Number of new and recent submissions awaiting administrative set up - 3

### **Section 278 Highways Act 1980 legal agreements**

- The numbers of this type of application also remains high, generally due to the approval of planning applications for Local Plan sites. The team are currently managing more than 60 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.

### **Public Rights of Way (PROW)**

- England Coast Path/Coastal Access – The grant funding bid to the Rural Development Programme for England has been approved by Natural England. The delivery of the establishment works is planned to enable completion by October 2022.

### **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 continues 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. This includes the junction improvement schemes on the A59 and the sustainable transport schemes for Crosby Coastal Park, Great George's Road and Scarisbrick Avenue.
- 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 is managing the maintenance schemes on Hightown station footbridge and Hillside station bridge as well as a number of minor bridge maintenance schemes.

## **Permit Scheme**

- We have just completed the 7<sup>th</sup> full year since the introduction of our permit scheme and this continues to function well.
- There were some staffing issues last year, due to people leaving and also with some long-term sickness absences. However, we have now filled the shortfall and any backlog has been caught up.
- Our annual review will commence shortly and we will produce the results, when available.

## **Winter Service**

- The season has been relatively mild, so far. To date (23/02/22) we have gritted the c/ways on 24 occasions and the f/ways on 8 occasions
- Regular updates are being produced to monitor expenditure until the end of the financial year.

## **Cleansing Services**

### **Communal Bin Roll Out**

The online consultation closed on the 18<sup>th</sup> February. Appropriate Ward Councillors have been updated with all necessary documentation and informed of the ongoing progress. The resulting data is currently being collated for discussion with Cabinet Member in early March.

### **Christmas Waste Operation**

Christmas and Shutdown waste collections were performed with a reduced workforce. Discussions will take place with JTU regarding agreed working practices for future shutdown and BH working periods.

### **Street Cleansing**

With effect from March of this year, managerial responsibility for the contract with Graysons for Weed control across the borough will be transferred from Highways to Street Cleansing. Discussions have taken place with National Highways resulting in positive outcomes for agreed collaborative working methods with shared Traffic Management and road closure arrangements to be confirmed. This will allow for greater collective working patterns for both functions.

The service has recently trialled a multifunctional cleansing machine that is 100% electrically powered combining litter picking, an on-board pressure washing facility, controlled suction and vacuuming of all litter/detritus. This will allow for greater coverage of high footfall areas especially those in towns and tourists routes.

### **Transport & Vehicle Maintenance**

All newly acquired Cleansing Fleet is now operationally active. T&VM in conjunction with Cleansing Management are working through the disposal process of older fleet and identifying those to be maintained.

Transport is to commence a service review of its charging mechanisms and service provision within the near future. As part of ongoing improvements to service delivery and a change in legislation surrounding the changes to the MOT roles, we are looking

to provide opportunities for staff to train to become more effective and improve their knowledge base as authorised examiners.

### School Crossing Service

The School Crossing Service continues to provide a vital safety service for the children and parents of Sefton. They work hard and strive to keep children safe when crossing our busy roads.

Whilst they have faced challenges throughout the previous year and during the pandemic, staff have continued to be professional and resilient in all circumstances.

## **Green Sefton**

Overall: Green Sefton

- The 2021 Annual Review, was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny (Regeneration and Skills) meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> November, and provides an update on the progress of Green Sefton's establishment and development, its operational delivery over the last year, and sets the strategic work programme for the coming year, all in line with the Service Vision 2030, and Service Plan.
- Climate Emergency Action Plan; particular actions re: offsetting and other aspects specific to Green Sefton. Overall summary statement was shared as part of the COP26 agenda, see here: [Green Sefton Archives - Page 2 of 15 - My Sefton News Channel](#) three articles are listed on this page; for strategic land use development with partner agencies, for launching our Business Supporter scheme, for monitoring coastal change and climate, and for our 'managed for nature' initiative.
- Our 'place based' strategy remains in development.
- Re-looking at time management; to make sure we focus on the right things at the right time – see workload matrix within the Annual Review document and presentations. These are now shared with Cabinet Member on a regular basis (service wide, and team by team, and individual officers now use them in their monthly 1:1 meetings with line managers)

More detail on all of the above, and our prioritised work programme, has been summarised again in an Annual Review newsletter, which includes links to a 2min headlines short film, and a narrated version of the main presentation, see here: [Green Sefton](#).

Further, officers are more than happy to discuss any of the issues further as requested.

In summary, key ongoing issues headlines are as follows, split into the three service areas of Green Sefton;

### Green Sefton; Development:

- There haven't been any flood events or storm events of note over the last period.
- The Local Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy is due to be adopted by the Council in early March after being recommended for approval by Cabinet in early February.
- The detailed design for the Pool Project is underway and feasibility and affordability will be assessed in March.
- Surface Water Management Plan – final amendments to reports for Formby and Maghull.

- Working with Highways to seek opportunities to deliver highways drainage schemes where flood risk to properties can be reduced, with funding allocated for the next 5 years.
- Working with Mersey Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency to seek options to slow the flow and improve water quality to Melling Brook.
- FCERM have updated their pages on Sefton.gov.uk to make the information available easier to find and more accessible.
- In discussions with United Utilities to secure 300k match funding to undertake some interim works along the Crosby Coast where erosion is continuing and the sea wall is failing, to bide time until funding is secured to deliver a major coastal defence scheme to the section of coast most at risk.
- Ainsdale Birkdale land drainage scheme has opened up watercourses through the Green Beach to allow free drainage of the surface water drainage systems.
- We have successfully recruited to the vacant shoreline management co-ordinator post who will be commencing employment with Sefton at the end of March.
- Continuing to work with risk management authorities to find solutions to alleviate flooding in Maghull, following storm Christoph and the publication of a statement of intent signed by all risk management authorities.
- Continuing to undertake routine inspections and maintenance to inland and coastal assets and undertake reactive works when necessary.
- The FCERM team worked with the Ecocentre and Edge Hill University to produce a series of short animations called 'coasts for kids'. The project has been successful in being shortlisted for a Liverpool City Region Culture and Creativity Award for the environmental sustainability category. The awards ceremony is the 2<sup>nd</sup> March.

#### Green Sefton: Community and Resources

- Storm Arwen resulted in a high volume of calls for fallen trees over the weekend of the 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> November. Storm clear-up was significant, and the after effects will take more further time to respond to – over 100 call outs; mostly full trees and some reporting multiple trees. Sterling work from the Tree & Woodland team inspecting and responding through the night as the storm hit, plus the Council's contractor, Ide Verde, making sure highways cleared promptly and trees made safe. Not to forget the wider Green Sefton team who have checked parks and carried out clearance and safety work where it was safe to do so.
- The Tree & Woodland team are now well into planting season, having secured funding for planting 270 standards and approx.1000 whips this season, linked to the Northern Forest, Trees for Climate and Queens Green Canopy projects. Several community groups and schools have already taken part in planting activity across the Borough.
- Development of a new Tree Management strategy is still in progress and will be shared for discussion early in 2022.
- Northwest in Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood Judging 2021 took place despite Covid, results have all been good.

#### Green Sefton: Land Management

- Staffing capacity remains a challenge. At times this Winter, circa 45% of operational staff have been unavailable (due to covid, other sickness, bereavement, training and other reasons). There is little resilience within the service, and grave digging at the cemeteries and crematoria has been prioritised, meaning only basic maintenance/ litter picking and bin emptying at best is being prioritised at remaining parks, coast and other sites.

- Resource issues also continued to be an issue throughout the summer with approximately 500+ days lost due to COVID or COVID related isolation episodes. This combined with a period of increased visitor activity and prolonged periods of good summer weather have been a real challenge. Litter, bin emptying and daily cleansing have for some teams taken priority over other routine maintenance tasks. In many locations our grass cutting schedules have reduced to up to 4 weeks between visits which has led to an increase in complaints.
- A proposal for 'normalising' some of the Visitor Action Plan activities has been included in the proposals to be considered at Budget Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> March and would assist in ongoing capacity during the summer months.
- The workload matrix and programming is assisting in prioritising works and agreeing the areas of focus. Also, an exercise is being undertaken to define the standards the team are able to provide on the ground, given the resources available in 2022.
- Cemetery operations have been challenging which unfortunately resulted in a short, but intense, period of complaints in Summer 21 – especially with the maintenance of Southport Crematorium due to resource limitations. Additional works have recovered the condition of the site and a dedicated maintenance resource going forwards, and further development of volunteering on site.
- The team are supporting the project development of the Bootle Strand Canalside venue. The project will include an exciting new urban landscape and the opportunity to develop community gardening, events and activities.
- Working closely with colleagues in the Tourism service, a fixed term 1 year post has been created for a site based gardener at Kings Gardens, Southport. This additional resource, filled by one of our successful Apprentices, will tackle the backlog of park based maintenance activities, assist in engaging the public, and overall address concerns raised by the HLF in their recent site visit (pre pandemic), where they were concerned we were struggling to meet the requirements of the Management and Maintenance Plan. After only a couple of months on site, the benefits of the return of a site based gardener are clear, with compliments having been received from a number of sources,