

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)

Councillor	Portfolio	Date
John Fairclough	Cabinet Member Locality Services	27 June 2023

Port Access

- A series of rail improvements have been set out in Liverpool City Region Investment Programme. These include a number of schemes within the 'Rail Freight Investment Programme' including projects aimed at improving freight capacity, including to the Port of Liverpool. Programme 'roadmaps' are currently being developed for all the proposed improvements.
- The Government has announced that the Port Access Route will now be considered as part of the Road Investment Strategy 3 (RIS3). The Transport Secretary confirmed, in March 2023, that the 'A5036 Port of Liverpool Access in the Roads Investment Strategy faces a range of challenges including environmental considerations and ongoing design changes, and so will be developed in RIS 3 (covering 2025-2030) to allow time to ensure stakeholders' views are fully considered' The scheme had previously been in the RIS2. It is understood that modelling and survey work is ongoing. This process is likely to take a further 10 months to complete.

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. The Council has achieved the agreed spend in Year 1 of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme despite the challenges the increased settlement has created. Progress is now being made on the delivery of Year 2. Recruitment for new staff to help deliver the programme is ongoing.
- The Year 2 CRSTS scheme will be set out in the 2023-24 Transport Capital Programme Report will be presented to Cabinet Member for approval.
- **Low Carbon Strategy:** In response to the Council's climate emergency declaration and an increased focus on active travel measures, work is continuing on the development of Low Carbon Transport Strategy for the borough. Some initial baselining work has been completed and a report completed. Plans are currently being developed for member engagement in advance of a wider consultation. The report will provide a quantification of the current transport related carbon position for the Council and a future trajectory for reductions towards Net Zero. The consultants are also identifying the next steps. Progress is also being made on the development of an Active Travel and E-mobility Strategies for the Borough.
- In order to identify potential improvement to the Councils walking and cycling network a local cycling and walking infrastructure plan is being developed. Proposals for stakeholder engagement were presented to the Consultation and Engagement Panel in early November. A number of engagement sessions were held with specific interest groups and some initial plans developed for helping inform the engagement process. Detailed plans for further engagement, initially planned with Members, are being developed.

- **Southport Eastern Access and Maritime Corridor Business Cases:** The detailed design work is now progressing on both schemes and the final details will be included within the Full Business Case submission as requested by the LCRCA.

Part of the Maritime Corridor scheme is likely to be funded from the Levelling Up Fund, following the success of the transport bid. There is some pressure to have the scheme delivered as soon as the FBC is approved, and therefore procurement options are being examined. It is expected that LUF projects will be delivered by March 25. Some further engagement to ensure that local Members, businesses and residents are sighted on the proposals and have an ability to shape them is planned for June and July 2023. Ward Members will receive a briefing on both schemes shortly.

- **A59 Junctions and Corridor:** Design work is continuing on improvements the junctions at Kenyon's Lane and at Hall Lane on the A59 Northway, these will be developed in the context of a wider improvement of the cycle route between Switch Island and Robins Island. 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. ATE are supportive of the project and are encouraging the Council to consider the link to the wider communities and the potential for improvement east and west on the A59. Discussions will have been undertaken with local Ward Members and Maghull Town Council on the details of both schemes and further consultation with the wider public is programmed.
- **Scarisbrick Avenue:** In Southport, improvements to Scarisbrick Avenue in conjunction with the Townscape Heritage Initiative have been completed, including the installation of lighting. Some defects were undertaken in April with some further work planned for after the summer season. The scope of this work has been reviewed by landscape architects.
- **Southport Town Deal:** Preliminary Design work on the first phase of public realm project identified within the Southport Town Deal (*Les Transformation de Southport*) has been completed. A Landscaping report has been completed which sets out the proposed materials to be used. This has been considered by the tourism, consultation, maintenance, Green Sefton and cleansing teams and comments provided and plans reviewed accordingly. The material adopted will then be used in further phases of improvement. Works has commenced on a report highlighting potential changes to the highway to facilitate improved pedestrian accessibility and public realm.
- **Crosby Town Centre:** The detailed design of the highway works which will support the new library development proposed for the Green Car Park. The works are aimed at reducing severance and improving access to the town centre. Discussions have been held with relevant authorities over the phasing of the works. It is anticipated that works will commence in the Autumn and a Ward Members update is being prepared.
- **Bootle Town Centre:** - Initial work has also been commissioned to review access to the Strand in Bootle, in order to help shape initial work associated with the re-imagining of the centre. A Transport Framework has been established, some detailed work is now being undertaken to look at the servicing of the Strand with a view to enabling the Vermont Way entrance to serve as access and egress. The detailed design of this work will be undertaken shortly as some work is likely to be delivered in the Autumn prior to demolition being undertaken. Some Master planning work will be undertaken looking at parking and bus waiting facilities. A series of parking surveys have been commissioned to help determine both current parking provision within the town and current demand.

Local Transport Schemes

- An updated version of the Transportation Capital Programme for 2022/23 to confirm final spend will be submitted to Cabinet Member for approval and a further report for 2023/24 will follow shortly. This will set out the schemes.

Sustainable Transport

- **Crosby Coastal Park:** Funding has been secured to introduce a scheme to provide lighting and an improved surface between South Road, Great Georges Road and the Lake House. This is targeted for implementation before the clocks change in the Autumn.
- **Formby By-pass:** The Department for Transport had previously confirmed that the funding secured through tranche 2 of the Active Travel Fund can be used for proposals to improve the cycle and walking facilities on part of the Formby Bypass. Work commenced on 13 February. Completion is due in July 2023. Detailed design works will shortly be commenced on improvements to the junction of the A565 with the Coastal Road at Woodvale.
- **Revenue funding** received from the Active Travel Fund for the development of projects capable to improving cycling and walking throughout the borough. Works are currently progressing the A59 cycleway, the remainder of the A565 corridor to complement the improvement to the links identified above, junction on the A565, including Woodvale and the development of a Local Walking and Infrastructure Plan to complement the City Region Strategic Plan. Further revenue money has been successfully bid for to continue this work and a Grant Funding Offer received,
- **School Streets:** Consultation work has been undertaken on three School Street Pilot schemes in Southport. Two of the schemes will be formally launched in July and engagement events have been planned. The further scheme, at Stanley High School is more complicated and will be subject to further development before implementation in the Autumn. Funding has been secured to develop other school streets initiatives throughout the borough and a dedicated officer, seconded from Sustrans, has recently commenced the selection and engagement work. A priority list of 10 schools has been chosen for further engagement and discussions are ongoing to determine the appetite from schools for engaging in this work. The initial response has been disappointed so some other schools may be approached.
- **Green Bus Corridor:** The LCRCA commissioned consultants to develop and appraise options for potential bus priority measures commence works on a number of routes in the City Region, including the No 53 bus corridor which travels between Crosby and Liverpool, passing on Stanley Road. Officers have provided some initial comments and a report is expected shortly setting out the results. The LCRCA are now engaging further consultants to develop schemes based on the initial options. Opportunities for 'quick wins' are also being established.
- **Great Georges Road:** Final design work to complete the previous cycle lane scheme along Great Georges Road has been completed and dates are being established for implementation.
- **Birkdale Village** - Some funding from the CRSTS programme has been established to enable proposals to be developed to improve accessibility in Birkdale. These will be subject to consultation within 2023.

Highway Development Control

Planning Applications

- The team continue to process large numbers of planning applications despite ongoing challenges associated with the recent turnover in staffing resources, increased by the fact that no suitable applications were received for the vacant senior highway development engineer post.

The applications include sites identified in the Local Plan and continue to involve close liaison with case officers from the planning department. A total of 203 applications have been responded to in February and May 2023.

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 – 46
 - No of stalled or no activity (on the part of a developer) – 2 where the developer appears to have ceased trading.
 - Number of development sites adopted within the last 3 months - 0
 - No of submissions awaiting technical approval – 20
 - Number of new and recent submissions awaiting administrative set up – 1

Section 278 Highways Act 1980 legal agreements

- The numbers of this type of application also remains high, including the approval of planning applications for Local Plan sites. The team are currently managing 70 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 coastal access rights and the coast path were enacted on Wednesday 10th May. Some minor items of establishment works have yet to be completed but they do not materially impact on the new rights and public use. The route is now a national trail and Natural England are working towards establishing a partnership with the local authorities in order to manage and maintain the route.
- Definitive Map Modification Applications – The British Horse Society has submitted 7 applications to either record additional routes on the Definitive Map or to upgrade routes to a higher status that are already on the Definitive Map. Once validated the applications must be considered and determined within 12 months.

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 collaborating closely with colleagues in network management and planning to ensure that the plans are being adhered to.

Highway Asset Management

Winter Maintenance

- The final gritting figures for last year were 57 carriageway treatments and 31 footway treatments.
- The annual winter consultation is about to commence with comments to be collated by 7th July.
- The report to approve next season's policy will be taken to O&S (regeneration & skills) on 19th September.

Street Lighting LED retro fit scheme

- Work is continuing with the replacement of the high – wattage bulbs to maximise the energy savings. This will continue for the remainder of the calendar year.
- Officers are currently working with colleagues in finance to look at the financing of the LED project. This is to take into account increased borrowing costs, whilst also factoring in the rise in energy costs which have increased savings for the Authority.
- The core period of the street lighting contract expires in March 24. Officers are working with the contractor to explore options to extend the contract until the end of the LED project to ensure continuity of work.

Traffic signals LED retro fit scheme

- Work has now commenced on the Traffic Signals LED scheme which will increase energy savings, provide carbon efficiencies, and reduce on-going maintenance costs.
- This is a 2-year programme with at least 50% of the programme to be delivered this financial year.
- This project is being externally funded through the Combined Authority.

Highway Maintenance

- Planned and routine maintenance operations are progressing well and in accordance with allocated programming timeframes.
- To date, since the beginning of this financial year, key maintenance improvements have been completed which include the following:
- Application of footway surface treatments commonly known as “slurry Seal” has been applied to 39,000 M2 of bituminous footways with a spend value of £120,000.

- Surface treatments in the carriageway known as “Micro Surfacing” has been applied to 50,000M2 of defective carriageway with a spend value of £385,000.00.
- Resurfacing, which involves the removal of one or more surfacing layers in the carriageway, has been completed totalling 12,000 M2 with a spend value of £610,000.00.
- Routine safety inspections and other maintenance functions such as grass cutting, and drainage renewals continue to operate daily which identifies isolated defects and repairs in accordance with the council's safety inspection policies and other industry guidelines.

Operational In-House Services

Building Cleaning

It has been a challenging period financially for the service as school budgets continue to be stretched at a time when labour costs have increased significantly, in the region of 20% since last year, for the following reasons:

1. In 2022/23, it was estimated that the pay award for staff would be around 2.5% and this was built into the costs of the SLA. However, when the pay award was agreed, it was significantly higher than that, in the region of 10% for cleaning staff. However, the additional costs of the pay award were not passed on to schools but absorbed by the Council.
2. Also included in the 2022/23 pay award, was a commitment to delete pay point 1 from the NJC pay spine from 1 April 2023. The majority of cleaning staff are employed on pay point 1, so from 1st April 2023, they moved to pay point 2, increasing their pay.
3. The Council's Finance section advised to build a flat rate increase of £1,925 for the 23/24 pay award into SLAs. This will afford most cleaning staff a pay increase of around 9.5%.

Officers continue to work with our partners in schools to creatively address the problems they are facing but also supporting staff through what can be an unsettling time.

Recruitment of staff remains very difficult in certain parts of the Borough with some posts receiving no applications, causing operational difficulties. It is hoped that the pay award will make such roles more attractive to potential applicants.

Catering

The service faces the same financial issues as the Building Cleaning Service as regards increasing labour costs at a time when school budgets are so tight. All SLA's have been issued and we have been in discussions with many schools regarding the cost of their service for 2023/24, with some schools raising significant concerns about being able to afford to remain with our service.

In addition, food costs have increased significantly during the last 12 months and there are likely to be more increases in 2023/24. As a member of the TUCO purchasing framework, we are as well placed as we can be to ensure that any future increases are not only justified but also fairly reflect the increases that food producers and distributors are having to bear. We are also working closely with our operational staff to ensure that they are taking all the necessary steps to reduce food waste.

Whilst part of the increased costs charged to schools were offset by the 5% increase in the price of a school meal, schools still had to bear a significant increase.

The current provider of fresh fruit and vegetables to the service has informed us that from August 2023, they will no longer be providing a service to the education sector.

Using the TUCO framework agreement, the service is in the process of undertaking a mini competitive tender to source a new supplier.

The service is also in the process of procuring an Electronic Communication, Payment and Kitchen Management System, which would enable it to operate in a more efficient manner.

This is being procured via the YPO framework agreement and it is anticipated that the process will be complete by the time schools return from the summer break in September.

The service has manual systems in place for many of its functions such as menu planning, providing allergen information, the recording of food safety data, providing financial information to schools, the production of management information and the ordering of food.

School kitchens do not currently have access to any electronic communication systems such as email or MS Teams. All communication with the management team and other kitchens is via the telephone and/or site visits. The service was badly exposed during the Covid-19 outbreak when the required speedy and regular communication with kitchen staff was not possible.

The lack of Electronic Communication, Payment and Kitchen Management System results in officers spending excessive time on relatively straight forward tasks.

An Electronic Communication, Payment and Kitchen Management System would benefit all key stakeholders: schools, parents, pupils and catering staff.

The catering section are continuing to support The Council's Healthy Weight strategy. The Service Manager chairs the Live Well subgroup, which is charged with reviewing and refreshing the Council's work to ensure compliance with Food Active's Healthy Weight Declaration accreditation.

Transport and Vehicle Maintenance

The service has successfully recruited a new Transport & Fleet Manager. Michael Roberts joins Sefton from United Utilities and has a wealth of experience within the Transport Industry. He will be the Operator Licence holder for the Authorities fleet ensuring we remain fully compliant and our Green status continues.

The service has also recruited a new Workshop Manager Joel Powell. Joel started with Sefton as apprentice Auto Fitter in 2013. He has progressed from Apprentice to Auto Mechanic and is now the Workshop Manager, responsible for the maintenance of all of Sefton's Vehicle's and Plant. This is one of our great achievements as Joel has progressed through the system and is a shining example of how successful Sefton's Apprenticeship scheme is.

The service continues to provide a full MOT service to both internal and external customers and remains 100% compliant with inspections and services.

School Crossing Service

The service has successfully recruited 4 new Patrols since February. These staff will fill 3 of the 10 vacancies we currently have and 1 will replace a leaver. Recruitment for the service is difficult and remains an ongoing issue country wide. The service also has a new Part Time Supervisor, George Payne, who commenced work within the service on 15th May and is settling in well. George has worked for Sefton Council for 20 years and comes to the service from Community Equipment Stores.

The service celebrates its Silver Jubilee this year which is an outstanding achievement. The service was officially created by the School Crossing Patrol Act in 1953 and the first official

Patrol started work in 1954 in Bath, whilst the uniform and pole have changed to meet modern standards and Patrols can now stop traffic to cross any pedestrian, adult or child – the role is essentially the same today as it was 70 years ago. To reach 70 years is truly a remarkable achievement and testament to how important the service is viewed by the public.

The service gives thanks to all Patrols for their hard work and commitment they have demonstrated past and present and continue to do so in keeping the children and pedestrians safe whilst crossing the busy roads in Sefton.

Burials and Cremations

The service continues to perform well and the staff restructure of 2022 is well embedded.

The service continues to work with Green Sefton to seek improvements to the grounds maintenance provision at all sites and this will be given the relevant focus throughout the grass maintenance season commencing April.

Alternative options for memorial provision are being explored to ensure that there is an affordable offer for all.

Sefton ARC and Careline

The Service has recently benefited from significant ICT improvements which is an on-going project in conjunction with the Council's ICT provider.

Careline: The service continues to work with Adult Social Care to review the service offer that is currently in place and ensure it continues to be fit for purpose and aligned to the technology enabled care agenda.

Specialist Transport Unit

School routes have increased over this past year and there are now up to 16 routes, transporting a total of 114 SEND children to and from school.

Waste Management

The service is continuing to move in the right direction and has recently undertaken a recruitment drive with numerous vacancies on the collection teams filled. This has created reliance within the service and has allowed us to resolve the long-standing issues we had previously faced around staff holidays.

The recent Bank Holiday's period was hugely successful, and the collection teams all worked together and maintained collections right throughout the Bank Holiday period with minimal impact to residents and their collections.

Strategically, the Assistant Director and Service Manager continues to attend the LCR Strategic Waste Partnership for future planning regarding the implementation of the waste related aspects of the Environment Act 2021.

Street Cleansing

The weed control programme commenced its first of four sprays in March 2023 and will finish the fourth spray in late October 2023. A stringent inspection process is being carried out daily by Officers to ensure evidence of 'die back' of weeds approximately 10-14 days following scheduled spray. This has proved successful in many aspects. However, we will continue to monitor the situation stringently and will be working closely with the contractor to improve the weed control across the Borough.

The service is currently of introducing a new zonal working arrangements with the Street Cleansing Operation. Each team will be allocated a zone and they work exclusively within that zone taking ownership and ensuring its continuously maintained. Similar to the new zonal arrangements that were recently made to the rear entry teams.

The service is currently undergoing a recruitment drive which will see a number of vacancies filled over the next few weeks and will add much needed support to the current operation.