

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (Regeneration and Skills)		
Councillor	Portfolio	Date
John Fairclough	Cabinet Member Locality Services	March 2024

Highway Asset Management

Winter Maintenance

- As of 22nd February, we have gritted the carriageways on 31 Occasions and the footways 16 times.
- Officers continue to monitor the weather conditions 24 hours a day and will do so throughout the remainder of the season.
- Regular spending updates are being provided to monitor against the allocated budgets.

Highways Maintenance Update

Since 1st April 2023 which coincides with the start of the new financial year, planned and routine maintenance operations are progressing well and in accordance with allocated programming timeframes.

To date key maintenance improvements have been completed which include the following:

Application of footway surface treatments commonly known as “slurry Seal” has been applied to **41,000 M2** of bituminous footways with a spend value of **£130,000.00**.

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**.

Surface treatments in the carriageway known as “Surface Dressing” has been applied to **73,000M2** of defective carriageway with a spend value of **£530,000.00**.

Resurfacing which involves the removal of one or more surfacing layers in the carriageway has been completed, totalling **99,000 M2** with an invoiced spend value of **£3,557,896.00**. There are several projects which have been completed and awaiting receipt of final invoices which are not included in the current spend profile. Allocated funds for this financial year are fully committed.

Extended repairs have been undertaken in approximately **1,000M2** footway which has involved the replacement and relaying of PCC Paving and renewal of bituminous

surfacing with a current spend value of **£115,000.00**. As works progress, valuations will increase and allocated funds for this year will be fully committed.

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. The volume and value of work does fluctuate and to date monthly budget spend continues to be in the region of **£160,000.00** to **£180,000.00**.

Strategic Transport

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. There is no firm indication that the scheme will be delivered or further developed under RIS3.

LTP and Growth Plan

- Work is currently progressing on the delivery of all projects set out in Year 2 of the current City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme. In discussions with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, it is clear that there is now some flexibility to enable some projects identified for expenditure in Year 2 to be delivered in Year 3 providing works have commenced. It should be noted that the increase in value of the Capital Programme has put some strain on resources. Recruitment for new staff to help deliver the programme is ongoing and the Transport Technical Support Services commission has been relied upon
- The entire current CRSTS programme has been re-baselined by the LCRCA to ensure that the projects originally identified on the list submitted with the Business Case are still capable of delivery within the current programme. It has also revised the funding allocations for each project following consultation with all the local authorities.
- The Year 3 CRSTS scheme has previously been shared with Cabinet Member. The various allocations are now being refined as schemes have been further developed.

The programme will be shared with Cabinet Member and then set out in the 2024-25 Transport Capital Programme Report to be forwarded for approval by Cabinet Member in Spring 24.

- The Government have indicated that funding previously allocated to HS2 will be allocated to the Combined and Local Authorities so a larger settlement is anticipated in the next CRSTS programme (CTSTS2) which will provide spending for projects from 2027 onwards. The Department for Transport have indicated that the CRSTS2 package will be £1.581bn, which is over double the current allocation of £710 million between 2022-2027
- To help define these projects that will be included in CRSTS2 the LCRCA are in consultation with all the Local Authorities to understand current programmes and needs. Some analysis work has been completed to review 'access to transport, future housing, health and deprivation and economic development. Some further engagement has been programmed between the Council and LCRCA for the end of February 2024. This will lead to the development of a Pipeline of projects.
- Work is progressing on the development of the next Local Transport Plan for the City Region. The target date for completion is Autumn 2024. Development has been impacted by the delay to the DfT providing the current guidelines. All future projects should be developed in accordance with the key themes within the LTP. These include a recognition that transport must support Placemaking and projects must aim to achieve a reduction in vehicle trips whilst growing the alternatives.
- **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. Baseline work has been undertaken and a report completed. Plans are currently being refined 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. Progress is also being made on the development of an Active Travel and E-mobility Strategies for the Borough. WSP have now been engaged to complete an assessment of the Carbon impact of the Capital Programme and to provide advice and instruction on carbon assessment of transport schemes. This work should be completed by late Spring and Early Summer 2024.
- One of the key elements of the **E Mobility Strategy** will be defining the Council's approach to On Street Charging. Some further discussion will be held with Cabinet colleagues to help inform the Council's Policy on On Street charging which will help inform resident engagement and focus investment. The LCRCA have submitted a bid for Local Electrical Vehicular Infrastructure (LEVI) funding. If successful, this will enable the Council to roll out new EV infrastructure across Council owned car parks whilst developing proposals for further potential installation. A decision on the LEVI funding is expected in March 2024.

- 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. It is envisaged that these will follow engagement on the LCTS which hopefully should provide some context to the need for an LCWIP.
- **Maritime Corridor Business Cases:** The detailed design work is now progressing and the final details will be included within the Full Business Case submission as requested by the LCRCA. Part of the Maritime Corridor scheme, Phase 1, will be funded from the Levelling Up Fund, following the success of a transport bid submitted by LCRCA. The amount of Levelling Up Fund allocated to the MC scheme has been increased following a Baseline review. In order to ensure that sufficient work is expended within the timeframe, there is some pressure to progress the scheme to construction. As such Balfour Beatty, have been engaged, through the SCAPE framework, to complete some Early Contractor Involvement. Balfour's have already completed some feasibility work at no cost to the Council. This has helped define the likely cost and probable construction phasing. Cabinet approved Balfour's appointment into the Early Contractor Involvement stage of the scheme which will enable some initial enabling works to be completed and the Target Cost to be established. Some further engagement to ensure that local Members, businesses and residents are sighted on the proposals and have an ability to shape them has been completed. Analysis work has been undertaken of the responses and those relevant to the Phase 1 scheme were reported to L&R Committee who have approved the changes to the highway. Engagement has also taken place with some key stakeholders, including National Highways (for the works on the A5036) and land owners and discussions held with Planning colleagues over the elements of the scheme for which Planning approval will be required. The re-baselining process has led to a revised total . The agreed allocation is £21.2m (MC). There may be some elements of MC which were included in the Outline Business Case which won't be deliverable under the current programme. These elements are likely to be delivered in CRSTS 2.
- **Southport Eastern Access Business Cases:** The detailed design work is now nearing completion for Phase 1 and Phase 2 proposals and the final details will be included within the Full Business Case submission as requested by the LCRCA. It is proposed that the same Procurement Route be adopted for the delivery of the project. The feasibility stage of the project has been completed and the scheme will move into the Early Contractor Involvement Stage. Some further development funding should shortly be announced following the LCRCA Gateway 3 process. Further engagement with local Members, businesses and residents has been undertaken and feedback appraised. In order to scope the necessary mitigation measures within the Norwood Ward, some specific targeted engagement with residents and businesses is required. A team has been established to lead on this process and initial discussion and site visits were agreed with Ward Members.

Sustrans will also be completing some school engagement work with schools in the area to help ensure that safer routes to schools are considered in the development of the proposals. The baselining process has resulted in £16.8m being allocated in the current CRSTS programme. As with the MC scheme which were included in the Outline Business Case which won't be deliverable under the current programme. These elements are likely to be delivered in CRSTS 2.

- **A59 Junctions and Corridor:** Design work is nearing completion on improvements to 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. The Road Safety Audit has been undertaken and its contents reviewed. 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 have been undertaken with local Ward Members and Maghull Town Council and Lydiate Parish Council on the details of both schemes and further consultation with the wider public has been completed. The works are programmed for delivery in Summer 2024.
- Outline design work is currently being undertaken on the difficult junction arrangement with Dodds Lane. Plans are also being developed for consideration of changes to Hall Lane on the section carrying the narrow bridge over the canal.
- **Scarisbrick Avenue:** In Southport, improvements to Scarisbrick Avenue in conjunction with the Townscape Heritage Initiative have been completed, including the installation of lighting. Some further correction and enhancement work has been identified and will be delivered in Spring 2024.
- **Southport Town Deal:** Design work on the first phase of public realm project identified within the Southport Town Deal (*Les Transformation de Southport*) is progressing and should be completed in early 2024. Balfour Beatty have been engaged through the SCAPE framework and have completed the Feasibility Stage before moving into the formal Early Contractor Involvement Phase. Some Value Engineering have been reviewed to help inform the likely funding requirement from the CRSTS programme to supplement the £2.5m allocated under the Town Deal. Careful consideration is being given to the delivery programme to minimise impact on trade. Some initial work is likely to be undertaken in the Spring and the TRO introduced to enable residents and businesses to become used to the changes.
- A hard landscaping report was produced 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.

- A report highlighting potential changes to the highway to facilitate improved pedestrian accessibility and public realm to be delivered under subsequent phases has been developed and agreement is being reached to define a second phase of public realm work. This is likely to be centred around MLEC development. No funding has been allocated for the works but proposals for securing funding will be developed and initial discussions have been undertaken. This 'Phase 2; work is at the early stage of design and some consultation will be undertaken in late Spring.
- **Crosby Town Centre:** The highway works which will support the new library development proposed for the Green Car Park were completed in late 2023. Some snagging work has been addressed and a Road safety Audit completed and reviewed. Work has also been developed for some paving and public realm enhancement work which will be delivered, under the main contract, with works programmed for March 2024. These works should set that standard for the external works associated with the planned new development. The Planning application for the Hub development has been submitted as a hybrid development. This includes all the traffic and transport work associated with the development.
- **Bootle Town Centre:** - Work has been designed and procured to ensure the Strand Service Road can operate from Vermont Way, thus enabling a section to be closed and demolition to take place. Design work will shortly be commissioned on a scheme to improve this temporary arrangement and the contractor to co-ordinate works.
- Some Master planning has been commissioned looking at the area to the north of the Strand which includes the car parks and bus waiting facilities. A parking survey has been completed to determine both current parking capacity and use. Some further work is being commissioned to look at anticipated demand. The study has revealed an over provision of car parking spaces across the town. Some consideration will be given to the potential repurposing of some of the current car parking stock. Meanwhile some consideration is being given to the likely parking provision at the Strand for supporters attending the Bramley Dock and events at the Salt n Tar event space.

Local Safety Schemes

- The Local Safety Schemes in the Transport Capital Programme include interventions at Northern Road (Gt Crosby), Hawthorne Road and Prescott Road. These schemes have all been subject to consultation and approved by L&R Committee. Works will be delivered over the next few months (Northern Road through Easter) with the Prescott Road scheme being incorporated into a wider resurfacing scheme.

Sustainable Transport

- **Crosby Coastal Park:** Works have been undertaken to provide lighting and an improved surface between South Road, Great Georges Road and the Lake House.

- **Formby By-pass:** Works to deliver an improved cycleway on the A565 south of Woodvale have been completed. Detailed design works are being undertaken on improvements to the junction of the A565 with the Coastal Road at Woodvale. Further preliminary and outline design work is continuing on the section from Southport Road and through Ince Woods.
- **Revenue funding** received from the Active Travel Fund for the development of projects capable to improving cycling and walking throughout the borough. Works is 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 compliment the City Region Strategic Plan. Further revenue money has been successfully bid for to continue this work.
- **School Streets:** Consultation work has been undertaken on three School Street Pilot schemes in Southport. Two of the schemes were formally launched in July and further engagement events have been undertaken. The further scheme, at Stanley High School is more complicated. Some initial safety measures have been identified and will be subject to further consultation development before implementation in summer 2024. Funding has been secured to develop other school streets initiatives throughout the borough and a dedicated officer, seconded from Sustrans, has been engaged in the selection and engagement work. A priority list of 10 schools has been chosen for further engagement and four schools are currently engaged with offers made to 1 more.
- **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, including Stanley Road. Officers have provided some initial comments and these are partly acknowledged in an Options Appraisal Report has been completed. The LCRCA are now engaging further consultants to develop schemes based on the initial options. Opportunities for 'quick wins' are also being established. It has been agreed that the timing and sequencing of engagement with Cabinet Member and Ward Members is key and a strategy will shortly be developed.
- **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. Consultation material has been produced and public consultation will shortly be undertaken to be completed before purdah.
- **North- South Cycle Route in Southport** - The monitoring and evaluation report on the two schemes aimed at creating a safe and improved walking and cycling route in Southport and a more modest scheme in Bootle have been considered by Cabinet Member.

A decision has been made, following a call in process, to retain the current schemes and make the associated orders permanent. This is on the basis that some further assessment work is developed for the Southport scheme and that work is commissioned on a more permanent scheme which would incorporate cycling and walking into a wider public realm project. Some initial design work has been undertaken. The Bootle project will be considered as part of a wider work described above.

- **Bootle Centre Walkability Project** – Some work has been undertaken, funded from the Freshfield Foundation, to develop some initiatives in Bootle ensuring the residents can safely walk between homes, schools, shops and public transport facilities. Some engagement work has been completed and possible schemes are being developed.

Highway Development Control

Planning Applications

- The team continue to process large numbers of planning applications despite ongoing challenges associated with the vacant senior highway development engineer post and limited staff resources. This has been exacerbated by the backlog from staff leave over the summer and autumn months, increasing demand for non-statutory highway advice prior to formal planning application submissions to the planning department (including the Council's own applications) and requests from developers for meetings and/or further advice some of which are not deemed necessary and create additional workload and delay. There is an impact on timescales for highway responses as a result. The applications include sites identified in the Local Plan and continue to involve close liaison with case officers from the planning department.
- A contract with one of the highway framework consultants is being set up to assist with the review of planning applications (particularly junction and area traffic modelling).
- **Section 38 Highways Act 1980 legal agreements**
- The report is as follows: -
 - No of live s38 and current developments subject to a s38 application – 45
 - 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 98 live full s278 HA 1980 highway works schemes in various stages of development on behalf of the Council plus 31 minor s278 agreements. 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 – A grant application has been submitted to Natural England for a grant to maintain the route for this financial year and work to establish this wider trail partnership is on-going for the long-term maintenance. The grant funding from Natural England is to cover a proportion of the costs for maintaining the infrastructure but not revenue costs associated with staffing. How the maintenance function by Sefton Council will be managed has yet to be determined.
- Definitive Map Modification Applications – there have been no further modification order applications since the previous report and the seven applications submitted by the British Horse Society (BHS) are yet to be determined. Negotiations with the BHS, Sefton Council and two affected landowners have commenced with regards to one of the BHS applications, with a view to dedicating a path along an alternative route to that detailed in the application.

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. This is very challenging for the East Maghull development site in particular due to the different developers and landowners involved. It may not be possible to provide the full spine road through the site between Poverty Lane and School Lane as there are no statutory highway powers to ensure this happens.
- 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.

Operational In-House Services

Transport & Vehicle Maintenance

The service are continuing to renew older fleet vehicles with more efficient low emission vehicles to help towards our carbon net zero target.

The service has commenced receipt of the new Mercedes electric vans for colleagues within the Pest Control Service. These vehicles are an improved version

of their previous EV's and retain charge for a lot longer, reducing time spent charging.

The Transport Manager is discussing options regarding the electric infrastructure capacity with a view to significantly increasing the amount of charging points we have across our depot sites boroughwide.

Transport and Vehicle Maintenance remain compliant regarding legal obligations to the Traffic Commissioners Office in line with our obligations for the Authority's Operator's licence.

The service have continued to maintain our Operator Compliance Risk Score at the highest level, due to our continuous preventative maintenance programme for the whole of Sefton's Fleet.

The service is looking to fill a vacancy for a Mechanic within the workshop at Hawthorne Road Depot. Recruitment is challenging given the current employment market and external wage gaps.

The Apprentice mechanic has successfully attained a full-time permanent position following a successful 3 year training programme, which is a great outcome.

There vacant Apprenticeship post is now out to recruitment and the service is actively working with colleagues within the Apprenticeship Team to attract the right candidate.

The MOT testing facility continues to be successful, currently operating targets are above the national average for testing.

Discussions are ongoing with colleagues in Waste Services to agree implementation dates for Tachographs in all Waste Vehicles, together with future planning for food waste collection fleet when required.

Specialist Transport Unit – Operations

STU currently operate 9 x ASC routes attached to schools with 7 schools only.

The Department has proposed incorporating additional ASC passengers that could be bolted onto the SEND routes. The service is in discussions with colleagues in the Travel Support Team and ASC to evaluate the routes and possible transfer of ADS passengers to in-house transport service.

If proven beneficial it could result in a significant saving to ASC as current in-house transport arrangements could be extended and utilised, reducing the cost of a full external route.

The service continues to progress the procurement of its fleet renewal.

Discussions continue with the Transport Manager to assess options with particular attention to decarbonisation of the vehicles and all EV options.

School Crossing Service

Since the beginning of the January term, 6 Patrols have left the service. However due in part to a successful social media campaign the service has recruited 5 Patrols which has almost completed the replacement of staff lost. Currently there are 10

vacancies within the service, and we are hopeful to continue to recruit across all areas of the borough.

The service is currently undertaking its legally required risk assessments on all of the established sites in Sefton. The service has completed 43% of eligible sites so far this term and are on target for 100% at the end of March 2024.

The service has provided 92% cover for all established crossings during Q3 of this year, any failure of completion is due to the aforementioned recruitment issues.

The service again 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.

Building Cleaning

The service continues to perform well both financially and operationally.

Schools continue to support the service despite increased costs and the fact school budgets are under significant pressure.

Two schools returned to the service from January 2024 with a further school returning in April 2024. Discussions are also on-going with another school and we hope to regain their business.

Recruitment of staff remains very difficult in certain parts of the Borough with some posts receiving no applications, causing operational difficulties.

There is also concern over the recruitment of senior operational staff. With the removal of Grade A from April 2023 (the grade for Cleaners), the differential in pay between Cleaners and Cleaners-in-Charge is only one grade but carries considerably more responsibility.

Catering

Financial Position

The service has had to significantly increase charges to schools as it was set for a large overspend in 2023/24.

The increased charges were met with significant resistance by schools, unhappy that agreed charges were increased mid-year at a time when school budgets are stretched.

Discussions have been held with The Sefton Association of Primary Headteachers (SAPH) and it has been agreed that should we need to increase charges to schools mid-year in the future, we will consult with SAPH before any final decision is made.

Consultation is taking place with schools concerning the recommended unit price per meal that would be charged to parents for a school meal from April 2024. Whilst schools have the freedom to charge whatever price they deem most appropriate for their school, most follow the recommended Sefton price.

The result of the consultation will be fed back to the Cabinet Member for Locality Services as part of The Council's Budget setting process.

The Council's Obesity Strategy

The catering section are continuing to support the Council's Obesity 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.

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 resilience within the service and has enabled resolution of long standing issues we had previously faced around staff holidays.

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 is due to commence the first of four sprays in March 2024 and will finish the fourth spray in late October 2024. A stringent inspection process will be carried out daily by Officers to ensure evidence of 'die back' of weeds approximately 10-14 days following scheduled spray. That has proved successful in many aspects last year. 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 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 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 resilience to the current operation.