

Highways & Transport Committee

Date of Meeting:	16 November 2021
Report Title:	Infrastructure & Highways Department – Mid-year Performance Review
Report of:	Andrew Ross, Director of Infrastructure & Highways Services
Report Reference No:	HT/29/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	All wards

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report gives an update on performance across Infrastructure and Highways services for the first half of 2021-22.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the Committee note and comment on the performance of these services
- 2.2. That the Committee note the on-going work of the Highways Service to support delivering the Council's Brighter Futures customer strategy.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. The Highways and Transport Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Infrastructure and Highways Department's services.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Not applicable.

5. Background

- 5.1. The Infrastructure and Highways Department is responsible for advising the Council on key policy areas, notably the Local Transport Plan and Local Plan, and is responsible for delivering front line customer facing services, related statutory functions and major projects and programmes. These include all highway services, strategic transport, parking, active travel, public transport, HS2 and major transport projects.

5.2. The Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan 2021-25 sets out our vision for an open, fairer, greener Cheshire East with three broad aims to be an open and enabling organisation; a council which empowers and cares about people, and a thriving and sustainable place. The Infrastructure and Highways Department contributes to several the priorities under the theme of “A thriving and sustainable place”:

- A great place for people to live, work and visit
- A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel
- To be carbon neutral by 2025

5.3. Highway Services

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
Priority	Aim
A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel	Safer and well-maintained roads

5.3.1. Appendices 1 and 2 contain information on service performance to date with the delivery of revenue and capital funded activities and projects for 2021/22 and on the Performance Management Framework which measures key outputs of the Highways Service Contract with Ringway Jacobs.

The information is presented in dashboard format, with key budgetary and progress information presented in each case, with any issues of note highlighted by exception on each sheet.

These reports are a key part of the monthly contract monitoring processes undertaken by the Council’s client team and Cheshire East Highways, the service delivery partner.

Given the high profile of this service area it is intended that information is presented to the committee in this format at each committee as a standing item on each agenda.

5.3.2. The service is continuing to work within the additional constraints and challenges of the pandemic which has in some instances, impacted significantly on normal working practices. The effect has been to increase the financial pressures on the service whilst striving to meet the service and performance standards required.

5.3.3. The highway service is working on the recommendations from the Service Improvement Plan reported to this Committee at its last meeting in September 2022. This includes delivering the changes identified to improve the customer experience as part of the Council’s Brighter Futures Transformation Programme and work to improve service quality

assurance and demonstrating value for money. The Council’s client team capacity is under consideration to ensure delivery of the plan. An [update report](#) on this work was presented to this committee in September and subsequent reports will follow (Agenda item 17).

- 5.3.4.** Delivery of the capital maintenance programme of schemes has progressed well during the summer months. Two of the largest schemes, the A536 north of Congleton and the A34 near Monks Heath used a method of surface dressing “lockchip” that increases durability of the road surface, reduces volume of loose chippings and the need for follow up sweeping and has seen a significant reduction in complaints associated with standard surface dressing.
- 5.3.5.** The A51 drainage and carriageway reconstruction project to address embankment stability alongside the canal at Wardle is progressing well and due for completion to programme in December.
- 5.3.6.** In terms of challenges, an increasing number of category 1 defects (pothole) are occurring on the network where safety repairs are required. This is an expected outcome from reducing capital investment in highway maintenance. This pressure will need to be considered in future business planning and budget setting.
- 5.3.7.** There is increasing pressure around general tree maintenance works. The Council recently developed a new policy covering all its tree stock and this included trees on the highway. A pilot on the implementation of the policy is currently being delivered with a specific budget allocation. Once the outcome of this pilot has been fully assessed the budget implications will need considered in the overall highways budget and work programmes.
- 5.3.8.** Castle Street public realm enhancement in Macclesfield was formally opened on 8th October 2021. The project was delivered to programme and budget through the highway service contract, with good feedback from the public and businesses on how the scheme was built while still accommodating access.
- 5.3.9.** The winter maintenance season commenced on 1 October 2021 and is implementing a revised gritting network following the Council decisions made in February and May 2020 on its Well Managed Highway Infrastructure policy and additional consultations agreed by the then Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A notable achievement this year is that the new salt barn at Wardle depot has been commissioned and is in use for the new season. The pandemic has meant that working practices have needed to be modified in line with the Business Continuity Plan to ensure service resilience. A review of the impact of the new winter gritting network will be reported to this Committee at its March 2022 meeting.

5.4. Infrastructure Services

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
Priority	Aim

A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel	Successful delivery of the major infrastructure programme
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5.4.1. Appendix 3 contains information on service performance on the delivery of the major transport scheme capital programme.

The information is presented in dashboard format, with key budgetary and progress information presented in each case, with any issues of note highlighted by exception on each sheet.

These reports are a key part of the monthly monitoring processes undertaken by the project teams. The information is the latest available prior to agenda publication. It is intended that information is presented to the committee in this format to each committee as a standing item on each agenda.

5.4.2. All projects are continuing to work within the additional constraints and challenges of the pandemic which has impacted on working practices for each scheme and is therefore continues to cause significant financial pressures on budgets.

5.4.3. Congleton Link Road was opened in April this year. It is the largest project ever delivered by the Council. Although delivered through the period of the pandemic, construction was complete on budget, with only a minimal delay.

5.4.4. The construction of Poynton Relief Road has continued throughout the period and remains on its original programme for opening in mid-2022.

5.4.5. Work has continued to progress major schemes at North West Crewe to support housing development, on the Middlewich Eastern Bypass to support a strategic employment site and A500 Dualling schemes to deliver housing and strategic access to Crewe and the HS2 Hub Station, all in line with the Local Plan objectives and site allocations.

5.5. HS2 Programme

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
Priority	Aim
Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all	Successful delivery of the Crewe HS2 Programme.
A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel	To protect residents and minimise the impacts of the HS2 line of route on our environment

5.5.1. This service is responsible for the Council's response to the national High Speed Rail 2 project in accordance with the Council's priorities. This includes leading the Council's response to the line of route proposals for

HS2 Phases 2a and 2b by responding to HS2 and DfT consultations and the petitioning process to ensure they deliver the maximum levels of environmental mitigation and compensation in accordance with Government policy. Once the phases become Acts of Parliament the service manages the Council's relationship with HS2 Ltd, and its contractors, as the scheme is constructed to ensure that HS2 undertake delivery of the scheme in accordance with the hybrid Bill and related undertaking and assurances.

- 5.5.2.** The service is also responsible for maximising the local benefits of the delivery of this national project within the towns of Crewe and Macclesfield by developing and delivering complementary packages of access improvements for all modes of transport, including active and public transport options and supporting more sustainable end-to-end travel. In addition, the service works to secure key HS2 commitments from Government to achieve a better Crewe hub solution.
- 5.5.3.** The HS2 service also manages the Council's key relationships with wider strategic rail partners in addition to HS2 Ltd including Network Rail, Transport for the North, North Midlands Growth Corridor and Growth Track 360 to ensure that plans and strategies that impact the borough are aligned.
- 5.5.4.** In February 2021, the HS2 Phase 2a hybrid bill received Royal Assent, and so became an Act of Parliament. This was a key milestone on the Council's HS2 programme as it granted HS2 Ltd the necessary powers and consents to bring HS2 to Crewe. As the project now moves into implementation the Council is managing its statutory roles for highways and planning consents and approvals within the Act.
- 5.5.5.** Following Royal Assent of the Phase 2a hybrid bill, the Council was allocated a £724,000 Road Safety Fund from HS2 Ltd to support road safety schemes in local authority areas across the phase 2a line of route. The Council is engaging with local communities and parish councils to implement the Fund.
- 5.5.6.** As a result of the Council's petition against the hybrid bill through Parliament, the Council secured an Assurance for the provision, by HS2 Ltd, of a £700,000 Environment and Landscape Enhancement Fund, to the Cheshire East Council for the provision of additional mitigation against the environmental and ecological impacts of the scheme. In addition, Cheshire Wildlife Trust also secured an Assurance for an additional £150,000 into this Fund.
- 5.5.7.** The service is now prepared to develop the Council's response to HS2's deposit of the Phase 2b hybrid bill within Parliament, which is expected at the end of 2021/early 2022. Subject to a Full Council resolution, the service will lead on the petitioning process of the hybrid Bill for the Council, engaging with other services across the Council.

5.5.8. The service is refreshing its plans for regeneration and access around the Crewe hub station to reflect the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and recent successes across the central Crewe area including the Future High Streets Fund and Towns Fund as well as emerging priorities including Town Investment Plan, prepared by Crewe Town Board, and levelling up agenda. This will allow the Council to realise current investment opportunities arising from Government’s levelling up agenda and to protect the longer term growth potential that is anticipated with the delivery of both HS2 Phase 2a and 2b and the unrivalled connectivity this can bring to Crewe and the borough.

5.6. Parking Services

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
Priority	Aims
To increase parking provision close to local transport hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadway Meadow multi-storey car park (MSCP) • Complete Local Transport Plan parking reviews

5.6.1. Business case work for Broadway Meadow MSCP is under review and will be reported shortly to identify the next steps for this project. Parking needs have been impacted by the pandemic and the business case is being assessed to reflect this.

5.6.2. A borough-wide review of parking provision has been undertaken, which will be used to inform further assessments across the borough, including the car park charging strategy.

5.6.3. Local Transport Delivery Plans are being developed for all Principal Towns and Key Service Centres. These will be reported to Highways and Transport Committee in Spring 2022.

5.6.4. The Civil Enforcement Teams has seen a considerable increase in reported incidents of anti-social behaviour since the lifting of lockdown restrictions earlier in the year. The team continues to work closely with the police in responding to reports.

5.6.5. New enforcement polices for the Parking Service – Civil Enforcement officers have been prepared for consideration by the Highways and Transport Committee.

5.6.6. The Council’s Annual Monitoring Report 2019/20 was the overall national winner of this year’s national Promoting Awareness of Civil Enforcement through Reporting (PACER) Awards.

5.6.7. The use of the Council’s car parks has increased steadily through the year during the different levels of restrictions through the pandemic. Since the removal of restrictions levels of demand has levelled off at around 80% of pre-pandemic levels, with revenues slightly lower. The service is constantly monitoring usage and revenue to determine what impact this could have on income and budget setting next financial year. At current levels of use a covid-related impact could be around £1.4million.

5.7. Strategic Transport

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
Priority	Aims
Investment in electric vehicle infrastructure in our key service centres	Secure supplier and install charging points in Cheshire East car parks

5.7.1. The Borough-wide Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy was approved at Highways Committee in July 2021.

5.7.2. Work to identify a partner to supply and install infrastructure is on-going and will be the subject of a further Committee report.

5.8. Walking and Cycling

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
Priority	Aims
To promote uptake of cycling in our local service centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of cycle storage facilities in Cheshire East car parks • Invest in new cycle routes and improve existing ones • Prohibit parking in existing cycle lanes
More residents to use walking routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote existing routes and nature trails • Create new walking routes between service centres

5.8.1. New cycle facilities have been trialled through deployment of Covid Emergency Active Travel funding in 8 locations. Community views have

been mixed and these schemes are being evaluated and reviewed. 1 scheme in Alsager has concluded its review and was withdrawn.

- 5.8.2.** Cycling infrastructure schemes are being implemented in accordance with the Councils adopted Local Cycling & Walking Improvement Plans. The Wilmslow Station – Royal London scheme was completed and is now open. Work continues on the Crewe – Leighton – Nantwich Greenway scheme.
- 5.8.3.** Government announced additional funding through the Active Travel Programme which is being used to develop schemes at Manchester Rd, Wilmslow and Manchester Road, Tytherington. These schemes will be developed and put out to public consultation later this year.
- 5.8.4.** Sustrans awarded funding to support improvement of the Middlewood Way scheme at Black Lane, Macclesfield, which is part of the National Cycle Network linking Macclesfield to Bollington.
- 5.8.5.** The Council has been invited to bid to Government on a Social Prescribing initiative with Public Health to promote cycling in Crewe. Work is proceeding with colleagues from Public Health and the NHS to prepare a strong bid for these funding, with any funding award known later this year.
- 5.8.6.** Walking infrastructure schemes are being implemented in accordance with the Councils adopted Local Cycling & Walking Improvement Plans. The Wilmslow Station – Royal London scheme was completed and is now open. Work continues on the Crewe – Leighton – Nantwich Greenway scheme.
- 5.8.7.** Council has engaged and promoted Bike and Walk to School Days, through liaison with local schools. Engagement with promotional events and training sessions has been positive as people are seeking opportunities to improve health and well-being post-pandemic.

5.9. Public Transport

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
Priority	Aims
To improve the speed and efficiency of public transport and encourage more residents to make fewer car journeys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility studies into the creation of rapid transit routes connecting existing infrastructure with key employment site
To reduce areas of the borough not served by public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit proposals to Rural Transport Fund

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality bus partnerships with operators and town councils
To encourage an increase in the use of public transport (especially buses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operators work together to share real time information • Bus routes planned to provide multi-modal connectivity • Cheshire East bus app developed

5.9.1. The pandemic has significantly reduced the use of local public transport and this has affected the ability to develop plans for rapid transit initiatives.

5.9.2. Throughout the pandemic, most if not all the local public transport network has been heavily impacted by social distancing and changes in travel behaviour. The Council and local operators have relied on Covid Bus Service Support Grant and latterly Covid Bus Recovery Grant to maintain services.

5.9.3. Work programmes have been incorporated in the preparation of the Council's first Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which is a requirement of the new National Bus Strategy.

5.9.4. Our first BSIP has been produced in consultation with operators and stakeholders.

5.9.5. The BSIP was submitted to Department for Transport on 31 October 2021 in accordance with the Government's programme.

5.9.6. Following a successful funding bid to Government, the new Rural Mobility Fund service "Go Too" commenced operations on 4th October 2021, serving the rural areas to the south and west of Nantwich. This initiative has been reflected in the preparation of the BSIP.

5.9.7. The critical next step under National Bus Strategy "Bus Back Better" provisions will be to develop an Enhanced Quality Partnership with the bus industry. This partnership is expected to be how improvements to bus provision are delivered. A Partnership Agreement is expected to be in place by 1st April 2020.

6. Implications

6.1. Legal

6.1.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.2. Finance

6.2.1. The financial implications of changes in performance requirements or responding to current performance levels will be included in the Mid Year Finance Review provided in a separate report to this Committee.

6.3. Policy

6.3.1. The report sets out how the department is contributing to the Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan 2021-25.

6.4. Equality

6.4.1. There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

6.5. Human Resources

6.5.1. There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

6.6. Risk Management

6.6.1. The performance reporting process provides opportunities for the Council to identify and focus on areas for improvement to support achievement of its strategic ambitions. Timely performance reporting mitigates risk of the Council not achieving its outcomes by providing the opportunity to review outputs, identify trends and areas for improvement, and introduce corrective and/or preventative actions wherever necessary to address areas of poor - or under – performance.

6.7. Rural Communities

6.7.1. There are no implications for rural communities arising from this report.

6.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

6.8.1. There are no implications for children and young people arising from this report.

6.9. Public Health

6.9.1. There are no implications for public health arising from this report.

6.10. Climate Change

6.10.1. An update on delivery of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan will be provided in a separate report to the Committee in January 2022.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Andrew Ross, Director of Infrastructure & Highways Services andrew.ross@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Contract Performance Highway Service Contract Appendix 2 - Highways Contract – Revenue and Capital Programmes Appendix 3 - Infrastructure Service – Capital Programme
Background Papers:	None