

## **Highways & Transport Committee**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	21 July 2022
<b>Report Title:</b>	Infrastructure & Highways Department – Annual Performance Review
<b>Report of:</b>	Tom Moody, Director of Infrastructure & Highways Services
<b>Report Reference No:</b>	HT61/22-23
<b>Ward(s) Affected:</b>	All wards

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### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1. This report gives an update on performance across Infrastructure and Highways services for the financial year 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. To update the Highways and Transport Committee as to the performance of the Infrastructure and Highways Department's services for the 2021/22 year in full.

### **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 with Cheshire East Highways as the service delivery partner.

**5.3.2.** For the majority of 2021/22 the service operated within the additional constraints and challenges posed by the pandemic which impacted in a number of areas, in particular with reduced supply chain resource and material supplies. In a small number of areas and projects this has contributed to increased costs and delays to commencement and/or completion. Recent events in the Ukraine, a global increase in the prices of construction materials and more local competition for a limited pool of subcontract resource has added to this pressure. It should however be noted that against this backdrop the performance of the service has continued to be strong throughout.

**5.3.3.** Over the course of the last 6 months the highways service has developed a refreshed Service Improvement Plan to ensure that more effective ways of working continue to be developed and implemented. This continues to

include delivering significant improvements to customer experience as part of the Council's Brighter Futures Transformation Programme.

- 5.3.4.** As part of this the Highways Service have implemented the following;
- 5.3.4.1. Published a monthly newsletter in April 2022, now distributed to over 900 recipients (as at 13th July), providing updates on delivery, forthcoming events and social value initiatives.
  - 5.3.4.2. A new easier to navigate and more informative annual work programme formats, now updated each month to show progress.
  - 5.3.4.3. Launched a Members, Town and Parish Council customer satisfaction survey in April, with an action plan now being developed using the feedback received. It is intended that this survey is repeated annually.
  - 5.3.4.4. Held a Engagement Day on 4<sup>th</sup> July at Crewe Alexandra's stadium, where 38 Members attended and were able to watch demonstrations, talk with officers around service priorities and constraints and give feedback on their key issues.
  - 5.3.4.5. Relunched the Fix My Street system as the principal way of contacting the Service with asset related enquiries. This includes a new user guide, and training sessions being planned for Members, Town and Parish Councils.
- 5.3.5.** The refreshed Service Improvement Plan also places a focus around the need to improve service quality assurance and demonstrate value for money through the highways term services contract. The Council are currently progressing the recruitment of a number of new roles to add resilience and additional expertise to the client team, with one of these roles being dedicated to quality assurance. In preparation for the recruitment process to conclude an independent consultant has been appointed to develop a client led annual audit plan. This plan will focus on key risk areas as well as those where the Council intends to invest most money into its highway network.
- 5.3.6.** The A51 drainage and carriageway reconstruction project to address embankment stability alongside the canal at Wardle was completed on time and within budget despite the impact of Covid throughout the majority of 2021.
- 5.3.7.** A review has commenced on the Speed Management Strategy which included a public consultation, attracting over 916 responses. A report will be brought back to Committee in September to approve the new strategy.
- 5.3.8.** In terms of challenges, an increasing number of category 1 defects (potholes) were observed across the network where safety repairs are required. As reported previously this is a direct result of a reduction in capital investment in highway maintenance, which with the continued increase in inflation and a 4 year Department for Transport grant settlement now known will continue to decrease in real terms.
- 5.3.9.** In 2021/22 the investment in category 1 defects was increased from £1.4m to £2.1m therefore enabling a total of 27,474 potholes to be filled, an

increase of 12,053 over the previous year. As per the budget paper it is proposed to continue this increased level of investment into 2022/23. It is anticipated that the Council's now confirmed additional £19m over 3 years capital investment into its highway network will go some way to alleviating this issue.

- 5.3.10. There is increasing pressure around general tree maintenance works. The Council recently developed an organisation wide Tree Risk Management Strategy (TRMS) covering all its tree stock and this included trees on the highway. A pilot to inform a highway specific tree safety inspection code of practice which ties into the TRMS is currently being delivered and largely funded from a corporate allocation. It is anticipated that the new code of practice will be implemented in the 23/24 financial year and the pilot will help to determine the budget requirements moving forward.
- 5.3.11. The 2021/22 winter maintenance season was the first where a revised gritting network was implemented. A review of the impact of the new winter gritting network has been completed and is contained at agenda item 6.
- 5.3.12. Alongside the delivery of the new salt barn at Wardle depot in readiness for the new season a further project is now underway to replace the same at Macclesfield Depot as well as exploring wider investment in the Councils highways depot assets to ensure service delivery can be optimised. It is expected that the new salt barn will come online in readiness for the 2023/24 winter season.

#### 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

- 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.

- 5.4.2. These reports are a key part of the monthly monitoring processes undertaken by the project teams. The information is the latest available prior to the drafting of this report. All projects have continued to work within the additional constraints and challenges of the pandemic which has impacted on working practices for each scheme.
- 5.4.3. Congleton Link Road was opened in April last 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, thanks to the excellent partnership working with the contractor.

- 5.4.4.** The construction of Poynton Relief Road has continued throughout the period with the achievement of several key milestones and it remains on its original programme for opening towards the end of 2022.
- 5.4.5.** Work has now commenced on site with a major highway scheme at North West Crewe to support housing development, whilst scheme development has continued on the Middlewich Eastern Bypass and A500 Dualling schemes to support a strategic employment site and deliver housing and strategic access to Crewe and the HS2 Hub Station respectively, all as set out in the Local Plan and in line with the Plan's objectives.

## 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 January 2022, the Phase 2b Hybrid Bill was deposited in Parliament. The Phase 2b Hybrid Bill is seeking the powers to construct and operate the section of the route between Crewe and Manchester.
- 5.5.5.** In February 2022, Full Council resolved to petition the Phase 2b hybrid bill, as the Council did against the Phase 2a Hybrid Bill. Petitioning the Bill provides the opportunity for the Council to seek changes to the Bill or enhanced mitigations to seek a better outcome for Cheshire East.
- 5.5.6.** The Council is preparing to submit a written petition following the Bill having its second reading, expected later this year, with the possibility of an appearance before a select committee.
- 5.5.7.** A planning application for enhancements to Nantwich Road Bridge, outside of Crewe station entrance, is being prepared for submission later this year and a pre-planning public consultation exercise was held between April and June this year to help shape the plans.
- 5.5.8.** The Nantwich Road Bridge enhancements are a key element to the Council’s wider Crewe hub proposals with early benefits offered to Crewe and the Borough through an accelerated delivery.

**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"> <li>• Broadway Meadow multi-storey car park (MSCP)</li> <li>• Complete Local Transport Plan parking reviews</li> </ul>

- 5.6.1.** Business case work for Broadway Meadow MSCP has been completed. A report on the opportunities arising at this site will be considered by the Council’s Economy and Growth Committee later this year.
- 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. A set of proposals were debated at Highways Committee in September 2021 without agreement. Further work is necessary to produce a more holistic and equitable approach to parking management across the borough, which is expected to be taken forward on a town-by-town basis as part of the next Local Transport Plan review.

- 5.6.3.** 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.
- 5.6.4.** Recruitment and retention of Enforcement Officers is an increasing pressure on the Parking Service. Local employers and businesses recovering from the pandemic are actively recruiting to roles that may be considered more appealing or less challenging than the work of the parking enforcement teams. The Council faces on-going challenges to retain a full complement of trained Civil Enforcement Officers in order to protect communities against illegal / irresponsible parking.
- 5.6.5.** Enforcement policies for the Parking Service – Civil Enforcement officers have been prepared / updated which we approved by the Highways and Transport Committee in November 2021.
- 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 88% of pre-pandemic levels, with revenues reduced by a similar factor. Growth in card and phone payments has been part of the recovery, up by 37%, with cash payments down by circa 20%. 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.** A bid to Government's On-Street Electric Vehicle Charging programme has been prepared, with proposals for the installation of public charging points to serve users in Alsager, Congleton, Crewe, Knutsford, Middlewich,

Macclesfield, Nantwich and Sandbach. The scope of this bid was closely aligned to the requirements of the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles guidance. It is expected that further bids to the fund will be prepared in future years.

**5.7.3.** Work to identify a partner to supply, install and manage EV infrastructure is on-going and will be the subject of a further report to Highways Committee.

**5.7.4.** Local Transport Development Plans have been developed for all Principal Towns and Key Service Centres. These have been reported to Highways and Transport Committee in March/June and they now form part of the Council's strategic infrastructure planning framework for transport.

## 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"> <li>• Installation of cycle storage facilities in Cheshire East car parks</li> <li>• Invest in new cycle routes and improve existing ones</li> <li>• Prohibit parking in existing cycle lanes</li> </ul>
More residents to use walking routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote existing routes and nature trails</li> <li>• Create new walking routes between service centres</li> </ul>

**5.8.1.** Temporary cycle facilities have been trialled through deployment of Covid Emergency Active Travel funding in 8 locations. Community views on 5 on-road schemes have been mixed and, following analysis of consultation responses, these schemes have been removed on expiry of the relevant Temporary Traffic Orders. Three experimental town centre cycle access schemes which allow cyclists to access pedestrian priority areas in Crewe, Congleton and Macclesfield are still being monitored to inform a decision on the future arrangements in late Autumn 2022.

**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. Consultations have taken place on these Active Travel schemes with feedback informing on-going work to deliver the schemes.

**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. Consultations have taken place on the Black Lane proposals which received favourable responses overall. Work to deliver this schemes is continuing.

**5.8.5.** The Council has been successful in a bid to Government for a Social Prescribing Pilot Project with Public Health to promote cycling in Crewe. Work with colleagues from Public Health and the NHS has completed a business case and delivery plan, which will be reported to Highways Committee in July 2022.

**5.8.6.** The 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. Capacity funding has been secured as part of pandemic recovery measures which is being used for training and promotional events offered to schools and businesses.

## 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"> <li>• Feasibility studies into the creation of rapid transit routes connecting existing infrastructure with key employment site</li> </ul>
To reduce areas of the borough not served by public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit proposals to Rural Transport Fund</li> <li>• Quality bus partnerships with operators and town councils</li> </ul>
To encourage an increase in the use of public transport (especially buses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operators work together to share real time information</li> <li>• Bus routes planned to provide multi-modal connectivity</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cheshire East bus app developed</li></ul>
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- 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. Current monitoring indicates that ridership overall is at 70% to 75% of pre-pandemic levels, making the commercial operating environment very challenging.
- 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. Government has announced the final component of Covid recovery funding, known as Local Transport Fund, which is intended to cover revenue deficits on services to 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022. Cheshire East has been allocated £382,682 from the Local Transport Fund.
- 5.9.3.** The Council published its first Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), in response to the National Bus Strategy. Our first BSIP has been produced in consultation with operators and stakeholders. The BSIP was submitted to Department for Transport on 31 October 2021 in accordance with the Government's programme. On 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022, Department for Transport informed the Council that it would be receiving no additional funding in response as part of the BSIP process.
- 5.9.4.** Following a successful funding bid to Government, the new Rural Mobility Fund service "Go Too" commenced operations on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021, serving the rural areas to the south and west of Nantwich. Patronage levels and customer feedback have been building steadily on Go-Too, although the service has been subject to short term pressures owing to staff availability during recovery from the pandemic.
- 5.9.5.** Work to prepare an Enhanced Quality Partnership with the bus industry has continued. Statutory consultations on the proposed Partnership agreements have taken place in May and June, with the outcomes informing the next steps. Subject to satisfactory consultation outcomes, this a Partnership Agreement is expected to be in place by 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022. Government has indicated that this arrangement will be a pre-requisite for future funding awards for local bus.

## **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 provided in separate Finance Review reports to the 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. There are no implications for public health arising directly from this report.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
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Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Performance Framework - Highway Service Contract Appendix 2 - Highways Contract – Revenue and Capital Programmes Appendix 3 - Infrastructure Service – Capital Programme
Background Papers:	None