

Meeting date: 14 March 2023

Report to: Stronger Communities & Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Board

Report title: Cabinet Portfolio Priorities – Update – Environment and Infrastructure

Report from: Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure

Report author/lead contact officer: Alan Brown, Assistant Director (Highways & Environment)

Wards affected:

All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood |
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle |
 Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South |
 Shirley West | Silhill | Smith's Wood | St Alphege

Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph: N/A

1. Executive Summary

1.1 To consider a progress update on the Cabinet Portfolio priorities for 2022/23 and future priorities for 2023/24.

2. Decision(s) Recommended

2.1 To consider and comment on the progress towards the Cabinet Portfolio priorities for 2022/23.

2.2 To highlight any potential topics for Scrutiny to consider as part of their 2023/24 Work Programme.

3. HIGHWAYS - What we are currently seeing

- 3.1 **Impact of HS2** – The teams time is required to technically review and approve strategically significant new highway infrastructure which affected every discipline in the Highways team. Last year saw substantial completion of the enabling highway works phase of the HS2 project. In doing so, the team has supported HS2 to construct a new traffic signal-controlled junction at the northern access to the N.E.C. and the completion of the new roundabout junction on the A452 Kenilworth Road at Park Lane to facilitate safe access to their largest construction compound in the borough. Substantial progress has been made in the design and construction of the realigned A446 / A452 Chester Road roundabout junction, providing access to the HS2 Station site and to make space to enable the HS2 railway line to pass over the M42 Motorway.
- 3.2 **SPRINT Bus Priority Scheme** - The team has also supported Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) to complete Phase 1 of the SPRINT project ahead of the Commonwealth Games. The works along the Hobs Moat Road/Lode Lane corridor brought with it new bus and pedestrian crossing facilities, including high quality bus passenger infrastructure and real-time journey information. Officers are already working with TfWM on the design of Phase 2.
- 3.3 **Major Events** – In addition to the normal calendar of sporting and leisure events which take place annually in the borough, last year will be remembered for both the Commonwealth Games and the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The Commonwealth Games brought with it the Queen’s Baton Relay; a daylong event, managed with well planned and executed rolling road closures that took the baton around a circular tour of the borough, marking the games coming to the region. This was quickly followed by 2 weeks of un-paralleled event management ensuring the competitors, spectators and officials travelled safely and without delay around the Games Route Network.
- 3.4 The sad passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II invoked Operation London Bridge which supported our local communities to pay their respects at the floral tribute sites and attend the Proclamation announcement on the High Street. All of these activities were managed well with the dignity and respect they deserved.
- 3.5 **Other capital funded work programmes** - The Department for Transport’s (DfT) Active Travel Fund (Tranche 2 Cycle Routes) along the B4102 Blossomfield Road, B4104 Birmingham Road in Meriden and along the A4141 Warwick Road in Knowle were completed and their benefits for Sustainable Travel will continue to be monitored during the 18-month experimental Traffic Regulation Order period.
- 3.6 As part of the Council’s own Structures Maintenance programme, the Fillongley Road Bridge (over the A45 Birmingham Road) was completed, and the road re-opened to traffic in November 2022. The approved walking and cycling improvement schemes in this year’s Local Network Improvement Programme were also designed, consulted on,

and implemented this year.

- 3.7 Following the June 2021 flood event, affecting 200 households in the Knowle and Dorridge area, the service has secured over £1.4m from the Environment Agency to provide property flood resilience measures. These works are due to commence this March with the programme running through to March 2024.
- 3.8 **Parking Services** – Customer demand settled down to the new normal, resulting in the service utilising all its available Covid Support Grant to forecast a balanced financial out-turn this year. Fourteen new e-payment only machines have been installed across the Council's Pay and Display car parks. This change encourages customers to move away from paying by cash which is expensive to collect but has increased risk of theft and fraud.
- 3.9 **Highway Management and Road Safety** - Demand for new and amended parking restrictions continues to exceed capacity and therefore, over 100 locations were taken through the prioritisation process this year. Over 30 new Traffic Regulations Orders will have been progressed to help support concerns over safety and congestion across the borough. The Parking Displacement Programme was successfully reintroduced with three schemes to help manage the impact of on-street parking being implemented.
- 3.10 **Sustainable Transport** - The team continues to train and promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport to a wide range of adults, children, and local businesses. Cycle training has fully recovered and is now being offered at Bikeability levels 1, 2 and 3 to children, adults, and whole families. Independent Travel Training to Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SENDs) and those people who are Not in Education or Employment (NEETs). Several of the school-based training programmes also contain an element of Road Safety Education which continues to ensure that children in the borough have the skills necessary to travel safely.

4. ENVIRONMENT - What we are currently seeing

Strategic Environment Contract

- 4.1 Veolia and Idverde took over provision of services that fall under the Strategic Environment Contract on 4 April 2022. Due to an intense mobilisation period prior to the transition of services from Amey and Glendale, all services were successfully transferred and operational on the first day of the contract, with minimal disruption to any of our frontline services.
- 4.2 Working with Veolia and Idverde and wider colleagues within the council we are progressing the full integration of our ICT and data collection systems to improve service efficiency and accurate service data to inform our own reporting and enable feedback to customers.
- 4.3 We are starting to make some of the contract improvements that were identified in the procurement process. A key activity is the restructure of the waste and recycling collection rounds. The current rounds have been in place for over 15 years and need to be rerouted to balance working patterns and improve efficiency by reducing

unnecessary travel times. The changes will affect around 40% of properties in the borough and will mean collection day changes, cycle changes or both for some properties. All impacted properties will be contacted directly regarding the changes with the changes being supported by a comprehensive communications campaign including a dedicated webpage. Veolia will also deploy additional collection crews to support the transition to the new rounds. The changes will start on 27 March.

- 4.4 We are now seeing widespread improvements in cleansing standards because of the new contract changes to cleansing schedules and an investment in machinery. Mechanical sweeping is performing particularly well with a significant difference in standards across our highway channels and curb edges. The night time economy cleansing service is also now well established and our services are operating to 10pm, with many large and small retail areas benefiting from extra cleansing and bin emptying in the evening.
- 4.5 This year's litter bin replacement programme has commenced which is informed by a recent condition audit of our litter bins, therefore providing the opportunity to target the worst litter bins for replacement. We are also in the process of upskilling and equipping our litter bin teams with tools and materials to enable basic on-site litter bin refurbishment work to take place. An example of this work we expect to see very soon includes deep cleansing, rust removal/treatment, and painting.
- 4.6 We are now in the second month of our extended garden waste collection period – with levels of participation as expected during the cooler winter months. The retention of the garden waste collection crews has resulted in a flexible workforce and eliminated the need to source additional staff over the busy Christmas and New Year collection periods.
- 4.7 In preparation for the 2023 summer season our teams are now fully equipped with all electric hand plant strimmers, blowers and some small chain saws. They are now all battery operated making them emission free and much quieter for operating in public places.
- 4.8 Due to the enforcement of regulations relating to persistent organic pollutants (POPs) we are changing how we operate some of our services. Some fire retardants used in soft furnishings (predominantly sofas and chairs) contain POPs and to comply with the regulations we now need to collect, store and treat these items differently to how we have previously. We are working closely with Veolia to identify best practice to enable us to continue to manage items containing POPs in accordance with the regulations, whilst having minimal impact on the services that we provide to our residents.

5. HIGHWAYS - What we might see in the future

- 5.1 Continued impact of HS2 on highway and footpath networks across the borough include the:
- Realignment of the A452 and A446 junction providing access to the HS2 Station site
 - Redesign of the A45 Stonebridge junction
 - Construction of the tunnel that crosses beneath the A45 Coventry Road

- Designs for the new bridges and road alignment taking HS2 beneath Diddington Lane, Lavender Hall Lane and Waste Lane
- Designing the realignment of the A452 Kenilworth Road at Bradnocks Marsh.

- 5.2 Development of a business case to consider whether to request Moving Traffic Contravention powers from the DfT. If adopted, this new service will use CCTV technology to enforce moving traffic offences such as failing to comply with a prohibited turn or entry order, entering a junction protected by a yellow box marking or entering into a School Streets restricted zone without a valid permit.
- 5.3 Significant shift in Government Policy to Cycling and Walking infrastructure. This will promote a reallocation of road space and the balance between vehicular traffic and sustainable modes of transport as set out to motorists in the new Highway Code.
- 5.4 Additional Sustainable Travel resources secured through the DfT's Capability grant and Defra funding. This will be used to grow the Council's sustainable travel training services and help provide more advice to those people who wish to know more or change their travel behaviours in future.

6. ENVIRONMENT - What we might see in the future

- 6.1 In partnership with Veolia we will be starting a small item collection in the summer. The service will enable residents to book a collection for small electrical items, textiles, small quantities of paint and batteries. While some retailers provide in-store take back for batteries and electrical items, they are still being disposed of in the recycling or refuse, where batteries pose a significant fire risk. This service will provide an easy way for residents to responsibly dispose of these items without having to drive to Bickenhill Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC).
- 6.2 The development of the new sub-regional recycling facility – Sherbourne Recycling is well under way and the facility is on target to start accepting commissioning waste from June/July 2023. Solihull will start to send its kerbside recycling to the facility from October 2023, when the current contract with Suez comes to an end. The facility will use state of the art technology to separate recyclable material into high quality materials. It will also present an opportunity to increase the scope of materials that we collect from the kerbside. We will be working with Sherbourne on a communications campaign to promote the new facility and what can be recycled which will go live later in the year.
- 6.3 Several trials related to cleansing services in 2023/24. Trials will include a smart bin sensor trial, particularly in rural areas to inform more efficient and effective bin emptying regimes. Vape sticker boards on bins, which is in response to an increase in vaping and a trend that is emerging with the vape packet stickers being placed all over the bins. Bin cleansing and minor refurbishment work will also be increased across the borough, to keep on top of litter and dog bin wear and tear.
- 6.4 We recognise the need to provide a much more proactive approach to play area improvements and we will be working with our partners Veolia in 2023/24 to implement a more proactive play area cleaning, painting, and minor repairs process. We are keen to ensure we are actively undertaking work wherever required and

overall, we want to raise the standards in our play areas.

7. HIGHWAYS – What we need to do to respond

- 7.1 Invest further in digital automation and capture of asset and network usage data to ensure that an efficient and evidence led approach can be adopted.
- 7.2 Targeting funding bids towards Cycle and Walking infrastructure.
- 7.3 CRSTS funding programme and ensuring resources in place to deliver commitments.
- 7.4 Targeting funding bids towards reducing our carbon footprint.
- 7.5 Innovate and invest in zero or low carbon alternatives and refresh our strategies to include carbon reduction at their heart.
- 7.6 Co-ordinate effectively emerging works on our network to minimise disruption and delay on the travelling public.

8. ENVIRONMENT – What we need to do to respond

- 8.1 The recently published Environment Action Plan reaffirms the requirement for all local authorities to provide a separate collection of food waste. The plan indicates that food waste collections should be in place by 2025 – however Defra is contacting authorities to determine if they may need an extension to this date to put in place the required infrastructure/contracts to enable the service to be delivered. SMBC is currently in the process of providing information to Defra.
- 8.2 Defra has also published the consultation responses on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and Deposit Return Schemes (DRS), which are due to be implemented in 2024 and 2025 respectively. We will continue to attend both industry and Defra forums to enable us to understand how these initiatives will impact on how we deliver our services in the future. A point of note is that the long awaited consultation response to the consistency in collections is yet to be published, and this will also have an impact on how we deliver our future services.
- 8.3 There is Increasing pressure on the space and facilities at both the Moat Lane Depot and Bickenhill HWRC. Therefore, identification and delivery of an alternative location for both facilities is critical to the continued provision of services and the opportunity to expand and contribute to further carbon reduction by investing in the infrastructure necessary to support alternative fuel vehicles and equipment.
- 8.4 There is a notable increase in graffiti across the borough with local hotspots identified. Through the Strategic Environment Contract we are managing graffiti well on Council Land, however there is not the same level of response from private land owners and graffiti is building steadily on areas not under Council ownership. We need to develop some strong collaborative working with private landowners to tackle this issue and we are currently arranging a Graffiti Summit which will take place in March and will include all key land and infrastructure owners that currently suffer from increasing graffiti. We hope this Graffiti Summit will be the catalyst for a combined action plan that will also ensure graffiti on infrastructure such as telecommunications boxes and

railway bridges is removed much more effectively.

9. Implications and Considerations

9.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull. 2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it. 3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities. 4. Enable communities to thrive. 	<p>Taking action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities.</p> <p>Enabling communities to thrive.</p>
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Develop and promote the borough's economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres. 6. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2. 7. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable. 	<p>Revitalising our towns and local centres.</p> <p>Delivering UK Central (UKC) and maximising the opportunities of HS2.</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions. 	<p>Enhancing Solihull's natural and physical environment.</p> <p>Improving Solihull's air quality.</p> <p>Reducing Solihull's net carbon emissions.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Promote employee wellbeing 	<p>N/A</p>

9.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

9.2.1 This Scrutiny Board has oversight of the progress towards Cabinet Portfolio priorities as contained within this report.

9.3 Financial implications:

9.3.1 There are no direct financial implications for this report. These will be considered at

the appropriate time for each individual priority as required.

9.4 Legal implications:

9.4.1 There are no direct legal implications for this report. These will be considered at the appropriate time for each individual priority as required.

9.5 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

9.5.1 There are no direct risk implications for this report. These will be considered at the appropriate time for each individual priority as required.

9.6 Equality implications:

9.6.1 There are no direct equality implications for this report. These will be considered at the appropriate time for each individual priority as required.

9.7 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Local Enterprise Partnership or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS):

9.7.1 The West Midlands Combined Authority provide support and financial assurance to the highway funding available through the City Regional Sustainable Travel Settlement. They also support activity and intervention programmes on the WM Key Route Network. Through their Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre, the West Midlands Combined Authority provide strong communication and co-ordination support to event and incident management which has been a positive addition.

10. List of appendices referred to

10.1 N/A

11. Background papers used to compile this report

11.1 N/A

12. List of Other Relevant Documents

12.1 Council Plan and Priorities 2020 - 2025