

FULL COUNCIL

8 DECEMBER 2020

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT & HIGHWAYS

1. COUNCIL UPDATE REGARDING ENVIRONMENT & HIGHWAYS

1.1 Purpose of Report

To advise Members that I have held two decision making sessions on 13th October 2020 and 25th November 2020, covering CPH Environment & Highways.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 This report highlights some of those decisions which have been made, but not all. Members wishing to view all decisions made can find these at <http://eservices.solihull.gov.uk/mgInternet/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

1.2.2 Attached to this report is a list of decisions made.

1.3 Decisions

13th October 2020

1.3.1 Flood Risk Management – Introduction of Flood Mitigation Schemes

1.3.2 I was asked to approve the sign off of two flood mitigation schemes at Nethercote Gardens and Colebrook Road, Shirley West and at New Road and Park Avenue, St Alphege, which I was content to do.

1.3.3 I further approved the use of up to £37,000 held in the Flood Risk Management reserve as partnership funding in order to unlock Flood Defence Grant in Aid and Local Levy funding.

1.3.4 Oak Lane, Barston – Definitive Map Modification Order Request

1.3.5 I was provided with update on options available to the Council in order to resolve the longstanding issue around an area of Oak Lane, Barston. I approved the engagement of an independent expert to undertake detailed investigations and fact finding around the history of part of Oak Lane and establish its legal status. A further Cabinet Report detailing the most appropriate way to permanently conclude this matter will be presented at a future Decision Session.

1.3.6 Sprint project update – Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme

1.3.7 I noted the Sprint scheme update provided by colleagues at Transport for West Midlands and endorsed, the Enhanced Partnership Plan for local bus services using the SPRINT corridors

1.3.8 I further noted the proposed content of the draft Enhanced Partnership Scheme and agreed to continue negotiations with partners to resolve any outstanding matters, including any member comment. Lastly on this report, I agreed to the Head of Highway Management having the delegated authority to give final approval to this agreement.

25th November 2020

1.3.9 Solihull Highways Management Service Update

1.3.10 I was happy to approve the Highways Management Service process associated with the Road Safety Audit Policy, the Blue Badge Parking Space and H-Bar marking application process. I agreed to the introduction of the £75 charge for the B-bar marking from the 1st January 2021 and noted the deferment of the proposed review of speed limits in the Borough to 2021/22 financial year owing to a change in service priorities associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.3.11 Highway Works Permit Scheme - Annual Report

1.3.12 I was pleased to note the performance of the Permit Scheme during the first two years of its operations together with the Year 1 Annual Report which will be submitted to the Department for Transport. Evaluation of Year 2 performance will also be submitted to the Department for Transport.

1.3.13 Members will be pleased to hear that following an independent review of the first year of the scheme that the recorded number of days where streets were occupied and affected the community reduced by 1,082. This great collaborative approach and ongoing dialogue has resulted in the average occupation (days spent on the network) being reduced by 17% from an average of 3.5 days to 2.9 days.

1.3.14 I agreed to receive a further report evaluating the performance of the Permit Scheme over its first three years and any changes that this may necessitate in January 2022.

1.4 Council Plan and Priorities

Asset Management

1.4.1 As is usual, our Winter Maintenance service for 2020/21 commenced on Monday 16th November, and is planned to run until mid-March 2021.

1.4.2 The 'Pothole Crew' started again on 1st November. The team will supplement our normal public reactive service with a more agile, area based service. They will be able to deal with newly reported potholes and also repair any other road defects they notice or are brought to their attention whilst in the area. This means the team can tackle any outstanding works within a two week time frame and in some cases considerably quicker. Last year, the team repaired all the potholes identified within the 10 day rota period, with some of them getting repaired within 1 day of the crew being notified.

Flood Risk, Drainage and Tanker Services

1.4.3 The team has had the final approvals through from the Environment Agency for Flood Mitigation Scheme at Nethercote Gardens, Shirley West. This follows on from the approval that was given in October by Cabinet Member. We are now in the process of contacting the relevant households with further information about the survey work that will now take place.

Projects and Housing Developments

The Housing development sites across the Borough have all restarted and the team are supporting them with regards to the Technical Approvals and site supervision. Even with the changes implemented through lockdown the team is still progressing sites with minimal impacts on our productivity. The team's Site Supervisors are still regularly visiting sites across the borough, whilst maintaining social distancing guidelines, to ensure works are being constructed to the standard required.

- 1.4.4 We are now at the final stages of the JLR Logistics Centre project on Damson Parkway, the new road has been adopted and highway works should be substantially complete before the end of the year.

1.5 Good News and Issues of Interest

Highway Infrastructure

- 1.5.1 Throughout the pandemic the team, supported by our partners Balfour Beatty, has continued to operate fully, this has been achieved through changing processes and implemented robust new procedures. Subsequently, the carriageway resurfacing programme is progressing ahead of schedule; the total programme budget (£1.9m) has been committed and programmed. Additionally, the team was successful in their funding bid to the DfT for the unclassified road network. The £1.74m of additional work has been programmed and will be completed this financial year.
- 1.5.2 Ahead of Remembrance Day, the team and our contractors organised for poppy road marking to be installed at 13 sites across the borough. The poppies were very well received by Councillors and local residents.

Highway Management

- 1.5.3 The Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) programme of measures to create space to aid social distancing and support cycling and walking activity is now substantially complete. The £200,000 grant funding for the various pilot temporary schemes has now been fully committed. As a result of feedback and monitoring of the impact of schemes, the majority of these pilot proposals have now been removed. The only two active schemes being the temporary 20 mph speed limits operating in Knowle and Meriden Village Centres.
- 1.5.4 Building on the success of these emergency schemes, many of which helped to create additional space to support cycling and walking activities, together with serving as a helpful reminder to follow social distancing advice, the focus will now move towards the Government's Tranche 2 programme or Active Travel Fund. The West Midlands region has secured £13m of funding to bring forward new high quality sustainable transport schemes, details of Solihull's allocation will be shared at a meeting in the New Year and will be subject to public consultation.

1.6 Future Decisions

- 1.6.1 At future Decision Sessions I look forward to receiving the following reports:
- 1.6.2 An update on the Emergency Active Travel Fund Project
- 1.6.3 The Outcomes of the Average Speed Enforcement Equipment Project.