

## **Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

Cabinet Member: Cllr John Woodman - Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Division and Local Member: N/A

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### **1. Summary**

- 1.1** As Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport I intend to use this report to highlight the key activities and achievements of the past year within these areas and to look ahead to what the coming months may hold.

### **2. Highways and Transport Activities and Achievements**

#### **2.1 Highways and Transport Commissioning, Strategic Planning and Commercial Activity**

- 2.1.1** The Commissioning Team focuses on finding the best way of delivering services in the future, thereby enabling operational staff to focus on the day to day running of our highway and transport networks. This team works closely with operational staff and commercial and procurement colleagues to develop new models of service delivery and put in place new contracts with external suppliers. The team also works with a wide range of stakeholders to secure investment in new infrastructure.

- 2.1.2** SCC has continued to work closely with Highways England (HE) as they develop vital improvements to the A303/A358/A30 corridor. These schemes if designed correctly will bring huge economic benefits to the area. HE has undertaken early consultations on three sections of the improvement at Stonehenge, Sparkford to Ilchester and M5 to Southfields. We have highlighted a range of issues, community concerns and potential local impacts to HE and urge them to give these matters careful consideration and undertake more technical work on the key issues before their further consultations and finalising their preferred routes. We continue to work with our Local Authority partners to keep the pressure on Government to deliver the three A303/A358 schemes that have currently been allocated funding and to ensure further funds are allocated for the remaining sections in the next Road Investment Strategy period from 2020.

- 2.1.3** We have continued to work closely with Great Western Railways (GWR) to develop the designs for enhancements to Taunton and Bridgwater Rail

stations utilising Department for Transport and Local Enterprise Partnership funds that we have secured. Early stakeholder consultations on both schemes have been completed and further consultation will be undertaken on final designs shortly, before GWR progress construction of the schemes.

- 2.1.4** We have continued working closely with other Local Authorities in the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area to agree investment in new strategic transport infrastructure, as part of the ongoing 'growth deal' process. We have secured £6.4m from the third growth deal towards 'Phase 1' of the Toneway Corridor improvements in Taunton which will enable us to upgrade the Creech Castle junction. We are now commencing more detailed design work and will consult on detailed proposals later in the year.
- 2.1.5** We secured a £4m growth deal 3 contribution towards a new access road to the proposed Huntspill Enterprise Zone near Puriton.
- 2.1.6** We have progressed schemes awarded funding under the first two growth deals. We have completed construction of the Huntworth Roundabout junction improvement in Bridgwater which has significantly increased the capacity of the junction and 'unlocked' the Bridgwater Gateway development site. We have progressed the procurement of improvements to Yeovil Western Corridor and have started major water utility diversion works with a view to the main construction contract starting in the Autumn.
- 2.1.7** A full funding package for improvements to M5 Junction 25 has been secured, including signing a funding agreement with the Local Enterprise Partnership and securing a £4m contribution from Highways England's Growth and Housing Fund. Other contributions from Taunton Deane Borough Council, developers and Somerset County Council complete the funding package. We have completed public consultation for the scheme and submitted a planning application to enable planning consent to be granted. Land acquisition is also underway. The scheme will play a vital role in relieving congestion at the junction and enabling planned growth and development in Taunton to take place including the 'Nexus 25' employment site which is being progressed by Taunton Deane Borough Council.
- 2.1.8** These works are designed to complement the wider A358 improvement scheme and programmed to be in place in advance of the A358 works.
- 2.1.9** We have submitted funding bids into the Government's 'National Productivity Investment Fund' for delivery of improved footway/cycleway connectivity between Taunton and areas to the east of the M5 including a new cycle bridge over the M5.
- 2.1.10** We secured a £300k DfT grant to trial new intelligent transport technology along the Hinkley Point C freight routes. This will enable the large fleet associated with the Hinkley Development to travel through the signal controlled sections of the route more efficiently using 'green waves' which reduce the number of times that 'platoons' of vehicles have to stop at traffic signals. This efficiency improvement will have benefits for all vehicles not just the EDF fleet.

- 2.1.11** Along with other authorities in the South West the Council has continued to lobby for much needed investment in rail infrastructure and services to the South West through the South West Peninsula Rail Task Force (PRTF). As part of PRTF we launched a well-received 20 year rail blueprint for the region which will feed into rail investment decisions and rail industry delivery plans.
- 2.1.12** We continued to work closely with our MP's to discuss campaigns for new rail stations at Wellington and Langport/Somerton and have facilitated discussions with local interest groups, Parish and District Councils to add our support to the development of proposals for these new stations. The DfT has unfortunately been unable to help local authorities fund the considerable scheme development costs needed to work proposals up to the required level of feasibility to qualify for construction funds, so we are working with local council's and communities to help them identify sufficient funds to undertake the very initial stages of work needed to move these schemes forward.
- 2.1.13** We have continued to support District colleagues in their various growth and regeneration programmes such as the Yeovil Vision and the Taunton Growth Programme. We are working closely with Taunton Deane to implement a new parking signage project funded by them; we have helped develop and consult on an exciting project to improve the public space in the town centre including considering removing traffic from a number of roads on a trial basis, and have jointly developed a new forward-looking 20 year Taunton Transport Strategy which we will consult on shortly. We have also commissioned technical work funded by Sedgemoor, South Somerset and Mendip District Councils to help them test the transport implications of local development and regeneration plans and to develop major transport schemes for the future.
- 2.1.14** A huge amount of work was undertaken on the procurement and mobilisation of our new Highway Maintenance contract during the year. We successfully completed an ambitious procurement process in collaboration with Devon and Plymouth Councils to put in place exciting new contracts that will enable us to jointly develop and implement more efficient ways of working and enable creativity and innovation within the contract.
- 2.1.15** Our contract is with Skanska and key benefits are requirements for efficiency, commercialisation and social value. Examples of the benefits of the new contract are a minimum of 85% of supply chain spend to remain in the local economy; creation of apprenticeships; use of digital by design principles; actively seeking community volunteers to be trained in delivering non-essential aspects of the highway service; opportunities for those with learning difficulties and care leavers to work and gain work experience in Somerset Highways; and providing support to district and parish councils wishing to fund network improvement or network safety projects.
- 2.1.16** We successfully completed phase-one of our 'invest to save' programme for Light Emitting Diode (LED) highway lighting, replacing approximately half our stock (18,000 lamps) with LED's saving 4.6million kWh per year and

delivering approximately £370k per annum in revenue savings to the authority. We are now considering further roll-out of LED lighting.

**2.1.17** A range of financial savings were implemented throughout the year and I am pleased that the service was able to deliver a significant underspend at the end of the financial year, to help the overall corporate position.

## **2.2 Highways Maintenance**

**2.2.1** The highways service again rose to the considerable challenge of keeping our highway network operating safely and efficiently.

**2.2.2** We repaired 18,787 potholes between April 2016 and March 2017, a slight increase when compared with the previous year (18,758). 1,656 planned highway inspections were undertaken, 100% of which were completed within the time tolerances defined within the Highway Safety Inspection Manual. A total of 24,213 safety defects (including potholes) were identified during planned and reactive inspections of the network which is a decrease when compared with the previous year (25,095).

**2.2.3** The recently established Asset Delivery Team (ADT) has improved the way we manage the highway asset to make sure that we target capital investment where and when it is most needed to reduce our short-term and reactive maintenance costs. Membership is made up of both Somerset County Council and Skanska employees who are co-located in the Priorswood Depot. This collaborative approach is bringing immediate reward with the team developing new systems and processes to improve how we deliver our capital maintenance programme.

**2.2.4** We have continued our investment in structural maintenance delivering over 1,000,000m<sup>2</sup> of surface dressing and more than 400 schemes across the county incorporating works disciplines such as resurfacing (28km), drainage, footways and earthworks.

**2.2.5** The major maintenance scheme at the A39 Causeway, Street was short-listed in the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation Awards 2017 and is currently vying for the Institution of Civil Engineers Peoples Award 2017. The innovative engineering solution was in-situ stabilisation using resin injection combined with 'traditional' reconstruction and resurfacing. The £285,000 scheme was completed one day ahead of programme and hundreds of people followed the story resulting in a significant decrease in enquiries and complaints.

**2.2.6** The Rights of Way (RoW) team have worked hard to increase their performance indicator 'ease of use' from 77% to 82.3% over the last year. Maximising volunteers' hours has been essential in increasing the ease of use indicator and in 2016/17 volunteer hours increased to over 19,000.

**2.2.7** Work to develop the second stretch of the England Coast Path from Brea to North Somerset continues.

- 2.2.8** The RoW bridge capital programme saw the installation of 2 new 7-15m bridges at Cotford St Luke and Fivehead, 3 footbridge refurbishments, and 2 contributions and support to private landowner bridge projects.
- 2.2.9** Our Structures team has continued the planned and reactive inspection programmes with 950 structures inspected over the year. The information gained is being used to develop the future works programme and allow long term investment in the structures stock to be targeted at those sites where it will be most effective.
- 2.2.10** The structures capital works programme saw major maintenance or strengthening works carried out at 62 sites including bridge replacements at Halse and Leeford; strengthening works at Hillcommon and Thorney Halt; and repairs at Tarr Steps, Fivehead, Lyte's Cary, Withycombe, and Parkfield Drive, Taunton.
- 2.2.11** Works to repair bridge scour damage and improve flooding resilience in the Kings Sedgemoor Drain at Dunball were completed in conjunction with the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA). A multi-year programme of works to improve flood resilience has been started with funding provided by the SRA, and works were completed at the first six 6 sites.
- 2.2.12** The winter of 2015/2016 was very prolonged and our last action to pre-salt the treated network in advance of ice forming took place on 27 April 2016 which is later than usual. Overall the County had an average winter for 2016/2017, with eleven pre-salting actions in November, 9 in December, 17 in January, 11 in February and 4 in March, giving a total for 2106/2017 of 54 (two from the previous winter). There was no need to undertake the enhanced winter treatment which is carried out during extended periods of cold weather or snow to provide access to settlements off the standard treated network. There were only a couple of occasions where snow fell on high ground, these were treated with increased salt spread rates without the need to call on the farmers/agricultural contractors for assistance.
- 2.2.13** The winter was slightly dryer than average with 96% of the norm rainfall recorded in Taunton. The one major emergency event was Storm "Angus", Saturday 19 November 2016 to Wednesday 23 November 2016 (five days), when 102mm rain fell in 48 hours in Taunton (more than the average for November and around 1/8th of the annual average rainfall).
- 2.2.14** During 2016 the DfT introduced an 'incentive' element to the capital allocation of Highway Maintenance funding, based upon a 22 question self-assessment which required each local authority to evidence how efficiently they deliver highways services. Somerset was confirmed as a 'band 3' authority (the highest) which means we retain all of our DfT capital allocation. This is a great achievement and Somerset is ranked in the top 33% of highway authorities. We cannot afford to become complacent and must maintain our 'band 3' classification to ensure future funding is secured.

## **2.3 Small Improvement/Minor Schemes Programme**

**2.3.1** Over the last year we have continued the delivery of our successful 'Small Improvement Schemes'(SIS) programme which enables local communities (through their local County Councillor) to request proposals for small highway improvements. To date the schemes have generally focussed on improving road safety and accessibility.

**2.3.2** As of mid-June 2016,

- 72 schemes from the earlier 2011/12 programme are complete, only 1 remains for construction.
- 46 schemes from the 2012/13 requests are complete 1 remains in construction
- Of the 2013/2014 13 are in the design stage, 44 schemes are complete with 10 at construction stage and 23 are either on hold due to unresolved issues or abandoned because they are not technically feasible.
- Of the new 2015/16 commissions 12 being progressed for feasibility, although only 2 reports remain outstanding, 20 are being progressed for design, 1 is with contractor for construction, 4 are on hold due to unresolved issues and 2 are being progressed through Traffic Management. 3 are complete.

**2.3.3** Two safety engineering schemes have been completed, these were the A371 route safety review from Wincanton to Rodney Stoke in May 2016, and also the Brean Rd/Rectory Way, Lympsham Junction Improvement, which was identified following a fatal collision.

## **2.4 Transport Improvements and Road Safety**

**2.4.1** Construction of the Taunton Northern Inner Distributor Road continued against the challenging backdrop of an ongoing dispute with the contractor. The road will play a key role in opening up the redevelopment of the Firepool area and improves the strategic transport route across Taunton. We are continuing to seek damages from the contractor for every day of delay on the project.

**2.4.2** We are progressing the delivery of Colley Lane Southern Access Road in Bridgwater and completed planning requirements and land negotiations as well as important statutory processes such as side roads orders, compulsory purchase orders and bridge orders. Advance works have been undertaken such as site clearance and ecological work and procurement for a construction contract will commence shortly.

**2.4.3** Improvements to Yeovil Eastern Corridor were largely concluded this year with construction of a second exit from the Tesco store to relieve pressure from u-turning traffic on the Horsey junction following issues raised during the consultation process. We are consulting South Somerset District Council and other stakeholders on the best use of the remaining DfT grant funds for further minor improvements on the corridor. Work in Yeovil will now move to the Yeovil Western Corridor.

**2.4.4** We continue to support new development in the County and facilitate the implementation of associated infrastructure. The service comments on a large number of planning applications each year and continues to respond to over 80% of them within the 21 day target period. The service undertakes about 600 technical audits of developers transport and infrastructure proposals per year and continued to meet targets for completing audits within 40 working days despite the submission of some very large, complex proposals demanding substantial input from officers.

**2.4.5** We have continued to work closely with the promoters of major employment sites such as Bridgwater Gateway and Puriton Energy Park and major housing sites such as Monkton Heathfield and Comeytrowe in Taunton, Keyford and Upper Mudford in Yeovil, to support the progress of applications and approvals needed to commence development. Key infrastructure elements of the Monkton Heathfield development are well underway along with many other significant developments across the County. On average, each year, we complete approximately £15m of new and improved highway infrastructure secured through our intervention in the planning process and through partnership with private developers. It is estimated that this infrastructure delivers with it assets valued at about £5m that contribute towards our own highway improvement objectives.

#### **2.4.6 Road Safety**

The Road Safety team has continued work to reduce the toll of people injured on Somerset's roads. In 2016, sadly 25 people died in fatal collisions, whilst 158 were seriously injured and 1370 people suffered minor injuries. The cost to our society of these people being injured is in excess of £80 million. Whilst the number of pedestrians injured increased slightly (5%), when comparing 2015 with 2016, the numbers of motor and pedal cyclists involved in collisions reduced by 3 and 8% respectively.

**2.4.7** Looking at the longer term statistics, and bearing in mind that the number of people fatally injured on the roads increased last year from above the 2015 figures, the trend over the last six years shows that our road safety work has contributed to a gradual decrease in slight injuries and collisions. The data also suggests a very gradual decrease in the number of Killed and Serious Injury (KSI) collisions and casualties. This is set against a background of increasing traffic growth; in 2015 there was a 2.5 % growth in vehicle kilometres across the County. In Somerset, road safety has always been a priority and I am very keen that work continues to reduce the number of people injured on our road network, particularly those killed and seriously injured.

**2.4.8** Somerset Road Safety uses a wide range of delivery mechanisms to try to keep the number of recorded injury collisions down. Key road safety tools are:

- Detailed data analysis;
- public engagement,
- partnership working; and
- road safety engineering.

- 2.4.9** These have been applied over the last year by continuous liaison with our partners such as Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue (DSFRS), one focus with them being on child road safety through the trucks and child safety (TACS) programme. We have also worked closely with Avon and Somerset Police, Highways England and the Ambulance Service. We held two local road safety sessions with these partners, one at Cartgate Service area, one at junction 23 of the M5.
- 2.4.10** We also believe in using the latest tools to spread our road safety message wider, therefore we use social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Our reach and engagement across social media platforms amounts to over 570,000 last financial year.
- 2.4.11** To try to continue the pace of reductions of the number of people injured in collisions across the County, the Road Safety, Commissioning and Public Health teams are working together on a new strategy, which will build on the above work, use broader health related datasets and encourage other partnerships to ensure that we have a continuing downward trends in road collisions.

## **2.5 Traffic Management**

- 2.5.1** In 2015 we upgraded our traffic signal infrastructure from old analogue technology to digital as part of the move into SMART office. We have now moved into phase 2 of the operation; allowing us to implement our new Traffic Control and Information Centre (TCIC) and have a member of the communications team embedded into the TCIC.
- 2.5.2** We have launched the new Travel Somerset website which provides a 'one stop shop' for all traffic and travel information for Somerset. The Travel Somerset twitter site now has over 1800 followers and has received very good feedback. The number of followers increased to over 3,000 during the Glastonbury festival. This improved website and twitter feed are supported by the improved TCIC which is currently operational 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday and enables the team to pro-actively manage the highway network and provide a greater level of up-to-date information to road users.
- 2.5.3** Over the last 12 months we have successfully delivered two large traffic signal upgrades; one at the junction of East Street/East Reach and Hurdle Way, Taunton, improving capacity and upgrading the pedestrian and cycle facilities; the other was an upgrade to the Shuttle junction at Ansford, Castle Cary.
- 2.5.4** Street works co-ordination remains a huge challenge for us with the demand to occupy the highway network increasing. Over 23,000 sets of work have been undertaken in the last year, a 40% increase from the previous year. Over 6,500 facilitated by temporary signals, again this is a 60% increase from the previous year. 1,435 Fixed Penalty notices were issued for incorrectly noticed works.
- 2.5.5** The Traffic Management team continues to work very closely with emergency services and event organisers on traffic management plans for



both planned and unplanned incidents and events to ensure the highway network is managed effectively. We always try and ensure that we minimise the disruption to the network and have seen significant benefits in the work we have been doing particularly for the larger events such as Glastonbury festival and carnival season. Last year's Glastonbury Festival suffered from exceptionally wet weather. Unfortunately the result meant that access to the site was hampered which, in turn, created significant traffic congestion on the surrounding road network. Over the past year we have been working closely with the festival organisers to ensure measures are put in place to mitigate the impact on the network should a similar event occur in the future, and traffic management ran smoothly for the 2017 festival..

- 2.5.6** Between April 2016 and March 2017 we processed over 1000 temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) for road closures for works and events, up 25% from previous year, and over 100 permanent TROs for various parking restrictions and speed limits etc. this is up 50% from the previous year.
- 2.5.7** We currently operate 28 Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) over 351 sites across the County and have successfully worked with 12 communities to take over the management and deployment of these signs themselves.
- 2.5.8** With the demand for sign maintenance increasing along with the current budget pressures, the maintenance of the traditional finger arm signs are no longer a priority in terms of sign maintenance, however, we value the importance of our historic fingerpost signs and are keen to work with local communities to help preserve them and find other ways to fund their maintenance. We are currently working with partners and contractors, including Exmoor National Park and the South West Heritage Trust, and are just about to launch a guidance document for communities to survey, restore and maintain these fingerposts themselves.

## **2.6 Parking Services**

- 2.6.1** Over the last year there have been some important developments in parking services.
- 2.6.2** New residential parking areas were introduced in Bridgwater, Street and Wells.
- 2.6.3** We renegotiated our parking enforcement contract resulting in:
- Improved flexibility and increased enforcement coverage across the County.
  - Extension of existing supplier for a further two years.
  - Schedule of service credits agreed in respect of poor performance.
  - Commitment to support Council initiatives to further service enhancements.
- 2.6.4** We also agreed to in-source the back office processing of penalties and permits to deliver an improved quality of service for customers and procured a new parking IT system with improved functionality for residents.

**2.6.5** We completed a pilot of blue badge fraudulent misuse resulting in a successful prosecution.

## **2.7 Transporting Somerset**

**2.7.1** Over the last year Transporting Somerset ensured around 9,000 Mainstream and SEN pupils who were entitled to free home to school transport were safely delivered to and from school every day. Transporting Somerset has provided over 160,000 trips to enable individual service users to reach their care placements and health patients to attend clinics and hospitals.

**2.7.2** Financial support continues to be provided annually for 61 public transport contracts (which include College Transport routes, Slinky Demand Responsive bus services and Taunton Park and Ride) which are not able to operate commercially. This financial support is provided to ensure a statutory need is met, or where on a discretionary basis the Council considers it appropriate to ensure a service is provided.

**2.7.3** Our Public Transport Team issued around 18,000 Concessionary Bus passes, both new applications and renewals and over 3,000 County Ticket bus passes to students attending Further Education. A new card management system has also been implemented recently.

**2.7.4** The Taunton Park and Ride service was revised from 1 August 2016. The main changes were a reduction in peak time frequency from every ten minutes to every 12 minutes with all journeys now operating via Musgrove Park Hospital and the Bus Station. This change allowed us to meet MTFP savings targets for the Park and Ride service in 2016/17.

**2.7.5** Following the cessation of Webberbus operations in May 2016 a small number of bus services previously operated commercially were not considered viable by other operators. Transporting Somerset was able to negotiate partial replacements for some of these including two Bridgwater Town Bus Services. In West Somerset we intervened when two bus services (100/101 Minehead Town Service and Minehead to Porlock) were under threat of withdrawal. A series of meetings were held with Parish Council's affected by these withdrawals and agreement was reached for them to take over on-going funding.

**2.7.6** New CCTV equipment has been installed at both Taunton Park and Ride sites as part of measures aimed at discouraging traveller incursions.

**2.7.7** We have recently awarded a contract to The Buses of Somerset for the provision of a half hourly bus service on Mondays to Saturdays serving the new housing development at Monkton Heathfield. The service is being supported using section 106 developer funding and provides direct links from the new housing development to Crown Medical Centre, Taunton Station and Taunton Town Centre.

**2.7.8** A grant scheme for bus operators has been set up using Department for Transport funding to improve smart travel options for bus users in Somerset. Grants were offered to allow bus companies to bid for matched funding to

upgrade their ticket machine equipment to accept contactless payments and also to provide a real time information feed to bus stop displays and mobile phone travel applications. The date for applications has recently closed and we are currently assessing the bids.

**2.7.9** We have recently tendered and awarded the Driver and Passenger Assistant Training contract for an initial period of four years commencing on 5 June 2017. The provider, Anstey James Ltd is a local company based in Yeovil who will be providing training courses across the County to both our contractors, volunteers and Somerset County Council staff who undertake passenger transport operations.

**2.7.10** Transport is the subject of one of the 5 MTFP themes. A review of policy, processes and provision is underway to enable savings to be achieved across all areas of SCC passenger transport over the next 4 years. The £2.2m saving identified for 2017/18 has been 94% achieved and work is now underway to enable further savings for years 2-4 to be achieved.

**2.7.11** Transport Commissioners are working to deliver a Total Transport portal utilising DfT funding. This will allow individuals to search for transport solutions, both scheduled and non-scheduled services and in some cases book their travel directly with the providers. Somerset is working in partnership with Gloucestershire CC. A specification has been written and we are currently out to market to secure a provider to build the portal. This will allow individuals to search for transport solutions, both scheduled and non-scheduled services and in some cases book their travel directly with the providers.

### **3. Background Papers**

None