

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 funding and delivering services in the future, thereby enabling operational staff to focus on the day to day running of our highway and transport networks. The team works with a wide range of stakeholders to secure investment in new infrastructure. This team also 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 to ensure that we deliver best value. A structural change this year moved responsibility for the Highways and Transport ‘Programme Management Office’ and Highways Development Management teams into the commissioning function.
- 2.1.2** Over the last year we progressed several important policy documents including a replacement Local Transport Plan - Implementation Plan which, sets out how we will use the various funds available to us to deliver transport improvements over the next two years. We have undertaken initial stakeholder engagement and scrutiny for a new passenger transport strategy to 2026 setting out our ambitions for future bus and rail services. We are currently consulting the public on this strategy prior to formal adoption. Consulted on a new road safety strategy has been completed and are finalising new highways asset management strategy and policies.
- 2.1.3** We have submitted responses to important Government consultations on issues that will affect investment in our transport system, such as the

Great Western Rail Franchise and a consultation on a new Major Road Network (MRN) for England. The MRN will comprise those local roads that carry highest volumes of traffic and which are therefore particularly important to regional and national movement. A new national roads fund will be created by Government to fund improvements on the MRN. Government has published a draft network and consulted on the criteria that should be used to identify which roads should be included.

- 2.1.4** The Government has made it clear that groups of local highway authorities should come together to form 'sub-national transport bodies' to enable discussion with Government about future strategic transport investment in the area. Somerset is currently in discussions about forming a South West Peninsula sub-national transport body with Cornwall, Devon, Plymouth, Torbay and Dorset County. The first meeting of a 'shadow' body will hopefully be in September as an informal partnership prior to establishing whether a new body with statutory powers (such as Transport for the North) is appropriate for the area. The other South West authorities are forming a 'Western Gateway' sub-national transport body so there will be two such bodies serving the South West. Somerset is likely to attend the Western Gateway STB as an 'associate' member due to the need to improve strategic connections to the north and east of Somerset, as well as those further to the south west.
- 2.1.5** We 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 progressed development of 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 and community engagement on the key issues before their finalising their proposals. The final layout of the Sparkford to Ilchester scheme is now progressing rapidly towards submission of the Development Consent Order in the coming months. Highways England have completed its statutory consultation on the preferred route, and we have brought in additional resources to provide technical input on the layout of local road connections to meet their challenging timescales with the aim of resourcing our work through a Planning Performance Agreement. 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.
- 2.1.6** 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. Designs are now being finalised before GWR progress construction of the schemes.
- 2.1.7** Taunton's Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR) was completed and opened to the public in Summer 2017, with a formal naming ceremony as

'Trenchard Way' taking place in June 2018. The road provides a quick and easy route for travelling between the east and west of the town and has greatly reduced the journey time for many movements across the town as well as providing access to the Firepool development area.

- 2.1.8** We have continued working closely with other Local Authorities in the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area to progress the business cases and further scheme development needed to secure investment in new strategic transport infrastructure, as part of the ongoing 'growth deal' process.
- 2.1.9** We worked with Sedgemoor District Council and Salamanca Group to secure an approved business case for £3.9m growth deal 3 contribution towards a new access road to the proposed Huntspill Enterprise Zone near Puriton. We are now working with the promoters on the remaining land acquisition and scheme delivery processes.
- 2.1.10** We have progressed schemes awarded funding under the first three growth deals. We have awarded a construction contract for delivery of improvements to Yeovil Western Corridor to Alun Griffiths Ltd and works are now well-underway.
- 2.1.11** A full funding package for improvements to M5 Junction 25 has been secured. Public consultation, planning consent and land acquisition for the scheme have now been completed, and procurement for delivery will commence later this year. 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. This is designed to complement the wider A358 improvement scheme and programmed to be in place in advance of the works.
- 2.1.12** We have finalised the initial design of 'Phase 1' of the Toneway Corridor improvements in Taunton and submitted a business case for funding to the Local Transport Board, which will enable us to upgrade the Creech Castle junction. We have completed consultation with Parish Councils and will undertake public consultation on detailed proposals later in the year.
- 2.1.13** We secured additional funding from the National Productivity Investment Fund and developer's contributions, along with contingency funding from the Council to enable us to commence construction of the Colley Lane Southern Access Road in Bridgwater in April 2018 which provides essential additional capacity to the Bridgwater road network supporting new development in the area. The scheme is being delivered by contractors Whitemountain Ltd.
- 2.1.14** We progressed an exciting project to trial new intelligent transport technology along the Hinkley Point C freight routes following a successful grant application to DfT. This will enable some of the bus 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 vehicles have to stop at traffic signals. This efficiency improvement is now being actively trialled and tested, and will have benefits for all vehicles not just the EDF fleet.

- 2.1.15** 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 continued to make the case for investment to deliver the 20-year rail blueprint for the region.
- 2.1.16** 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. In collaboration with the District Council we are working on proposals to improve the public space in the town centre and, will be progressing implementation of trial road closures in the coming months.
- 2.1.17** We have jointly developed a new forward-looking 20 year Taunton Transport Strategy and have commenced community engagement on the proposals prior to finalising the strategy. We have commissioned some new information on traffic movements in Taunton which we are presenting to communities to enable effective discussions about the issues.
- 2.1.18** We have worked closely with the planning authorities in Somerset to secure additional investment in infrastructure through the 'Housing Infrastructure Fund' (HIF) which unlocks new housing growth across the County. We successfully supported bids for HIF 'marginal viability' funding towards the Staplegrove Spine Road in Taunton (£7m), Brimsmore Spine Road in Yeovil (£2m) and a spine road for the new East Bridgwater development site (£5m). This will plug significant gaps in the development finances enabling housing sites to progress into construction subject to the usual consents being completed. We also submitted a successful £83m expression of interest for HIF 'forward funding' grant, and have now been invited to 'co-develop' a detailed business case for the funding with Government, which will help forward-fund essential infrastructure at key development sites across Taunton and Bridgwater, accelerating delivery of approximately 17,000 new homes.
- 2.1.19** We successfully secured consultancy support funded by Government to develop new 'Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans' for our three main towns. Having these new plans in place will be essential if we are to successfully bid for future funds that may be made available by government to invest in improved walking and cycling networks, but the plans will also be very useful to inform a range of discussions about how to encourage more walking and cycling and will also inform new development proposals. Work commences on developing the new plans this September.

2.2 Development Management

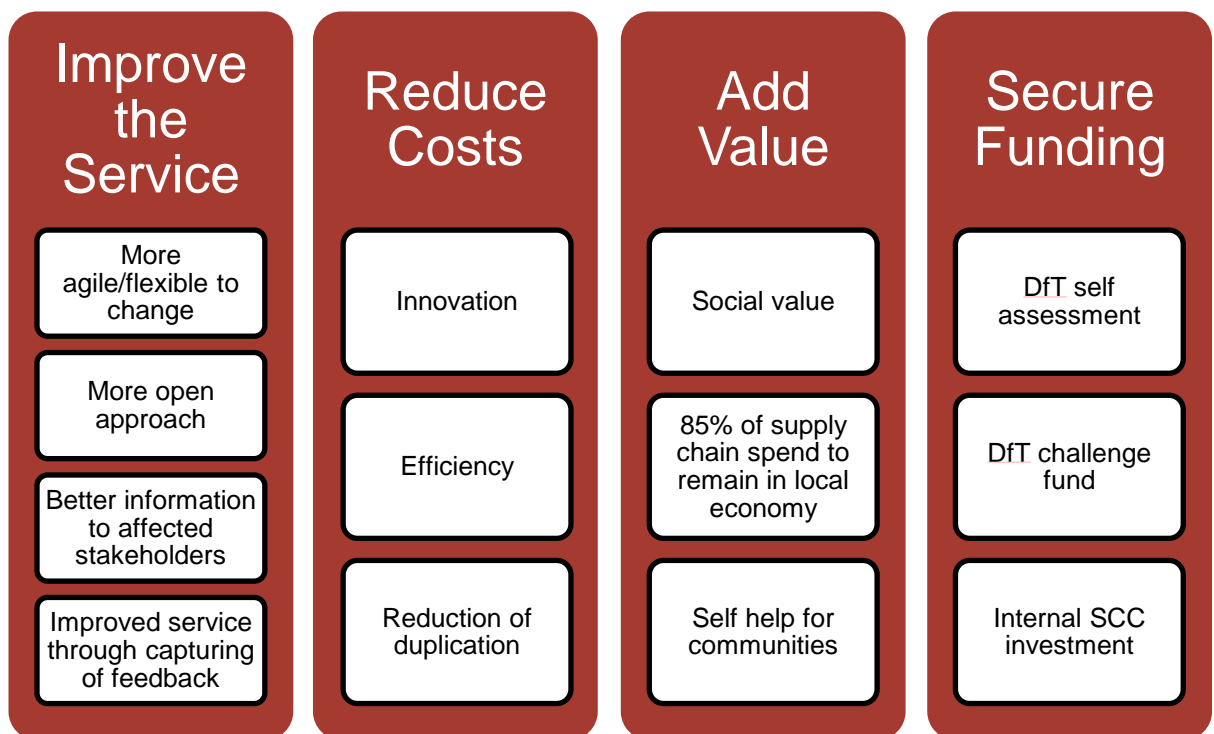
2.2.1 The Planning Liaison team continue to support new development in the County and facilitate the implementation of associated infrastructure. The service receives around 9000 planning applications each year for comment.

2.2.2 We continue to work closely with the promoters of major employment and housing sites in the County to support the progress of applications and approvals needed to commence development. This includes employment sites such as Firepool, Bridgwater Gateway, Huntspill Enterprise Zone and housing sites including Monkton Heathfield and Comeytrowe in Taunton, Keyford and Upper Mudford in Yeovil.

2.2.3 **Highways Maintenance**

In October 2016, a new contract for highway maintenance in Somerset was awarded to Skanska Construction UK Ltd following a decision made by Somerset County Council's Cabinet. The contract commenced on 1 April 2017 and will continue until 31 March 2024 with the option to extend for a further three years based on performance. The collaborative contract will promote a number of new initiatives such as; to identify further savings, follow industry best-practice, support local communities, and reduce the number of potholes over the life of the contract. A summary of the primary aims of the contract is illustrated below.

2.2.4



2.2.5 There is an array of performance measures that are used to monitor and manage the outputs of the contract. These measures are weighted and combined to provide an overall score relating to performance. The Year 1 performance threshold for the contract was set at 90%. Contract

performance over the year was 'good' and the threshold was exceeded to return a performance score of 91.5%.

2.2.6 I am pleased to report that, in addition to exceeding the overall performance target, significant progress has been made on gaining added value from our contract with Skanska. For example, I can report that the contract supply chain spend within Somerset is over 75%, well in excess of the 40% target for the first year. A Care Leavers employment programme has been introduced and, I am particularly proud that so far 3 of our care leavers have currently been accepted into Skanska's apprenticeship programme.

2.2.7 The Asset Delivery Team (ADT) continues to perform well. Membership is made up of both Somerset County Council and Skanska employees who are co-located in the Priorswood Depot. Over the past year, we have seen considerable improvements in the delivery of the structural maintenance capital programme. Perhaps the most notable being the positive and proactive communications surrounding major schemes which has served to drive down service requests during the works.

2.2.8 We have continued our investment in the highway network through the structural maintenance programme as illustrated below:

Work type	Overall value	Output
Carriageway resurfacing (A and B road network)	£2,700,000	35 schemes
Carriageway resurfacing (C and unclassified network)	£2,200,000	85 schemes
Surface dressing	£8,000,000	Over 1.2m m ² of dressing laid across the county, 163 sites over 260 kilometres in length.
Other surface treatments; Retexturing, Crack Sealing, Paco-patch, Dragon Patcher	£250,000	Various locations
Highway surface water drainage improvements	£1,700,000	69 schemes
Footway resurfacing	£1,500,000	50 schemes
Earthworks and embankments	£300,000	11 schemes
SRA schemes	£392,000	2 schemes

2.2.9 Grass cutting through 2017/18 saw a cumulative length of over 11,000km of highway verges cut and 1,800 junction visibility splays through the summer months. A further 302 sites were treated to control noxious and invasive weeds on the highway. Almost 67,000 road drains were cleaned as part of the planned gully maintenance programme. A further 461 sites benefited from more extensive drainage cleansing and jetting to ensure the drainage asset remains serviceable.

2.2.10 18,315 potholes were repaired between April 2017 and March 2018, a slight decrease when compared with the previous year (18,787). 1,698 planned highway inspections were undertaken, 99.9% of which were completed within the time tolerances defined within the Highway Safety Inspection Manual. A total of 24,121 safety defects (including potholes) were identified during planned and reactive inspections of the network which is a slight decrease when compared with the previous year (24,213).

2.2.11 During 2016 the DfT introduced an 'incentive' element to the capital allocation of Highway Maintenance funding, which required each local authority to evidence how efficiently they deliver highways services. Somerset County Council continues 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 amongst the top highway authorities in England.

2.2.12 Winter and emergency

The second half of the 2017/18 winter was much colder than average and very wet (in fact one of the wettest March's on record). This manifested itself in late February with the arrival of Storm Emma resulting in widespread, deep snow across Somerset for the first time since January 2013. The strong winds caused severe drifting in places and there was also a rare occurrence of freezing rain. Two weeks later there was a repeat, with further cold easterly winds and some snow. The final weather event of note was on Good Friday, 30th March, when an isolated snow event closed the A39 above Porlock Hill, trapping 30 cars in the drifts.

2.2.13 The first two events necessitated a major highways response with round the clock working and the deployment of in-house snow ploughs and farmers/agricultural contractors with snow ploughs/blowers. The Traffic Control Centre was stood up during Storm Emma as a 'command and control' centre to liaise with Skanska regarding operations and to lead on communications with the public and the media.

2.2.14 In total, there were 82 winter gritting actions during the season, compared to a long-term average of 65. In 2016/2017 there were only 52 actions. Overall salt usage was 10,167 tonnes compared to a typical year of 6,850 tonnes.

2.2.15 Seven new dedicated gritters were purchased from AEBI Schmidt Ltd and came into operation in November and December 2017. The superseded seven old ECON gritters are in the process of being sold at auction. A further three gritters are on order from Schmidt with delivery scheduled for September 2018.

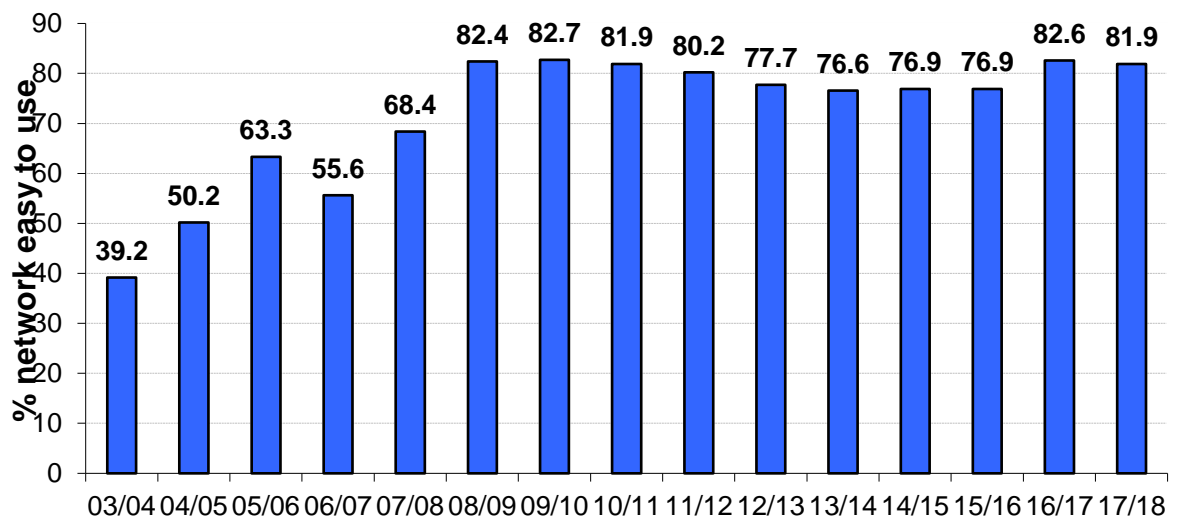
2.2.16 Rights of Way

The Rights of Way (RoW) team continue to work collaboratively with Parishes and the volunteer network as part of their Community Paths Partnership. For example, 90% of Parishes in Somerset have a Parish

Path Liaison Officer. They support the Rights of Way service by undertaking annual surveys, liaising directly with the Area Wardens and logging service requests as required. Working parties continue to gather momentum with Ramblers groups being active in three of five districts. And finally, over twenty-five parishes continue to benefit from access to a strimmer scheme providing savings and added benefit to the management and maintenance of the rights of way network. The annual 'ease of use' survey undertaken by volunteers, particularly the Ramblers Association, looks at a 10% sample of the rights of way network in Somerset. The result for 2017/18 shows 81.9% a slight reduction on the previous year, please see chart below.

2.2.17

% network easy to use performance in Somerset



2.2.18 The RoW bridge capital programme saw the installation of three new 7-15m bridges at Cotford St Luke, Norton Fitzwarren and Long Sutton, with heritage bridge enhancements taking place in Churchstanton and Marston Magna. Two of the capital schemes also involved a diversion order to help reduce overall costs, present and future.

2.3 Bridges and Structures

2.3.1 Our Structures team has continued the planned and reactive inspection programmes with 69 Principal Inspections and 870 General Inspections undertaken on structures 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. Information gathered also assists with the county's asset valuation obligations.

2.3.2 The structures capital works programme saw maintenance or strengthening works carried out at a number of sites with i) Masonry and scour repairs undertaken at three sites, ii) Site Protection undertaken at

twenty-three sites iii) Urgent and Minor Works undertaken at eighty-six sites and four major schemes.

2.3.3 The County's structure portfolio continues to grow with new by-passes being built and old structures being found. Records show thirty-one new structures (notified as found or potential new build) and two structures removed from the portfolio.

2.3.4 Highway lighting

The investment in to highway lighting amounted to nearly £627,000 over the year. This included the routine and cyclical maintenance of 14,431 street lights, illuminated signs, Belisha beacons, school crossing lights and illuminated bollards; all of which were inspected cleaned and re-lamped where applicable. A further 1,500 illuminated bollards were cleaned. There were a total of 280 emergency responses and 12,152 repair jobs were undertaken for faulty illuminated highway equipment £85,000 was spent replacing old type lanterns to energy saving light emitting diode (LED) fittings. A further £405,000 was invested in complete LED replacement units. The combination of both will return significant savings on energy costs over the life of the street lighting asset. Finally, approximately £2.4m was spent on energy for highway lighting and traffic signals.

2.3.5 Highway Communications

Through 2017/18 the Highways service area has worked closely with colleagues in the Somerset Direct Contact Centre to better understand the highway service demand and quality of response. Proactively managing seasonal campaigns using the Travel Somerset website has had the effect of driving down telephone service requests and enabling the public to access information when they want it. This was particularly notable during the snow events where the vast majority of communication was channelled through social media. The use of online reporting is increasing and further work is underway to make this the primary form of contact rather than email or telephone.

2.4 Small Improvement/Minor Schemes Programme

2.4.1 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.

As at 24th May 18 a total of 187 schemes have been completed with an additional 45 on hold or abandoned due to land or feasibility issues. 1 is currently at construction, 38 remain in design and 0 remain at feasibility.

- 2.4.2** By 'request year' this can be broken to as below;
- All 72 schemes from the earlier 2011/12 programme are complete with additional works recently undertaken at Miners Arms crossroads
 - All 48 schemes from the 2012/13 requests are complete
 - Of the 2013/2014 57 schemes are complete 11 are in the design stage, with 0 at construction stage and 22 are either on hold or abandoned.
 - Of the 2015/16 commissions 26 are being progressed for design, 6 are on hold, 1 is at construction and 10 are complete.
 - In 2017/2018 19 new Small Improvement Scheme were completed. These included a 6 pedestrian safety improvement schemes, a road safety improvement at a known collision site in near Compton Dundon as well a number of other traffic management, traffic calming and speed review schemes.

2.4.3 In addition, 105 new scheme requests have been received following an invitation for new submissions from members last year. These have been assessed and Members have recently received details of the successful schemes that will be progressed within the new programme.

2.4.4 Development Management and Development Engineering

2.4.5 Development Engineering

Current Major Infrastructure Projects being overseen by officers within the Development Engineering team include Brimsmore, Lufton and Wyndham Park developments in Yeovil, the large phased development at Monkton Heathfield in Taunton and the retail development at The Leggar in Bridgwater. We continue to provide technical/design support services to our colleagues in Planning Liaison in pursuit of their role as statutory consultee in the planning process, reacting to as ever-increasing volumes of planning applications.

2.4.6 We are currently administering 1142 road adoption agreements pursuant to new and improved highway infrastructure assets which have been collectively valued at approximately £290 Million. Of these agreements, over 550 relate to infrastructure that is currently under construction at a collective estimated value of over £150 Million.

2.4.7 Every year we measure the value of the overall highway infrastructure delivered through private development and identify which elements of this infrastructure would meet with our Local Transport Plan (now Small Improvement Schemes) objectives. We are yet to complete this exercise for the fiscal year 2017-2018 but can report that for the previous fiscal year 2016-2017 of the £21.6 Million of highway infrastructure completed, £9.1 Million could be considered as having delivered against Local Transport Plan objectives.

2.4.8 Between April 2017 and March 2018, we completed 670 technical and road safety audits of designs for new or improved highway infrastructure

proposed with the county. We also completed a further 93 road safety audits post completion of highway infrastructure works.

- 2.4.9** We continue to support Education and Children's Services by assessing the safety of identified walked routes to school in response to formal requests from parents. Between April 2017 and March 2018, we produced 33 Walked Route Assessment Reports.
- 2.4.10** Work has now commenced on the second tranche of service improvement measures identified as part of the Highways Development Management Service Improvement Programme. The first tranche of measures is now complete culminating in the publishing of 8 technical advice notes for developers. A further 17 guidance documents are currently in preparation.
- 2.4.11** We are currently working with our colleagues in Somerset County Council Flood Risk Management to develop procedures and standards by which the construction of Sustainable Urban Drainage associated with new major residential and commercial developments can be monitored against local planning authority requirements.
- 2.4.12** Officers within the team are currently fulfilling the role as 'Client Representative' for Somerset County Council on the delivery of the Yeovil Western Corridor and Colley Lane Bridgwater major highway infrastructure projects.
- 2.4.13** We continue to project manage the highway authority's engagement on the delivery of the highway infrastructure associated with the Hinkley Point C New Nuclear Build and National Grid Connections Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.
- 2.4.14** We have recently been commissioned to manage and provide key design expertise in support of Somerset County Council's engagement with Highways England with respect to the A303/A358 Corridor Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project.

2.5 Road Safety

- 2.5.1** The Road Safety team has continued its important work to reduce the number of people killed and injured on Somerset's roads. In 2017, sadly 22 people died in fatal collisions; whilst 164 were seriously injured and 1273 people suffered more minor injuries.
- 2.5.2** The cost to our society of these people being injured is in excess of £94 million. Collision and casualty numbers in Somerset were lower in 2017 when compared to 2016, by approximately 6%. Despite a fall in both slight and fatal severities, the number of serious ones resulted in an increase in those killed and seriously injured (KSI) of 2%.
- 2.5.3** While car user casualties were just over 8% lower in 2017, motorcycle casualties however remained at the same level, but fatal motorcycle casualties increased from 3 to 7. Pedal cycle casualties showed a significant increase of 19%, rising from 105 to 125. However, over the year

pedestrian casualties fell by 7% from 154 to 143; whilst pedestrian KSI casualties fell by 30%, from 30 to 21.

- 2.5.4** A summary of provisional national 2017 data sourced from the DfT (Department for Transport), indicates that there was a 4% fall in fatal casualties, along with a 5% decline in overall casualties. Somerset's figures show a decline in both fatalities of 12% and overall casualties of 6%, both exceeding the National trend.
- 2.5.5** Whilst the monitoring of performance against road safety KPI's, shows that all but one of the annual casualty reduction targets have been met, that being the older drivers group. This is of concern and we are increasing our work in that area; this group proves to be a challenge due to population growth.
- 2.5.6** Looking at the longer-term statistics, the trend over the last seven 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 2016 there was a 3% growth in vehicle mileage across the County.
- 2.5.7** In Somerset, road safety has always been a priority and I have been very keen to support the production of a new road safety strategy to look at how we can drive forward our road safety efforts using the latest thinking. We have already consulted upon a Safer Systems lead strategy, with more joint internal working and greater partnerships at its core, and I hope it will be adopted later this year. This will help to ensure that the reductions in the number of people killed and seriously injured on Somerset's roads continue.
- 2.5.8** To ensure that this is a live and progressive process we have been holding a series of road safety innovation workshops to garner expertise on new approaches. This has involved the expertise of a wide range of partners, to ensure there are no gaps in our thinking about how to continue to reduce road casualties. The outcomes of this will feed in the planning of delivering the outcomes of the strategy. Another way we are making big changes to the way we achieve safer roads is through the Office of Data Analytics project. This is a joint project with Avon and Somerset Police, and the Fire and Rescue service. It entails far greater sharing of public sector data than has been possible before, to give us much richer datasets to understand road safety data and problems much more broadly.
- 2.5.9** The above will support our key road safety tools of:
- Detailed data analysis
 - public engagement and training
 - partnership working, and
 - road safety engineering.

These tools have been applied over the last financial year by continuous liaison with our partners such as Avon and Somerset Police, Highways England and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue (DSFRS), we have:

- Continued our focus on child road safety through our TACS (Truck and Child Safety) sessions
- delivered to staff in military establishments
- Somerset Road Safety engaged with and delivered talks and training to over 25,000 people
- 1973 pupils were trained in 'Bikeability' cycle safety training
- 1,500,000 million impressions were made on Twitter
- 156,000 people were reached on Facebook

2.5.10 Our social media reach has therefore increased by over 1,000,000 since last year.

2.5.11 The Road Safety team also worked with the Small Improvements Schemes team to deliver road safety engineering schemes at Brean Rd/Rectory Way, Lympsham, along the A371 between Wincanton to Rodney Stoke, and at B3151 Stock Elms Cottages, Street Road.

2.6 Traffic Management

The Travel Somerset website which provides a 'one stop shop' for all traffic and travel information for Somerset continues to grow and the Travel Somerset twitter site now has over 4800 followers, an increase of 3000 from last year and has received very good feedback. The site came into its own during the snow events earlier in the year, when the public were able to access live and up to date information. The number of related phone calls received during these weather events was 12, which goes to show the power of these social media sites. The travel website received over 190,000 views during March alone. The Traffic Control and Information Centre remains 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.

2.6.1 Since the start of the December 2017, Highways and Traffic have now established an out of hours Highway and Traffic Duty officer rota. This officer represents the Highway Authority and is the point of contact for Highways England (HE), Police, neighbouring authorities and other key stakeholders in the event of any highway/traffic related issues requiring tactical input for out of hours issues relating to the highway network. This rota came proved invaluable during the winter period and is key to SCC managing its highway network outside of normal working hours.

2.6.2 Street works co-ordination remains a huge challenge for us with the demand to occupy the highway network increasing. Approximately 23,000 sets of work have been undertaken in the last year. Over 5,000 facilitated by temporary signals and over 1800 under road closures. 1,471 Fixed Penalty notices were issued for incorrectly noticed works. We also

successfully prosecuted Statutory Undertakers for various offences under the Street works legislation as follows:

- Bristol water: 3 offences including an illegal road closure; carrying out works when directed not to and carrying out works without the correct permissions. Total fine £3000, costs of £1,130 plus a victim surcharge of £150.
- Wessex water: 3 offences; carrying out works when directed not to and failure to use the correct traffic management including signs and safety zones. Total fine £3320, costs of £1,687 plus a victim surcharge of £170.
- BT: 6 offences relating to failing to comply with statutory safety measures; carrying out works when directed not to and without authorisation. Total fine £25,000, costs of £2,696.67 plus a victim surcharge of £170.
- Vodafone: Carrying out works when directed not to causing over 4 miles of queues – Total fine £15,000, costs of £1,201.17 plus a victim surcharge of £170.
- Western Power Distribution: 2 offences relation to failing to co-operate and failing to install a safe worksite – Total fines - £6000, costs £1690.33 plus a victim surcharge of £170

2.6.3 These prosecutions are part of County Council's commitment to minimise disruption for the travelling public and sends a very clear message to anyone who works on the highway that we will not tolerate unauthorised roadworks.

2.6.4 Between April 2017 and March 2018, we processed over 1450 temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) for road closures for works and events, up 40% from previous year, and approximately 70 permanent TROs and notices for various parking restrictions and speed limits etc.

2.6.5 A review of the Community Speed Indicator Device (SID) Provision was undertaken and the SCC programme as it was terminated on the 31st March. Communities have the option to purchase and manage their own SID's or to joining a revised SCC SID programme based on a contribution on £100 per site from Parish and Town Councils who wish to participate. Officers are continuing to work with communities about what options are available.

2.6.6 With the demand for sign maintenance increasing along with the current budget pressures, the maintenance of the traditional finger arm signs is no longer a priority. 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 South West Heritage Trust, and have launched a guidance document for communities to survey, restore and maintain these fingerposts themselves. Workshops held at a number of different venues for volunteers wishing to be involved in the project have proved very successful and there are now numerous sites across the County where the community have restored these finger arm signs.

2.7 Parking Services

2.7.1 During the year 2017/18 parking services has seen significant changes. The two key events being;

Extension of enforcement services for a further period of two years

Following extensive negotiations with the approved contractor NSL an additional two-year period was agreed. The key benefits for the Somerset were:

- Agreed cost savings on the contract price.
- Introduction of home deployed civil enforcement officers to improve the coverage with specific area.
- Relocation of Taunton enforcement base to vacant officer space within Taunton library.
- Agreement of performance matrix with associated service credits for failure of service delivery.

2.7.2 Contract negotiations also involved an increase in the number of enforcement hours.

2.7.3 Overall the performance of the civil enforcement officers has been at the expected level. Feedback from NSL confirms the Somerset contract is performance at a higher level than others within the region. The NSL region includes a number of local authorities that do not have the extensive rural and geographical challenges of Somerset.

2.7.4 The home deployment initiative was recognised as a finalist at the 2018 British Parking Awards.

2.7.5 Insourcing of Notice processing and back office services

2.7.6 The contract negotiations with NSL also involved the ending of the back office and IT services provided by NSL.

2.7.7 Since June 2017 the processing of penalties, permits and all other aspects has been undertaken by an increased team of Council officers primarily based in County Hall. One individual is based within South Somerset offices in Yeovil.

2.7.8 The new in-house service involved the procurement of a different IT system. This has enabled improved efficiencies both in terms of officer time and for residents.

2.7.9 Residents are now able to purchase the full range of permits online in a single transaction.

2.7.10 With the introduction of virtual permits which are checked in real time by the enforcement officers this has resulted in two benefits for residents.

- Residents no longer receive a penalty if they forget to display their permit or it is displayed incorrectly
- Residents can manage their permits online and change the registration in real time. This avoids problems when residents change their vehicle or have a courtesy vehicle for a few days.

2.7.11 The insourcing project involved the contact centre being responsible for ALL incoming calls in respect of parking matters.

2.7.12 All payments in respect of parking and now made using Somerset County Council systems.

2.7.13 Since insourcing the back-office processes, the overall service provided to residents and members of the public has improved. The level of correspondence has reduced with fewer second stage representations received following challenges. The service to our District partners has also improved with positive feedback and fewer referrals made to them.

2.7.14 The insourcing project was recognised at the staff awards in 2018 by being nominated within the Collaboration category and winning the Creativity and Innovation Award.

Performance Statistics to 31 March 2018

Penalties served	50,068
Enquires and telephone calls received	23,182
Annual visitor permits (paper)	747
Annual resident permits (virtual)	1,794
Daily scratch cards (paper)	57,520
Carer permits (virtual)	228
Items of correspondence sent by post	52,276
Responses sent by email	6,144
Penalty payments made online	26,205
	(£902,227)
Penalty payments made via automated telephone system	9,137
	(£316,162)
2.7.15 Challenges and representations via online portal	61%
Correspondence reply within 10 days	94%*
*further investigation to be undertaken as considered low	

2.7.16 Bus Gates

This year saw the implementation of the County's third bus gate along the old A38 Bridgwater Road.

2.7.17 The use of extensive signs within the area (both regulatory and advisory), press and TV coverage the numbers of vehicles contravening the restrictions has fallen. At the commencement of enforcement, the daily average was about 100 per day, this has now reduced to about 50 per day. This lower number equates to about 0.5% of the average daily vehicle movements (9,000) in the area.

2.7.18 Further bus gates within the Langford Mead, Taunton and Wyndhams Park, Yeovil developments are due to be installed in the coming year.

2.7.19 Resident parking policy

This year has also seen a revised and updated policy on how residents may request a resident parking scheme within their area.

2.7.20 The aim of the policy was to make it easier for residents with less reliance on a local scheme champion to lead the consultation process.

2.7.21 The policy also ensures that the impact of displacement parking was accounted for within the consultation. This ensures the problem isn't simply moved to an adjacent location without first consulting with residents in the wider area.

2.7.22 There have been a number of enquiries with consultations due to commence. It is anticipated the first schemes using the new policy will be implemented in the coming year.

2.8 Transporting Somerset

2.8.1 Over the last year Transporting Somerset ensured around 9,000 Mainstream and Special Educational Needs pupils, who were entitled to free home to school transport, were safely delivered to and from school every day. Transporting Somerset has provided over 150,000 trips to enable individual service users to reach their care placements and health patients to attend clinics and hospitals.

2.8.2 Financial support continues to be provided annually for 57 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.

2.8.3 Our Public Transport Team issued around 18,000 Concessionary Bus passes, both new applications and renewals and over 2200 County Ticket bus passes to students attending Further Education. A new system for online application and renewals for concessionary bus passes is being implemented to reduce administration and improve the application process for users recently.

2.8.4 A number of public and school transport operators ceased to operate last year resulting in reduced competition in the market, which has in turn resulted in increased costs. The underlying reasons for operator failure were different in each case, but some suppliers are citing a shortage of qualified drivers, and an increased regulatory focus from the Office of the Traffic Commissioner, as underlying reasons for increasingly challenging commercial conditions in the sector. As part of the MTFP transport theme work is underway to mitigate cost increases through reviewing networks,

policy and working practices. The £2.2m target for 2017/18 was successfully met but further savings targets remain a challenge. We have invested in 10 new low floor minibuses within our in-house fleet over the last year to increase flexibility of use and improve accessibility for passengers. Disabled passengers can now access the vehicle through the main door rather than having to use a lift or ramp to access the vehicle. More of these vehicles will be purchased over the coming year to replace the aging fleet of minibuses with tail-lifts.

2.8.5 Partnership working with our major bus operator, Buses of Somerset, has resulted in improved ticketing options for passengers on all their buses. Customers can now have the option to pay for their ticket on bus using a debit card. This speeds boarding times and improves punctuality. The recent amendments to the Bus Bill have improved the Local Authorities options to work in partnership with Bus Operators. The introduction of Advanced Quality Partnerships allows greater flexibility for joint working without the need for large investment in infrastructure, work is already underway to progress this to improve the sustainability of the bus market in Somerset.

2.8.6 Following a successful tendering process, the Total Transport Portal is now being built to allow individuals to search for transport solutions, both scheduled and non-scheduled services and in some cases, book their travel directly with the providers. This work is being undertaken in partnership with Gloucestershire CC and it is hoped once live in the spring of 2019, other Local Authorities will also use the system. An additional key feature of the portal is a noticeboard which will allow users to connect with other users to find affordable transport solutions to access school, college, work and leisure facilities

3. Transport and Logistics Academy

In response to the lack of bus drivers in Somerset, the Somerset Transport & Logistics Academy has been set up, designed to give young people aged 17+ an opportunity to gain a better insight into the Transport and Logistics profession with the aims of inspiring the future generation to take this particular career path.

In partnership with Yeovil College, Gregory's Distribution Ltd, LGS Transport Training, Road Safety Team and Berry's Coaches the programme commenced on Friday 27th April. The programme will run over a six-week period giving the students a chance to get an in-depth look into the industry, both through academic study and practical workshops.

The aim of the programme is to give the students an insight into the many different aspects of the Transport and Logistics profession. During the visit students will get an opportunity to meet staff at all levels and find out more about their roles and responsibilities and the day to day tasks that help with the running of the organisations. Students will have an opportunity to explore routes to employment within this sector and the type of qualifications needed for different job roles.

Students will also be given the opportunity to drive a Berry's automatic bus, taking a ride in one of Gregory's HGV's and being able to experience road safety training through Virtual Reality technology.

At present this scheme is a pilot, it is hope that if successful the programme can grow and become self-sustainable and be rolled out across the county to more schools and colleges. Whilst continuing to work in partnership with other Transport and Logistic industries and therefore improving the likelihood of finding the next generation of Bus, Coach and HGV drivers in Somerset.

4. Financial Management

A range of financial savings were implemented throughout the year and I can report that the service delivered a significant underspend at the end of the financial year, including its planned medium term financial plan savings. A particularly long winter with a number of extreme weather events placed an additional burden on the winters and emergency maintenance budget.

The Medium Term Financial Plan cross cutting 'transport' theme delivered over £2m in savings through successful implementing new ways of working, and continues to examine opportunities for further savings,

5. Background Papers

None