

Parish Councillor Notes of virtual meeting with Highways on 8 July 2021.
Meeting commenced 10 AM.

Present: Gary Sumner, Head of Strategic Projects SBC; Nigel Atkins [NA] SBC Assistant Project Manager; Ms Sam Howell[SH] SBC Head of Transport; Nigel Gibbons, Keith Williams, Suresh Gattapur , WSPC Councillors.

Apologies from Kevin Parry, SBC .

By reference to the notation of the pre prepared questions circulated by WSPC, SH and NA responded as follows.

1. SH stated that poor communication by SBC relating to Phase 1 delays is accepted. SH/NA confirmed that delays were attributed to the Covid pandemic. More particularly, reluctance from the utility providers to travel and stay away. SSE and BT were key factors in the delay. BT, first contractor due on site were delayed with a consequent knock- on effect to SSE . BT were delayed from March to July 2020 and then SSE had lost their window. SH commented that utility provision was stressed during the pandemic given slippage on projects nationwide.
2. SH stated that SBC did consider employing more resource which may not have been apparent when viewing the site. SH commented that efficiencies are not always drawn from employing more people but prioritising work on component parts such as the drainage works which required up to 6 metre excavation.
3. SH extended apologies for the lack of communication with WSPC. Sep 21 is indeed projected as completion date of the whole project. SH commented that there are daily updates with contractors on site and that time consuming work has been completed although their remains utility diversions to be completed.
4. SH confirmed that the project is not on budget and there is a cost over-run. This cannot be quantified at the moment as contractual negotiations with the principal contractor are ongoing. Keith Williams referred to an over-run of £470k which has been quoted but SH stated the actual position is outstanding.

5. SH confirmed an open market tender was employed inviting 7/8 contractors. The awarded contract (NEC 3 type Contract) does provide for damages for any delays due to non- performance by the chosen contractor.
6. SH commented that worker numbers initially on site were reduced whilst awaiting utility companies. Noted that 9/15 contractors are normally on- site Monday to Friday. Breaks are taken sitting in cabs given the lack of welfare facilities which may give a false impression.
7. SH noted that quality of work is paramount and considered high. Supervisors are on site every day to monitor the work. There is no advantage in rushing elements of work if this might compromise quality.
8. SH noted that there are a high number of projects underway across the Borough, with a need to utilise government grant assistance within stated timeframes as slippage might mean losing financial support. This has put pressure on road infrastructure across town. SBC are acutely aware of issues arising from Langstone Way being used as a rat run. Streetsmart are responsible for signage which is monitored particularly given evidence of signage being moved (we are not aware of any such activity). SBC will consider additional signage and are working directly with Westlea School. Note: WSPC might wish to verify this with the school.
9. SH confirmed that SBC undertake road repairs generally on a risk- based approach. Highways consider that cracks in Whitehill Way pre- date this project but will confirm a reinstatement programme when this project is complete. Note: WSPC should follow up on this. SH confirmed that the contractor is not responsible for damage to other roads because of traffic diversion.
10. SH acknowledges that the SBC newsletter is still evolving and has had shortcomings. They will work on improving it to fully capture key headlines.

AOB arising. Suresh asked about a no right turn signage at KFC entrance for traffic coming from GWW to Delta. The queues may be formed from Delta end to enter KFC. SH confirmed this will be reviewed by SBC.

Meeting ended 10:40 approx. Cllr Nigel Gibbons (Chair)