

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 20 October 2021

Report Title:	STREET LIGHTING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME, PROGRESS REPORT
Report of:	DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

APPENDIX 1 – PROGRESS REPORT

1. Progress, performance and outcomes of the SSE Contract

1.1 Governance and financial monitoring:

The NEC3 Engineering and Construction Contract (ECC) form of contract with SSE has been diligently and professionally managed with a robust governance process under the highways capital programme portfolio and with a dedicated external specialist contract manager procured through the council's professional services supply contract with Amey Consulting Ltd. Wirral Council provided project Senior Responsible Owner, Project Manager and Senior User roles to the Project Board from existing staffing resources. The contract supervision was provided from discrete external resources until January 2021 and from internal council staffing resources since then. Amey has authorised compensation events (variations) totalling £731,849 for additional works ordered under the SSE contract for reasons of expediency and best value, including: essential variations to electrical safety processes; additional cabling (where post-contract faults have been identified); additional column replacements (where stock condition was found to have deteriorated significantly since the 2017 survey); the inclusion of works to high mast lighting which posed a serious public safety risk; electric vehicle charging provision and a section of lighting infrastructure on the A5139 Docks Link Key Route Network, which had due to have been included in a separate contract for safety barrier replacements in 2018, but was unable to be completed because of insufficient technical information and budget provision at the time. The final outturn contract valuation price expected to be contractually due to SSE is £10,022,745, which will be financed from the available budget provision.

1.2 Progress and completion:

Works on the SSE contract commenced on 2 October 2019 with a completion date of 1 October 2021. By August 2021 some 23,930 LED lanterns had been installed and 9,122 columns had been replaced under the contract with SSE. The final numbers ordered are 27,565 lanterns and 9,884 columns. At the time of writing this report, the current accepted programme shows completion on 8 October 2021. However, as a result of contract compensation events currently being evaluated the contractual completion date will be amended, but will not be later than the end of December 2021. Progress has been monitored monthly and at project board. Initially SSE concentrated resources on the installation of lanterns and by May 2020 had installed 1235 units more than programmed. During the same period the number of columns installed was 878 units less than programmed. When the pandemic restrictions were introduced in March 2020, the contract works were designated an essential service, SSE introduced safe working procedures and progressed both lantern and column installations with a focus upon column installations to restore the 878-unit deficit. At all times throughout the project total unit installations were ahead

of programme in terms of the Salix loan requirements. Progress has been consistently reported to the public using a dashboard format in a dedicated page on the council's website here:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-travel/major-projects/led-replacement-programme-phase-2>

1.3 Performance monitoring and customer feedback:

The contract required that performance be measured monthly during the contract term. Measurement was facilitated through Five Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) each clearly defined together with a methodology for measurement and weighting. Performance scores were awarded at each monthly contract management meeting and reported by exception to the Project Board. A total score of 30 was the minimum acceptable score set, with continued failure to achieve this level having the potential to trigger low performance damages. The monthly score achieved for every monitoring period throughout the contract was 42, so performance has been good and SSE has not been subjected to any low performance damages.

SSE has conducted customer satisfaction surveys available to all Wirral residents on an anonymous response basis during the course of the contract and this was promoted through the council's communications messaging. Only 343 individual responses have been received to date across all wards in the borough. In summary, the responses indicate: that 64% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the associated roadworks and effort made to ensure the safety and convenience of residents; that 67% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the effort made to keep the surrounding area clean and tidy whilst work was in progress. Only 50% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the improvements made to the street lighting in their area with 26% being very dissatisfied. This is disappointing but is not necessarily a reflection on the performance of SSE. Anecdotal evidence suggests some residents may initially take time to become accustomed to the different type of light emitted by LED compared with the old sodium lights. This may be indicative of the responses received. LED is in fact no brighter, but may be perceived as such, and anecdotally many people do eventually prefer the new type of light.

During and leading up to the contract with SSE, a number of streetlights may have been left unattended where they were in low-priority locations or any defects were not considered urgent, and it is recognised this has been frustrating for residents and Members who have supported them. Nevertheless, all resident and Member enquiries were still properly investigated in this period. Many temporary repairs have been undertaken across the borough as an interim measure to retain lighting at certain locations until the SSE contracted work of full replacement could be completed. Some locations may have received multiple visits in this period, since one visit from the council's Highway Operational Service (HOS) may have been to temporarily repair to retain lighting levels in a reactive response when appropriate, and one visit may have been by our LED replacement contractor, SSE, to replace the full unit which was part of the planned major project. Many enquiries queried the practice of cutting down an old lighting column and leaving it in place. Columns are only cut down if they pose an immediate risk to public safety. Often they will be replaced with new columns later in accordance with the relevant level of priority or as

part of the planned SSE contract works, or even removed altogether where no longer required under changed illumination level requirements. The SSE contract is an enormous undertaking in terms of scale and numbers of asset units included and inevitably some locations will have been omitted either intentionally, if part of other future planned work, or due to an oversight as a result sheer volume of installations being managed. Any genuine omissions will be corrected during the contract closure and correction period.

However, reference to the council's customer enquiry data reveals that the number of reports relating to lighting faults have gradually reduced over the past 2 years. In August 2019, 429 fault reports were received; in August 2021, 145 fault reports were received. This would imply good progress with the LED contract works and suggests residents are generally more satisfied with the council's street lighting performance there than they previously were.

1.4 Health and Safety:

There have been no major or reportable injury accidents during the course of the SSE contract. There have been two near-miss incidents of significance, as follows:

4 September 2021, concrete column falling: There was an incident in Mount Drive, Bebington where an existing 5m concrete column fell across the road after a new column had been installed adjacent to it. SSE discovered the cause was due to insufficient root plant depth of the column at its original installation. SSE carried out a full review and revised their working procedures. SSE also carried out toolbox talks with their operatives and sub-contractors.

15 March 2021, cable strike: During excavation works to locate a supply an operative working for an SSE sub-contractor disturbed a low voltage cable which caused local power outage to small number of residential properties in Wordsworth Walk, West Kirby. No operatives were injured and the outage was reinstated later the same day. A full sub-contractor incident review was held and toolbox talks conducted with operatives.

Both incidents were fully reported to the council's corporate health and safety board with lessons learned documented and have been closed out accordingly.

1.5 Energy savings:

By the end of August 2021 the total energy saved since October 2019, compared with the old sodium lanterns that had been replaced, was 2,944KWh (60% reduction) equating to a saving of £414,625 p.a. revenue budget saving, which will contribute to the Salix loan repayments and future budget savings. The total carbon saved was 1,263 Tonnes. The projected total carbon savings by the end of the SSE contract are 1,423 Tonnes. By 2030, 7,700 Tonnes of carbon emissions will have been avoided since 2019, as result of the LED installations, compared with the emissions that would have been produced by the previous lantern types, based on the way carbon emissions are currently calculated on annual government conversion factors.

1.6 Social value delivered:

As part of their tender submission SSE provided a quantitative proposal against the Wirral-specific social value themes, outcomes, and measures (Wirral TOMs). This

amounted to a theoretical social value to be delivered of £282,516 in financial terms, along with supporting qualitative statements on how this value was to be delivered throughout the life of the contract. This was an indicative offer and not contractually enforceable.

Social value delivery has been reviewed all board meetings. Delivery has been retrospectively measured and reviewed by the Social Value Portal Ltd on an ongoing basis ensuring the delivery of benefits relevant to Wirral.

At the time of writing this report SSE has delivered measured social value outcomes amounting to £244,694 in financial terms, which is 87% of the offered amount. SSE has had difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic in delivering on some of the TOMs offered, where they involved working in the community face-to-face. This has been offset by additional social value projects providing physical infrastructure, such as traffic signs, as community social value projects, and further additional work is planned in the next two months to bring the total value delivered closer to the offer amount.

2. Electric Vehicle Charging

- 2.1 The council is currently developing its strategy and policy for the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the borough linked to the climate emergency declaration and the council's borough-wide net carbon neutral targets. Key to this is considering the feasibility of providing on street charging and one opportunity to supply this is direct from public street lighting infrastructure. Locations for this solution are only suitable and appropriate where the lighting columns are at the front of the pavement and in areas where residents have no access to off-road parking where they can charge direct from home electrical supplies.
- 2.2 During the course of the contract with SSE a funding opportunity for financing the provision of local authority electric vehicle charging points (EVCP) became available as grant through the government's Office for Zero Emissions Vehicles (OZEV), formerly Office for Low Emissions Vehicles (OLEV). A sum of £77,000 was made available in grant and a further £26,000 was provided as 'match-funding' from the overall capital programme budget allocated to the current street lighting improvement programme, which will be offset against the council's climate emergency budget provision. The council agreed a variation to the contract with SSE to include the provision of on-street EVCPs using supplier City EV Ltd. A survey that was open to all Wirral residents was conducted to gauge interest and 45 suitable lighting column locations were selected across Hoylake, Woodchurch, Wallasey, Prenton and Bromborough as a trial.
- 2.3 The EVCPs were activated and made free to use by any member of the public from October 2021 for an initial period of 12 months. During this trial the council will gather data on usage, cost of energy provided through the energy supply contract and customer feedback. This data will be used to inform the wider council vehicle charging infrastructure strategy and the setting of appropriate tariffs after the trial period.

- 2.4 A dedicated page on the council's website has been established to provide residents and Members with further details and information about the EVCP trial, here:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-travel/major-projects/street-electric-vehicle-charging>

3. **Heritage Lighting**

- 3.1 Concerns have been raised by residents and Members regarding the retention of heritage or ornate style street lighting. The council has a duty to maintain a safe street lighting asset and the provision of good quality lighting at best value for money. To standardise as much equipment possible for future sustainability and efficiency is key to this, whilst respecting the status of some key locations. Many of the council's lighting columns and lanterns are often described as "heritage" lighting, and whilst some genuine heritage style stock is present in some conservation areas, many described as such are actually older isolated asset types more commonly installed as standard (including ornate cast iron) across the borough many years ago. Others may be specialist designs which result from specifically funded public realm initiatives in localised areas. Unfortunately, this now means that some of the council's original ornate lighting columns are more than 70 years old. Whilst these may appear in to be good condition, surveys have revealed they are at the end of their serviceable life and need to be replaced to help reduce the council's liability risk. There is no current budget availability to install heritage style lighting infrastructure anywhere in the borough as part of the current improvement programme, which is based upon invest-to-save and safety-related business cases.
- 3.2 Nevertheless, concerns raised by some residents and Members on this subject are appreciated and a cross-directorate working group between Neighbourhoods and Regeneration and Place has been established to develop an overall proposed strategy for heritage street lighting, particularly for the key conservation areas, to address the issues described above. All conservation areas will initially be subject to a review and listed in order of recommended hierarchy to offer an options appraisal with anticipated costs for consideration by Members, along with funding recommendations and options to allow the enhancement of specific standard lighting column and lantern equipment in locations identified to achieve a heritage style appearance.
- 3.3 Where specific columns described by the public as heritage in conservation areas are in satisfactory condition, they will currently be left in place with new LED lanterns installed where possible, and where it is possible to retain existing heritage style lanterns in conservation areas these will be fitted with LED bulbs. Where replacement columns are needed, these will need to be replaced with standard modern steel galvanised columns to remove any risk of structural failure.
- 3.4 Enhancements to modern lighting columns can include painting, the fitting of decorative bases, and decorative rings to the column to give a more traditional look at the appropriate locations where agreed using proprietary embellishment 'kits'. The painting and embellishment of standard galvanised steel lighting columns is a considerable additional cost of circa £800/column. This will be one of the options presented to Members in due course. An example of a painted and embellished modern lighting column, next to a standard galvanised finished one, has already

been set up in Port Sunlight as a trial (column No.3, The Causeway). The provision of heritage style lanterns is a further considerable additional cost, compared with the standard lantern type, of circa £900/lantern. Standard lanterns can be provided in black finish at no additional cost.

- 3.5 A full report will be brought to the relevant Committee to consider officers' recommendations on heritage lighting in 2022, only once the results of current ongoing realm strategy studies have reported back and have been properly considered. The Port Sunlight and Birkenhead Design and Public Realm guides are likely to be completed by May 2022. Both will consider the issue of lighting columns, and a range of options including the potential of adapting existing columns where possible, which will allow for the accommodation of LED fittings, or their replacement with columns which complement the conservation areas. The recommendations in the future report to Members will present a wide variety of options for Members to consider and potential capital funding opportunities will be suggested that are likely to be based on a visitor economy related business case.

4. Future structural maintenance requirements

- 4.1 Wirral's street lighting column asset has been predominantly fabricated from concrete, cast iron, aluminium and steel, and a few timber columns still exist. Some of the concrete columns are over 60 years old and a number of the non-galvanised steel columns are more than 40 years old. Most of the columns identified as in immediate or urgent need of replacement due to condition have been replaced as part of the SSE project described above or prior to that. However, there will be a need to replace all of the remaining concrete and cast-iron columns in the next few years, since these materials are unreliable, prone to failure without warning, and no longer meet current design standards. There will also be a need to replace any defective steel or aluminium columns that continue to deteriorate in the interim period.
- 4.2 There is currently no funding identified to undertake a further wholesale column replacement programme, although £60,000 per annum is allocated from the annual Local Highways Maintenance Capital Block funding for a small number of ad hoc column replacements. This funding level, which has remained unchanged since 2010, allows for approximately 60-70 columns to be replaced annually. This piecemeal approach to column replacement has still not significantly reduced the overall rate of decline of the councils lighting column asset, despite the 9,884 replaced under the current contract. For example, over 15,000 concrete columns remain on the highway network and this will require addressing in future years.
- 4.3 Consequently, a further fully-evidenced, safety-related, business case submission will be presented to the council's Capital and Assets (CAG) group and Investment and Change Board (ICB) in due course requesting funding of up to £1.8m per annum, over a 10-year rolling programme period.