STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
22 NOVEMBER 2017

Present: Councillors D Absolom (Chair), Ayub, Brock, Chrisp, Duveen, Gittings, Hopper, Khan, Maskell, McGonigle, Page and Vickers.

Apologies: Councillors McDonald and Rodda.

9. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

10. MINUTES OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meetings of Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 14 June and 13 September 2017 were received.

11. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board of 7 July 2017 were submitted.

Resolved - That the Minutes be noted.

12. PETITIONS

Enrico Petrucco presented a petition on behalf of Reading Friends of the Earth, in the following terms:

"I call for a new air quality action plan to be put in place by 2018 with the necessary resources to cut all pollutant levels to below World Health Organisation guidelines by 2020."

In response Councillor Page, Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, thanked the petitioners and advised that the Council would take account of the points made. He hoped that officers would be able to bring forward a report to the Committee during 2018 once further details had been received from the Government including what assistance they might make available to support introduction of a Clean Air Zone and associated measures to improve air quality.

13. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Questions on the following matters were asked in accordance with Standing Order 36.

Questioner	Subject
Councillor McGonigle	Charging points for electric powered vehicles
Tom Robinson	Reading Cycle Network Maps

(The full text of the questions and replies was made available on the Reading Borough Council website).

14. PRE-SUBMISSION DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking the Committee's approval to undertake community involvement on a Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan and associated documents including a Proposals Map showing the geographical extent of the policies and proposals in the Draft Local Plan. The Committee noted that the Local Plan had been considered at two previous stages, the Issues and Options Document in November 2015 and April 2016 (Minutes 22 and 34 refer respectively) and the full Draft Local Plan which had been considered at the 4 April meeting and consulted on in May and June 2017 (Minute 26 refers).

The report provided a summary of the approximately 150 responses which had been received to the consultation. The report explained that, with the Committee's approval, further community involvement would be undertaken, and, subject to any further minor changes that did not affect the overall policy direction, the Local Plan would be submitted to the Secretary of State for public examination.

The Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.
The Draft Proposals Map was attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

The report listed the main changes made to the draft, mostly made in response to comments received during the consultation, which included:

- An increase in the overall number of houses planned for, from 658 per year to 671 per year
- A new policy on noise generating equipment
- Changes to the Heritage section to take account of a significant number of comments received
- A new policy on build-to-rent housing schemes
- Clarification on how zero carbon homes would be implemented for new developments
- Clarification on the education requirements associated with the proposed levels of growth
- Changes to respond to concerns about air quality, including provision for electric vehicle charging
- Extension of the site at Napier Court to take in a new parcel of land owned by Network Rail which might become available during the Plan period
- A policy on potential traveller transit provision on Cow Lane as a result of a recent consultation which would be fully reported to Policy Committee in the new year.

The Committee noted that subject to its approval, consultation was scheduled to commence on 30 November and would end on 26 January 2018.

At the invitation of the Chair, Karen Rowland addressed the Committee on behalf of the Conservation Area Advisory Committee.

Resolved -

(1) That the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan (Appendix 1 of the report) and Pre-Submission Draft Proposals Map (Appendix 2 of the report) be approved;

(2) That community involvement on the pre-Submission Draft Local Plan, Proposals Map and associated supporting documents be authorised;

(3) That the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan and Proposals Map in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, prior to community involvement;

(4) That the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan and Proposals Map be authorised for submission to the Secretary of State should no significant issues arise during community involvement that would necessitate a substantive change to the document;

(5) That the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan and Proposals Map that do not alter the policy direction, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, prior to their submission to the Secretary of State and prior to the consequent Public Examination of the Document.

(Councillor Vickers declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item. Nature of interest: Councillor Vickers is a Trustee of Tilehurst Poor's Land Charity)

15. PLANING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004 – BROWNFIELD LAND REGISTER

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out new requirements placed on local authorities under the Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017. The regulations required the publication on the Council's website of a Register of all previously developed ('brownfield') housing sites of 0.25ha, or capable of accommodating at least five dwellings. This was required to be published by the end of 2017. The report outlined the requirements of the regulations and detailed how officers intended to respond to these in 2017 and in future years.

The report explained that the register was in two distinct parts. Part one of the register was a list of all suitable sites, i.e. those with planning permission, those allocated in development plans and those considered to be suitable in assessments supporting the Local Plan. The second part was a list of those sites from part one

that had received 'permission in principle' – a new form of planning permission introduced in 2017 which could either be applied for or conferred by the planning authority. The act of listing a site in part two of the register had the effect of conferring permission in principle, which would be followed by a technical details stage. Since inclusion within Part 2 essentially granted permission, a number of consultation and notification stages were associated with placing a site in Part 2 of the register.

Local authorities had been encouraged by DCLG to keep the register as simple as possible and accordingly, since there appeared to be no repercussions for local authorities if they did not put any sites in Part 2, the report proposed that the register prepared by the end of 2017 should only include sites within Part 1.

Resolved -

(1) That the requirements under the Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017, to publish a register of brownfield housing sites within their area of 0.25ha or above, or capable of accommodating at least five dwellings, be noted;

(2) That the register to be published in 2017, and in subsequent years, be agreed by the Head of Planning Development and Regulatory Services in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment Planning and Transport.

16. VEHICLE IDLING REVIEW AFTER ONE YEAR

The Committee received a presentation by Ross Jarvis, Senior Technical Officer and Catherine Lewis, Environmental Protection and Nuisance Manager, regarding the vehicle idling campaign.

The presentation informed the Committee of progress made with vehicle idling and plans to take the campaign forward in the coming year. Awareness raising activities and had taken place with schools in the Borough including a competition to design signs to put up around the Town centre and school sites, where idling was a problem. Taxi drivers had signed-up to a voluntary agreement to avoid idling and Licensing officers had been speaking to idling taxi drivers to challenge non-compliance.

An idling action campaign, supported by Green Gumption, would initially focus on changing driver behaviour. The campaign would involve recruiting a team of volunteers to act as clean air champions to run a series of awareness-raising events across the Borough.

It was noted that officers had powers to issue fixed penalty notices in cases of persistent idling and although it had been the approach so far not to issue notices, those powers would be used in future and enforcement officers had been trained in how to issue fixed penalty notices for idling where drivers failed to comply.

A copy of the presentation was made available on the Council's website.

Resolved - That the presentation be noted.

17. AIR QUALITY PLAN 2017

Further to the report on the Government's proposals for reducing Nitrogen Dioxide, considered by the Committee on 3 July 2017 (Minute 5 refers), the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing an update on the Air Quality Plan for nitrogen dioxide and its impact on Reading, the recently published Clean Growth Plan and next steps to improve air quality.

The report explained that the draft plan to tackle Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2) had been published on 5 May 2017 following a challenge at the European Courts to the 2015 plan by Client Earth, an environmental lobbying group. The draft plan had remodelled where acceptable levels of NO2 might be exceeded and concluded that significant intervention was likely to be required in 40 local authority areas including Reading and Wokingham. The Committee had agreed the Council's response to the draft plan on 3 July 2017 (Minute 5 refers).

The report stated that the new Air Quality plan had remodeled the air quality data using more up to date figures. Due to the remodeling, Reading was no longer required to prepare an action plan as the new data indicated that the town would meet legal requirements by 2020. The report explained that the modelling indicated that Reading met the legal requirement by a marginal 'pass', which without continued action under the Air Quality Action Plan, could still result in the Council having to take action.

The report also provided details of the Government's Clean Growth Strategy 2017, which was primarily aimed at delivering the fifth carbon budget through domestic action, but included specific measures which impacted on plans to reduce Nitrogen Dioxide, specifically accelerating the shift to low carbon transport. The report added that the Government had indicated its aim to publish a Clean Air Strategy in 2018 to set out how it would meet international commitments to significantly reduce emissions of five damaging air pollutants by 2020 and 2030.

The report explained that, since Government modelling had removed Reading from the list of authorities expected to breach the NO2 limits by 2020, no further action was required in respect of the new Air Quality Plan for Nitrogen Dioxide 2017. However, given concerns about the accuracy of DEFRA's modelling and the continuing need to protect residents' health from exposure to poor air quality, work was still required. A report by the Royal College of Physicians published on 31 October 2017 and believed to be based on 2013 data, had named Reading as one of forty four local authority areas breaching particulate limits based on the World Health Organisations limit values.

The report explained that the Council would continue to deliver on the Air Quality Action Plan, which included delivery of key highways and transport schemes and projects; idling campaigns and as required enforcement and update of the Borough's Smoke Control Zones and the framework around it. Additionally, the Council had reviewed its Local Plan and has made updates to reflect proposals outlined in the Air Quality Plan for Nitrogen Dioxide 2017 and the Clean Growth Strategy.

Resolved –

(1) That the changes to the Air Quality Plan be noted;

(2) That a progress report on vehicle idling be presented to the Committee in summer 2018.

18. READING TRAIN CARE DEPOT – STATUTORY NUISANCE

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the outcome of a statutory noise nuisance investigation at Reading Train Care Depot, impacting on residents of Cardiff Road, Reading.

The report explained that Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd (NRIL) had built Reading Train Care Depot in 2013 under permitted development rights. The depot was currently operated by First Greater Western Limited (trading as Great Western Rail (GWR)) as a light servicing depot carrying out cleaning, maintenance and refuelling of over 40 diesel trains. The depot also included sidings where trains were stacked for a period overnight before returning to service in the early hours of the morning.

The report detailed the history of complaints from local residents about the noise, light and odour nuisance from the site, which had been the subject of extensive communications between the council, NRIL and GWR. A statutory abatement notice had been served in 2013, resulting in construction of a 4m acoustic barrier. However, early in 2014 complaints had begun to be received again after electrification works had impacted the typical rail operations. Investigations had established that a statutory noise nuisance was occurring, which was considered prejudicial to health.

The report explained that as a result of the noise nuisance, statutory notices had been served on Network Rail Infrastructure Limited, First Greater Western Limited and the Board of Directors of each company. Negotiations and work to rectify the matter with both NRIL and GWR had been ongoing for a number of years without a satisfactory conclusion. It was with regret therefore that it had been necessary to undertake formal proceedings. Substantial and careful consideration has been given to the impact of the service of statutory notices, both on the operators and rail users. The Council had issued the abatement notices which gave the recipients six months to abate the nuisance. The recipients had a right to appeal the notices to the magistrates' court. During the period of any appeal the notices would not be suspended. The Council had expressed its willingness to attend a prearranged meeting with the representatives of GWR and NRIL. The Council had also stated that it was prepared to consider mediation if satisfied that this could bring about a speedier abatement of the nuisance.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

(Councillor Duveen declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item. Nature of interest: Councillor Duveen's son worked for Network Rail)

19. ANNUAL CARBON FOOTPRINT REPORT 2016/17

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the Council's progress towards reducing its emissions of greenhouse gases by 50% by 2020 and to zero carbon by 2050. The report showed that the Council has continued to make reductions of carbon emissions and almost reached its 2020 target in 2016/17, with a 13.1% reduction in corporate emissions against the previous year's levels (2015/16). When taking into account the gross emissions of the wider influence of the Council, the footprint decreased by 11.5 %.

The report explained that the 2016/17 carbon footprint for the Council's corporate activities was 45 % lower than the baseline emissions in 2008/09, well ahead of target and on track to meet it early. The total renewably generated energy in 2016/17 had been equivalent to 5% of the total energy use of the council, or 7.1% of energy used in buildings, which continued to move towards the challenging 2020 renewable energy target of 15%. In addition, Reading Transport Ltd continued to invest in its bus fleet to reduce the impact on the environment and improve its efficiency.

The report stated that on-going and new initiatives would support further reductions; these included completing the second and final year of the major street lighting upgrade programme, continued Salix investment in energy efficient technology through building improvement programmes, new procurement of water, a coordinated energy awareness and training programme and sustained improvements in data capture and analysis. It was estimated that the avoided energy costs to the Council from the reduced energy consumption since 2008 were £5.8m (excluding standing charges and other contract charges). In 2016/17 the avoided costs were estimated to be around £1m (excluding standing charges and other contract charges).

The full Reading Borough Council Greenhouse Gas Protocol Report 2016-17 was provided in Appendix 1 of the report.

Resolved –

(1) That the Committee notes the continued reduction of carbon emission for 2016/17, with the Council's corporate activities 45% lower than the baseline emissions in 2008/09, 8.5% ahead of target and the Council's wider activities (including schools and managed services) being 28.8 % lower than the baseline emissions in 2008/09;

(2) That the Committee notes that total renewably generated energy in 2016/17 was equivalent to 5.0% of the total energy use of the council, or 7.1% of energy used in buildings. In addition the Committee recognises that the 2020 renewable energy target continues to be challenging following the significant changes to the 'Feed in Tariff' incentive scheme made by government in 2015/16;

(3) That the Committee notes that total renewably generated energy in 2016/17 was equivalent to 5.0% of the total energy use of the council, or 7.1% of energy used in buildings. In addition the Committee recognises that the 2020 renewable energy target

continues to be challenging following the significant changes to the 'Feed in Tariff' incentive scheme made by government in 2015/16.

20. LOCAL AUTHORITY ENERGY COMPANY

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report proposing that Reading Borough Council join Southampton City Council's (SCC) proposal to establish a 'white label' service to sell energy to residents in the South of England in Local Authority (LA) areas across Berkshire, Hampshire and Oxfordshire.

The report stated that just below 14% of Reading households remained in fuel poverty, meaning they could not afford to heat their homes. Continually rising energy prices were putting ever increasing pressure on low income families and households. A typical home on a standard variable tariff in the UK spent £1,135 per annum on energy; over £300 more than the lowest tariff available (October 2017 figures). Reading's residents and businesses paid an estimated £109m p.a for energy and these prices were set to rise, worsening the problem of fuel poverty and weakening the local economy.

The report explained that there were currently 60 energy suppliers in the UK, of which the 'big six' supplied 82% of customers and other companies 18%. With the energy market starting to diversify, Local Authorities were getting involved in energy supply. The first LA owned company to set up in the UK was Robin Hood Energy in 2015, followed more recently by Bristol Energy. A new energy supplier called Rayleigh Energy was setting up in Portsmouth as a private/LA venture.

The report noted that a number of Local Authorities had implemented collective switching campaigns. Reading Borough Council had not done so, preferring to focus resources on helping those most at need who were least likely to register for this kind of service. The Council had been working with APSE Energy, SCC and a number of other Southern authorities to establish an approach to jointly supply energy. It had been concluded that it was best to operate as a grouping of LAs to gain a sufficient market share. This could provide a reliable, good value local energy tariff.

The report stated that a Local Authority energy company offer in the South could:

- Help tackle fuel poverty by reducing the cost of energy for residents.
- Create income for RBC.
- Enable a fully licensed company in the future.
- Reduce carbon footprint and improve energy security of borough.
- Create jobs.
- Deliver further energy related services to the community creating further jobs and decarbonising Reading.

In June 2017 the SCC Cabinet had approved the establishment of such a LA offering. SCC has written to potential partnering LAs to gain endorsement for phase 1 of the scheme, which was set out in four possible phases. The first phase was the establishment of a regionally branded 'white label' contract with a licensed energy supply company. Southampton would manage this on behalf of a number of partnering LAs in the southern region. Subsequent phases offered the opportunity to

provide additional sustainable energy products and services and potentially to establish a LA owned licensed energy company in the South.

Resolved -

That the Committee delegates to the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Head of Legal Services and the Director of Finance, the decision to enter into a contractual arrangement with Southampton City Council to supply energy to customers in Reading Borough.

21. WINTER MAINTENANCE SERVICE PLAN 2017/18

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Committee of the outputs of the Winter Service Plan 2016/17 and setting out details of the Winter Service Plan for 2017/18.

The report explained the main features of the Winter Service Plan for 2017/18 which had been produced by Transport and Streetcare Services following the review of the 2016/2017 Plan, and was available as a background paper.

The report explained that the review of salting of pedestrian footbridges had found following benchmarking that none of the other Berkshire Authorities pre-treated pedestrian footbridges in isolation. The report itemised the main logistical, operational and practical problems associated with salting footbridges and explained why it was not appropriate to consider treating Christchurch Footbridge in isolation from other footbridges, or the entire length of a designated 'pedestrian/cycle route'.

The Committee noted that in consultation with the Council's contractor, it had been agreed to reduce the salt stock from 1200 tonnes to 750 tonnes due to the degrading condition of 500 tonnes of older salt stored under sheeting, which was purchased to increase resilience following the severe winter of 2009/10, it was proposed to prioritise using the older salt and to increase the spread rate from 7g per square metre to 8g per square metre to ensure that recommended salt spread rates were maintained.

Resolved –

(1) That the outputs of the Winter Service Plan 2016/2017 be noted;

(2) That the Winter Service Plan 2017/2018 be approved.

22. MAJOR TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAY PROJECTS - UPDATE

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report updating the Committee on the current major transport projects in Reading, namely:

- Reading Station Area Redevelopment (Cow Lane Bridges)
- Thames Valley Berkshire Growth Deal Schemes - Southern Reading Mass Rapid Transit, Green Park Station, TVP Park and Ride, East Reading Mass Rapid Transit and National Cycle Network Route 422

- Unfunded schemes – Reading West Station upgrade and Third Thames Bridge

The report also provided key future programme dates associated with these schemes, where available.

The Committee noted that that at the recent meeting of the Berkshire Local Transport Body, full financial approval had been granted for the East Reading MRT and for phases three and four of the South Reading MRT. The Planning application for East MRT had been submitted and was being considered by both Reading and Wokingham Planning Authorities. It was planned to commence phases three and four of South Reading MRT early in 2018 starting with the sections in the Town Centre on London Street and Bridge Street.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

(Councillor Duveen declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item. Nature of interest: Councillor Duveen's son worked for Network Rail)

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 7.27pm).