

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
16 JULY 2014

Present: Councillors Tickner (Chair), Anderson, Ayub, Chrisp, Dennis, Duveen, K Edwards, Jones, Maskell, Page, Stanford-Beale, Whitham and Willis.

Apologies: Councillor DL Absolom

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of 19 March and 11 June 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. MINUTES OF TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meetings of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee of 13 March and 25 June 2014 were received.

4. MINUTES OF JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD

The Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board of 13 March 2014 were submitted.

Resolved: That the Minutes be noted.

5. AWE LOCAL LIAISON COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report updating the Committee on recent changes to Reading Borough Council's Local Liaison Committee (LLC) representatives, the most recent LLC meeting, and the creation of a Pangbourne Pipeline Decommissioning steering group, and making the Committee aware of a review of wider LLC membership that was presently underway.

The report stated that there was no legal duty for the operator of a Nuclear Licensed site to host a Local Liaison Committee (or Site Stakeholder Group (SSG) as they were called at some Nuclear Licensed sites), nor was there any national guidance stipulating the composition of their membership or Terms of Reference. The AWE LLC provided a link between the work undertaken on the AWE sites and the surrounding community, by bringing together elected representatives from local councils along with AWEs senior management. AWE plc (via the MOD's management and operation contract with AWE Management Limited) had responsibility for running the LLC and the committee met four times a year, providing a platform to discuss the operation of the site as it affected the local community.

The current RBC representatives on the AWE LLC were Councillors Stanford-Beale and Livingston. The current membership of the AWE LLC was restricted to AWE and MoD staff, Councillors from surrounding areas, and the West Berkshire Council Emergency Planning Officer. Membership of the AWE LLC had been a topic of discussion at recent LLC meetings and a steering group had been set up to review the terms of reference of the group, and the code of conduct for members. A sub-group had also been set up to review the criteria for LLC membership going forward. No decisions had yet been

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made although initial indications suggested that local MPs and Emergency Planning Officers from each Council were likely to be included as additional formal members of the AWE LLC in future.

The report also outlined the history of the Pangbourne Pipeline which had been used to discharge pre-treated wastewater from the AWE Aldermaston site into the river near Pangbourne until its closure in 2005 and replacement the following year by an on-site waste treatment site. The discharge end of the Pangbourne pipeline, known as the sparge pipe, had now been dismantled and disposed of safely, and the remainder of the pipeline would be removed or otherwise made safe in accordance with procedures agreed with and monitored by regulators. A Pangbourne Pipeline Decommissioning Steering Group was being established, although the membership of the Group had not yet been confirmed at the time of writing the report.

At the invitation of the Chair, Mr P Burt addressed the Committee.

The report had attached:

- A Local Liaison Committee Joint Steering Group discussion paper on options to broaden the membership of the LLC (Appendix A);
- A letter from Councillor Page to the Secretary of State for Defence dated 12 February 2014. The letter had appended Councillor Page's responses to two questions asked by Mr P Burt at the Council Meeting on 28 January 2014. Councillor Page had requested the Ministry of Defence to ask the AWE LLC to view sympathetically a proposal to extend its membership to include local community groups and non-government organisations, similar to the practice of other LLCs around the country (Appendix B);
- The response to Councillor Page's letter from the Philip Dunne MP, Minister for Defence Equipment, Support & Technology, dated 13 March 2014 (Appendix C).

Resolved:

- (1) That the response from Philip Dunne MP of 13 March 2014, in particular, the reference to the lack of national guidance on attendance by the public, local community groups and non-government organisations at LLC meetings, and the recognition that different LLCs might have different attendance arrangements, be noted;
- (2) That the Council's representatives on the AWE Local Liaison Committee re-iterate the Council's position as stated in Councillor Page's letter of 12 February 2014;
- (3) That a representative of AWE be invited, if possible, to the next meeting of the Committee to discuss the composition of the Local Liaison Committee.

(Councillor Willis declared an interest in the above item. Nature of Interest: Councillor Willis was employed by the Ministry of Defence.)

6. WATER SECURITY SCRUTINY REVIEW - UPDATE

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report highlighting the Water Security scrutiny review carried out in November 2012 by the External Overview & Scrutiny Commission.

The report stated that in November 2012 the External Overview and Scrutiny Commission had set out a framework to work with partners to review a Water Security and Management Plan for Reading. The outcome of this process was attached as Appendix A to the report. The Commission had reviewed the provision of the water supply for Reading, measures to deal with leakage, waste water (foul and surface water sewers) and the need to reduce demand for water and to promote water efficiency.

As a part of this process, Thames Water had produced a Water Resources Management Plan for the period 2010 to 2035, which included consideration of climate change, population growth, a forecast for future clean water needs, demand management, how to reduce water leakage, mains replacement, waste water infrastructure and flooding. This included the value of investment in Reading up to 2014.

The report stated that Thames Water had carried out a number of investments in their infrastructure over the past few years which had had a temporary impact on the Reading Road Network over recent months. Whilst this investment was essential in providing secure water supplies and waste water capacity, the impact of these improvement works could be significant. Thames Water had worked closely with Reading Borough Council to ensure that these planned works minimised disruption wherever possible.

More recently, Thames Water had identified a number of structural failures with their infrastructure (primarily emergency repairs resulting from water leaks or sewer collapses). Whilst by definition these works were emergency repairs and could not be planned, the negative impact that these works created was significant. This could be evidenced most recently with the closure of the A4 Bath Road for four weeks during May 2014, due to a major sewer collapse. The combination of emergency closures such as the Bath Road (there were currently repairs being carried out restricting London Road as well) and the impact of the current mains replacement programme in the Town Centre and on the IDR, at Great Knollys Street, was significant and was causing delays to traffic in Reading.

The purpose of reviewing the Water Management Plan now was to ensure that the Plan remained current and was adequate to minimise the ongoing infrastructure failures.

Resolved:

- (1) That the work carried out by the External Overview and Scrutiny Commission as detailed in Appendix A, be noted;**

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- (2) That an update review be carried out and Thames Water be invited to a future SEPT Committee meeting to provide a programme update for Reading;
- (3) That a Task and Finish Group comprising Councillors Jones (Chair), Crisp, Duveen, K Edwards, Maskell, Stanford-Beale and Whitham be established to undertake the review and report back to the Committee;
- (4) That the Task and Finish Group be authorised to finalise its terms of reference at its first meeting.

7. SEVERE WEATHER POTHOLE FUNDING AWARD - ADDITIONAL ALLOCATION 2014-15

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval to extend the additional Pothole Repair Plan beyond July 2014 so that it could include unclassified roads within Reading with completion due by March 2015.

The report set out the Council's statutory duties relating to highway maintenance and contained details of the current procedures for the inspection and repair of potholes.

Section 4.5 of the report contained details of the additional Pothole Repair Plan for 2014-15, which had been produced following the award by the Government in June 2014 of an additional sum of £163,833 for pothole repairs. The Repair Plan included a proposal that, in order to make best use of the funding available within existing time constraints, half of the additional award be used on additional road resurfacing schemes, which would enable some of the reserve schemes (currently unfunded) which had been approved for Major & Minor Roads resurfacing to be tackled in the current financial year. This preventative measure would also help improve the resilience of the road network and reduce the number of potholes that would have developed following another winter.

It was also proposed that progress on the additional Pothole Repair Plan 2014/15 was reported to meetings of the Traffic Management Sub Committee.

Resolved:

- (1) That the additional pothole repair plan proposal outlined in Section 4.5 be approved;
- (2) That an update on progress be reported to future meetings of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee;
- (3) That a revised schedule of those previously unfunded reserve schemes for Major & Minor Roads resurfacing which would now be progressed, be sent to all Members of the Council;

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8. FLOOD & WATER MANAGEMENT ACT 2010 - POST 2013-14 WINTER FLOODING UPDATE, SECTION 19 FLOOD REPORT AND APPROVAL TO SPEND SEVERE WEATHER RECOVERY SCHEME GRANT

Further to Minute 28 of the meeting of 19 March 2014, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report updating the Committee on progress on the Council's response to flooding, and providing Reading Borough Council's Section 19 Flood Investigation report as required by the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 (FWMA).

The report also sought the Committee's approval to spend the Severe Weather Recovery Scheme & the Severe Weather Recovery Scheme Tranche 2 Grant Allocations on the following flood reduction measures in Reading, as identified in the Section 19 Flood Investigation report, in order to carry out the Council's responsibilities as the Lead Local Flood Authority as set out in the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 and Flood Risk Regulations 2009.

- Circuit Lane - Holybrook Breech Scheme;
- Island Road Flood Reduction Scheme;
- Investigations and Flood Prevention Schemes (to be submitted to the Committee in due course).

The report also stated that a Reading Recovery Co-ordination Group had been set up on 24 February 2014 with members of RBC Emergency Planning, Housing, Highways, Streetcare, Communications, Finance, Policy and Parks Departments, as well as Thames Valley Police, the Environment Agency, Canal & River Trust, Thames Water, Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue, 7 Rifles Army Corp and RE3 Waste. The Group had established an action log and a wide range of actions had been addressed, including communication, sandbag recovery, contamination, financial assistance to householders and businesses affected by flooding, clean-up after flooding subsided, funding opportunities, psychological support, signposting, future flood prevention and business continuity. The vast majority of these recovery actions were now completed, with only the longer term restoration of banks remaining outstanding, and action plans for these issues were addressed in the report.

The report had appended:

- A list of flooded properties, together with key issues (Appendix A);
- The Section 19 Flood Investigation report (Appendix B);
- The Reading Recovery Co-ordination Group flooding action log, as at 30 June 2014 (Appendix C).

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Resolved:

- (1) That the progress made following the flooding event be noted;
- (2) That the Section 19 Flood Investigation report be noted;
- (3) That the Capital spend proposals of the Severe Weather Recovery Scheme & the Severe Weather Recovery Scheme Tranche 2 Grant Allocation, be approved;
- (4) That the additional flood investigation work be noted;
- (5) That the Committee's appreciation of the work of the Emergency Planning & Risk Management Officer, other Council officers and other organisations involved in the Reading Recovery Co-ordinating Group during this difficult period, be placed on record.

9. LETTINGS BOARDS - PILOT PROPOSAL IN PART OF REDLANDS WARD

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report stating that the rapid growth in the student population in the Borough had had significant impacts on residents and communities, particularly in Redlands Ward and parts of Park and Katesgrove Wards, with one source of continuing complaint from local residents over recent years relating to the proliferation of estate agent letting boards within these areas.

In responding to the issue, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Transport and Planning had invited all estate agents dealing with private lettings in the Borough to a meeting on 20 March 2014 to start to address the issue. The consensus of those agents who attending the meeting was that they would support a voluntary "ban" on boards advertising house and flat "lets". The meeting had resolved that a letter be sent by the Lead Councillor to all agents to invite agreement to participate in a pilot that would involve agents volunteering not to use "To Let" or "Let By" boards in a defined area for a specific period.

The report set out the details of the pilot, how the success of the pilot would be assessed and an outline of the other options open to the Council and the local community should the voluntary ban prove not be satisfactory.

The report had attached:

- Details of Class 3A of Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) regulations 2007 (Appendix 1);
- A copy of the letter from the Lead Councillor (Appendix 2);
- A copy of the voluntary agreement and a plan of the area to which the agreement applied (Appendix 3).

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Gavin addressed the Committee.

Resolved:

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- (1) That the contents of the letter recently sent to all agents involved in the letting of private rented property in the Borough inviting them to take part in a voluntary ban on the use of letting boards, be noted and endorsed;
- (2) That the alternative options available to the Council and the local community, should the voluntary ban prove not to be satisfactory, be noted;
- (3) That it be noted that a report would be brought back after the end of the voluntary ban trial period setting out the results of the pilot voluntary ban and, if necessary because the voluntary ban had clearly not been successful in reducing the harmful proliferation of letting boards, with proposals for further action.

10. READING'S CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2013-2020 - PERFORMANCE REPORT, OCTOBER 2013 TO MARCH 2014

Further to Minute 15 of the Committee's meeting of 20 November 2013, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on progress against the targets in the Action Plans during the first six months' operation of Reading's Climate Change Strategy, from October 2013 to March 2014. The full performance report against all of the actions across the eight themes of the Strategy was set out at Appendix A.

The covering report stated that across all partners, 8% of the actions were 'red', 40% were 'amber' and 49% were 'green'. For the delivery of actions for which Reading Borough Council was the lead, this improved a little with 6% red, 34% amber and 55% green.

Overall, the report concluded that there had been some significant progress, but there were also many areas where timescales had slipped, where local delivery partners were not able to commit, or where national policy changes had impacted delivery. The Council's delivery was slightly better than the partnership with areas of strength being energy and transport. National policy uncertainty, in particular around Green Deal had impacted delivery in a number of chapters.

There were also a number of areas where the Council and/or partners were no longer able to resource actions, or where a significant review of actions was required, in particular, the Purchase, Supply and Consumption and Education and Influencing Behaviour chapters.

Finally, the report stated that in addition to the delivery of the Strategy Action Plan, a wider participatory framework had been established called Reading Climate Action Network (RCAN) which encouraged organisations and individuals to meet challenges such as aiming to reduce their carbon footprint by 7% per annum.

B Burfoot, Sustainability Manager, gave a presentation which included examples of successes and follow-up actions across the eight themes, together with targets and challenges.

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Resolved:

- (1) That the outcome of the first six-monthly monitoring report of the Reading Climate Change Strategy, 'Reading Means Business on Climate Change', for the period October 2013 - March 2014, be noted;
- (2) That Council officers and other partners involved in the Strategy be encouraged to continue with their work.

11. BUS SERVICE OPERATORS GRANT (BSOG) DEVOLUTION OF FUNDING

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report updating the Committee on the transfer of responsibility for payment of Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) for contracted bus services to Reading Borough Council (RBC), from the Department for Transport (DfT).

The report stated that the DfT had informed RBC on 30 September 2013 of its intention to devolve payment of Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) for contracted bus services to local councils as part of its BSOG reforms. The concept behind BSOG reform had previously been consulted on and despite the responses of RBC and others that this was not felt to be an effective reform, and in effect only moved the same funding around via a different method, the DfT had made the changes. The effect of this decision was to make RBC responsible for receiving money from the DfT and then making payments of the BSOG to operators of contract services.

Despite the above reservations a check of the proposed level of devolved BSOG grant to RBC (and thence to operators) with the level of funding that had previously been directly claimed by operators of RBC contract services had showed that there would be sufficient to make the same level of payments, although these would not be able to rise with inflation or be able to reflect any increase in contracted bus operation over time.

The report contained details of the first two payments of BSOG made to RBC, in January and April 2014.

The report also stated that RBC had tendered bus contracts for the Greenwave and Nighttrack bus services, and these had been won through an OJEU procurement process by Reading Transport Ltd who had offered the most economically advantageous tenders. The contracts had started in November 2012 and all tenders assumed the then current arrangements for BSOG claims would continue. While these arrangements could be varied to not pay the BSOG element, this would likely result in the cost of the contracts being revised upwards to take account of the lack of BSOG received by the bus operator.

It was therefore proposed in Paragraph 5.4 to continue to accept claims for reimbursement of BSOG from RBC, from the bus operator concerned, based on the DfT BSOG criteria of mileage operated, up to the level of grant received from the DfT and for these claims to be paid quarterly in arrears.

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- (1) That the report be noted;
- (2) That officers continue to implement the re-imbusement arrangements set out in paragraph 5.4 of the report.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 8.25pm).