

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE - 19 MARCH 2018

QUESTION NO. 4 in accordance with Standing Order No.36

Zahid Aziz to ask the Chair of Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee:

#### Extension of A329(M) and Third Thames Bridge - Update

Please could the Lead Councillor provide me with an update on the extension of the A329 (M) - the 3rd Thames Bridge? Our neighbours in Oxfordshire continue to clog Caversham and create the bottlenecks that Reading residents have to suffer every day.

**REPLY by the Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee (Councillor Debs Absolom):**

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

**REPLY by the Lead Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (Councillor Page):**

I thank Mr Aziz for his question.

The provision of a Third Thames Crossing to the east of Reading is a longstanding element of our transport strategy to improve travel options throughout the wider area. This scheme would address a key north-south bottleneck on the highway network and help to manage traffic congestion to the north and south of the river. The Cross Thames Travel Group has been established to progress development of the scheme with representation from the local MPs, Councils and Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Recent progress includes preparation of the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC), which is required by national guidance for a scheme of this size. This work was completed last year and was discussed at a Summit meeting called by Matt Rodda, MP for Reading East last September. The SOBC demonstrates there is a strong case for a two lane traffic bridge in the previously preferred location, linking the A3290 Thames Valley Park Drive to the A4155 Henley Road. Full documentation for the business case is available on Wokingham Borough Council's website at - <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/parking-road-works-and-transport/transport-and-roads-guidance-and-plans/>

The traffic modelling undertaken for the SOBC concluded that the scheme would provide significant congestion relief in areas including Reading, Sonning and Henley-on-Thames. The results of the modelling analysis show there would be no strategic reassignment of trips, with localised increases in traffic on the existing road network

identified which future work would look to address through appropriate mitigation measures.

Unfortunately, due to the historic opposition of Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council, previous bids to Government to secure funding for this further work including development of the full business case, planning application and construction costs have been unsuccessful to date.

However, the Council will continue to work with all project partners through the Cross Thames Travel Group to explore options to fund future development of this important scheme that would result in significant benefits to the wider area.