

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	11 SEPTEMBER 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	6
TITLE:	PETITION UPDATE - TOWN CENTRE ACCESS RESTRICTION OPERATIONAL TIMES		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	TRANSPORTATION & STREETCARE	WARDS:	ABBEY
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JOB TITLE:	ASSISTANT NETWORK MANAGER	E-MAIL:	Cris.butler@reading.gov.uk

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To update the Sub-Committee on the investigation carried out by officers following the submission of a petition to the Traffic Management Sub-Committee on 25th June 2014 requesting a review of the Town Centre access restriction operational times.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Sub-Committee notes the report.
- 2.2 That, based on the existing high level of blue badge parking spaces in the Town Centre and the need to continue to protect the Town Centre road network for the benefit of all users, the operational hours of the access restriction in the Town Centre is not changed.
- 2.3 That the lead petitioner be informed accordingly.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The provision of movement restrictions and associated criteria is specified within existing Traffic Management Policies and Standards.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 A petition containing 228 signatures was presented to the Traffic Management Sub-Committee on 25th June 2014 asking the Council to reduce the operational times of the Town Centre access restriction (currently applies 7am-11am and 4pm-7pm).

4.2 The petition read - "We, the undersigned urge Reading Borough Council to reduce the hours during which we are unable to drive into Reading Town Centre and park. Denying us access for 7 hours a day, in combination with the difficulties of working out where we can and cannot drive, has caused many disabled people in particular, to do their shopping elsewhere. Reading must have lost a great deal of trade because of this.

We ask that the morning restriction should end at 9.30am and that the afternoon/evening restriction should end at 6.30pm."

4.3 Councillor Page as Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport asked officers to investigate the request and provide a response to the next Traffic Management Sub-committee. This report is the response as requested.

4.4 The adjustments to the traffic system and access times in Reading Town Centre were made in April 2011 and were introduced in preparation of the major changes associated with the redevelopment of Reading Station.

4.5 The revised access restrictions were introduced to improve and strengthen the existing access and pedestrian zone restrictions in the Town Centre. The revision was necessary to ensure the central area is used appropriately both for the benefit of the Town Centre and the wider road network as Reading relies heavily on public transport and peak hour bus operations must be protected.

4.6 The current access restriction is in place in St Mary's Butts (between Hosier Street and West Street), West Street, Friar Street west and Minster Street. This restriction operates between the hours of 7am to 11am and 4pm to 7pm. The previous restriction was an 11am to 4pm Pedestrian Zone restriction covering all of St Mary's Butts, West Street, Friar Street, Broad Street, Cross Street, Queen Victoria Street, Station Road, Oxford Rd (between Broad Street and Cheapside) and Minster Street.

- 4.7 The majority of blue badge parking spaces in Reading Town Centre are still accessible at all times. There are 292 on-street spaces available to blue badge holders in the central area (46 designated disabled bays and 219 pay and display spaces free to blue badge holders, with a further 27 spaces available on single or double yellow lines). There are also a further 179 disabled parking bays within the off-street Town Centre car parks which are accessible at all times.
- 4.8 The revised access restrictions prevent motorists with a blue badge from accessing the 24 designated parking bays in St Mary's Butts, West Street and Friar Street at peak times between 7am and 11am and from 4pm to 7pm. As long as entry to the restricted area is made before the restriction applies (i.e. at 6.59am or 3.59pm), blue badge holders can still use these spaces for a maximum of four hours.
- 4.9 Blue badge parking is available at all times in Blagrove Street (Near the Town Hall), Oxford Road near Argos, St Mary's Butts (southern end), Kings Road, Abbey Square, Forbury Road near the Crown Court, Castle Street, Greyfriars Road, the Pay and Display areas in Oxford Road, St Marys Butts, Valpy Street, Kings Road, Abbey Street, Castle Street Garrard Street and Cheapside, and all Town Centre car parks including a shop mobility scheme offered by the Oracle. There are also areas of double yellow lines or single yellow lines in Friar Street east, Greyfriars Road, Hosier Street and St Mary's Butts (southern end).
- 4.10 Therefore, based on the existing high level of blue badge parking spaces in the Town Centre and the need to continue to protect the Town Centre road network for the benefit of all users, it is not recommended to adjust the operational hours of the access restriction in the Town Centre.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The lead petitioner will be informed of the findings of the Sub-Committee.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None arising from this report.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:-

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 The Council completed an equality impact assessment as part of the original scheme in April 2011.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None arising from this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Traffic Management Sub-Committee report - June 2014.