

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

<b>TO:</b>	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB COMMITTEE		
<b>DATE:</b>	4 NOVEMBER 2014	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	10
<b>TITLE:</b>	PLAY STREETS UPDATE		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	COUNCILLOR TONY PAGE	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
<b>SERVICE:</b>	TRANSPORTATION & STREETCARE	<b>WARDS:</b>	BOROUGHWIDE
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#### 1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the sub-committee with progress on Play Streets.
- 1.2 As indicated within previous reports to TMAP and TM Sub-committee, Play Streets, or similar type schemes, is a concept whereby residents close their street for, typically, a short period of time to through traffic to enable children to play in the street safely. The reasons for play streets are set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.3 Over the past 18months a number of streets across the borough have taken part in play street activities. The current list of Play Streets is shown in Appendix 2.
- 1.4 The experimental traffic regulation order that has been used to close roads for play streets is reaching its 18 month legal limit. At this point we have to decide to make the order permanent or allow it to expire. As Play Streets are a temporary road closure, for a short duration and requires the flexibility of future dates not yet determined a permanent traffic regulation order is not appropriate. Therefore, it is recommended to proceed with Play Streets using the Town Police Clauses Act 1847.

## 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 To note the report.
- 2.2 That the current experimental traffic regulation order used for Play Streets be allowed to expire at the end of its 18month duration.
- 2.3 That Play Streets is continued using the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 to temporarily close roads.
- 2.4 That any objections received to the temporary closure of streets for Play Streets are reported back to the Sub Committee at an appropriate time.

## 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Play Streets meets a number of international, national and local policy objectives. Appendix 1 highlights 10 reasons for Play Streets and the positive impact it has on society, education and the health and well-being of not just children but also of the wider community.

## 4. UPDATE

- 4.1 The current Play Streets scheme, although limited to a ridged road closure process, has been regarded as a success. The scheme has created interest across the Borough with a number of enquires received by officers. The number of streets now engaged in Play Streets has increased over the past year (Appendix 2) and there is growing interest from community groups such as Neighbourhood Action Groups and GLOBE groups.
- 4.2 The current experimental traffic regulation order that has been used to close roads for play streets is reaching its 18 month legal limit. At this point we have to decide to make the order permanent or allow it to expire. As Play Streets is for a temporary road closure, for a short duration requiring the flexibility of future dates not yet determined, a permanent traffic regulation order is not appropriate. Therefore, it is recommended to proceed with Play Streets using the Town Police Clauses Act 1847. This is nationally recognised legislation used to close roads for short duration events and is used widely across the country including within Thames Valley Police force area.
- 4.3 No objections have been received to any of the current Play Street road closures although officers received two concerns prior to the

first closures of two streets. A third 'objection' was received to the closure of a street that has not made an application to join the scheme to date.

- 4.4 It seems that some people do not agree with the principal of the scheme by allowing children to play out in their street rather than the road closure itself. The most common reaction is that children should not play in the road and go to a local park. There are also some fears associated with children playing in the street such as: allowing children to 'run amok' and create damage. These reactions are about the idea itself and do not really relate to the road closure. If we are supporting Play Streets we should be approving the scheme on the basis of its core objectives as highlighted in Appendix 2 and arguments against the scheme should not be used to object to the road closure itself.
- 4.5 We close roads temporarily for a variety of reasons but mostly for road works. Under temporary road closures there is no mechanism to object as the road will be returned to its original state in the future. As long as access is maintained, which is a requirement of the Play Street scheme, the reasons for objecting to the road closure is largely removed. However, where objections are made to the closure of streets for Play Streets rather than the principals of the scheme itself then they will be brought back to the sub-committee. At the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2013 meeting of TMAP it was agreed that reasonable reasons for objection are: a) creating additional traffic problems, b) Too few people taking part to justify closing the street, c) a previous play street was not managed properly. These reasons should be given serious attention and officers will advise the lead member of Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport of any concerns that may lead to a Play Streets event being cancelled between Sub-committee meetings.
- 4.6 The presentation of the road closure itself is quite varied across schemes. All closures shall be managed to ensure access can be maintained. A physical removable barrier is recommended as it has to be managed. Wheelie bins have been used to create a removable barrier and in principal this meets our requirements. However, the recognised ROAD CLOSED sign must be displayed whilst the street is closed as should be the case with any road closure.
- 4.7 Feedback from the community indicates that gaining the initial support to close a street for the scheme can be difficult. The requirement to demonstrate 2/3 support has proved to be a barrier and we have been asked if this could be relaxed. The recommendation for 2/3 support was intended to be a guide and this

is flexible. It is for the applicant to make and explain the case for Play Streets where it may not be so easy to demonstrate 2/3 support.

## **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

5.1 To enhance quality of life in all neighbourhoods and build communities where everyone is included and has opportunities to succeed.

5.2 To improve the health of the population, prevent and treat ill-health and promote good health and lifestyle for people of all ages.

## **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

6.1 The success of Play Streets is dependent on local communities engaging and taking ownership of the event.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Traffic Regulation Orders are required to enable the closures to take place.

## **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 An equality impact assessment has not been carried out at this stage but will be considered at the time that the road closures are known.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The cost of advertising the legal Order.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 13 September 2012 TMAP report
- 10.2 17 January 2013 TMAP report
- 10.3 14 March 2013 TMAP report
- 10.4 13 June 2013 TM Sub-committee
- 10.5 13 March 2014 TM Sub-committee