

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
- 18 MARCH 2019**

Present: Councillor Debs Absolom (Chair);
Councillors Ayub (Vice-Chair), David Absolom, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Gittings, Khan, Maskell, O'Connell, Page, Stanford-Beale and J Williams

Apologies: Councillors Robinson

33. MINUTES - 21 NOVEMBER & 12 DECEMBER 2018

The Minutes of the meetings held on 21 November and 12 December 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

34. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meetings of Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 10 January 2018 were received.

35. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were submitted:

- AWE Local Liaison Committee of 7 November 2018
- Joint Waste Disposal Board of 12 October 2018

Resolved - That the Minutes be noted.

36. NORTH READING AND LOWER CAVERSHAM FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

Joanne Emberson-Wines, Nick Read, Angelin Hallaways and Lewis Purbrick from the Environment Agency gave a presentation on the North Reading and Lower Caversham Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Joanne Emberson-Wines explained that the aim was to draw up a scheme for extreme flood events when there was a high amount of rainfall in a short amount of time and as a result to reduce the risk of flooding to many properties in Caversham. The presentation covered why the Environment Agency were working on the scheme, the flood risk in Reading, aerial pictures of the flooding in 2003 and pictures of the flooding in 2014, recent survey work and details of the option being considered.

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The option for consideration was not final and the aim was to find a scheme that was viable and acceptable for everyone, it would also be based on a solid benefit cost basis. Funding for the scheme also had to be found. The next stage would see work carried out to look at areas along the scheme in greater detail and work would also be undertaken with the community to see what would be suitable in each area. Further modelling work would also be carried out which would be shared when it was available. Discussions would also continue with partners such as Thames Water. All information would be independently verified using a third party test and assessment would continue once the scheme had been built. All schemes would have to be in keeping with the natural environment but would also have to enhance the environment. The need to improve engagement with the community was recognised and more/different ways of engaging with the public would take place; the scheme had to be seen as a community project with the Environment Agency and the community working together.

At the invitation of the Chair Councillor Davies, Caversham Ward Councillor, Mr and Mrs Goddard, Daniel Hayman, Heron Island Residents Association, and John Booth, Reading Friends of the Earth, addressed the Committee on their concerns and issues about the scheme and asked a number of questions.

The Chair told the Committee that discussions had taken place with the Environment Agency about holding other community events about the scheme and that the Agency would come back to future meetings when the scheme was at a more advanced stage.

Resolved - That Joanne Emberson-Wines, Nick Read, Angelin Hallaways and Lewis Purbrick be thanked for their presentation and residents thanked for attending the meeting and asking questions.

37. CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing the Committee with a summary of the Council's intention in respect of the motion that had been moved at Council on 26 February 2019 that had declared a 'Climate Emergency', the report also set out the intended course of action.

The report explained that in February 2019 the Council had received a petition from 798 residents urging the Council to declare a Climate Emergency. A motion was moved at Council on 26 February 2019 confirming that the Council believed the world was now in a 'Climate Emergency' and committing the Council to play a full role in achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. The Council had instructed officers to report to SEPT and Policy Committees on further potential measures that could accelerate the timescale for reducing carbon dioxide emissions to zero by 2030, but recognised that this date could only be achieved with substantial policy changes from national government. The Council had also requested officers to ensure that forthcoming revisions to the Local Transport Plan and Climate Change Strategy and any other relevant policy statements, reflected the urgency of the motion. The Council had also instructed the Chief Executive to write to local MPs and to the Prime Minister and to relevant Government departments (DEFRA,

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MHCLG, DfT and Treasury) setting out the above requirements and the need for new legislation and financial support to deliver this radical agenda.

In response to a question by Tony Goodchild, Extinction Rebellion Reading, Councillor Page explained that work on the Climate Change Strategy was ongoing and included 127 actions. The work would need to be done properly, be given appropriate and adequate time to complete and done in partnership, involving a range of officers and departments. When completed the updated Strategy would be submitted to a future meeting.

Resolved -

- (1) That officers be instructed to submit a report to the next meeting on further potential measures that could accelerate the timescale for reducing carbon dioxide emissions to zero by 2030;**
- (2) That the Chief Executive of the Council be instructed to write to local MPs, the Prime Minister and to relevant Government Departments setting out the requirements and the need for new Legislation and financial support to deliver this agenda;**
- (3) That officers be instructed to ensure that upcoming strategy revisions including the Local Transport Plan and Climate Change Strategies reflect the urgency of the motion.**

38. MAIN MODIFICATIONS TO THE LOCAL PLAN

Further to Minute 23 of the meeting held on 21 November 2018, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report presenting the Committee with the main modifications to the Local Plan.

The report explained that the Council was replacing its existing development plans (the Core Strategy, Reading Central Area Action Plan and Sites and Detailed Policies Document) with a single Local Plan to set out how Reading would develop up to 2036. Three consultations had been carried out on this Local Plan between 2016 and 2018 and the Plan had been submitted to the Secretary of State on 29 March 2018, which had marked the beginning of a public examination that had been held by an independent Planning Inspector. The Inspector had informed the Council that main modifications would be needed to make sure that the plan was sound and legally compliant. These main modifications needed to be subject to consultation and a Sustainability Appraisal. However, the Inspector had not yet provided a list of modifications, despite informing the Council that these would be received by 1 March 2019. Therefore, although it had been anticipated that a full list of modifications could be considered by the Committee for consultation, this was not the case.

Resolved - That the position regarding main modifications to the Local Plan be noted.

39. CONSULTATION ON STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report asking the Committee to approve for community involvement the consultation paper on the Statement of Community Involvement. An Equality Impact Assessment was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and the proposed consultation paper on the Statement of Community Involvement was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The report explained that the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was a planning document that detailed how consultation and community involvement on plans and applications would be carried out. It was a statutory requirement to have an SCI in place and one of the considerations for examination of any future development plans would be whether it had complied with the SCI. The Council's most recent SCI had been adopted in March 2014 and there was now an opportunity to consider whether there was a need to revise the SCI, to ask the community whether this represented the best way of consulting, learn from experience and take account of any legislative changes. Rather than produce a full draft at this stage it had been proposed to consult on this in the form of a discussion paper.

Resolved - That the Consultation Paper on the Statement of Community Involvement, attached to the report at Appendix 2, be approved for community involvement.

40. CHANGES TO THE SELF-BUILD REGISTER PROCESS

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report asking the Committee to consider whether eligibility tests or fees should be introduced in determining planning applications for self-build homes.

The report stated that there was a statutory requirement for the Council to maintain a Self-Build Register, which listed those who had registered an interest in building their own home in the Borough. Reading's Self-Build Register had been in existence since 2015, but up to the current time the Council had not sought to apply any eligibility tests or charge a fee. The report considered whether such tests or fees should be introduced, particularly since the number of entries on the Register might have implications for the Council's functions, mainly in determining planning applications.

The legislation enabled authorities to charge a fee for entry onto the Register, but given that the number of new entrants each year onto the Register would be relatively small, averaging one per week for the previous three years, and could potentially decline with the introduction of local eligibility tests, the report recommended that introducing a charge would not be worthwhile. The Council had also received New Burdens Funding from Government which was of a level that would cover most of the costs of maintaining the Register in the first year.

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The report explained that the specific criteria that had been proposed for a Local Connection test were that an applicant should:

- Have lived in the Borough for at least two years; and/or
- Have been in full-time employment (greater than 16 hours per week) within the Borough for at least two years; and/or
- Have an immediate family member who had lived in the Borough for the previous five years (immediate family were defined as a close relative, limited to spouse/partner, parent, sibling or adult child).

The report recommended that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services to make amendments to the specific criteria above in order to respond to issues that might arise through operation of the criteria. Those that did not pass a local connection test would still be included on the Register, but the Register would then be split into Part 1 and Part 2, with Part 1 containing the list of those who had passed the test and it would be only Part 1 which would be counted for the 'duty to grant permission'.

The Council was not required to specifically justify requiring a test of sufficient resources, although applying such a test was logical as it would ensure that those on the Register were those who would be in a position to actually build if a plot were available, rather than those with only a passing interest in self-build. The report therefore recommended that a test of sufficient resources should be introduced which would require applicants to demonstrate that they had, or would be able to access, funds to purchase land worth £75,000 (the likely estimated minimum cost of purchasing a self-build plot of land in Reading). The following detailed criteria were proposed:

- An offer for a self-build mortgage from a verifiable lender;
- Written confirmation and evidence from a qualified financial advisor with active membership of a verifiable and appropriate professional body;
- Any other information which would demonstrate to the Council's satisfaction that the applicant had sufficient resources to purchase land for their own self-build and custom housebuilding.

The report again recommended that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services to make amendments to the specific criteria above in order to respond to issues that might arise through the operation of the criteria and to allow the specified land value to change in line with any land value changes locally.

Once approved the new tests would be brought into force by 1 April 2019. The Council would then contact the existing entrants on the list and ask them to demonstrate compliance with the two tests. Those who could not demonstrate compliance with the

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local connection test would remain on the Register, but only on part 2, which would not count towards the 'duty to grant permission'.

Resolved -

- (1) That the changes to the Self-Build Register process to introduce a local connection test and a test of sufficient resources be approved;**
- (2) That the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the specific criteria for the local connection test and test of sufficient resources in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport.**

41. MAJOR TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS PROJECTS - UPDATE

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing the Committee with an update on key progress and milestones associated with the current programme of major transport and highways projects in Reading namely:

- Reading Station Area Redevelopment (Cow Lane Bridges)
- South Reading Mass Rapid Transit;
- Reading Green Park Station;
- Thames Valley Park and Ride;
- East Reading Mass Rapid Transit;
- National Cycle Network Route 422;
- Reading West Station Upgrade.

The report also gave an update on the following unfunded schemes:

- South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (Future Phases);
- Tilehurst Station Access Improvements;
- Third Thames Crossing East of Reading.

With regard to the Cow Lane Bridges the report explained that the route had been opened to two-way traffic without signals for the first time on 25 February 2019, with the full scheme, including pedestrian and cycle routes, to be completed in summer 2019. It was clarified that the meeting that the scheme was not yet complete with work on lighting, the footpath and resurfacing of the road still to be carried out and that there would be a further closure of the route over the weekend of 13 and 14 April 2019 for this

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work to be done. Road signage also needed to be changed and talks were ongoing with Network Rail over the removal of the height restriction signs.

The report also explained that a revised planning application to address concerns that had been raised by Wokingham Borough Council's Planning Committee in relation to the East Reading Mass Rapid Transit had been prepared, including further public consultation that had been carried out during September 2019 on possible amendments to enhance the appearance of the scheme. Fundamental structural changes had not been possible as the scheme had needed to retain the core public transport, walking and cycling elements as set out in Reading and Wokingham's Planning and Transport Plans and the scheme business case, therefore hanging landscaping had been selected as the preferred option, which was consistent with the revised proposal for the Thames Valley Park, Park and Ride scheme. Wokingham Borough Council's Planning Committee had refused permission for the revised scheme in December 2018. The second planning application refusal by Wokingham meant that the scheme could not be delivered in the timescales required by the funding grant conditions, therefore the Berkshire Local Transport Body had reallocated the funding to other schemes across Berkshire, including Reading West Station Upgrade, Theale Station Park and Rail Upgrade and Coppid Beech Park and Ride site. The Council did not intend to pursue the scheme further at the current time and would be carrying out a consultation on development of a new Local Transport Plan to invite suggestions to tackle the current and forecast congestion and air quality issues within the Borough.

With regard to National Cycle Route 422, improvements to a privately owned wall, between New Lane Hill and Greenwood Road, and adjacent footway widening works, were subject to further feasibility work and budget availability after the completion of the final phase. Cris Butler, Acting Head of Transportation and Streetcare, reported that the wall was failing and talks with the landowner were ongoing and that officers were committed to resolving the issue.

Resolved -

- (1) That the progress on delivery of the programme of major transport schemes as set out within the report be noted;**
- (2) That the opening of Cow Lane to two-way traffic without signals for the first time on Monday 25 February 2019 be noted;**
- (3) That the reallocation of funding for the East Reading MRT scheme to other schemes across Berkshire, including the Reading West Station Upgrade, Theale Station Park & Rail Upgrade and Coppid Beech Park and Ride schemes be noted.**

42. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT WORK PROGRAMME - 2019/20

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The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out the planned 2019/20 work programme for delivery of various highways and transport schemes in Reading. A list of the projects was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the programme set out in Appendix 1 provided the detail of the Highways and Transport projects to be delivered throughout the 2019/20 financial year. The projects were in line with the aims and objectives of the current Local Transport Plan 2011 to 2026, the Council's Transformation Programme and the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. Full details of the schemes would be reported at meetings of Traffic Management Sub-Committee and SEPT Committee. In some cases delivery of schemes was dependent on Traffic Regulation Orders and Public Consultation and regular updates on progress with the implementation of individual schemes would also continue to be reported at meetings of Traffic Management Sub-Committee and SEPT Committee.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That progression of the programme as detailed in Appendix 1, attached to the report, be approved.**

43. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE UPDATE 2018/19 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMME 2019/20

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing the Committee with an update on the 2018/2019 Highway Maintenance programme and on the £653,000 share of the Additional Highways Maintenance Funding Award for 2018/2019. The report also informed the Committee of the £1.308m Highway Maintenance 2019/2020 Award from the Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport and Highway Maintenance) settlement and outlined the proposed Highway Maintenance 2019/2020 works programme and spend allocation. Finally, the report provided the Committee with an update on the Lead Local Flood Alleviation Grant Funding.

Appendix 1 to the report outlined the proposed Highway Maintenance 2019/2020 works programme and spend allocation and Appendix 2 set out what had been delivered in the Highway Maintenance Programme in 2018/2019.

In response to a question on the condition of pavements and footpaths, Sam Shean, Streetcare Services Manager, informed the Committee that issues could be reported by email, via the Council's website, by phone or directly to Streetcare.Admin@reading.gov.uk or by using the Love Clean Reading app.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Highways Maintenance Update 2018/2019 be noted;**

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- (2) That the update on the £653,000 Additional Highways Maintenance Funding Award and gives spend approval be noted;**
- (3) That the £1.308 Million Highway Maintenance Award for 2019/2020 from the Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement be accepted and spend approval for the proposed Highway Maintenance Programme 2019/2020, as set out in Appendix 1 and paragraph 4.11 be granted;**
- (4) That the Head of Transportation and Streetcare be authorised, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and the Head of Finance, to enter into the variety of contracts required to undertake the highways maintenance works as described in the report;**
- (5) That the update on the Lead Local Flood Alleviation Grant (LLFA) Funding be noted and spend approval for the total amount of £40,721 available for 2019/20 be granted.**

(The meeting closed at 8.37 pm)