

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
- 16 NOVEMBER 2021**

Present: Councillor Gittings (Chair);
Councillors Ayub, Carnell, Challenger (Vice-Chair), McGonigle, Page, Stanford-Beale, R Williams, McElroy, Mitchell and Eden

Apologies: Councillors Maskell, Khan and McEwan

(Councillor Duveen was unable to attend in person, so attended and contributed remotely via Microsoft Teams, but did not vote on any of the items, in line with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Stanford-Beale and R Williams declared a prejudicial interest in Item 22, on the basis that they were Council-appointed Non-Executive Directors of Reading Transport Limited.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 30 June 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

The Minutes of the meeting of Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 15 September 2021 were received.

4. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- Joint Waste Disposal Board - 17 June 2021
- AWE Local Liaison Committee - 7 July 2021
- Reading Climate Change Partnership - 14 September 2021.

5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Questions on the following matters were asked in accordance with Standing Order 36.

Questioner	Subject
Peter Bowyer	Intsalcom
John Booth	Air Quality
John Booth	Cross River Traffic Congestion
John Booth	WHO Guidelines for PM2.5 Concentrations Tightened

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(The full text of the questions and replies were made available on the Reading Borough Council website).

6. ANNUAL REPORTS BY THE READING CLIMATE CHANGE PARTNERSHIP ON THE READING CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY AND READING BOROUGH COUNCIL ON GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report presenting the Committee with Annual Reports on two key initiatives within Reading's response to the Climate Emergency. The Annual Report on the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 for the year 2020/21 was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and the Annual Report on the Council's corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions (for the year 2020/21) was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The report explained that the Annual Report on the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 for the year 2020/21 had been produced by the Reading Climate Change Partnership and reflected activity by a range of partners across Reading, not just the Council. The headline message from the Annual Report was that the Borough's carbon footprint had fallen by 49% between 2005 and 2019 (the latest year for which data was available). This represented the fifth largest reduction of 379 local authorities. The report also reviewed progress with the seven action planes that were included within the Strategy. This suggested that of almost 150 actions approximately 30% had been rated 'green' (completed or on target), 50% amber (underway but not complete/not on target) and 20% red (not started). In the context of the disruption that had arisen from the pandemic, this was considered a notable achievement in the first year since the publication of the Strategy.

The Annual Report on the Council's Greenhouse Gas Emissions had been produced annually by the Council since 2008/09 to record progress with the implementation of the Council's carbon reduction efforts and its publication meets the Council's obligations to report transparently on corporate emissions in-line with greenhouse gas emissions reporting protocols of local authorities. The headline message from the report was that the Council's carbon footprint had been cut by 69.8% between 2008/09 and 2020/21; 2020 had represented a significant reduction in a single year with the closure of offices and public facing facilities during the pandemic being a significant factor in the reduction. The Council's corporate emissions now represented less than 1.5% of the total emissions for the Borough as a whole.

With regard to progress in relation to 'net zero by 2030 targets, while emission reductions that had been recorded in both annual reports were very welcome, they had to be considered in relation to the very ambitious aim that had been set by Reading's Climate Emergency Declaration to achieve a net zero Reading by 2030. Although the 2% reduction in Reading's carbon footprint between 2018 and 2019 was encouraging, in broad terms the rate of emission reduction would need to be approximately double in each remaining year of the decade to be on track to meet the 2030 target. There was a risk of emissions bouncing back in 2021/22 as pandemic restrictions on services such as

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leisure centres, theatres and libraries had lifted, which might be reflected in the next annual report. The reductions for the Borough and the Council should not therefore be a cause for complacency and continued sustained effort would be required to increase the rate of emissions reduction between now and 2030.

Finally, the report set out the key factors that had driven the reduction in the Council's carbon footprint.

Resolved -

That the following be noted:

- (a) The continued reduction in Reading Borough's carbon footprint, which had fallen by 49% since the baseline year of 2005;**
- (b) The continued reduction in Reading Borough Council's carbon footprint, which had fallen by 69.8% since the baseline year of 2008/09;**
- (c) The need for the Council and other partners to redouble efforts to meet the very challenging target of a net zero carbon Reading, and a net zero carbon Council, by 2030.**

7. WINTER SERVICE PLAN 2021/22

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Committee of the outputs that had been delivered by the Winter Service Plan 2020/21, of the Winter Service Plan review that had been carried out to ensure compliance with the Highway Act 1980 and 'Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice' and sought approval for the Winter Service Plan 2021/2022. A copy of the Winter Service Plan 2021/2022 was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and a Financial Implications Report was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The report stated that the 2020/2021 winter season had been relatively mild overall although interspersed with colder spells. However, there had been numerous occasions when the temperature had reached the trigger point for precautionary salting action, this had resulted in 85 primary runs and two secondary runs. The cold spells were not severe or prolonged enough for activation of the Snow Plan. In comparison during 2019/2020 the primary precautionary salting routes had only been treated on 46 occasions and on 57 occasions during the 2018/2019 winter season. There had been no issues with salt supply/delivery which had enabled the contractor to maintain stock levels throughout the winter season and there had been not issues with the contractor replenishing the grit bins as and when had been required. The winter decision making process to determine when to salt had worked well during the previous winter season and the Vaisala weather stations had provided the correct data for informed decisions to be made. The joint arrangement/agreement with Wokingham Borough Council, through their consultants, Volker Highways, for providing the decision making service had worked well and had delivered against the set key performance indicators during the 2020/2021 winter season.

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The Winter Service Plan for 2020/2021 had provided a robust service for the duration of the winter period with no disruption to the primary and secondary road network during the season.

A review of the Winter Service Plan 2020/2021 had been carried out and the main points, including updates for the Winter Service Plan 2021/2021 were summarized in the report. Risks assessments and method statements had been updated and agreed with the Council's gritting contractor J.H. Cresswell and Sons Ltd to take account of the Covid-19 pandemic and would be actively updated as Government advice was made available. A review of the proposed Active Travel Plan schemes had shown that they were primarily situated on the existing primary/secondary precautionary salting routes and any future Active Travel Plan schemes brought forward would be evaluated to determine whether they should be added to the precautionary salting route. A review of the National Covid-19 Temporary Testing Stations/Sites had been carried out, they were primarily situated on or adjacent to the existing primary/secondary precautionary salting routes. The access to other new sites would be included within the primary precautionary salting route on a needs basis when any station/site was operational.

In answer to a question, officers reported that Vaisala Ltd had been appointed to provide the 'winter forecasting' service for the coming winter following a joint tender process by the Berkshire Winter Service Consortium. Staff and the Council's gritting contractor, J.H. Cresswell and Sons Ltd, were also thanked for their work over the previous winter season.

Resolved -

- (1) That outputs delivered by the Winter Service Plan 2020/2021 be noted;**
- (2) That the outcome of the review carried out on the Winter Service Plan to ensure compliance with the Highways Act 1980 and the 'Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice' be noted;**
- (3) That the Winter Service Plan 2021/2022 be noted and approved.**

8. MAJOR TRANSPORT SCHEMES UPDATE

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing an update on progress with the delivery of the current programme of major transport schemes in the Borough namely:

- South Reading Mass Rapid Transit
- Reading Green Park Station
- Reading West Station Upgrade
- Active Travel Fund - Shinfield Road
- School Streets Programme

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With regard to south Reading Mass Rapid Transit, construction of the current phase of works had been delayed initially due to Covid-19 and more latterly due to significant technical delays with implementing the enhanced traffic signal arrangements on Bennet Road gyratory. However, works were progressing on site with a planned completion date of November 2021.

Construction of Green Park Station and multi-modal interchange had continued on site for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, there had been impacts on the schedule that had resulted from Covid and Brexit impacts, material shortages, which had resulted in further delays to the programme. The current timeline indicated construction works would be completed by late 2021. Once complete the station would go through a period of testing before its official opening and public use. The Council was working with Network Rail and GWR to ensure that the station was open as soon as possible after construction works were complete.

Construction of the enhanced interchange and highway arrangements for the Reading West station upgrade had commenced on-site in February 2021 and was progressing well. Following completion of these works, GWR would take possession of the southern footway and start their station building construction programme. The final completion date of the overall project was currently projected to be summer 2022. The Council would continue to work with railway partners, including Network Rail, to seek opportunities to secure funding for full accessibility enhancements which formed part of the overall Masterplan vision for the station, as these were not currently affordable within the funding envelope for the current scheme,

The report set out a timeline for delivery of the scheme at Shinfield Road that was being delivered under Tranche 2 of the Active Travel Fund and a drop-in session had taken place at the university about the scheme that day.

Finally, monitoring of the first School Street scheme at Park Lane Primary Junior School had opened in April 2021 and had demonstrated that it had both made it safer for children travelling to school and had increased significantly levels of active travel for children, parents and carers. Evidence of the positive impacts from the scheme were set out in the report. Preparations were currently underway for a further joint School Street trial scheme for Maiden Erleigh School in Reading, UTC Reading and Alfred Sutton Primary School on Crescent Road. The scheme had been delayed but, it was due to commence in early 2021.

Resolved - That the progress made on the delivery of the current programme of major transport schemes as outlined in the report be noted.

9. READING BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2021-2026

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing the Committee with an update on preparation of the Reading Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021 - 2026, which would set the strategy for enhancing bus services in

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Reading over the next five years. The Reading Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021-2026 was attached to the report at Appendix A.

The report explained that the Bus Service Improvement Plan had been prepared in partnership with all local bus operators and neighbouring authorities in accordance with guidance that had been issued by the Department for Transport, which had included a requirement to publish the first iteration of the Strategy by the end of October 2021. Following publication of the Plan, which set the overall Strategy, more detailed proposals were currently being developed in partnership with local operators through the establishment of Enhanced Partnership arrangements and associated action plans. These Enhanced Partnership arrangements were due to be in place by April 2022, in line with the timetable which had been set by Government.

In answer to a question regarding bus routes going across the Borough rather than on a hub and spoke pattern, officers confirmed that focus in the Plan had initially been on things that would be financially sustainable but, linking key points, such as the hospital and Rivermead, with residential areas was something that could be investigated in the future.

Resolved: That the Reading Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021-2026, attached to the report at Appendix A, be approved.

(Councillors Stanford-Beale and R Williams declared a prejudicial interest in the above item, on the grounds that they were Council-appointed Non-Executive Directors of RTL. They left the meeting and took no part in the debate or discussion.)

(The meeting closed at 8.12 pm)