

To: Councillor G Dennis (Chair)
Councillors Eden, Asare, Ayub, Barnett-Ward,
Challenger, Cresswell, Emberson, Hacker,
Kitchingham, McCann, Magon, O'Connell,
Goss, Rowland, R Singh, Tarar and Yeo

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28 June 2023

Your contact is: **Julie Quarmby - Committee Services (julie.quarmby@reading.gov.uk)**

NOTICE OF MEETING - HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 6 JULY 2023

A meeting of the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee will be held on Thursday, 6 July 2023 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

	<u>WARDS AFFECTED</u>	<u>Page No</u>
1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST		
Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the items for consideration.		
2. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS & LEISURE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 MARCH 2023		5 - 12
3. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES		13 - 20
Minutes of the Community Safety Partnership meetings held on 2 February 2023 and 20 April 2023.		
4. PETITIONS		
Petitions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been received by Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.		
5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS		

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Questions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been submitted in writing and received by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.

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| 6. | EXTENSION OF THE CONTRACT TO PROVIDE A HOUSING REACTIVE REPAIRS SERVICE TO WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL | BOROUGH WIDE | 21 - 26 |
| | A report requesting the extension of the partnering contract with Wokingham District Council to deliver repairs and maintenance work to its housing stock for a further two years. | | |
| 7. | FIRE SAFETY IN TALL BUILDINGS | BOROUGH WIDE | 27 - 38 |
| | A report providing an update on the Council's ongoing work in relation to fire safety in tall buildings and the partnership with the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. | | |
| 8. | HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE UPDATE: NATIONAL HIGHWAYS GRANT FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR READING 2023/24 & 2024/25 | BOROUGH WIDE | 39 - 48 |
| | An update on the National Highways Grant Funding Allocation of £250k per annum for Reading Borough Council to invest on Highway Assets on the M4 Motorway designated diversion route through Reading for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025. | | |
| 9. | HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE ASSET MANAGEMENT UPDATE | BOROUGH WIDE | 49 - 110 |
| | A report providing the approved 2022/2023 Annual Status Options Reports (ASOR) for carriageways, pavements and structures and updating the Committee on the proposed inspection regime for the Public Rights of Way in Reading. | | |
| 10. | ALLOTMENTS - CONSULTATION - FEES & CHARGES REVIEW | BOROUGH WIDE | 111 - 122 |
| | A report updating the Committee on progress on the Allotment Rent Review and seeking approval to consult on changes to Allotment discounts and rent. | | |
| 11. | WEED CONTROL MANAGEMENT - TRIAL OF MARKET AVAILABLE OPTIONS | BOROUGH WIDE | 123 - 136 |
| | This report informing the Committee of progress to date on trials to explore the alternatives to using glyphosate to control unwanted vegetation across the borough. | | |

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HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 9 MARCH 2023

Present: Councillor Hacker (Chair);
Councillors Ayub, Barnett-Ward, Cresswell, Cross, Emberson, Kitchingham,
Lanzoni, McCann, McGonigle, Mpofu-Coles, O'Connell, Rowland, Singh and
Woodward.
Via Teams: Councillor G Dennis

33. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of 4 January 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

34. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meeting were submitted:

Community Safety Partnership – 10 November 2022.

Resolved - That the Minutes be received.

35. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

Questions on the following matters were submitted by members of the public:

<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
Jennifer Leach	Reading Festival	Cllr Rowland
Rona Robinson	Allotments	Cllr Rowland
Marg Cobb	Flytipping at Public Bins	Cllr Rowland

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

As Mr Robinson did not attend the meeting to ask his question, a written reply was provided in accordance with Standing Order 11(3).

36. READING'S CULTURE & HERITAGE STRATEGY STATEMENT OF INTENT 2023-26

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which gave an update on progress to date on the strategic priorities set out in the Culture and Heritage Strategy that ran until 2030 and sought approval of the three-year Culture and Heritage Action Plan for 2023-26. A draft of the Statement of Intent was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the Cultural Sector had expressed a desire for a set of shared cultural aspirations and objectives for Reading. and that a Statement of Intent had been found to be appropriate at this stage. This statement would be a living document, that would evolve with Reading Borough Council's relationship with the sector. The statement was a shared document and would not be the sole responsibility of any one organisation. Reading Borough Council was leading the development of the document and was facilitating, but was not solely responsible for delivery of the statement. The report added that the Statement of Intent did not commit the Council or any partner to spending money to deliver these intentions, and was intended as a direction of travel and set of aims around which the sector could coalesce. The next steps would be for Officers to set up small strategic group to manage and develop the statement of intent. This group would start delivery against year one aspirations and objectives and submit a progress report to the Committee in March 2024.

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The report explained that the Statement of Intent had been inspired by the three strategic priorities of the Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030 and recognised the opportunities that the Levelling Up Funding now presented and the importance of Culture, Creativity and Heritage in the following areas of work:

- Placemaking;
- Physical and Mental Wellbeing;
- Celebrating the diversity of Reading's communities;
- Economic Development;
- Sustainability.

The report also set out examples of successful partnership projects including the High Street Heritage Action Zone Cultural Consortium, Reading Anniversaries Celebrations, Gaia for Reading Climate Festival, Reading Abbey Revealed, the Reading Libraries and Reading Rep partnership and delivering Children and Young People's Mental Wellbeing through Culture.

Resolved:

- (1) That the progress to date and achievements of Reading Borough Council's culture and heritage partnership projects over the last two years be noted**
- (2) That the shared Statement of Intent and proposed next steps be approved.**

37. READING LIBRARIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME: DISPOSAL OF LIBRARY STOCK

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out a withdrawal policy for library stock. It was necessary for the approach to withdrawal and disposal of stock to be formally agreed as it involved disposal of Council assets. The policy was attached as Appendix 1. To the report

The report explained that Reading Libraries had a bookfund of £110,000 per year, the majority of which was spent on new and replacement printed books. Books were withdrawn based on use, need, quality and condition. This meant that where an item was in poor condition, not being used, or was superseded/superfluous it would be withdrawn to provide space for new books.

The report explained that the majority of items were withdrawn as they were in poor condition, no longer required or not issuing. These items totalled around 8-10,000 per year and as they were often of limited value, were either offered for sale to the public or collected by a book recycler.

The report also noted that following the successful Levelling Up Fund bid to build a new Central Library at the Civic Centre, there was a need to formalise the withdrawal approach as the service prepared to relocate. The process set out in the policy would enable the service to efficiently and effectively assess its withdrawn stock and appropriately dispose of it and give the library service the freedom to look at different ways of maximising return and efficiently and effectively dispose of withdrawn stock.

Resolved – That the approach for the disposal of library stock and assets as set out in appendix 1 to report be agreed.

38. READING FESTIVAL UPDATE

Further to Minute 22 of the meeting held on 9 November 2022, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report updating the Committee on proposals to improve the Festival and providing an overview of the event which was in its planning phase for 2023.

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The report explained that the capacity of the Festival would remain unchanged, as would the main arena layout. Changes for 2023 included replacing Challenge 21 with Challenge 25 to give a margin of safety when trying to prevent the sale of alcohol to under 18s, the introduction of key points within the campsite areas to be used as check points and friendly, approachable sites for information, support and assistance, and an increase in the number of Safeguarding officers as part of the Festival Republic team to ensure a 24-hour response throughout the event. The eco-campsite had proved very popular and would be double the size for the 2023 event. This would be the first event to implement a no campfire policy, with no firewood allowed on site.

The report added that Festival Republic had responded to questions raised by the Committee at the meeting in November 2022. Festival Republic's social media team were keen to explore how all partners social media could be used proactively and positively to reassure or respond to community forums or group pages on social media. This subject was part of this year's planning meeting agendas and would remain so as Festival Republic learnt more about how these platforms could be used positively to support the community. Festival republic were also working with partners and vendors both on-site and nearby to prevent underage sales of vapes and to ensure that the disposable devices were recycled. The provision of a Thames Valley Police boat on the river during the 2022 event had been very useful during the run up and throughout the event had an ongoing impact after the event and this would continue as part of the plan for this year's event.

The report also set out details of emissions from waste, specifically the incineration of non-recyclable material, which are classified as Scope 3 emissions, using DEFRA conversion factors which were used by UK companies as standard to report greenhouse gas emissions. They applied the same factor for recycling and combustion of 21.280 kg CO₂e / tonne of waste and details are set out in the table below:

STREAM	2022 (t)	2022%	CO ₂ e(t)
Landfill	0.00		
Energy From Waste (RDF)	151.75	19.30%	3.23
Energy From Waste (SDF)	103.79	13.20%	2.21
Recycled	436.37	55.50%	9.29
Green Waste (Composted)	94.35	12.00%	0.84
TOTAL	786.26	100%	15.56

The report explained that total waste reduced from 2021 was 42 tonnes (5.07%) and non-recyclable waste (including tents) was sent to Solid Recovered Fuel (SRF) or Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF). The Material Recovery Facility (MRF) that processed the festival waste reported a 55.05% recycling rate during the period between 22nd August – 16th September (53% in 2021). Festival Republic also included water and wastewater processing as part of the on-site Scope 3 emissions, which gives a total of 74.6 tonnes CO₂e compared to the 2021 scope 1, 2 & 3 total of 452 tonnes CO₂e. It was estimated that 38% of tents were left behind during 2022 which was a 21% decrease on the previous event.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

39. HOUSING ANNUAL UPDATE PROGRAMME OF WORKS

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which provided an update on performance and key achievements of the Housing Service over the past financial year and set out the work programme for the Council's housing stock for the next financial year. The following documents were appended to the report:

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Appendix 1 - Works to Housing Stock 23/24 Housing Revenue Account (HRA);
Appendix 2 – Works to Housing Stock 23/24 General Fund;
Appendix 3 – Works to Housing Stock by Ward 23/24.

The report stated that over the past year, the achievements of the Service had included:

- Low carbon improvements in a further 18 properties in Kentwood Ward, bringing the total number of improved properties to 43;
- Installation of a further 40 air source heat pumps in Granville Road Southcote with the remaining properties at this location on the 2023-24 work programme;
- Continued support and debt advice to tenants, leading to top quartile rent collection levels of over 99%. The Money Matters webpages had been continually refreshed to offer up to date advice and support;
- No families were placed in shared B&B accommodation;
- Continued delivery of new homes with 15 key worker flats at the old Arthur Hill swimming pool site and 37 homes in North Street due to be handed over in Spring 2023. Planning applications were due to be submitted for two mixed general needs housing and adult social care provision at the old Central Pool site and a site on Hexham Road expected to deliver a further 103 properties;
- Maintaining high tenant satisfaction levels as detailed in the survey results;
- A successful bid to DLUHC for £2.8 million to maintain and increase rough sleeping services;
- The Council had been shortlisted as finalists for the best social housing initiative for the modular pods in the MJ Awards, APSE Awards and LGC Awards.

Further to the introduction of the new Complaints Handling Code (CHC) (see Minute 30 of the meeting held on 4 January 2023), the report set out a breakdown of Housing Service complaints by area and by outcomes. The most common areas for complaint included the quality of the service received, communication, lack of support, policy issues, failure to resolve the issue and the time taken to resolve the issue. The report stated that 59% of the 275 complaints had received a response within the required timescale and explained that new systems to track, manage and embed learning from complaints would be implemented over the next two months, with the aim of improving complaints handling performance.

The report also updated the Committee on the results of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey which had been carried out during Autumn 2022, which found that satisfaction levels were still generally high, there had been an improvement in some areas.

The report explained that Housing Property Services had a responsibility to ensure that the housing stock was well maintained in accordance with the Decent Homes Standard and that Council homes were safe and healthy places to live, including the improvement of the thermal efficiency of its stock in line with the Council's Climate Change ambitions ensuring homes could be heated efficiently and cost effectively, thus reducing their carbon footprint and reducing fuel poverty. The service also worked to improve the wider environment on housing estates to meet the needs and aspirations of both the Council and the tenants.

Resolved:

- (1) That the performance and key achievements of the Housing Service in the past financial year be noted;**
- (2) That the planned maintenance programme for Council homes for 2023-34 detailed in appendices 1 to 3 of the report be noted;**
- (3) That the Assistant Director of Housing & Communities, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, be authorised to: (a) procure; (b) award and (c) enter into all necessary contracts relating to the individual schemes for**

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the 2023/24 work programme as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report subject to sufficient funding being available in the approved Budget to meet the cost of the relevant schemes.

40. ENVIRONMENT ACT 2021 – WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report briefing the Committee on aspects of the Environment Act 2021 covering the elements on waste management and the Act's impacts on Reading Borough Council and Reading residents.

The report explained that waste management element of the Environment was intended to promote and deliver: (a) extended producer responsibility, to include the costs for the treatment of packaging, (b) increased recycling, (c) the simplification and increased consistency of waste collection across the UK, (d) the development of a circular economy, and (e) the reduction of litter.

Extended Producer Responsibility meant that producers of packaging would have to pay the full net cost of collection and treatment associated with the packaging placed into circulation, to encourage better overall design of packaging and systems of capture, and to promote resource circularity. Producers would pay modulated fees and the aggregated fees would be used to make payments to local authorities for the costs of managing packaging. Councils would be placed within a performance cohort, wherein their costs and their performance would be benchmarked against a 'best in class' council. The arrangements would be quite different from current operating conditions, and would probably mirror more commercial operating conditions. The timescales were subject to change but local authorities were expecting to be presented with their initial funding allocation during the 2023/24 year.

The deposit return scheme would see a deposit being added to in-scope packaging, at the point of sale. The deposit will be reclaimable via reverse vending machines at retailers and via smaller shops to encourage the return of the packaging. The packing in the scheme would be limited to all polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic drinks bottles and tins/cans (aluminium and steel) for drinks between 50 ml and 3 litres. The level of the deposit would be controlled by the Deposit Management Organisation (DMO) and would be around £0.20 per item and would apparently be applied to all single, in-scope, items and also those sold as part of a multi-pack.

Under Waste Collection Consistency, Councils would be mandated to collect newspapers and magazines, cardboard, glass bottles, plastic bottles, plastic pots/tubs/trays and steel and aluminium cans or tins and a separate food waste collection would also be required. Plastic film, aerosols, cartons and foil would be added to the list of mandated materials, probably in 2027. At present, the re3 councils were well-placed to comply with the requirements of waste collection consistency although glass and plastic film collection and processing would need to be added to current services. It was noted that the Government was also considering two options for garden waste collection: (a) a free scheme for residents or, (b) an assessed reasonable charge, based on estimates put together by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), and pitched at about 50% of current service charges. If Government chose free garden waste collections there would be an estimated budget pressure of c£950k.

The report also set out the potential impacts and opportunities that would arise from the Act, including:

- It was likely that funding allocated to Councils would not meet the costs incurred in meeting the new requirements;
- Councils that were deemed not to be sufficiently Efficient or Effective could receive an Improvement Notice as only one council in each cohort could be 'best in class' and this could lead to reductions in funding if the required improvements were not achieved;
- The introduction of the deposit scheme could have implications for those residents who, through disability or age (or other non-protected characteristics), might find it challenging

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and/or inconvenient to access and utilise a reverse vending terminal and would therefore face increased costs;

- The removal of up to 90% of plastic and metal packaging from recycling collections was likely to prove challenging to many councils who had contractual obligations that related to waste composition, financial value or tonnage. It should be anticipated that contractors may seek contractual relief and/or compensation through Change in Law (CiL) provisions.

Further reports would be submitted to the Committee incorporating proposals for service change to move towards a position of compliance in relation to both waste collection and the shared re3 arrangements.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

41. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2023-24 & 2022-23 HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Further to Minute 14 of the meeting held on 29 June 2022, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that provided updates on:

- Year-3 (2022/23) of the 3-year £9M Highway Capital Investment Programme 2020/21 to 2022/23;
- The additional £8M five-year Highway Capital Investment Programme (2022/23 to 2026/27);
- The additional £4M two-year Highway Bridges & Structures Capital Investment Programme (2022/23 to 2023/24);
- Year two of the three-year Department for Transport (DfT) Highway Maintenance Award 2023-24 Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement.

The report also gave an update on the completed Highway Maintenance 2022-23 DfT Local Transport Block Funding Capital Works Programme. The following documents were appended to the report:

- Appendix 1: Programme Delivered: £9M Residential Roads 3- Year Investment Programme Update and the DfT Roads and Bridges Programme (2022-23);
- Appendix 2: Proposed Delivery Programme: £8M 5-year Residential Roads & Pavement Programme (2022/23 to 2026/27);
- Appendix 3: Bridge & Structures five-year Rolling Programme (2023-24 to 2027-28);
- Appendix 4: Financial Implications Report.

Section 4 of the report set out details of the works that included highways maintenance, resurfacing of roads and pavements and works to bridges and other structures, plus the costs associated with these works.

Resolved:

- (1) **That the progress of year-3 (2022-23) of the 3-year £9M Highway Capital Investment Programme 2020-21 to 2022-23 be noted;**
- (2) **That the update on the progress of year-1 of the Council's additional £8M 5-year (2022-23 to 2026-27) Highway Capital Investment Programme be noted;**
- (3) **That the update on the progress of year-1 of the Council's additional £4M 2-year (2022-23 to 2023-24) Bridges & Structures Capital Investment Programme be noted;**

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- (4) That the year-2 settlement for the 3-year Department for Transport (DfT) Highway Maintenance Award 2023-24 Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) be noted;**
- (5) That the update on the completed Highway Maintenance 2022/23 DfT Local Transport Block Funding Capital Works Programme be noted.**

(The meeting opened at 6.30pm and closed at 8.47pm).

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Agenda Item 3

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP – 2 FEBRUARY 2023

Present:

Cllr Karen Rowland	Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety, RBC (In the Chair)
Cllr Jason Brock	Leader, RBC
Zelda Wolfe	Assistant Director of Housing & Communities, RBC
Sarah Gardner	Community Safety Partnership, RBC
Joanne Anderson	Neighbourhood Initiatives Team Manager, RBC
Martin White	Consultant in Public Health, RBC
Elizabeth Brown	Thames Valley Police
Frances Martin	Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, RBC
Sally Andersen	Senior Wellbeing Commissioning Manager for Drugs & Alcohol, RBC
Jackie Markie	Probation
Jo Middlemass	Community Safety and Enablement Manager, RBC
Giles Allchurch	Brighter Futures for Children
Catherine Marriott	Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
Kathryn Warner	PACT
Jemma Durkan	Committee Services, RBC

Apologies:

Steve Raffield	Thames Valley Police (Chair)
Cllr Tony Page	Deputy Leader, RBC
Brian Grady	Brighter Futures for Children
Donna Gray	Safeguarding Children, Brighter Futures for Children
Carly Dagg	Probation
Dave Turton	Thames Valley Police
Andrew Pernith	Thames Valley Police

1. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

2. COMMUNITY SAFETY AND SERIOUS VIOLENCE STRATEGY – DELIVERY MECHANISMS

Further to minute 3 of the previous meeting Jo Middlemass provided an update on the Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy 2022-25 delivery model. The delivery of the strategy would be undertaken over the next three years with six delivery focus groups. There would be three Serious Violence Focused Groups reporting to the Serious Violence Steering Group, and three Community Safety Focussed Groups reporting directly to the CSP Executive Group. A Communications Group would cross over all delivery groups as communication had been identified as an area that needed to be strengthened. A SharePoint site would be set up for the CSP Executive Group to share information and communicate with members more easily. Also, there would be standard terms of reference, action plans and Highlight Reporting format for all delivery groups.

The Community Safety Survey would be launched on 3 March 2023 and draft survey questions were being finalised. These would include perception questions and questions on engagement in relation to the Crime and Serious Violence Agenda. The survey would be available online, in paper copies and accessible in several languages. Face to face engagement would be undertaken in local communities through engagement events. Links to the survey would be shared with CSP members to publicise.

The Group discussed the Strategy, and it was suggested that questions and data from the Police Crime Commissioner survey be shared to help inform and support the Community Safety Survey.

The Group were also informed that Safer Streets 4 funding had been used to provide a platform for young people to share views and contribute towards how crime and serious violence would be dealt with in Reading. This would focus on Safer Streets Engagement, Community Safer Partnership re-brand, Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy, and a Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy Action Plan. Regarding the CSP rebrand the Group were provided with suggested new logos that had been designed by young people with new wording and artwork. Information would be circulated to CSP members outside of the meeting to provide feedback on the preferred options.

Berkshire Youth were undertaking a Young Peoples Survey in schools. It was suggested that data from this survey could also be used to support the Community Safety Survey. There was also an opportunity to use funding to help with the survey in schools. Jo confirmed that she would discuss this matter with Catherine Marriott outside of the meeting so that the relevant officers in Brighter Futures for Children could be contacted on how this could be taken to schools in Reading.

AGREED:

- (1) That information regarding the rebranding of the CSP logo by young people be circulated for feedback;
- (2) That information regarding funding for the survey to be circulated in schools be investigated.

3. COMBATING DRUGS PARTNERSHIP (CDP) UPDATE

Sally Anderson provided an update on the Combating Drugs Partnership (CDP) which was created following the 10-year Drugs Strategy 'From Harm to Hope' published in December 2021. This was a formal response to the Independent Review of Drugs led by Dame Carol Black providing a 10-year plan to reduce overall drug use towards a 30 year low. Funding for three years was being provided and had been secured for the first year.

The three core priorities were –

- Break drug supply chains,
- Deliver a world-class treatment and recovery system, and
- Achieve a shift in the demand for recreational drugs.

By the end of 2024/25 national ambition expectations from the strategy were as follows:

- Prevent nearly 1000 drug related deaths,
- 54,500 new high-quality treatment places,
- Preventions of 750,000 crimes through drug treatment,
- Closed over 2000 more county lines,
- Delivered 6400 major and moderate disruptions,
- Increased removal of criminal assets,
- Over the 10-year strategy reverse the rising trend in drug use.

It was noted there was a high level of pressure to achieve the outcomes.

The milestones achieved by the CDP in the first year included:

- Employment of a Senior Reporting Officer who would be the accountable officer and the Chair of the CDP.
- A CDP partnership with West Berkshire and Wokingham.
- Footprint.
- Needs Assessment.

- Strategic Delivery Action Plan to deliver the strategy.
- Progress Review (April 2023).

Next steps for the CDP would be to confirm a new Senior Reporting Officer, hold a stakeholder workshop to determine priorities for the Delivery Action Plan, confirm subgroups to deliver the plan, and agree the Outcomes Framework to link into the plan and to strategies.

It was noted that the stakeholder workshop was currently in the planning stage. Work would be undertaken with stakeholders across Thames Valley or Berkshire wide areas, but this had yet to be decided. Invites would be sent to all stakeholders and partners so that their strategic priorities could be shared, discussed, and aligned with current strategies.

The Chair thanked Sally for the update.

4. SOUTH CENTRAL REDUCTION RE-OFFENDING PLAN 2022 – 2025

Jackie Markie provided a presentation on the Probation Service and the South-Central Reduction Re-Offending Plan 2022-25. The Group noted the vision of the service:

‘Working together across the South-Central region to protect the public and help people to live law-abiding and positive lives.’

Scope of the service included supporting the courts, sentence management and working with criminal justice partners, interventions to reduce reoffending, working with victims of serious crime, and working in partnership with local prisons to reduce crime. Partnership working would be an important part of the service to help service users to engage in the community. Partners included prisons, police, youth offending teams, children’s/adult services, substance misuse services, MARAC/MATAC, local authority housing and voluntary organisations. The work of the service was undertaken across West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham local authorities with service to Reading Crown Court and Reading Magistrates Court. The Group were provided with information on the Sentence Management Approach and Commissioned Rehabilitation Services.

The South-Central Reduction Re-Offending Plan set out four main objectives to deliver over the next three years: Training, skills and work; Drugs and alcohol addiction; Family Accommodation and Readjustment to society; and Public Security through Engagement and Compliance. A set of performance measures would be put in place to support the plan these would include:

- National Reconviction Dashboard.
- Outcome focussed Service Level Measures
- Needs Analysis every 12 months
- HMIP and Operational and Systems Assurance Group.

In response to questions, it was noted local delivery would include a memorandum of understanding signed between the service and treatment providers, working with Job Centres, utilising probation officers with specialist knowledge, working with prisons, and developing links with health services. To support people on probation there was a People in Probation Forum that met bi-monthly to discuss a collaborative agenda, a scheme for mentors which was looking to expand, and a Pathway to Work in the Probation Service.

Regarding work around ethnic minorities the Group were informed that the Forum would be providing feedback on how to improve in this area and data will be used to consider disproportionality.

It was noted that the CSP could consider where the Re-Offending Plan fitted into local priorities, share data, and consider how partners, communities and initiatives fitted into the plan.

Cath Marriott informed the Group that a pilot between the PCC and partners had been extended to support prison leavers. Some of the funding had been provided and a business case would be put forward to expand the project. Cath confirmed that an update would be provided to the Group with further information.

The Group also requested that an update on the Re-Offending Plan delivery phases also be provided to CSP members.

AGREED:

- (1) That an update on the delivery of the South-Central Reduction Re-Offending Plan 2022-25 be provided to a future meeting;
- (2) That an update from the PCC on the Supporting Prison Leavers project be provided to a future meeting.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

Giles Allchurch updated the Group on discussions to rebrand the Youth Offending Service. A name to better reflect the service had been considered and following a survey 79 responses had been received from service users and 200 votes had been cast via social media. The preferred name change chosen was Youth Justice Service. The logo and branding would be changed to reflect the change in the future.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETING

The next meeting for 2022/23 would take place on:

20 April 2023

All meetings start at 9.30am, venue to be confirmed.
(The meeting commenced at 9.30am and closed at 11.00am)

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP – 20 APRIL 2023

Present:

Steve Raffield	Thames Valley Police (Chair) (In the Chair)
Cllr Jason Brock	Leader, RBC
Jo Middlemass	Community Safety and Enablement Manager, RBC
Sarah Gardner	Community Safety Partnership, RBC
Frances Martin	Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, RBC
Sally Andersen	Senior Wellbeing Commissioning Manager for Drugs & Alcohol, RBC
Joanne Anderson	Neighbourhood Initiatives Team Manager, RBC
Jill Marston	Senior Policy Officer, RBC
Jason Murphy	RBC
Trip Pannu	Thames Valley Police
Colin Paine	Thames Valley Police
Emma Tompkins	Thames Valley Police
Gail Muirhead	RBFRS
Giles Allchurch	Brighter Futures for Children
Catherine Marriott	Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
Justin Thomas	Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
Elizabeth Brown	Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
Kathryn Warner	PACT
Julie Quarmby	Committee Services, RBC

Apologies:

Cllr Karen Rowland	Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety, RBC
Cllr Tony Page	Deputy Leader, RBC
Zelda Wolfle	Assistant Director of Housing & Communities, RBC
Brian Grady	Brighter Futures for Children
Donna Gray	Safeguarding Children, Brighter Futures for Children
Lynne Mason	Business Manager, Locality Team, RBC
Cllr Raj Singh	Observer
Cllr Clarence Mitchell	Observer

1. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

2. THAMES VALLEY POLICE FORCE REVIEW

Colin Paine (Thames Valley Police) gave a presentation on the ongoing Thames Valley Police Force Review. He explained that this had been required as the last review had been carried out during 2010 and the recent HMIC inspection had shown that TVP had been struggling with high public demand and the effects of current financial constraints.

Colin explained that the aim of the review had been to improve the way that the force worked, rather than as a cost-cutting exercise. Staff at all levels had been consulted and lessons had been learned from other forces. Several options had been considered and in February 2023, the preferred option had been to move towards a five-area command structure, although a final decision would be made following full consultation with partners and stakeholders. This would mean that Reading would be placed in the Berkshire West area together with Wokingham and West Berkshire.

Colin also explained that the new structure would have several benefits for the West Berkshire Area, including increased staff numbers across harm reduction units, neighbourhood policing and response teams amongst others. However, there were some areas of concern including the loss of a dedicated Reading Commander and a risk that the team would appear more remote to some partners. The changes were due to be finalised in June 2023, and if agreed, the roll out would be phased across the five command areas, with the West Berkshire area being the last one starting in late 2023 and finishing during 2024. This would allow for any teething problems experienced by the other areas to be resolved and would ensure a smoother roll-out.

Colin also noted that the new commander for the area would have three Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) within their remit and it would be necessary for them to agree attendance at meetings. TVP recognised the value added by the Partnerships, particularly as the proposed new area was complex, encompassing both urban and rural areas and the need for cross-boundary working.

AGREED: That Colin Paine be thanked for his interesting and informative presentation.

3. HOME OFFICE COMMUNITY SAFETY REVIEW & ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POWERS CONSULTATION

Jo Middlemass gave a presentation on a Home Office Review of Community Safety Partnerships and a consultation on Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) powers. The presentation covered an overview of the review and consultation which would run from 27 March 2023 to 22 May 2023.

Jo explained that the three key proposals aimed to improve the understanding of Crime & Disorder and ASB by area, strengthen CSP accountability and agree any changes needed to the current requirements. The consultation also asked if existing ASB powers were sufficient and appropriate.

Cath Marriott explained that other CSPs worked in different ways and some worked better with their PCCs than others. The balance between Local Authorities, their policies and other non-political partnership organisations could also have an effect on how CSPs operated. She added that it would be very helpful if all organisations could respond to the consultation.

AGREED: That CSP member organisations complete the survey.

4. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY GROUPS - FINAL MODEL

Jo Middlemass gave a presentation setting out the final model for the CSP Delivery Groups:

- Community Safety (Reducing Crime, Tackling ASB & Hate Crime and Reducing Community-Based Drug Activity)
- Serious Violence (Reducing Knife Crime, Improving the Safety of Women & Girls, Tackling Organised Crime Groups)

Jo explained that the next steps would be working with key partners to look at how the Delivery Groups would work, with a focus on communications. The Chairs of the Groups would meet during May then convene the Groups in June to draw up draft action plans for agreement at the next CSP meeting to be held in July 2023.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

5. THAMES VALLEY POLICE RACE ACTION PLAN

Trip Pannu, (TVP) updated the CSP on the development of the TVP Police Race Action Plan, which aimed to improve policing for BAME communities. He explained that, when surveyed, these communities generally showed the least confidence and trust in police. Reading was one of five areas surveyed during February and March 2023 and the Action Plan was still in the development stage. Trip added that TVP were committed to improve policing, employing a more representative workforce and engaging more

meaningfully with the local BAME communities. The plan would be split into four pillars: Represented, Respected, Involved and Protected and would have strong links to the CSP Communications plans.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

6. THAMES VALLEY POLICE STRATEGIC PLAN

Steve Raffield (TVP) gave a brief presentation updating the CSP on the 2023 Strategic Action Plan. He explained that this was a simplified plan which picked up on the matters that were of most concern to communities, including serving victims, building trust, fighting crime and valuing our people. He added that the Plan was available to the public.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

7. SAFER STREETS 4 UPDATE

Sarah Gardner gave an update on the Safer Streets 4 scheme. The Home Office had granted £429k in July 2022, with Phase 1 taking place from July 2022 to March 2023, and Phase 2 running from April to September 2023. The focus was on using the funding to build on the strategic priorities of addressing violence against women and girls and reducing crime in Reading town centre. Sarah set out the highlights of the first phase including new CCTV cameras and an upgrade to the CCTV wireless network, the Safe Hub, analysis of crime generating venues, the Safer Student Partnership, the My Way mobile app, increased public engagement (in particular youth involvement) and ASB problem solving. The key priorities for Phase 2 would be further work to address violence against women and girls via a communications campaign and information about personal safety tools, designing out crime and further work with the Safe Hub.

Jo Middlemass explained that as much of this work related to the Delivery Groups, she and Sarah would be sharing details of the Safer Streets 4 progress to reduce duplication. There had not yet been any announcements from the Home Office relating to Safer Streets 5, but any further funding for Reading would depend on the Home Offices themes.

AGREED: That Sarah Gardner be thanked for her work in making Safer Streets a success.

8. COMMUNITY SAFETY SURVEY - EARLY HEADLINES

Jo Middlemass and Sarah Gardner gave an update on the results to date of the CSP survey, which would run until 30 April 2023. Key themes that were emerging included:

- 55% of respondees felt that Reading was not a safe place;
- 45% felt that the level of neighbourhood crime had increased;
- 53% felt that ASB had increased;
- 56% were unaware of hate crime in their community;
- 70% felt safe during the daytime, compared to 34% who felt safe at night;
- 29% had been a victim of crime, 41% had been affected by ASB;
- 69% had not heard of the Community Safety Partnership.

Jo and Sarah would submit a more detailed report to a future meeting of the CSP, once the survey had closed and the responses been analysed.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

9. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERHIP LOGO

Sarah Gardner shared the final two proposed logo for the CSP, both of which were available in different colourways, and explained the reasoning behind the designs. She asked that members vote for their choice.

AGREED: Sarah Gardner to email the CSP with the final logo choices with a request for members to cast their votes by Friday 28 April 2023.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

Steve Raffield reported that the Amnesty Art Project sculpture made from knives that had been handed in during the knife amnesty would be unveiled outside the Oracle on 15 May 2023. TVP would be holding knife crime awareness raising sessions linked to the artwork over the summer.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETING

The next meeting for 2022/23 would take place on:

13 July 2023

14 September 2023

9 November 2023

1 February 2024 and

18 April 2024

All meetings start at 9.30am, venue to be confirmed.

(The meeting commenced at 9.30am and closed at 11.44am)

Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

06 July 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Extension of the Contract to Provide a Housing Reactive Repairs Service to Wokingham Borough Council
Purpose of the report	To make a key decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Nick Burston, Head of Housing Property Services
Lead councillor	Cllr Ellie Emberson, Lead Councillor for Housing
Corporate priority	Inclusive Economy
Recommendations	<p>The Committee is asked:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Assistant Director of Housing & Communities in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and Director of Finance, be authorised to enter retrospectively into a further extension of the Response Housing Maintenance and Response Housing Engineering Maintenance Partnering Agreement with Wokingham Borough Council for a period of two years, expiring on 31 March 2025 and to negotiate and agree various variations to the terms and conditions as proposed by both parties as detailed in the report.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. On the 31st March 2017 Reading Borough Council (RBC) entered into a partnering contract with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) to deliver its repairs and maintenance work to its housing stock. Under the terms of that contract an agreed extension extended this to 31st March 2023.
- 1.2. WBC have been very happy with the service provided to date, however they are required to go through a process of market testing and possible re-tender of the contract which they are estimating will take approximately 24 months to complete.
- 1.3. As the current contract has come to an end and as they are not able to enter into a new contract at the current time, WBC have requested that RBC agree to extend the existing arrangement for a further 2 years.

2. Policy context

- 2.1. In 2011 RBC were approached by WBC to provide a Reactive Repairs service following the sudden market collapse of the contractor who originally provided their service. Due to the extremity of the situation and the need to have a service in place, RBC agreed to the provision of the service pending the negotiation of a contract which was formally put in place in September 2013, this contract was then extended and later renewed bringing us to the current date.
- 2.2. RBC's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:

- Healthy Environment
- Thriving Communities
- Inclusive Economy

2.3. These themes are underpinned by “Our Foundations” explaining the ways we work at RBC:

- People first
- Digital transformation
- Building self-reliance
- Getting the best value
- Collaborating with others

2.4. Full details of RBC’s Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council’s website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how RBC meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

2.5. The Housing Repairs Service has successfully continued to provide this service since 2011 and has assisted in improving the Reactive Repairs service for WBC residents and has brought their housing stock, which had suffered from a lack of repair, up to standard.

2.6. Currently WBC are very satisfied with our performance, and this is underlined by their last star survey results which reflect a 9% upwards shift in overall satisfaction with the Repairs Service by their residents.

	Wokingham
PERFORMANCE MEASURE	Mar 22-23
% Repairs Calls Answered	91.05%
Average time to answer a call	128s
Emergency and Urgent Jobs raised as a % of all jobs raised	10.66%
% of Emergency jobs done in agreed time-frame.	100%
% of Urgent jobs completed in agreed time-frame.	66.67%
% of Routine jobs completed in agreed time-frame.	82.69%
Average days to complete an Emergency & Urgent job.	2.39%
Average days to complete a Standard job.	16.85%
Percentage of jobs which had an appointment kept.	98.24%
Percentage of jobs completed on first visit.	90.13%

2.7. The benefits to RBC of the provision of this service to WBC include:

- Reducing costs for RBC tenants by benefitting from economies of scale and sharing overhead costs.
- Putting the service on a good footing to take advantage of any new trading opportunities due to its experience in the provision of a commercial service.
- Joint learning between the authorities on tenant consultation and best practice

2.8 The Wokingham Repairs Contract runs separately to the Repair Service Reading Borough Council provides for it’s own tenants. There are staff members employed with duties specific to the Wokingham Repairs Contract. This allows for a separation to meet the needs of the Wokingham Repairs Contract whilst also providing a Repair Service for Reading Borough Council tenants.

- 2.9 The risks to RBC of entering into this extension to the contract is a possible challenge from an alternative contractor. This could result in WBC having to terminate the extension early. However due to the relatively short duration and type of work involved this is likely to be a low risk and TUPE would apply so any staff would transfer and limit any RBC costs. These risks are significantly mitigated by the fact that providing a Reactive Repairs service is core business for RBC in terms of its own stock. In addition, RBC has been successful in the provision of this service to WBC for a number of years as demonstrated by the resident satisfaction results and there is a desire from WBC to negotiate this extension.

3. The proposal

- 3.1. WBC have a requirement to market test and retender the building maintenance contract that RBC undertakes for them. WBC have stated that they are very happy with the service provided and wish to work collaboratively with RBC to undertake the market test and look at future options for how the service can be delivered either through a retender or subject to the market test and negotiated position. To allow sufficient time to undertake this exercise WBC wish to extend the existing contract for a further 2 years, our recommendation is to agree to the proposed extension of the existing contract for 24 months.
- 3.2. During the extension period the parties have proposed various areas to vary the existing terms and conditions. These areas are still to be fully finalised and authority has been requested for these to be able to be negotiated and finalised during the extension period. The areas to be negotiated are:
- 3.2.1 adoption of the NHF Schedule of Rates and annual price increase
 - 3.2.2 incorporation of all the new legislation requirements around social housing regulations, fire and building safety as far as it relates to the repairs and maintenance service being undertaken
 - 3.2.3 exploration of Northgate ICT platform integration
 - 3.2.4 adoption of any key service improvements from WBC's independent review to be carried out with tenants
 - 3.2.5 market testing for re-procurement
- 3.3. **Current Position** – The current contract came to an end on the 31st March 2023 and therefore RBC are currently working at risk out of contract.
- 3.4. **Options Proposed** –To extend the current contract on the existing terms and conditions as potentially varied as detailed above but with an uplift in costs to ensure RBC are not subsidising the work undertaken for WBC. The amount is yet to be fully negotiated.
- 3.5. **Other Options considered but not recommended** -
- 3.6. To enter into a new contract for the two-year period – this option was not offered by WBC.
- 3.7. To work with no contract in place however this offers no protection for either party and RBC would not be able to implement required price increases.
- 3.8. To withdraw the service. This would currently not be in the best interest of either party and would have TUPE implications.

4. Contribution to strategic aims

- 4.1. Although this contract is for WBC and therefore outside of the borough of Reading the two boroughs are intrinsically linked. Many of the staff that work on this contract live locally and therefore this contract is beneficial to local labour and local businesses in and around the Reading area. This fits with the Corporate Plan and its three themes of delivering a

Healthy Environment for tenants building Thriving Communities and working in an Inclusive Economy.

- 4.2. This contract also underpins “Our Foundations” in putting tenants first, looking at how RBC and WBC can better deliver services through digital transformation, meeting best value through jointly using subcontractors and material purchasing and collaborative working in areas such as tenant engagement and tenant satisfaction.

5. Environmental and climate implications

- 5.1. RBC declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2. This contract is for repairs and maintenance only on WBC properties and it is therefore not directly related to RBCs climate emergency declaration. However, in using and sharing ideas across the boroughs small changes and improvements can always be achieved, this will include the use of IT and digital communication with tenants to reduce the use of paper. Ensuring that products and materials used are sustainably sourced through our stores provider. Ensuring that works are managed and allocated as efficiently as possible to reduce vehicle movements, along with the use of impressed van stock and a policy of right first time to eliminate unnecessary additional journeys.

6. Community engagement

- 6.1. As this work is related to WBC housing stock it will be for WBC to engage with its tenants on this proposal.
- 6.2. In producing this report discussions have been held with both WBC Senior Management Team and RBC’s Legal Team and Senior Housing Management Team.

7. Equality impact assessment

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, 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.
- 7.2. An Equality Impact assessment is not required for this decision.
- 7.3. This decision will not have a differential impact on people with protected characteristics these are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) or sexual orientation.

8. Other relevant considerations

- 8.1. If RBC decide not to continue to offer this service, there will be TUPE implications for the staff employed by RBC on the delivery of this contract.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1. The legal implications are:
 - Whilst RBC are a party to this contract, RBC is undertaking the role as ‘service provider’ rather than ‘purchaser’, therefore the requirement to comply with Public Contracts Regulations 2015 is the responsibility of WBC.
 - Having an extension in place offers the best protection for RBC in the absence of a new contract from WBC as it provides certainty in respect of the service to be provided by RBC and price to be paid by WBC for provision of that service.

10. Financial implications

- This proposal to extend the contract by a further 2 years is a continuation of the existing financial position of the council, therefore represents no change to the existing financial implications.
- There are budgets available for the costs of the scheme held within the DLO budgets of the council
- The key financial risks with this contract are the failure to recover all costs associated with the works undertaken, however this has not been an issue to date and mitigation processes are in place to offset this risk.

1. Value for Money (VFM)

As stated in the main body of the report, this contract offers **value for money** through shared services and additional buying power and economies of scale through the purchase of materials and subcontractor works.

2. Risk Assessment.

There are no key financial risks with this extension to the existing contract, as the costs incurred are covered by the income received.

11. Timetable for implementation

11.1. Not applicable.

12. Background papers

12.1. There are none.

Appendices – None

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Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee



Reading
Borough Council
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06 July 2023

Title	Fire Safety in Tall Buildings
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report authors	Stuart Taylor Principal Environmental Health Officer Catherine Lewis Community Protection Group Manager
Lead councillor	Councillor Emberson
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	The Committee is asked to: 1. To note the report for information

Executive summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Council’s ongoing response in the private sector, following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017. This includes action taken in relation to privately-owned high-rise residential blocks within the Borough boundaries and our partnership with the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS).
- 1.2 As a result of the building safety programme a data collection exercise to identify external wall materials and insulation on all high-rise residential buildings was carried out and inspections made of the high risk properties.
- 1.3 Four high rise residential buildings in the private sector were identified with Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding which failed the required fire safety standards, early in the project in 2017/18. Work has been completed on all these buildings.
- 1.4 Work continues to a further set of properties in the private sector with other types of external wall system and with other defects, such as compartmentation issues. Works to 9 properties were completed in 2022/23 and 17 tall buildings have works outstanding, or require further investigations to determine the extent of works required.
- 1.5 The Council continues to work with the RFBRS on buildings that contain fire safety deficiencies, taking enforcement action where required. In most cases the fire and rescue service are the enforcing body, particularly in relation to external wall systems. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between RBFRS and the 6 Berkshire councils was reviewed in early 2022 to reflect changing priorities and new legislation. This enables a partnership approach to inspections and enforcement.
- 1.6 The Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities on 10 February informed the Council of ‘New Burdens’ funding of £47,049 for financial year 2023/24 to drive the remediation of unsafe high-rise private sector buildings.

2. Policy context

- 2.1 The tall buildings remediation work contributes to the ‘Healthy Environment’ and ‘Thriving Communities’ themes of the Corporate Plan 2022/25. There was a target for remediation of tall buildings with cladding under the Healthy Environment theme and 100% of residential tall buildings with ACM cladding were remediated. However, continuing work is required to protect residents of other buildings.

3.0 The proposal

Background

- 3.1 Following the Grenfell fire a Public Inquiry opened on 14th September 2017. Phase 1 of the inquiry looked at the events on the day of the fire and the Chairman of the inquiry published his Phase 1 report on 30 October 2019. Phase 2 of the Inquiry examines the causes of these events, including how Grenfell Tower came to be in a condition which allowed the fire to spread in the way identified by Phase 1. The Inquiry suggests that external fire loading was partly responsible for the rapid-fire spread.
- 3.2 On 16 May 2018, *Building a Safer Future, Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: Final Report* by Dame Judith Hackitt was published. The report identified that the current system of building regulations and fire safety was not fit for purpose and that a culture change was required to support the delivery of buildings that are safe.
- 3.3 The government published an implementation plan in December 2018 that provided an approach to delivering the recommendations in Hackitt’s Review. This plan sets out the intended programme of work to deliver fundamental reform to the system that will ensure that residents are safe, and feel safe, in their homes.
- 3.4 As part of this plan, changes to legislation have been made which includes the recent introduction of the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Building Safety Act 2022. Although much of this is enforced by the fire and rescue service and a new Building Safety Regulator, remediation orders and remediation contribution orders may be applied for by interested parties and a range of enforcement bodies including the Council. These are new powers to require works and contributions towards costs. Amendments have also been made to the Building Regulations and the associated guidance (Approved Documents).
- 3.5 The government has also introduced schemes to protect leaseholders from paying costs associated with remedial works relating to external wall systems including the Building Safety Fund and a developers self-remediation scheme where those who built the affected buildings complete or pay for the works.
- 3.6 The legislation sets up three new bodies to provide effective oversight of the new regime: the Building Safety Regulator, the National Regulator of Construction Products and the New Homes Ombudsman. The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) will be the Building Safety Regulator. The HSE will be responsible for regulating high-rise buildings (7 or more storeys or 18 metres+) with at least 2 residential units or that are hospitals or care homes as a building control body (during design, construction) and will also have a role in regulating occupied buildings and have some interaction with Council functions relating to tall buildings fire safety. The Building Safety Regulator will also have a wider role regulating the building industry and building control bodies.
- 3.7 The fire service remains responsible for enforcing the Fire Safety Order, these regulations including requirements on performing checks common parts and external wall systems and providing information.

- 3.8 The Council's enforcement role is primarily through its role as Building Control Body, where building regulations apply to new works to buildings and as Local Housing Authority for enforcement of housing conditions under the Housing Act 2004.
- 3.9 The Housing Act does provide the Council with powers to require improvements or prohibit use of all or part of a residential building. In November 2018, the Government amended the operating guidance on the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, to clarify that local authorities have powers to enforce against the owners of buildings with unsafe cladding under the Housing Act 2004.
- 3.10 There is overlap between the Housing Act and Fire Safety Order. The Housing Act covers flats and common parts whilst the Fire Safety Order covers common parts. The safety of common parts can sometimes rely on fire safety measures within flats which is an added complexity. However under the memorandum of understanding agreed with BFRS, the fire authority are to take the lead on inspection and enforcement action in purpose built blocks of flats.
- 3.11 There are further issue highlighted in the legal implications section of this report. The full implications of this may not become clear until the new regulator is fully operational and further primary or secondary legislation is introduced.

Tall Buildings Activity In Reading

- 3.12 Given the overlap in legislation, in 2018 a County-wide Steering group was convened by RBFRS with representatives of the six Unitary Authorities in Berkshire. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between RBFRS and the 6 Unitary Authorities was signed in 2018 and updated in 2022 with the purpose of strengthening the draft Protocol for Fire Safety Enforcement and putting into place a joint plan of action with regards to the roles and responsibilities of each party. A programme of joint work was agreed and a multi-disciplinary operational team comprising RBFRS, and an Environmental Health Officer from the Council was formed with the remit of reviewing the safety of high-rise residential blocks in Reading on a prioritised basis.
- 3.13 RBFRS built a risk profile for all high-rise residential premises across Berkshire which informed prioritisation for inspections. By using these calculated risk profiles, 32 of the highest risk residential buildings over 18 metres in Reading were jointly inspected between March and August 2018. Joint letters were sent out to notify all residents prior to the inspections and to offer home fire safety checks by fire officers. In addition to the communal areas, at least 5% of flats were inspected for each residential high-rise block. RBFRS and the council followed up separately on the issues found under their respective enforcement legislation - The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the Housing Act 2004.
- 3.14 The common deficiencies found in high rise blocks in Reading include:
 - Compartmentation breaches.
 - Fire lifts not in operational use.
 - Fire doors in disrepair.
- 3.15 In Reading there were four residential buildings over 18 metres which were identified as having ACM cladding which failed the required fire safety standard and is not of limited combustibility. The Council and RBFRS have worked with the relevant stakeholders of these buildings to ensure a long-term remediation plan were established. Works to remove ACM cladding were completed to the final of these buildings in May 2022.
- 3.16 Following on from the work carried out to ensure ACM cladding is removed from residential properties, buildings with other types of cladding systems and other external wall systems (EWS) are now being considered as part of the government's Building Safety Programme.

- 3.17 DLUHC has required all local authorities to complete a data collection exercise to identify external wall materials on all high-rise residential buildings 18 metres and over within their area. In response to the DLUHC's data collection request, the Council served over one hundred legal notices requiring building owners and managers to provide information on their external wall materials. The Council has received EWS information on all the applicable buildings. This data collection exercise must now continue for the buildings where works are completed.
- 3.18 33 buildings were identified as non-compliant and possibly requiring remedial works. The properties required assessment by a fire engineer or other competent person to determine whether remedial works were needed. As well as the work to remove hazardous external wall systems, in some cases there was a need to install interim measures to reduce risk. Initially interim measures included waking watches, but over time alternative measures such as extended fire alarm systems were installed, pending completion of works to the EWS.
- 3.19 Several factors can explain the delays to completion of works. As well as the complexities of tendering and organising the physical works, availability of materials, testing sites and competent assessors was a factor. In some cases, despite combustible material being in place the competent person (a qualified surveyor or fire risk assessor) determined that the risk was low and that the material could remain, or suggested a 5 year timescale for completion. Some property owners reported delays in confirmation of funding from the Building Safety Fund and may be unwilling or unable to complete works until funding is confirmed. In addition, a separate scheme for developers to pay the costs of remediating buildings which they build may add further complications.
- 3.20 The Council has been monitoring progress with works in conjunction with the fire service. In most cases responsibility for enforcement of requiring owners to complete remedial works, particularly in relation to external wall systems, lies with the fire service. This is outlined under the terms of the MOU, the Council will provide a supporting role. In most cases planning consents were required to complete works and material alterations to existing blocks of flats, including alterations to individual flats, are controlled under the Building Regulations 2010 through the Council or external Approved Inspectors.

CURRENT POSITION

- 3.21 The MOU with RBFRS was reviewed and signed in early 2022 to reflect changing priorities and new legislation. Periodic meetings have taken place at a strategic and operational level to review activity and priorities. This has included reviews of the buildings where significant risk has been identified and emergency planning to consider the response required should a building be found with significant issues. Other joint work has included a training day relating to tall buildings and fire precautions in houses in multiple occupation.
- 3.22 Nine residential properties were recorded as having works completed to their EWS in 2022/23. The corporate plan contains a target for 5 properties to be remediated each year. However, from the works in the pipeline it is likely that fewer than 5 will be completed in 2023/24.
- 3.23 Seventeen buildings continue to require works, or need further investigation to determine what works are required.
- 3.24 Thirteen properties were recorded as having interim measures currently in place at the time of writing, though in the case of five of these buildings it was believed that works to replace the EWS were complete. This categorisation was expected to change following a review of updated risk assessments, so that interim measures would no longer be required.

- 3.25 RBFRS changed their structure in early 2023 to disband the previous tall buildings team and relocate the work into the local area teams, the West Hub covers Reading and so officers have met with the West Hub team to begin a review of the information we both hold. The Council will continue to assist RBFRS as they complete further inspections and assessments, providing information or officer presence as and when required and we intend to meet regularly with them. The lead officer for this project is due to be away for some time and so measures are in place to handover some of this work.
- 3.26 The Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities awarded New Burdens funding of £47,049 for financial year 2023/24 to drive the remediation of unsafe high-rise private sector buildings.
- 3.27 In early 2023 DLHUC requested that all records are updated on their computer system, known as DELTA to confirm the current EWS in place (i.e. to show the works completed). Despite the changes in legislation confirming RBFRS are responsible for enforcing the EWS requirements, the Council is required to collect and update this information.
- 3.28 DLUHC announced that the portal on DELTA will remain open until October 2025 to allow for further records to be uploaded and amended. An initial data release is expected in the summer of 2023 and so work is underway to collect this information. A further set of notices have been issued in 2023 relating to 11 buildings, requiring information to be provided. As further works in the pipeline are completed similar information requests will be carried out.

OPTIONS PROPOSED

- 3.29 The Council and RBFRS will continue to work on high-risk buildings which contain deficiencies related to fire safety. The Council will review on a case by case basis whether formal enforcement is required under the Housing Act or our other powers, following the statutory guidance and the Housing Standards Enforcement Policy. RBFRS continue to have regular communication to discuss progress with the Building Safety Programme and individual properties.
- 3.30 The Council will continue its efforts to obtain external wall systems details of all applicable buildings in response to the request from DLUHC.
- 3.31 The Council will keep updated with the latest government guidance and take action where appropriate. This includes any new changes derived from recommendations in the final Grenfell Inquiry report and from the new Building Safety Regulator.
- 3.32 On completion of this work stream the focus will shift to identify and work on other priority areas. This may include buildings over 11 metres tall, residential conversions or flats above commercial properties.
- 3.33 The Environmental Health Officer post that has led on delivery of this work is currently on maternity leave. The work is to be shared across existing members of the team who have received training from the Joint Inspection Team (a specialist team hosted by the Local Government Association). Maternity cover will be used to backfill elements of their work.
- 3.34 The post that has led on delivery of this work to date is part of a team responsible for licensing of houses in multiple occupation and other housing standards activities. It is proposed to use some of the DHLUC funding to deal with backlogs of work in this area, which have built up in part due to activity in this area.

4. Contribution to strategic aims

- 4.1. Working in collaboration with Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) and building owners we can build on work already undertaken to enable safer housing for communities living in tall buildings, aligned to the 'Healthy Environment' and 'Thriving Communities' themes of the Corporate Plan 2022/25.
- 4.2. The partnership working on this project can also assist in our working relationship with Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

5. Environmental and climate implications

- 5.1 This report is for information only and as such there are no implications for environmental and climate change. In addition, the action taken in relation to external wall systems, is likely to fall under the jurisdiction of the fire and rescue service.
- 5.2 Removal of cladding without replacement would be likely to increase heat loss and energy use from the affected buildings. Any re-cladding works carried out to buildings will need to comply with Building Regulation Standards including those set out in Part L. Wider impacts on heatloss and excessive heat relating to external wall systems are not within the scope of this report.

6. Community engagement

- 6.1. Any enforcement action taken would likely require consultation with a range of stakeholders including building owners, management companies, leaseholders and other occupants.

7. Equality impact assessment

- 7.1. Not relevant to this report.

8. Other relevant considerations

- 8.1. This report sets out our role as an enforcement body, there will be separate implications to the Council as landowner and as a landlord. A report to this committee on 10th November 2021 set out the likely implications of the legislation in relation to our social housing stock.
- 8.2. Although the Memorandum of Understanding with BFRS does not have legal implications if we are not able to meet our commitments, it could cause reputational damage and harm further working partnerships with them.
- 8.3. Although a number of staff have received training on tall buildings defects and enforcement, this is a specialist area. Close partnership working with the fire service will help the Council to deliver its advisory and enforcement functions.
- 8.4. Once the Building Safety Regulator becomes operational, working relationships will need to be set up with the new body. Information sharing and consistency of enforcement, particularly where there is overlap of enforcement regimes, are likely to be key issues.
- 8.5. The continuation of this work and the loss of the lead officer for this programme on maternity leave are likely to have some impact on the ability to deliver the house in multiple occupation licensing scheme, housing complaints reactive services and other housing standards work. Recruitment to two fixed term posts should mitigate this.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1 There are several important pieces of legislation which impact on fire safety within dwellings. In addition, statutory and non-statutory guidance supports the legislation. Some of this predated the Grenfell fire, this has been supplemented by new legislation as well as amendments to this existing legislation. The main changes to legislation have been made which includes the recent introduction of the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Building Safety Act 2022. Amendments have also been made to the Building Regulations and the associated guidance (Approved Documents).

Legislation enforced by the local authority

- 9.2 The Council's powers are principally contained in
- Building Regulations 2010 Part B.
 - Housing Act 2004.
- 9.3 Material alterations to existing blocks of flats, including alterations to individual flats, are controlled under the Building Regulations 2010, and need to be approved by a building control body otherwise an offence is committed. Even if the block satisfied earlier legislation, proposed alterations must be considered in the light of the current Building Regulations; it is not sufficient to carry out alterations based on the earlier legislation. In practice, any proposals to carry out alterations including to fire alarm systems, means of escape, smoke control arrangements and structural alterations, should be submitted to ensure compliance with regulations.
- 9.4 The Housing Act 2004 makes requirements regarding the condition of a broad spectrum of housing including both individual flats within a block and the common parts of a block. The Council as local housing authority are the enforcing authority for this legislation. Assessment of conditions is carried out using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) - where 'category 1' (more serious) hazards are identified the local authority has a duty to take some form of enforcement action. Under the Housing Act 2004, the housing authority must inspect properties if they become aware of significant fire hazards and have powers of entry for this purpose. The Council may make requirements for improvements in fire precautions and has the power to prohibit or take emergency remedial action in the event of serious risk.

Legislation enforced by other bodies.

- 9.5 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the Fire Safety Order) came into force in October 2006. The FSO imposes duties on the 'responsible person' who has control of the premises - usually a company or organisation and usually the freeholder or landlord. Responsibilities also apply in respect of anyone who has a contract or responsibility for maintenance, repairs or for the safety of premises. It does not apply to individual flats but does apply to the common parts of flats such as stairwells, a plant room or caretaker room, shared facilities and lobbies. The Fire Safety Order was extended in 2022 to clarify that it does include flat entrance doors, external walls and the structure of the building. The Fire safety order is enforced by the fire and rescue authority (Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service)
- 9.6 The Fire Safety Order requires that suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments (FRAs) are carried out - this forms the foundation for the fire safety measures required in a block of flats. The fire and rescue authority will review the FRA at the time they audit a building. Further detail is provided above in this report. An FRA will result in an action plan detailing managerial and physical measures with prioritisation commensurate with

the risk. LGA guidance suggests that a low risk, low rise block might need an FRA to be completed every 4 years and reviewed every two years. For blocks with higher risk and over four storeys in height a new FRA every 3 years and an annual review would be more appropriate. Guidance on the FSO and its requirements has been issued in a series of guides. Blocks of flats are included, among many other types of residential premises, in the HM Government guide 'Fire safety risk assessment: sleeping accommodation' published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

- 9.7 The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 have been made under the Fire Safety Order, these regulations create new requirements for responsible persons including providing information to residents, performing checks on fire doors and informing the fire service of external wall systems and any material changes made to them.
- 9.8 There is overlap between the Housing Act and Fire Safety Order. The Housing Act covers flats and common parts whilst the Fire Safety Order covers common parts. There may be cases where either the fire service or the Council could take enforcement action. The safety of common parts can sometimes rely on fire safety measures within flats which is an added complexity. The Housing Act places a duty on the council to consult the fire service before taking action relating to fire safety and the memorandum of understanding and partnership arrangements should assist in determining who is best placed to take action, when required.
- 9.9 The Building Safety Act 2022 creates three new bodies to provide effective oversight of the new regime: the Building Safety Regulator, the National Regulator of Construction Products and the New Homes Ombudsman. The Building Safety Act has named the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) as the Building Safety Regulator. The HSE will be responsible for regulating high-rise buildings (seven or more storeys or 18 metres plus) with at least 2 residential units or that are hospitals or care homes (during design and construction).
- 9.10 The Building Safety Regulator may issue directions, with Secretary of State approval, which could require The Council to take actions to assist the regulator perform its functions.
- 9.11 The Building Safety Regulator will also regulate standards in the wider building industry and the building control profession.

Remediation orders and Remediation contribution orders

- 9.12 Remediation orders will allow interested persons to apply to the Property Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal for an order requiring a building owner or other person with repairing obligations to remedy certain relevant defects. Where a building owner has a remediation order applied and they are not fixing the defect, then it is enforceable by the county court. Where the building owner or developer has not remediated the building in the specified timeframe, they can be held in contempt of court, this can be punishable by a fine or up to 2 years in prison.
- 9.13 Remediation contribution orders allow interested persons to apply to the Property Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal for an order requiring a company to make payments in connection with the remediation of relevant defects.
- 9.14 Interested persons who can apply include the Council as well as the Building Safety Regulator, the fire and rescue service, leaseholders of flats within the building, as well as the freeholder and other building owners for the building.
- 9.15 A review of the Councils delegations and enforcement policies will take place to determine whether further actions are required.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1. The Department for Levelling Up Housing and communities on 10 February informed the Council of New Burdens funding of £47,049 for financial year 2023/24 to drive the remediation of unsafe high-rise private sector buildings.
- 10.2. The main anticipated costs of resourcing this work are staffing costs. No capital expenditure is planned. The funding is therefore likely to be sufficient for this years planned activity. The work is to be shared across existing members of the Public Protection team during the lead officer's maternity leave. Maternity cover will be used to backfill elements of their work.
- 10.3. Given the funding that has been provided and the potential harm to our communities arising from a lack of action, the proposal is considered to be value for money.

11. Timetable for implementation

- 11.1. Not applicable.

12. Background papers

- 12.1. There are none.

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Project / Proposal Name or Reference:

Date:

Your Name:

APPENDIX 1

Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee update report - Fire Safety in Tall Buildings		26-May-23	Stuart Taylor		
1. IMPACT ON CARBON EMISSIONS					
HOW WILL THIS PROJECT/PROPOSAL AFFECT:		CONSIDERATIONS <i>See guidance below on determining whether negative or positive impacts are High, Medium or Low</i>	IMPACT? <i>Use drop down list</i>	GUIDANCE IF NEGATIVE/NIL RATING HAS BEEN AWARDED	SUMMARISE HOW YOU PLAN TO MANAGE AND REDUCE ANY NEGATIVE IMPACTS
1	ENERGY USE	* More energy will be consumed or emissions generated (by RBC or others) = Negative Impact * No extra energy use is involved or any additional energy use will be met from renewable sources = Nil Impact * Energy use will be reduced or renewable energy sources will replace existing fossil fuel energy = Positive Impact	Nil	Consider: - Energy efficiency measures - Renewable energy - Reducing demand for energy	It is not envisaged that, as a result of this report, more energy will be consumed or emissions generated than there currently is.
2	WASTE GENERATION	* More waste will be generated (by RBC or others) = Negative Impact * No waste will be generated = Nil Impact * Less waste will be generated OR amount of waste that is reused/ recycled will be increased = Positive Impact	Nil	Consider: - Re-usable/recycled goods - Recycling facilities - Reducing/reusing resources	It is not envisaged that, as a result of this report, more waste will be generated than there currently is.
3	USE OF TRANSPORT	* RBC or others will need to travel more OR transport goods/people more often/further = Negative Impact * No extra transport will be necessary = Nil Impact * The need to travel, the use of transport and/or of fossil fuel-based transport will be reduced = Positive Impact	Nil	Consider: - Use of public transport - Reducing need to travel or transport goods - Alternative fuels/electric vehicles/walking and cycling	It is not envisaged that, as a result of this report, there will be any increase or decrease in the use of transport.
2. IMPACT ON RESILIENCE TO THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE					
HOW WILL THIS PROJECT/PROPOSAL AFFECT THE ABILITY OF READING TO WITHSTAND:		CONSIDERATIONS <i>See guidance below on determining whether negative or positive impacts are High, Medium or Low</i>	IMPACT? <i>Use drop down list</i>	GUIDANCE IF NEGATIVE/NIL RATING HAS BEEN AWARDED	SUMMARISE HOW YOU PLAN TO MANAGE AND REDUCE ANY NEGATIVE IMPACTS
4	HEATWAVES	* Increased exposure of vulnerable people and/or infrastructure to heat stress = Negative Impact * No increase in exposure to heat stress = Nil Impact Reduced exposure of vulnerable people and/or infrastructure to heat stress = Positive Impact	Nil	Greater need for cooling, ventilation, shading and hydration methods	N/A
5	DROUGHT	* Water use will increase and/or no provision made for water management = Negative Impact * Levels of water use will not be changed = Nil Impact * Provision made for water management, water resources will be protected = Positive Impact	Nil	Greater need for water management and perhaps reserve supplies	N/A
6	FLOODING	* Levels of surface water run-off will increase, no management of flood risk = Negative Impact * Levels of surface water run-off & flood risk are not affected = Nil Impact * Sustainable drainage measures incorporated, positive steps to reduce & manage flood risk = Positive Impact	Nil	Consider flood defence mechanisms or alternative arrangements (business continuity)	N/A
7	HIGH WINDS / STORMS	* Exposure to higher wind speeds is increased or is not managed = Negative Impact * No change to existing level of exposure to higher wind speeds = Nil Impact * Exposure to higher wind speeds is being actively managed & reduced = Positive Impact	Nil	Greater need for stabilisation measures, robust structures resilient to high winds	N/A
		* Exposure to supply chain disruption for key goods and services is increased = Negative Impact		Source key goods and services	N/A

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Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

06 July 2023

Title	Highway Maintenance Update: National Highways Grant Funding Allocation for Reading 2023/24 & 2024/25
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Sam Shean, Highways & Traffic Services Manager
Lead Councillor	Karen Rowland, Environmental Services & Community Safety
Corporate priority	Inclusive Economy
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Committee note the National Highways Grant Funding Allocation of £250k per annum for Reading Borough Council to invest on Highway Assets on the M4 Motorway designated diversion route through Reading for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 financial years. 2. That the Committee note and endorse the formal funding agreement between the Council and National Highways, and that officers proceed with delivery of the approved schemes.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To update the Committee on the National Highways Grant Funding Allocation of £250k per annum for Reading Borough Council to invest on Highway Assets on the M4 Motorway designated diversion route through Reading for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 financial year periods.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Council approved Shaping Reading's Future – Our 3-year Corporate Plan 2022/23 to 2023/24. The Plan reflects the Council's priorities for Reading and provides direction for staff in delivering services to meet the needs of the communities within the Borough whilst working to a budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and updated to include to current Year-2 priorities.
- 2.2. To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.
- 2.3. To make travel more secure, safe and comfortable for all users of the public highway.
- 2.4. To provide a public highway network as safe as reasonably practical having due regard to financial constraints and statutory duties.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy is informed by and supports delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities including its commitment to address the climate change emergency and seeks to ensure a balanced and affordable and sustainable budget. The Strategy is also informed by the Council's Vision: "to ensure that Reading realises its potential – and that everyone who lives and works in Reading can share in the benefits of its success", as well as its Corporate Plan priorities:

- Securing the economic success of Reading;
- Improving access to decent housing to meet local needs;
- Protecting and enhancing the life outcomes of vulnerable adults and children;

3.2 As part of MTFs an ambitious capital investment programme is being delivered with the Council investing **£9M** (over 3-years from 2020/21 to 2022/23) Capital and an additional **£8M** (over 5-years from 2022/23 to 2026/27) in Reading's local residential road and pavement network. This welcomed investment is over and above the annual Local Transport Block Funding settlement from the (DfT) for highway maintenance work to improve the condition of local residential roads and pavements and reverse a deteriorating highway network.

3.3 In addition to the Council's investment in Reading's local residential road and pavement network, an opportunity has presented to Reading to secure funding from National Highways, who manage the Strategic National Roads including the M4.

3.4 National Highways is the Strategic Highways Company for the section of highway which plans, designs, builds, operates, and maintains England's motorways and major A-roads, known as the strategic road network (SRN).

This Project is in relation to the upgrade of Highway Assets on the tactical diversion route between J11/M4 and J12/M4. For clarity, the National Highways Strategic M4 diversion route is from Junction 11 of the M4, north along the A33, left onto Rose Kiln Lane, left onto A4 Berkeley Avenue, left onto A4 Bath Road and back to Junction 12 of the M4 Motorway.

The Secretary of State is empowered by section 17 of the Infrastructure Act 2015 to provide financial assistance to any person for the promotion or improvement of transport services in the form of grants. National Highways is authorised by its Articles of Association to pay grants on behalf of the Secretary of State and National Highways are awarding Reading Borough Council Capital Grant funding to maintain highway assets along this strategic diversion route.

The Council will undertake works to maintain these Highway Assets along this strategic diversion route within the Borough and National Highways are funding works in respect of the Project on the terms and conditions set out in the Funding Agreement.

These terms and conditions of the Funding Agreement are intended to ensure that the Funding is used by the Recipient for the purpose for which it is awarded.

3.5 The Council has and will continue to actively bid for appropriate external funding including Department for Transport (DfT) and Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) grants to maximise the use of available funding to improve the condition of all highway assets.

PROPOSED - Highway Maintenance Diversion Route Proposal

3.6 Works will include carriageway resurfacing, road marking refreshing using longer life cold applied Methyl Methacrylate (MMA) paints, preservation materials to extend the life of bitumen carriageway surfaces and the upgrade of strategic directional gantry signage.

3.7 Works up to the maximum value of £250kpa will be delivered by the Council in a combination of either highway maintenance contracts that the Council will be tendering for the 2023/24 & 2024/25 financial year periods or by the Council's own in-house Highways & Drainage Operations Team.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1 Reading Borough Council's vision is:

To help Reading realise its potential – and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

4.2 The Highway Maintenance Programmes will contribute to the Council's 3-Year Corporate Plan 2021/2024 objectives of::

- Healthy Environment
- Thriving Communities
- Inclusive Economy

4.3 TEAM Reading values:

Together – Collaborative working approach between the Council, consultant, contractors and the public

Efficiency – Continue to explore efficiency savings within the contract

Ambitious – Investing into the public highway

Make a Difference – Providing a safe inclusive public highway for all users

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1. The Council declared a climate emergency at its meeting in February 2019 and as such recognises the need to minimise the climate impacts of its decisions. A climate impact assessment of this decision has been conducted which suggests a 'net low negative' impact. Highway maintenance is an energy intensive activity and some carbon emissions from the process are inevitable, but a number of steps are being taken to mitigate these impacts as far as possible as set out below.

5.2. The Council on 15th October 2019 formally adopted of the 'Unite Construction Charter' where the Authority supports the 'Get Britain Building' campaign, which is aimed at supporting and sustaining the British construction industry. As a result, all relevant construction contracts will be required to comply with the Authority's Sustainable Buying Standard for Highways and Construction Materials, which requires structural steel and other relevant materials to be covered by BES 6001 Responsible Sourcing of Construction Product certification, or equivalent.

5.3. Tenders for any subsequent contracts that are necessary will be invited to submit Environmental Implications proposals which will form part of the quality element of the tender evaluation. A social value quality submission will also be required to be submitted with tenders and evaluation.

5.4. Tenders also needed to include carbon reduction targets and improved sustainability within tender returns. The intent is to reduce the amount of carbon used to produce the materials at source, using recycled materials, lower temperature bitumens, reducing the uncontrolled waste in the environment to reduce pollution of the natural environment, use of electric vehicles and plant, use of cold applied materials with lower carbon emission, as well as how they will achieve their carbon reduction targets.

5.5. The Council is committed to a tree planting programme to increase canopy cover, improve biodiversity and reduce localised flooding. The Council is committing up to 1% of the value of the road resurfacing programmes towards this initiative.

5.6. The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council in November 2020, highlights the importance of adapting to climate impacts as well as reducing the emissions which are driving climate change. The Council will regularly review design standards for roads, in conjunction with industry bodies, to take into account the extreme weather events (both extreme heat and extreme cold) to ensure sustainability of the public highway network.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. The public can report highway defects to the Council, including the condition of carriageways, signage, road markings and structures concerns along the M4 strategic diversion route through Reading, which will be assessed and included within the review of these highway assets that will help inform priority schemes for consideration should they meet the assessment criteria.
- 6.2. This report will be available on the Council's website following Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee approval processes.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, 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.
- 7.2. The National Highway Maintenance programme 2023/24 & 2024/25 consists of improvement work to the Council's existing public highway network and will be making improvements to existing highway assets along the M4 strategic diversion route. There is no overall change to service delivery at this time and all users will have a safe public highway. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. None.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. The Borough Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway.
- 9.2. The Secretary of State is empowered by section 17 of the Infrastructure Act 2015 to provide financial assistance to any person for the promotion or improvement of transport services in the form of grants. National Highways is authorised by its Articles of Association to pay grants on behalf of the Secretary of State.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. The National Highway Maintenance programme 2023/24 & 2024/25 will be fully funded by the National Highways Grant Funding.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. Not applicable.

12. Background Papers

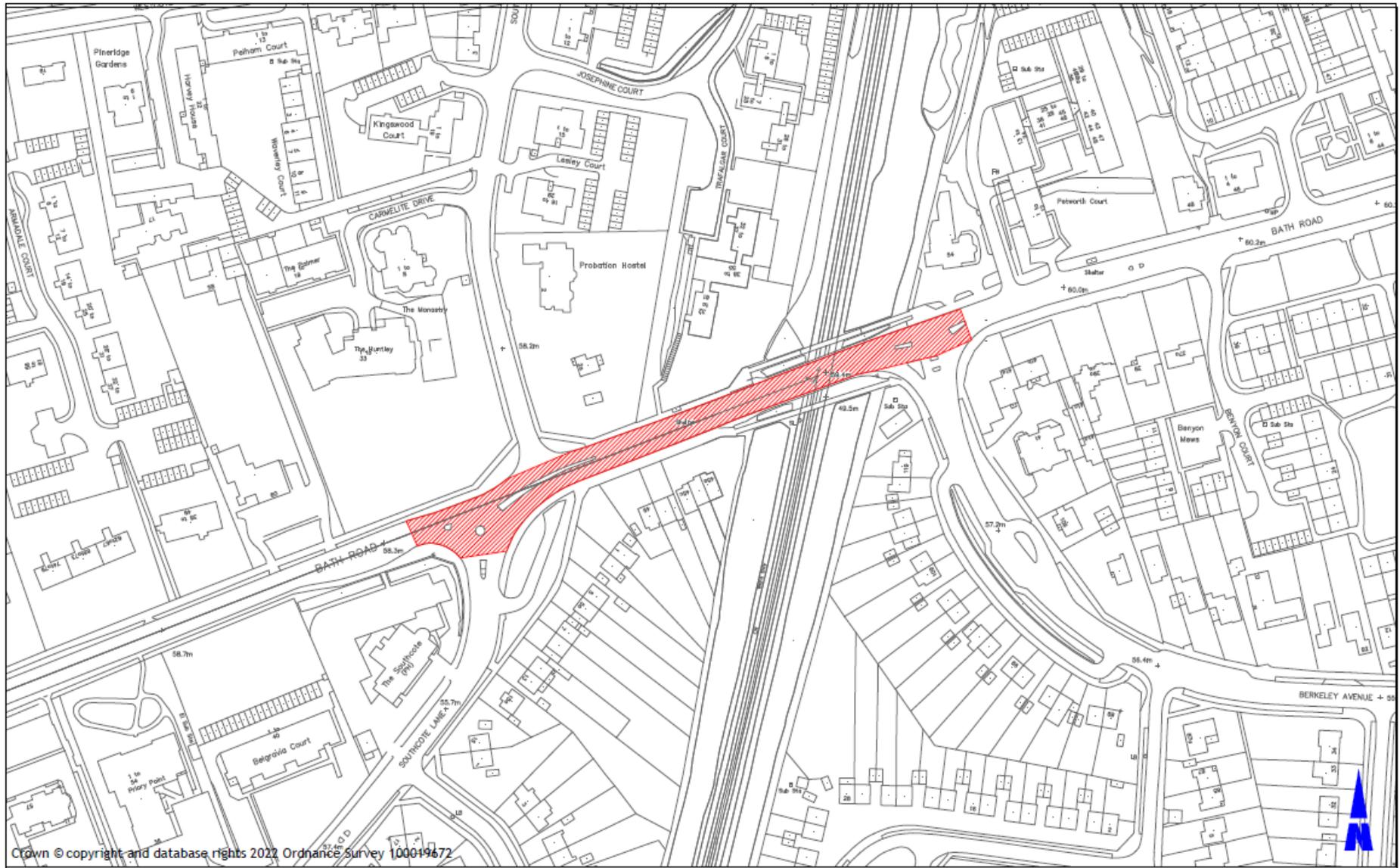
- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices:

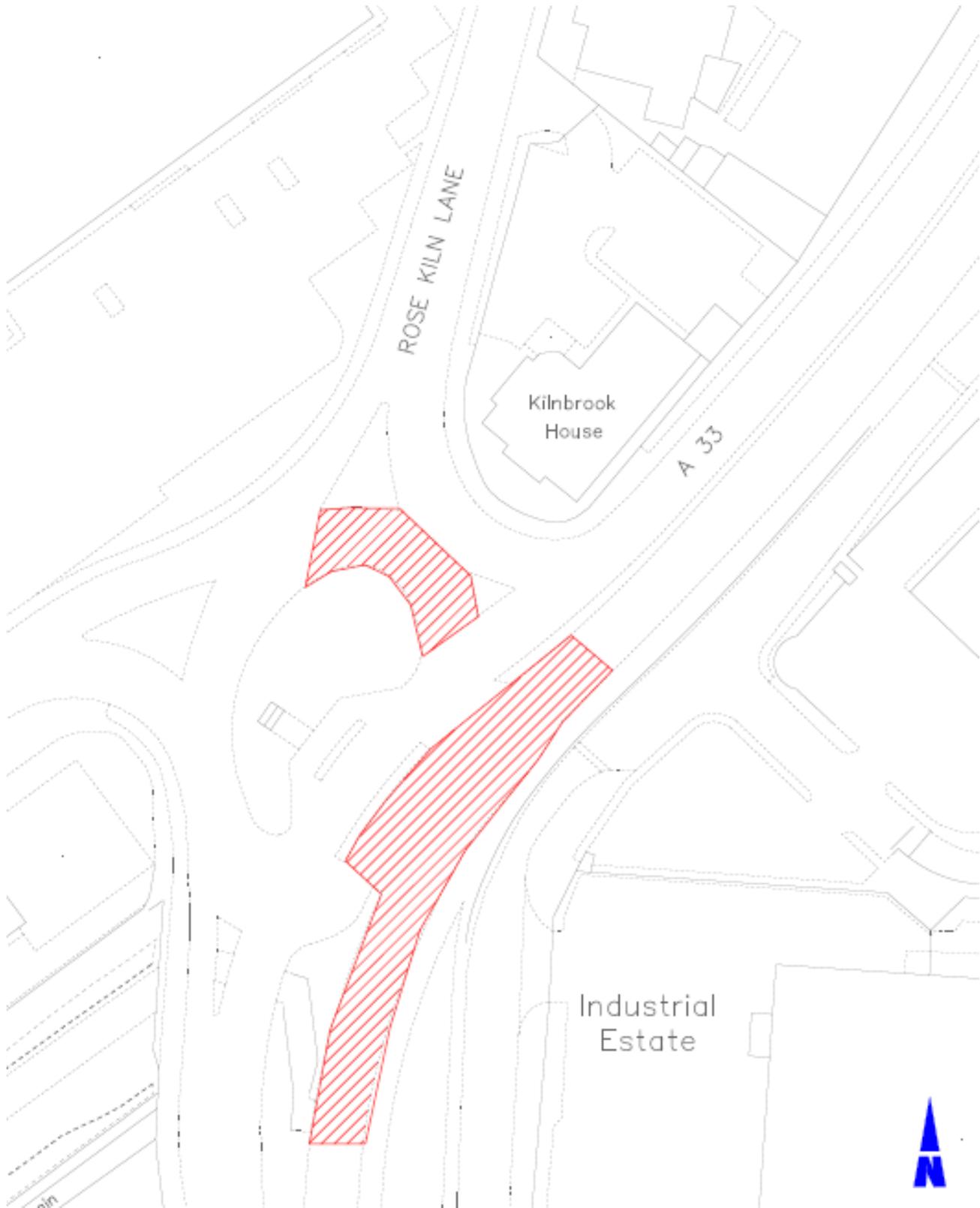
1. Appendix 1: Proposed National Highways Schemes on M4 Diversion Route

1. Resurfacing

1.1. Bath Road (Southcote Lane to Berkeley Avenue)

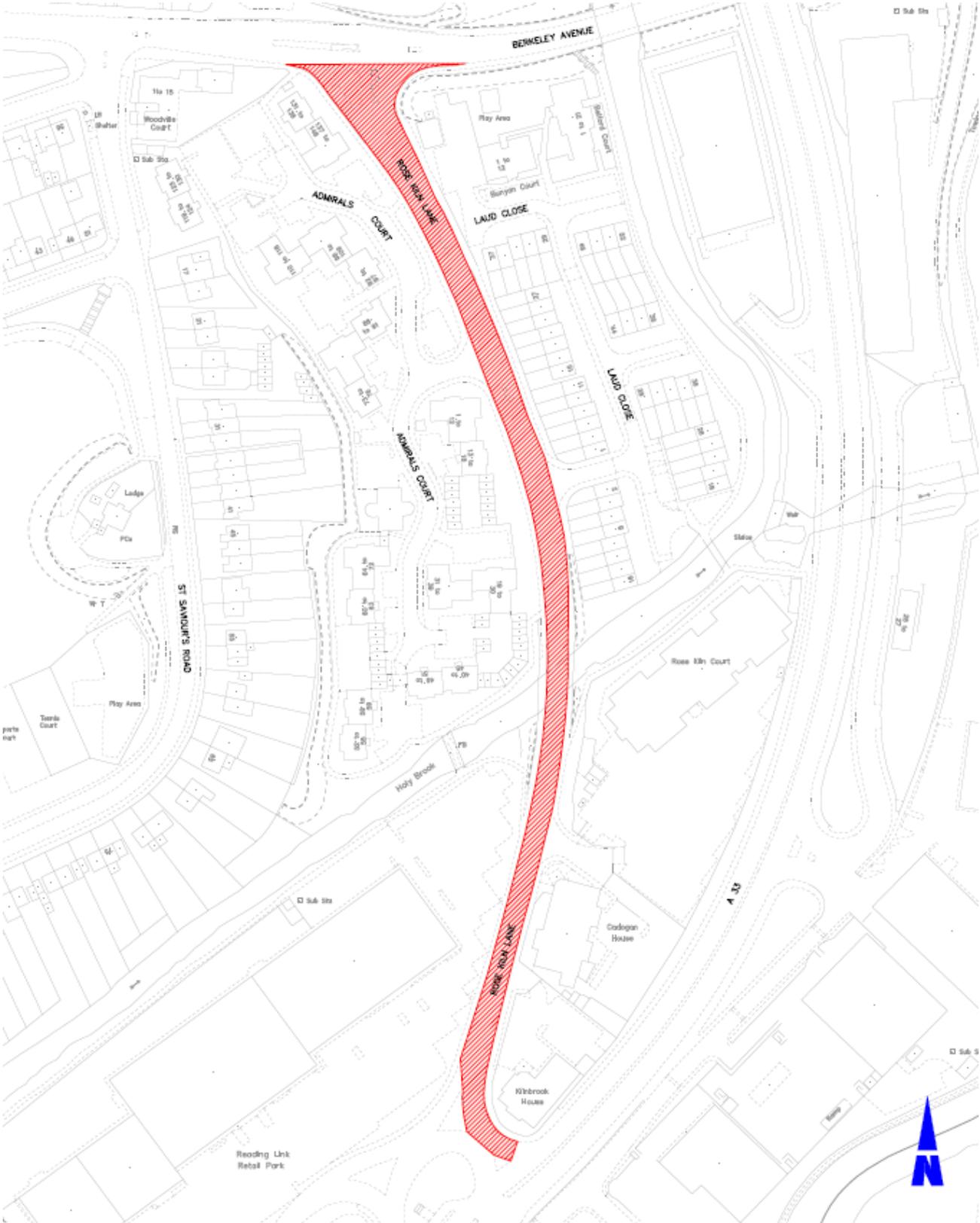


1.2. Rose Kiln Lane (Southbound from Matalan)



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1.3 Rose Kiln Lane (A33 to Berkeley Avenue)

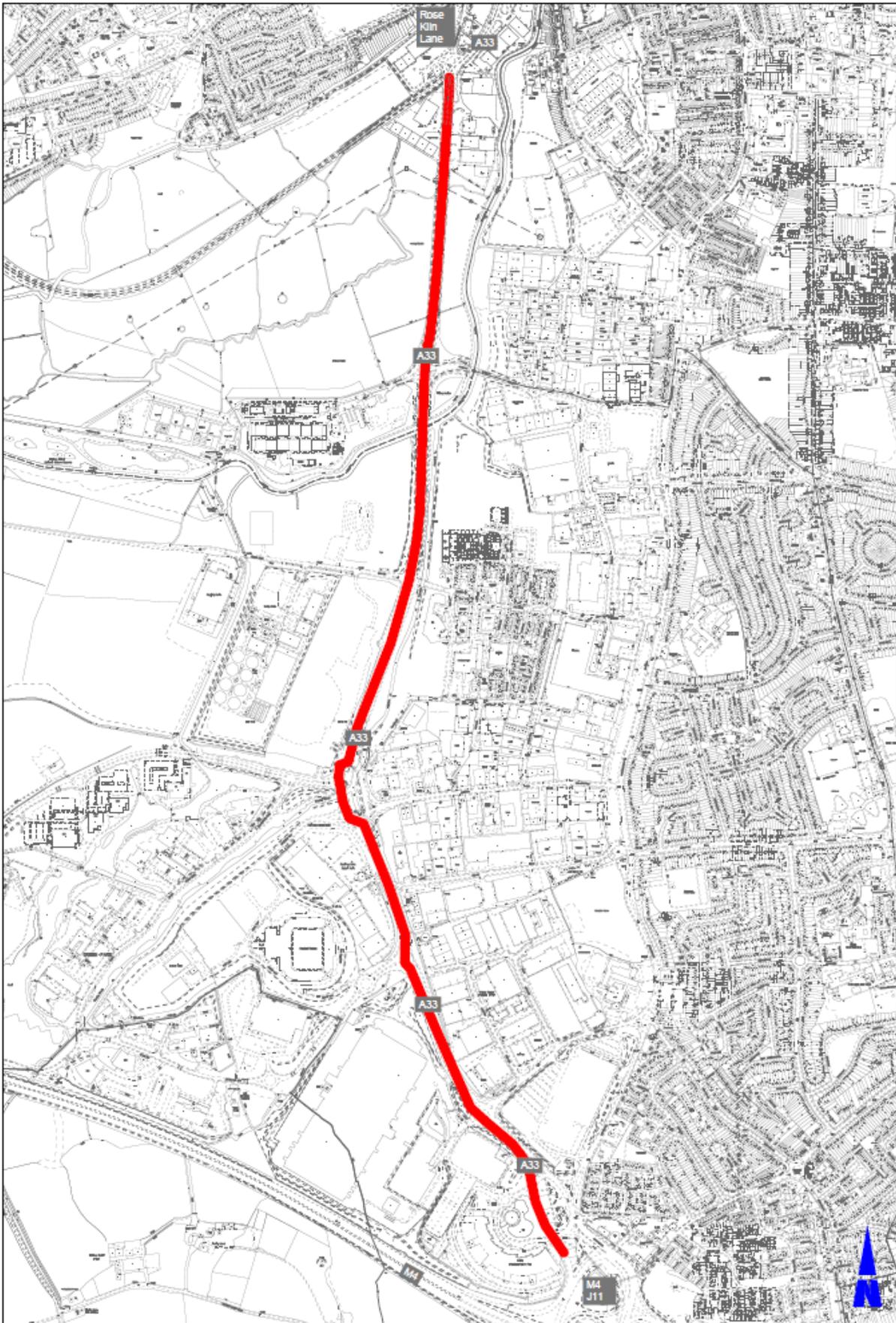


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2. Re-texturing: Bath Road Eastbound lanes (50 West of Lienbenrood Road to Southcote Lane)



3. MMA road marking (Junction 11 to Rose Kiln Lane)



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Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

06 July 2023



Reading
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Title	Highway Maintenance Asset Management Update Report
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Sam Shean, Highways & Traffic Services Manager
Lead Councillor	Karen Rowland, Environmental Services & Community Safety
Corporate priority	Inclusive Economy
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the approved 2022/2023 Annual Status Options Reports (ASOR) for carriageways, pavements and structures be endorsed. 2. That the proposed inspection regime for the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) be endorsed.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To provide the Committee with the approved 2022/2023 Annual Status Options Reports (ASOR) for carriageways, pavements and structures.
- 1.2. To update and inform the Committee of the proposed inspection regime for the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in Reading.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.
- 2.2. To make travel more secure, safe and comfortable for all users of the public highway.
- 2.3. To provide a public highway network as safe as reasonably practical having due regard to financial constraints and statutory duties.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The Highway Asset Management (HAM) Board met on the 14th December 2022, reviewed and approved the 2022/2023 Annual Status Options Reports (ASOR) for structures, carriageways and pavements/footways.
- 3.2. The ASORs are an Asset Management tool that is used by the Council to report on the condition, the asset value and future funding requirements of public highway maintainable structures, carriageways and pavement assets.
- 3.3. The ASORs are reviewed annually to provide an up-to-date measure of the current condition status of our Highway Assets.
- 3.4. The ASORs include the historical investment in maintaining these strategic highway assets and are used to calculate future funding requirements to ensure that the assets are maintained in a reasonable and serviceable condition (steady state).
- 3.5. The ASORs assist the Council by targeting available funding to assets in greatest need, thereby extending the life of the asset before it becomes necessary to carry out more expensive reconstruction.

- 3.6. The approved ASORs are attached in the following Appendices for information and publishing:

Appendix 1 - Carriageways
Appendix 2 – Pavements/footways
Appendix 3 - Structures

- 3.7. The ASORs show the current and proposed status of Reading's Highway Assets as follows:

Carriageways ASOR (Appendix 1 refers):

- 3.7.1 The Residential Unclassified Carriageway ASOR shows a significant improvement in the residential roads condition indicator, where the Council has now achieved 80 % good condition (green) following the £9M Council funded Residential Roads & Pavements 3-year investment programme (2020/23), an improvement from 35% good condition (green) prior to this investment.
- 3.7.2 The remaining 20% (56km) Residential Unclassified Roads are in a condition where treatment is desirable (amber). There are no poor (red) condition residential roads in Reading.
- 3.7.3 There has been a significant reduction in reactive repair of carriageway defects in the last 3-years. This can be attributed to the substantial amount of resurfacing carried out under the additional investment the council has made in Residential Unclassified Road maintenance.
- 3.7.4 Condition survey results indicate that Classified (Main) Roads have improved slightly in the last 13 years.
- 3.7.5 The projection shows an overall reduction of poor and deteriorating roads after the additional investment. It is predicted part of these benefits will be lost if a steady state level of investment is not able to be provided in the following years.
- 3.7.6 Residents' satisfaction levels have been improving with 'Overall Average' results clearly showing that Reading's results against all 111 local authorities, which participated in the National Highways & Transportation (MORI) 2022 residents survey, showing that (all but one) is above the national average and improving
- 3.7.7 With regard to Customer Contacts relating to potholes, 543 public enquiries relating to the carriageway were received in 2022/23. These have reduced by 44% over the last 3-years. Public contact at this level, is a significant generator of work in terms of both inspection and subsequent repair of defects that warrant repair/meet investigatory levels.
- 3.7.8 The improvement in the carriageway results, especially between 2021 and 2022, demonstrates the positive impact of the road surfacing programme is having on the public in Reading.
- 3.7.9 It is noted that the level of inflation has been higher than normal over the last year due to various economic and outside factors, which has led to a significant increase in costs, making the improvement in condition more impressive.

3.8. Pavements / Footways ASORs (Appendix 2 refers):

- 3.8.1 2022/23 was the third year of the Investment programme into Residential Pavements / Footways using the Council's additional investment. An additional £625k was invested in the year improving Reading's pavements / footways.
- 3.8.2 The Council's Highways & Drainage in-house team have delivered this programme and targeted those pavements that were the highest risk, many damaged by vehicle parking in areas of high footfall. The programme will shift in the coming years to an asphalt preservation (thin layer of slurry sealing) type solution, which is more cost effective, rejuvenates 'tired' pavements that are showing signs of deterioration while preserving the tarmac / asphalt surface, which is still structurally sound.

3.8.3 The annual Public/Customer Satisfaction (NHT Satisfaction Survey (MORI)) for 2022 indicated that the level of satisfaction with pavements / footways in Reading has reduced slightly in the last year, however, Reading remains within the top quartile for all footway condition and maintenance indicators compared with the 111 Locals Councils that participate in the annual data collection exercise. The future programme of preservation being more cost effective will accelerate the amount of pavements / footways that the Council can improve, and we expect to see an improving satisfaction result for this area in the coming years.

3.8.4 Minor defect quantities within pavements / footways (safety and maintenance defects) were similar to the previous year, which is encouraging.

3.8.5 No visual assessment condition results are available for 2022/23, however, it is expected the investment will have made a minor improvement in footway condition and will be confirmed in subsequent years.

3.9. **Structures ASORs (Appendix 3 refers):**

3.9.1 The current structures condition inspection results show that out of a stock of 275 highway structures, 10 No. structures are currently rated to be in a ‘very poor’ condition and a further 31 No. in a ‘poor’ condition.

3.9.2 It should be noted that ‘very poor’ & ‘poor’ condition structures are monitored and not in a dangerous condition, rather the detailed assessment results show which structures need to be prioritised for maintenance works. For example, an element of a structure may need replacing rather than the whole structure, resulting in a ‘very poor’ or ‘poor’ rating, and by carrying out regular monitoring & testing for any signs of further deterioration, reduces the risk to the Council allowing us to programme the works in around available budgets. These structures are still safe to use with the Council using a range of tools to keep them safe including increased inspection frequency, minor remedial works, reducing road lanes to implementing weight limits, for example, as we have on the Berkeley Avenue Bridge over the A33.

3.9.3 The proposed investment over the next 5 years of £14.1M is to be invested in structures maintenance, which will enable 7 No. ‘very poor’ and 9 No. ‘poor’ structures to be refurbished. This investment will address over 20 structures in total and reduce the current structures backlog significantly.

3.9.4 The table below shows the proposed investment programme and funding source:

Financial Year	DfT Funding	Council Investment	S106 funding	Total
2023/2024	£650,000	£3,650,000 **	£205,000****	£4,505,000
2024/2025	£650,000	£3,000,000 ***		£3,650,000
2025/2026	£650,000*	£4,000,000 ***		£4,650,000
2026/2027	£650,000*	£0 tbc		£650,000
2027/2028	£650,000*	£0 tbc		£650,000
Total	£3,250,000	£ 10,650,000		£14,105,000

* Denotes assumed future years funding from annual Department of Transport (DfT)

** This is remaining funding from the 2-year Council £4M Investment in structures for 2022/23 to 2023/24

*** Denotes part of £7M Council funding for the IDR and Berkeley Ave Bridge Bearing Replacement scheme

**** Denotes S106 funding for Station Subway

- 3.9.5 Maintaining a 'Steady State': It is estimated that on average approximately £1.3m pa is required to counteract ongoing deterioration, in addition to any investment made in refurbishing structures in a deteriorated ('very poor' or 'poor' state).
- 3.9.6 It is noted that this substantial structural investment and works will have an impact on strategic routes within Reading and liaison with statutory utility company undertakers, as well as other Council Departments who manage their own large Transport and Infrastructure projects, are being engaged to minimise the disruption as far as reasonably practicable. A comprehensive programme covering all project schemes is being developed, as well as a detailed communications plan in consultation with our Marketing & Public Relations team to ensure residents, businesses and all users of Reading's public highway are well informed in advance and kept up to date during these essential maintenance works and strategic projects.
- 3.9.7 Tackling the Backlog: The estimate cost of repairing all the defects identified on the structures "total backlog/ workbank" is £21M. Within this there is £9.4M worth of works required to structures that are in a "very poor" or "poor" condition. It should be noted that the Council, as with all council's, is not required to eliminate the full backlog, as that would be uneconomical and unnecessary, rather it a measure we use to grade structures and prioritise works accordingly to achieve a 'steady state'.
- 3.9.8 Additional DfT Investment: from time to time the department of Transport release funds that the Council can bid for structures works and the Council will continue to bid for those when they are available.

4. Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

- 4.1 The Council, as the Local Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 legislation to ensure that access is maintained to all PRoWs and to ensure that they are kept clear and unobstructed.
- 4.2 Reading Borough Council Highways are the responsible team for ensuring that the PROWs are inspected on a cyclical basis and to action maintenance to the surface to the appropriate standard and to ensure that any obstruction is removed / cleared including arranging for overhanging vegetation to be pruned back by the adjacent landowner.
- 4.3 The public highway network is inspected on a cyclical basis the frequency of which is determined by the hierarchical status of each road. Some PRoW routes are located on the public highway and are currently included within the highway inspections, however, the majority of PRoWs are on land owned by the Council or on land owned privately.
- 4.4 The proposal for PRoW inspection will be actioned along a similar line to that used for the public highway inspections, and to be carried out by the Highway Inspectors.
- 4.5 It is proposed to carry out an initial inspection of all PRoWs following this Committee meeting which will set a baseline for determining the hierarchical status of each PRoW based on their similarities / difference (e.g. a PRoW on a tarmac highway compared to a gravel track through a remote PROW using a risk-based inspection criteria.
- 4.6 Currently a tarmac PRoW on the public highway will receive an inspection based on the class of road, which could be every 3 months up to 18 months.
- 4.7 Once this initial assessment of all PRoWs has completed, those sites needing more frequent inspection will be included as appropriate and those already on the public highway network will align with the Highway inspection frequency for the class of road they are on.
- 4.8 It is proposed to bring back the results to a future Committee meeting to set out the hierarchical status of PRoWs and the proposed future inspection regime.
- 4.9 A list of all PRoWs are shown in Appendix 4.

5. Contribution to Strategic Aims

5.1. Reading Borough Council's vision is:

To help Reading realise its potential – and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

5.2. The Highway Asset Management Policy, the Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice and the Annual Status Option Reports for Carriageways, Pavements & Structures will contribute towards Year-2 (2023/24) of the Council's 3-Year Corporate Plan - 2022/25 objectives of:

- Healthy Environment - Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active
- Thriving Communities - Enabling the infrastructure to continue to support the economy
- Inclusive Economy - Remaining financially sustainable and to ensure everyone has an equal chance to use the public highway

5.3. TEAM Reading values:

Together – Collaborative working approach between the Council, consultant, contractors and the public

Efficiency – Continue to explore efficiency savings within the Highway Asset Management Plan

Ambitious – Investing into the public highway

Make a Difference – Providing a safe inclusive public highway for all users

6. Environmental and Climate Implications

6.1. The Council declared a climate emergency at its meeting in February 2019 and as such recognises the need to minimise the climate impacts of its decisions. A climate impact assessment of this decision has been conducted which suggests a 'net low negative' impact. Highway maintenance is an energy intensive activity and some carbon emissions from the process are inevitable, but a number of steps are being taken to mitigate these impacts as far as possible as set out below.

6.2. The Council on 15th October 2019 formally adopted of the 'Unite Construction Charter' where the Authority supports the 'Get Britain Building' campaign, which is aimed at supporting and sustaining the British construction industry. As a result, all relevant construction contracts will be required to comply with the Authority's Sustainable Buying Standard for Highways and Construction Materials, which requires structural steel and other relevant materials to be covered by BES 6001 Responsible Sourcing of Construction Product certification, or equivalent.

6.3. Tenders for any subsequent contracts that are necessary will be invited to submit Environmental Implications proposals which will form part of the quality element of the tender evaluation. A social value quality submission will also be required to be submitted with tenders and evaluation.

6.4. Tenders also needed to include carbon reduction targets and improved sustainability within tender returns. The intent is to reduce the amount of carbon used to produce the materials at source, using recycled materials, lower temperature bitumens, reducing the uncontrolled waste in the environment to reduce pollution of the natural environment, use of electric vehicles and plant, use of cold applied materials with lower carbon emission, as well as how they will achieve their carbon reduction targets.

6.5. The Council is committed to a tree planting programme to increase canopy cover, improve biodiversity and reduce localised flooding. The Council is committing up to 1% of the value of the road resurfacing programmes towards this initiative.

6.6. The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council in November 2020, highlights the importance of adapting to climate impacts as well as reducing the emissions which are driving climate change. The Council will regularly

review design standards for roads, in conjunction with industry bodies, to take into account the extreme weather events (both extreme heat and extreme cold) to ensure sustainability of the public highway network.

7. Community Engagement

- 7.1. The public can report highway defects to the Council, including road and structures condition concerns, which are assessed and included within the annual review of the highway assets that inform the 'Annual Status Option Reports' (ASOR) with the proposed high priority schemes brought to Committee for consideration and approval should they meet the assessment criteria.
- 7.2. The Highway Asset Management Policy includes managing community expectations about how the Council manages its Highway Assets. As progress is made on implementation of Asset Management new policies and standards will be made available on the Council's website once approved by the Highway Asset Management Board and this Committee.
- 7.3. The Highway Asset Management Policy and Prow Inspection Regime will be available on the Council's website.

8. Equality Implications

- 8.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, 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 Highway Asset Management Policy and Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice are part of procedures to maintain the Council's existing public highway network. The formal, cyclical maintenance of PRoWs will result in improving access for all users of the public highway. There is no overall reduction to service delivery at this time only how those service requirements are met. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

9. Other Relevant Considerations

- 9.1. None.

10. Legal Implications

- 10.1. The Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to carry out highway maintenance and maintain public highway structures.

11. Financial Implications

- 11.1. The maintenance of the PRoWs will be fully funded by the Council's existing Highways & Traffic Services Revenue Budgets.
- 11.2. The Highway Maintenance programme 2023/2024 to 2027/2028 will be fully funded by the following:
 - The Council's £8M 5-year (2023/2024 to 2027/2028) Capital Residential Roads & Pavement Investment.
 - Year-2 of the Council's £4M 2-year (2022/23 to 2023/24) Capital Bridges & Structures Investment of £3.65M.

- The Council's £7M 2-year (2024/2025 to 2025/2026) Capital investment for the IDR and Berkeley Avenue Bearing Replacement scheme.
- The Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) annual settlement for 2023/2024 & 2024/2025 (confirmed financial years award at this time).

12. Timetable for Implementation

12.1. Not applicable.

13. Background Papers

13.1. There are none.

Appendices:

1. Appendix 1: Reading Carriageway Annual Status Options Report 2022-2023
2. Appendix 2: Reading Pavement Annual Status Options Report 2022-2023
3. Appendix 3: Reading Structures Annual Status Options Report 2022-2023
4. Appendix 4: Reading Public Right of Way Register

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Annual Status Report

Carriageways, 2022/23

Summary, March 2023

➤ Investment

- 2022/23 is the final year of the Council initial additional investment in roads.
- An additional £3.1m was invested in the year, In addition to £1m from DfT.

➤ Public/Customer Satisfaction (NHT Satisfaction Survey)

- The level of satisfaction with roads in Reading has improved in the last year.
- RBC are top quartile for all carriageway condition and maintenance indicators.

➤ Condition (Repair of Minor Defects)

- Minor defects (safety & maintenance) reduced by 28% (3,158 to 2,282) from the previous year.
- The vast majority (94% safety defects and 93% of the maintenance defects) were repaired within their allocated response times.

➤ Condition (survey results)

- The condition of the residential streets has improved over the last 3 years. The percentage of unclassified roads in a deteriorating condition has reduced from 49% to approximately 20% after three years of investment.
- The most recent condition survey has shown that the classified roads have improved a small amount.

➤ Future Condition

Based upon expected future funding:

- Years 1-3, investment levels will improve condition a small amount.
- Years 4 -10, unless investment is made of at least a steady state level the condition trend will revert to deterioration and the benefits of the additional investment will be progressively eroded.

➤ Future Strategy

- A condition survey using AI technology is currently being undertaken which will enable a plan for future needs to be defined.
- A specific strategy for concrete roads may be developed using this data as these roads have particular repair needs.
- Consideration needs to be given to ensuring that long term funding is obtained to ensure that the progress made in improving roads is not eroded by returning to levels of investment that are insufficient to prevent deterioration.

1. Purpose

This report presents the state of the council's carriageway assets as of March 2023. It enables council to plan, to set targets and to establish budgets based on a view of the predicted impacts.

Status

The report describes the status of the council's carriageway in terms of condition and investment.

Condition Projection and Impacts

A projection of future condition is presented showing the effects on condition over time using the predicted investment levels. The impact of the predicted future condition is provided by 10-yr forecasts. Assessment of the impact is provided to the extent possible with available data.

2. The Asset

Scale

The council manages 397km of carriageways. The roads range from busy major roads (typically A and B class roads) to residential streets. The network is made up of:

- 27% are classified roads (A, B and C roads, [107km])
- 73% are residential streets (Urban unclassified roads, [288km])

Value

The total (gross) replacement value of the carriageway asset was last calculated as £584m in 2015. It is unlikely that this valuation has changed significantly since that time.

3. Customer Satisfaction

The council participates in annual National Highways and Transportation (NHT) public surveys. The surveys provide data on satisfaction with highways and enable comparison with other authorities. In 2022 111 local authorities took part in the annual NHT Survey

General Levels of Satisfaction: Highway Maintenance Service

The following table shows RBCs results for indicators associated with road condition and maintenance. There are three types of indicators: key indicators, benchmark indicators and quality indicators. The key indicators reflect the overall service of the carriageways while the other indicators assess more specific aspects of the service.

'Overall Average' shows the average result for all 111 local authorities which participated in the 2022 survey. All but one of the average values for the carriageways is below 35%. This reflects a low level of satisfaction nationally with the road network. There are several positive aspects for RBC:

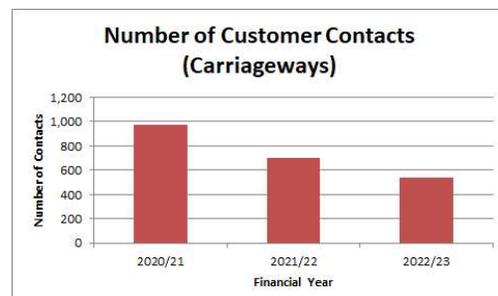
- All RBC's results are in the top quartile of the 111 participating authorities.
- The two 'Condition of Highway' indicators increased by 9% between 2021 and 2022.

The improvement in results, especially between 2021 and 2022, probably reflects the impact all the new road surfaces are having on the public in Reading.

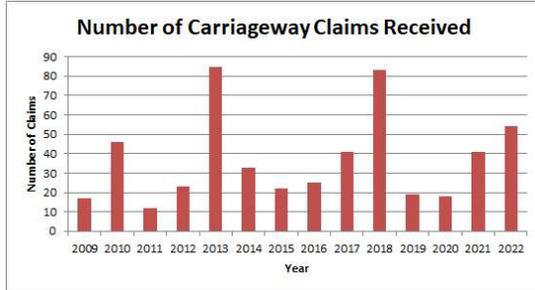
2022 NHT Results – Carriageways							
Ref	Indicator	RBC 2019	RBC 2020	RBC 2022	RBC Trend	Overall Average	Quartile
Key Benchmark Indicators							
KBI23	Condition of highways		31%	40%	↑	34%	1
KBI24	Highway maintenance		51%	50%	↔	46%	1
Highway Maintenance Benchmark Indicators							
HMB101	Condition of road surfaces	35%	31%	41%	↑	32%	1
HMB113	Deals with potholes / damaged roads	35%	30%	41%	↑	32%	1
HMB130	Speed of repair to damaged roads		28%	33%	↑	28%	1
HMB131	Quality of repair to damaged roads		35%	39%	↑	34%	1
Highway Maintenance Quality Indicators							
HMQI11	Number of Potholes		22%	43%	↑	22%	1
HMQI12	Action to repair local roads		33%	59%	↑	33%	1

Customer Contact/ Potholes

543 public enquiries relating to the carriageway were received in 2022/23. These have reduced by 44% over the last 3 years. Public contact at this level, is a significant generator of work in terms of both inspection and subsequent repair of defects that warrant repair/meet intervention levels.



3rd Party Claims



54 3rd party claims were received during 2022/23 relating to carriageway defects.

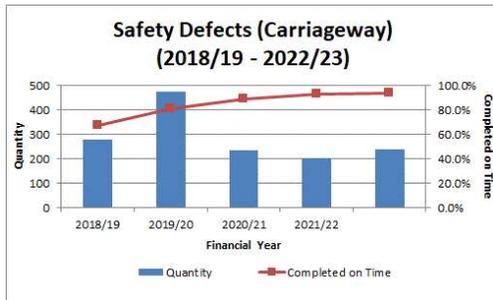
It must be noted that 36 of the 54 incidents occurred in the last three months of the financial year. A number of these claims were associated with defects at two sites, Junction 11 and Caversham Road. The council did not manage to repair these defects within the required response time. This resulted in the council having to settle 8 claims for a cost of £3,307.29. These are considered as two single incidents and not an indication that claims are increasing generally. Steps are being taken to avoid this problem recurring

4. Condition

The condition of roads is reflected by the number of defects requiring repair (recorded during inspections) and the lengths of road that require resurfacing (recorded by condition surveys). Both measures are required to understand condition and the service provided to users.

Safety Defect (Cat R1e and Cat R1 Repairs)

Defects that are considered potentially hazardous to users are categorised as Cat R1e and Cat R1 repairs. Cat R1e are defects classified as those that require the most urgent response, 1 hour. Cat R1 defects must be responded to by the end of the next working day.

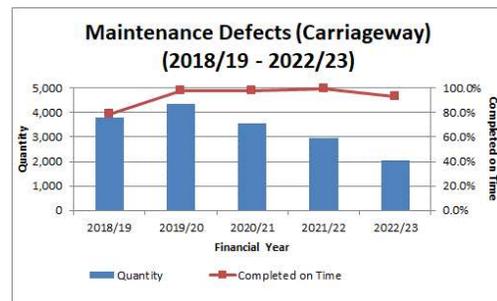


- 239 safety defects were identified in 2022/23
- 94% of these defects were responded to within the allocated response time.
- The annual quantity of safety defects remains at a steady level of approximately 220.

Maintenance Defects (Cat R2, Cat R3 and Programmed Works)

Maintenance defects are defects that do not require an urgent response are categorised as Cat R2, Car R3 or programmed repair. Depending on where they are and their severity, they are allocated either a 7-day response (Category 2), a 28-day response (Category 3) or inserted onto the next programme for repair.

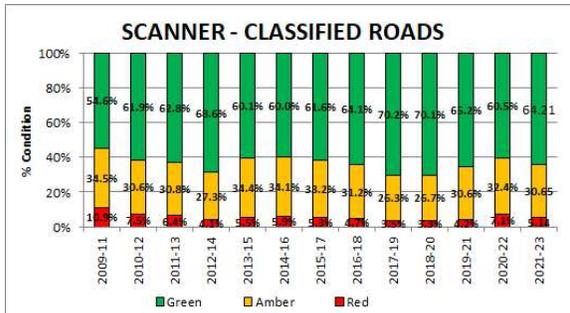
- In 2022/23 a total of 2,043 maintenance defects were recorded.
- 93% of these were repaired within their allocated response times.
- Maintenance defects have reduced by over 50% (4,365 to 2,043) since 2019/20 which is prior to the beginning of the improvements provided by the additional investment.



There has been a significant reduction in reactive repair of carriageway defects in the last 3 years. This can be attributed to the substantial amount of resurfacing carried out under the additional investment in residential road maintenance.

Condition: Classified Roads: Trends

Condition survey results for the last 4 years indicate increasing amounts on classified roads in need of treatment (red) or in need of investigation for maintenance (amber).



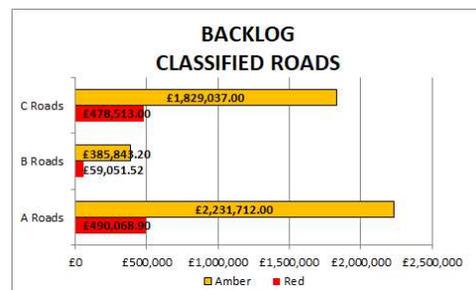
It is considered that the results surveys between 2017 and 2021 are not indicative of the actual condition of these parts of the network. In 2022 a different provider completed the survey. The results from this survey are considered reliable and accurate. The chart shows that over the last 13 years the level of condition has improved a small amount.

The most recent condition survey has confirmed that the classified condition is continuing to improve.

Total "Backlog"

Based on the results shown above the total cost of repairing all the lengths of classified roads in red or amber condition is **£5.5m**.

The split of this by road class is illustrated. The total backlog is theoretical. It is not practical to aim to remove it entirely.



Approx. £5.5m would be required to repair all poor (red) & deteriorating (amber) lengths of classified roads.

Maintenance Backlog/Condition Standard Targets

It is appropriate to consider the deficit between existing condition and appropriate condition targets.

Class	Target Condition	
	Red	Amber
A	5%	25%
B	5%	25%
C	5%	25%

To achieve these targets on Class A, B and C would require the amount of poor (red) condition roads and deteriorating (amber) condition roads to be reduced. The "maintenance backlog" (the cost of returning the asset to the target condition) is therefore **£1.1m**.

Approximately £1.1m would be required to improve A, B and C roads to be within target.

Unclassified Roads

The condition of unclassified roads has been measured using a visual condition survey which has been undertaken annually since 2012. The survey is undertaken by the Highways Inspectors in conjunction with the safety inspections.

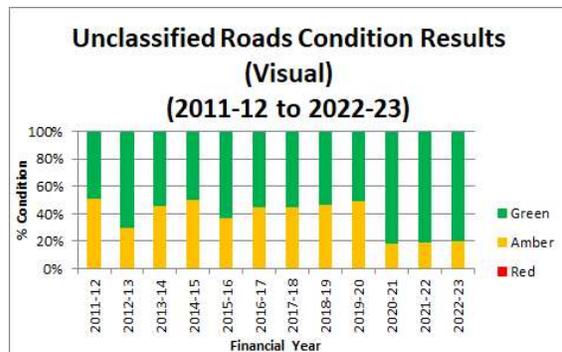
To enable consistency in reporting carriageway, condition the scores from the visual survey have been linked to the green / amber / red condition bands used for classified roads.

Condition Band	Visual Condition Score
Green	0 - 9
Amber	10 - 24
Red	25+

The accuracy of the visual condition survey relies on individuals rating condition in a consistent manner. It is therefore subject to variances that are greater than for a machine-based survey. The result for condition for unclassified roads shown below should be read with this in mind. The information does provide an approximate overall state of the unclassified roads and is also used to identify potential schemes.

Visual condition information was not available between 2020/21 and 2022/23. An estimate was calculated by changing all roads with new surfaces to 1 which is the lowest rating. An approximate level of deterioration was also incorporated into the estimated condition results.

Condition: Unclassified Roads: Trends



The survey results indicate that in most years there are no unclassified roads in red condition needing structural treatment.

In the last three years there has been increased investment in unclassified roads which has resulted in the level of amber condition reducing to approximately 20%.

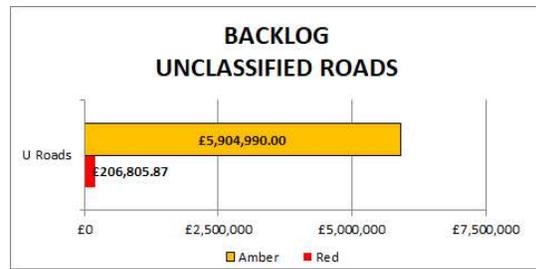
This equates to 56km of road. Prior to the investment the roads in amber condition were between 40 and 50%.

20% (56km) of unclassified road condition are in a condition where treatment is desirable.

Total “Backlog”

The total cost of repairing all the lengths of unclassified roads identified as poor (red) or deteriorating (amber) condition is **£6m**.

This has reduced from £16.5m reported in 2019 which is prior to the beginning of the improvements provided by the additional investment.



Approx. £6m would be required to repair all poor (red) and deteriorating (amber) lengths of unclassified roads.

Current Condition vs Existing Targets

The condition target levels for unclassified roads are shown in the table. These targets were set before the additional investment and now warrant review. Adopting target standards enables a “maintenance backlog” to be reported as the cost of returning the asset to the target condition. The improvement in condition achieved from the investment means that the target condition has now been met. The council aims to maintain the condition of unclassified roads at or below the current target.

Target Condition		
Class	Red	Amber
U	5%	35%

Condition Survey (Using AI Technology)

A condition survey of all the roads in the borough using AI technology has been commissioned. This will enable future maintenance needs to be determined in a detailed way that is not currently possible for unclassified roads.

Concrete Roads

A recent review and report on the benefits of the additional investment highlighted the fact that many roads in Reading are made of concrete. Such roads are usually strong and only suffer deterioration at their joints. These roads do become unsightly over time, especially if they have been previously overlaid with a bituminous layer that is now stripping off. It may be appropriate to create a strategy specifically for the future management of these roads. The cost of treating these roads is higher than for flexible (bituminous roads) but is expected to have a significantly longer lifespan.

Condition Summary

Road Class	Criteria	Standard	Actual 2022/2023	Met?	Trend (last 5 years)
All	Cat R1e & Cat R1 Defects #	475	239	n/a	Improving
	Cat R2 & Cat R3 Repair #	4365	2,043	n/a	Improving
A	Poor Roads	5%	6%	X	Getting Worse
	Deteriorating Roads	25%	38%	X	Getting Worse
B	Poor Roads	5%	3%	✓	Improving
	Deteriorating Roads	25%	31	X	Getting Worse
C	Poor Roads	5%	5%	✓	Getting Worse
	Deteriorating Roads	25%	25%	✓	Getting Worse
U	Poor Roads	5%	0%	✓	Steady
	Deteriorating Roads	35%	20%	✓	Improving

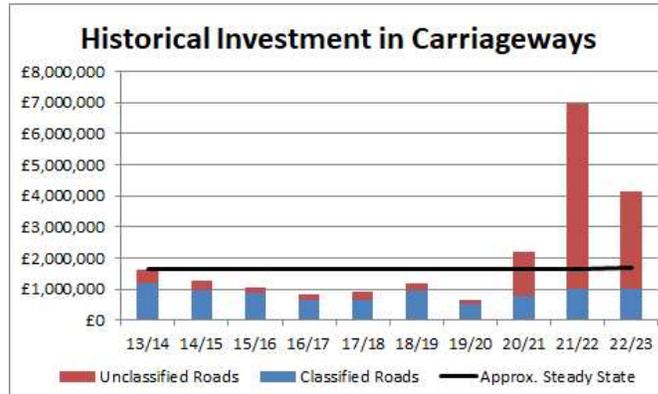
it is not appropriate to set standards for the number of defects as their occurrence can be the result of bad weather. It is however positive to see them reducing because of the additional investment.

5. Investment and Output

The results above have been achieved from investment over the period reported. The levels of investment made to deliver the standards that have been achieved are reported below.

Total Investment

Historical investment in carriageways has been as shown below.



Investment was boosted by additional investment from DfT Pothole funds as follows:

- 2016/17, + £60k
- 2017/18, + £97k
- 2018/19, + £134k

And, by addition major maintenance £350k pa in each of 2016/17 and 2018/19.

In 2020/21 RBC provided additional funding of £9m to invest on residential roads over a 3-year period.

These sums add up to provide the total investment as shown above and tabulated below.

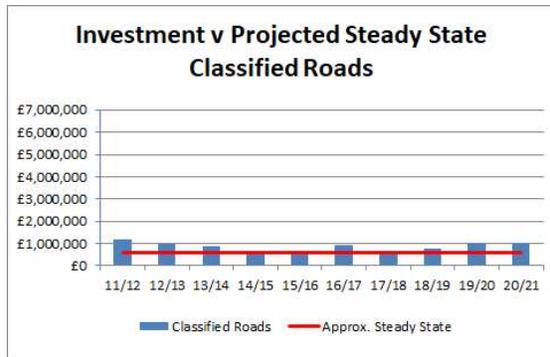
Year	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Classified Roads	£1,166k	£970k	£875k	£641k	£629k	£939k	£525k	£770k	£1000k	£1000k
Unclassified Roads	£466k	£305k	£175k	£163k	£289k	£231k	£111k	£1415k	£5965k	£3125k
Total	£1632k	£1,275k	£1,050k	£804k	£918k	£1,170k	£636k	£2185k	£6965k	£4125k

The council, over the period shown, has invested all the monies supplied by the DfT on roads.

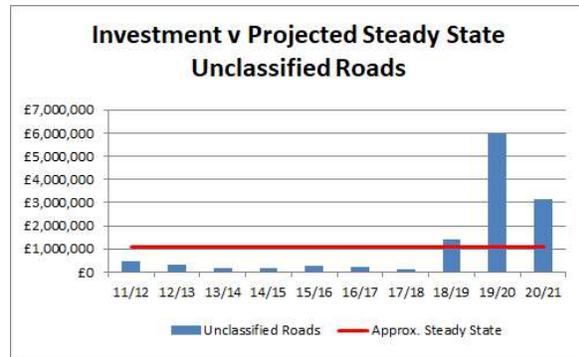
Average Investment

Prior to the additional investment provided in 2020/21 the average annual investment over the previous 7 years was £1.1m pa. This was lower than the estimated level of investment required to maintain a steady state of measured condition of £1.7m pa.

Comparing the investment made in classified and unclassified roads illustrates why the condition profiles reported earlier in this report have arisen:



Investment over the last 10 years has fluctuated between steady state levels and above that.



Prior to the residential roads Investment in 2020/21 unclassified roads had invested approximately 15% of the predicted steady state.

Investment/Cost of Routine and Reactive Maintenance

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Revenue	#	£60,000	£97,000	£134,681	£234,121	£183,620	£152,759	£112,203
Total Repairs	#	5,020*	3,116*	4,092*	4,840*	3,796*	3,158*	1,933*

Figures cannot be readily computed, *may include some footway repairs

The additional investment in residential roads between 2020/21 and 2022/23 follows years of under investment in those roads.

6. Projection of Condition

Projections of condition have been created using the CSSW* condition projection tool (6CW).

Results

The results of these projections are detailed below.

Projection	Annual Investment		Total 10 Year	Network Outturn Condition		
	0 to 3yrs	4 to 10yrs		Condition	Yr. 10	Benefit above Base
Baseline	£1.2m	£1.2m	£12.0m	Poor	2%	-
				Deteriorating	34%	-
1	Yr1-£2.5m, Yr2 - £2.1m, Yr. - £2.0m	£1.0m	£15.0m	Poor	1%	5km less after 10yrs
				Deteriorating	32%	9km less after 10yrs

(*CSSW = County Surveyors Society of Wales, a group coordinating all Welsh highway authorities who have developed the projection tool used. This has been calibrated against both data from authorities in Scotland and Wales, including several urban authorities with networks similar to Reading and against the Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programmes Carriageways Lifecycle Planning toolkit).

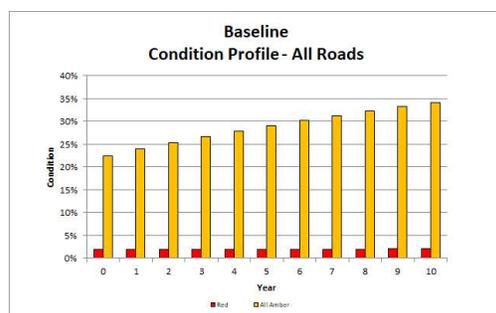
Baseline Projection: Current Budget for Planned and Routine Maintenance

Budget

The baseline projection is based on the Projected DfT Funding and is shown in the table below. The baseline option is based on mitigating the level of deterioration on all road classes. The option assumes a treatment strategy of 60% corrective treatments (resurfacing) and 40% preventative treatments (micro-surfacing).

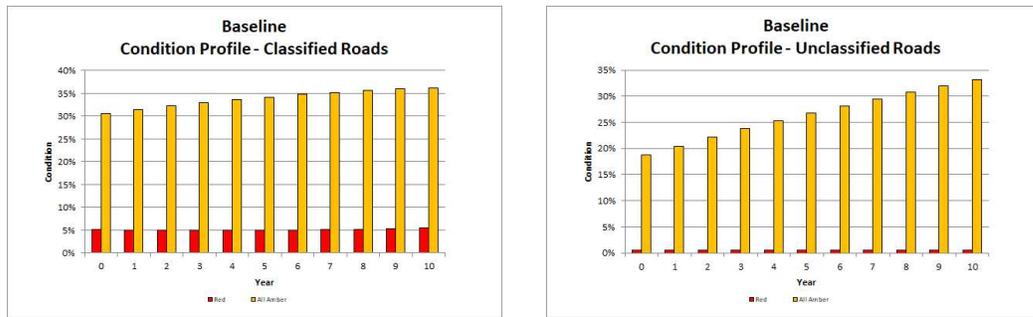
Annual Investment	All Years
Planned Maintenance – Corrective and Preventative	£1,200k

Predicted Condition



- Poor Condition: ■
- Steady at 2.0%
- Deteriorating Condition: ■
- Getting worse (from 22.5% to 34.1%)

The individual profiles for Classified and Unclassified Roads are shown below:



Predicted Impacts

Based on this level of investment it is predicted that there will be 400m more poor roads and 47km more deteriorating road at the end of 10 years. Over time deteriorating carriageway condition would lead to an increase in the number of carriageway defects requiring repair and a decrease in customer satisfaction.

Option Summary

- Deteriorating condition.
- Increasing reactive repairs, 3rd party claims and decreasing level of public satisfaction with highway condition.

Projection: Additional Investment in Years 1 to 3, followed by reverting to baseline

The projection is based on the following assumed funding levels.

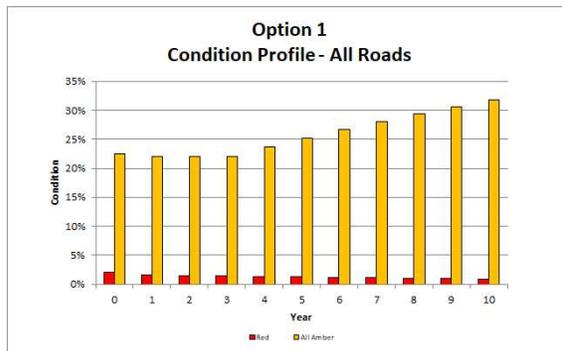
- Year 1 to 3: RBC Investment (including additional funding from borrowing), Projected DfT Funding and National Highways Funding
- Years 4 to 10: Projected DfT Funding

The option assumes a treatment strategy of 60% corrective treatments (resurfacing) and 40% preventative treatments (micro-surfacing) for all years.

The funding levels for each of these are as shown below:

Annual Investment	Yr. 1	Yr. 2	Yr. 3	Yrs. 4 to 10
Planned Maintenance – Corrective & Preventative	£2,464k	£2,138k	£2,038k	£1,200k

Predicted Condition



Years 1 to 3:

Poor Condition: ■

- Improving (from 2.0% to 1.4%)

Deteriorating Condition: ■

- Improving (from 22.5% to 22.0%)

Years 4 to 10

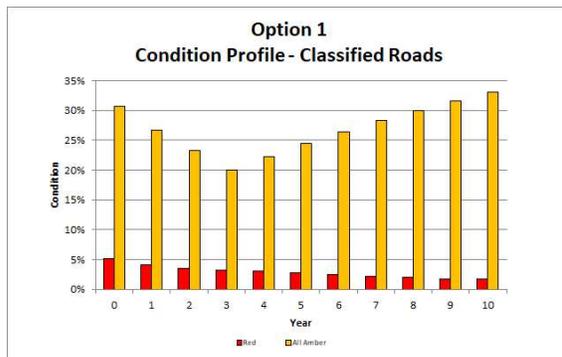
Poor Condition: ■

- Improving (from 1.4% to 0.9%)

Deteriorating Condition: ■

- Getting worse (from 22.0% to 31.8%)

The individual profiles for Classified and Unclassified Roads are shown below:



Predicted Impact

It is predicted that at the end of three years increased investment there will be 2km fewer poor roads and 2km fewer deteriorating road. However, if funding levels revert to just estimated DfT funding profile this will result in a deteriorating condition in the subsequent years part of that improvement will be eroded. At the end of ten years there will be 5km fewer poor roads but there will be 38km more deteriorating roads than currently exists. It can be expected that there would be a reduction in the number of reactive repairs, 3rd party claims and level of customer satisfaction in the years of the additional investment and for a period after that. Those benefits would be progressively eroded if this strategy were adopted.

Option Summary

- Improving condition initially but after the period of investment a return to deterioration
- An initial improvement in the level of reactive repairs, 3rd party claims and public satisfaction with highway condition to currently, but then a predicted reversion over the remaining option period due to returning to a deteriorating state.

The projection shows an overall reduction of poor and deteriorating roads after the additional investment. It is predicted that these benefits will be lost if a steady state level of investment is not provided in the following years.

Investment Impact

The following table shows the impact on the condition made by the additional investment. RBCs increase in investment began in 2020/21 when £9m was provided for treatments on mainly for residential roads. This lasted for 3 years. At this stage further investment has been obtained for the next 3 years.

Road Class	Condition (Combined Poor and Deteriorating)		
	Baseline Actual (2020/21)	End of Investment Year 3 Projection	End of 10 Year Projection
Classified Roads	35.9%	23.3%	34.7%
Unclassified Roads	45.1%	23.4%	31.7%
All Roads	42.5%	23.4%	32.7%

The results show that the additional investment is projected to reduce the quantity of roads in poor and deteriorating condition by approximately 19%. **If at the end of the additional investment RBC's annual budget is only that provided by the DfT than the reduction in investment for the remaining 7 years is projected to erode the benefits gained by almost 50%.**

Conclusions

1. There has been a significant reduction in reactive repair of carriageway defects in the last 3 years. This can be attributed to the substantial amount of resurfacing carried out under the additional investment in residential road maintenance.
2. Condition survey results indicate that classified roads have been improved a small amount in the last 13 years.
3. Approximately £5.5m would be required to repair all poor (red) & deteriorating (amber) lengths of classified roads. £1.1m would be required to improve A, B and C roads to be within the target.
4. 20% (56km) of unclassified road condition are in a condition where treatment is desirable.
5. Approximately £6m would be required to repair all poor (red) and deteriorating (amber) lengths of unclassified roads.
6. The additional investment in residential roads between 2020/21 and 2022/23 follows years of under investment in those roads.
7. The projection shows an overall reduction of poor and deteriorating roads after the additional investment. It is predicted part of these benefits will be lost if a steady state level of investment is not provided in the following years.
8. The level of inflation has been higher than normal over the last year which has led to an increase in costs. The projections in this report are based on unit rates prior to the inflation. It is likely that the projections are over estimating the amount of works and therefore the amount of improvement in condition that may be possible in the future.

Appendix A: Reports by Road Class

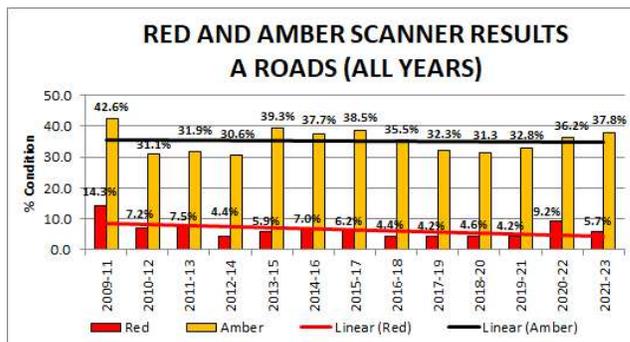
A Roads

37km (9.3% of the network by length). A-roads are in most cases the council's busiest roads.

Current Condition

- 5.7% (2.1km) in a deteriorated red condition
- 37.8% (13.9km) in a deteriorating amber condition

Trend in Condition



Poor Condition: ■

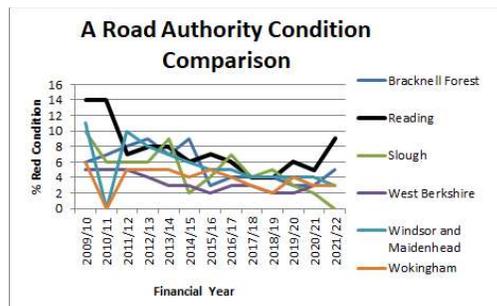
- Decreasing (improving)

Deteriorating Condition: ■

- Steady (approximately the same)

The amount of A road in poor condition has been trending downwards since 2009/11. In the shorter term the poor condition has been increasing since 2017/19. There have been some issues with the accuracy of the data. A new supplier completed the survey in 2022/23 and the results confirmed deterioration has occurred in recent years.

The amount of A road in a deteriorating condition (amber) has remained between 30% and 40% since 2010/12.



The percentage of A roads in a poor (red) condition has been very similar to neighbouring authorities over most of the last 10 years.

The increase in 2020/22 has not been reflected in the other authorities.

Summary Status

The amount of A roads in a poor condition is 5.7% which is outside the target level of 5%.

37.8% of A roads are in a deteriorating condition. It would be desirable to reduce this with a target proposed of 25%.

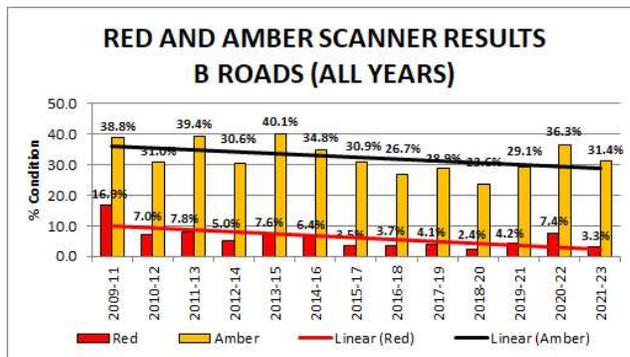
B Roads

10km (2.5% of the network by length). B roads are a mixture of routes. Some of these routes are as busy as A roads. Some carry significantly less traffic than others.

Current Condition

- 3.3% (0.3km) in a deteriorated red condition
- 31.4% (3.0km) in a deteriorating amber condition

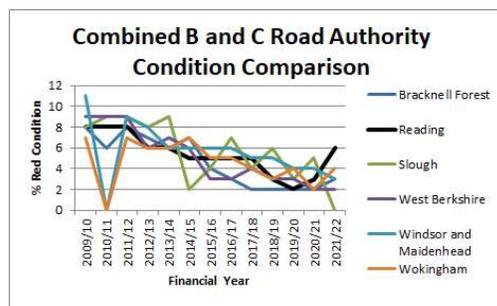
Trend in Condition



- Poor Condition: ■
- Decreasing (improving)
- Deteriorating Condition: ■
- Decreasing (improving)

The amount of B road in poor condition has been trending downwards since 2009/11. The results reported in 2019/21 and 2020/21 showed that the level of poor roads may be starting to increase. There have been some issues with the accuracy of the data in the last 4 years. A new supplier completed the survey in 2022/23 which resulted in 3.3% of the B road been classified in poor condition. If the previous 4 years of results were ignored then the overall trend is downwards.

The amount of B road in a deteriorating condition (amber) has trended downwards since 2013/15 when it recorded its highest value of 40.1%. There can be quite large annual variations in condition on this road class due to the small overall length 9,600m. Sections of road which are either renewed or deteriorate significantly will have a bigger effect on the overall condition than a longer length road class.



The Condition of B and C roads in terms of the percentage in a poor condition is like that in neighbouring authorities

Summary Status

The amount of B roads in a poor condition is 3.3% which is within the target level of 5%.
 31.4% of B roads are in a deteriorating condition. It would be desirable to reduce this with a target proposed of 25%.

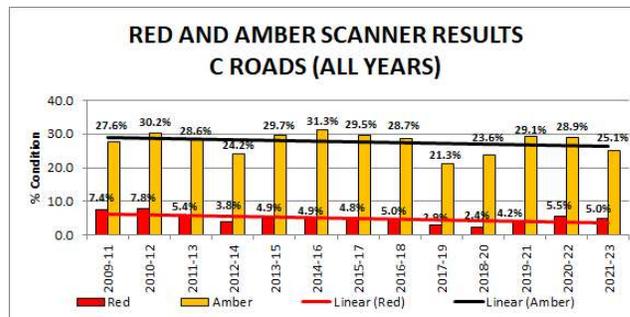
C Roads

69km (17.4%) of the network by length). C roads include a range of local urban distributor roads.

Current Condition

- 5.0% (3.5km) in a deteriorated red condition
- 25.1% (17.4km) in a deteriorating amber condition

Trend in Condition



- Poor Condition: ■
- Decreasing (improving)
- Deteriorating Condition: ■
- Decreasing (improving)

The amount of C road in poor condition trended downwards until 2018/20. It has increased annually since 2018/20. There have been some issues with the accuracy of the data. A new supplier completed the survey in 2022/23 and the results confirmed deterioration has occurred in recent years.

The amount of road in a deteriorating condition has been remained between 25% and 32% since 2009/11. In 2012/14 and 2017/19 the condition did drop below 25%.

Summary Status

The amount of C roads is in a poor condition is 5.0% which meets the target level of 5%.
 25.1% of C roads are in a deteriorating condition. This almost meets the target proposed of 25%.

Unclassified Roads

288km (71.5% by length).

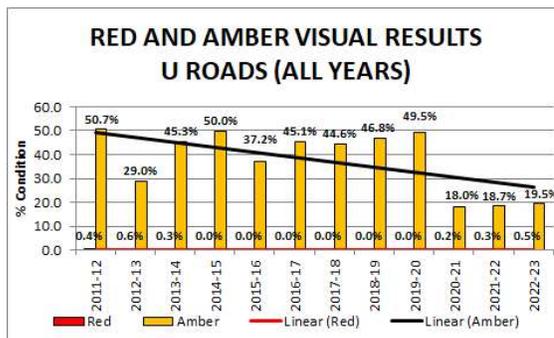
Unclassified roads are the largest group of roads in the network. Most of these roads are urban roads, predominantly residential streets.

Current Condition

Current unclassified road condition is:

- 0% in a deteriorated red condition
- 19.5% (56km) in a deteriorating amber condition

Trend in Condition



Poor Condition: ■
 - Steady at 0%

Deteriorating Condition: ■
 - Decreasing (improving)

There have been no poor condition roads identified in the survey since 2014/15. Between 2020/21 and 2022/23 there was additional investment in unclassified roads which lead to deteriorating condition reducing to deteriorating condition reduced to below 20%. In the years prior to the investment the amount of road reported in a deteriorating condition had been mostly between 40 and 50%.

Data is not available for unclassified roads for other authorities and therefore a comparison is not possible.

Summary Status

There are no unclassified roads in a poor condition.

19.5% of unclassified roads are in a deteriorating condition which is inside the target level of 35%.

Appendix B: Explanatory Notes on Condition Measurement

The condition data in this report for classified roads is from Scanner surveys. Scanner surveys were designed for use on heavily used, designed roads. They are the method of survey used

internationally on strategic roads (trunk roads and motorways). They consequently lend themselves well to use on the busier road classes within the local road network.

There are however some issues with their use on the lower use roads and consequently Scanner surveys are not used nationally for U roads. RBC has adopted a visual condition survey method for these roads. The method used is a coarse assessment method and has been used historically predominantly to enable programmes of works to be created. The repeatability of these surveys is less than for machine (Scanner) surveys.

Classified Roads (A, B and C) 29% of the network

Condition of classified road carriageways (A, B and C roads) is measured annually by machine-based “scanner” surveys. The machine record cracking, rutting, texture and a measure of ride quality. These defects are collated and computed into figures that represent the condition levels described below. The survey results indicate the condition of the carriageway and how it is changing over time. The results report condition in terms of:

Poor Condition: Roads in a state where structural maintenance should be considered: Reported as red. typically **require a structural treatment** e.g., resurfacing combined with patching designed to restore the surface and the strength of the pavement



Red Condition

Deteriorating Condition (Major): Roads in a state where maintenance should be considered, e.g., resurfacing: Reported as Amber 1. Roads in this condition typically **require a resurfacing treatment** e.g., overlay with a new surface with a nominal amount of patching.



Amber 1 (Major Deterioration)

Deteriorating Condition (Minor): Roads in the early stages of deterioration where preventative maintenance should be considered. Reported as Amber 2. Roads in this condition typically require a **surface treatment**, e.g., a thin surfacing, to restore the surface



Amber 2 (Minor Deterioration)

The condition survey results are indicative primarily of the amount of road that warrants a treatment such as resurfacing or surface treatment.

Roads can, and are, kept in a safe condition by the regime of inspection and repair of minor defects (potholes etc), however there is an ongoing need to renew road surfaces to prevent them spawning potholes and the like that require reactive repair.

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Annual Status Report

Footways, 2022/23

Summary, March 2023

➤ Investment

- 2022/23 is the third year of the council additional investment in footways.
- An additional £625k was invested in the year

➤ Public/Customer Satisfaction (NHT Satisfaction Survey)

- The level of satisfaction with footways in Reading has reduced in the last year.
- RBC are top quartile for all footway condition and maintenance indicators

➤ Condition (Repair of Minor Defects)

- Minor defects quantities (safety and maintenance) were similar to the previous year.
- The vast majority (84% safety defects and 91% of the maintenance defects) were repaired within their allocated response times.

➤ Condition (survey results)

- No condition results are available for 2022/23. It is expected the investment will have made a minor improvement in footway condition.

➤ Future Condition

- Year 1 - 3, investment level will lead to a small level of deterioration.
- Years 4 – 10, investment levels will lead to constant deterioration

➤ Future Strategy

- To be agreed by HAM Board

1. Purpose

This report presents the state of the council's footway assets as of March 2023. It enables council to plan, to set targets and to establish budgets based on a view of the predicted impacts.

Status

The report describes the status of the council's footway in terms of condition and investment.

Condition Projection and Impacts

A projection of future condition is presented showing the effects on condition over time using the predicted investment levels. The impact of the predicted future condition is provided by 10-yr forecasts. Assessment of the impact is provided to the extent possible with available data.

2. The Asset

Scale

The council manages 1,027km of footways. They range from busy footways in the town centre to lightly used footways in residential areas.

Value

In July 2016, the total (gross) replacement value of the footway asset was estimated at £73m.

3. Customer Satisfaction

The council participates in annual National Highways and Transportation (NHT) surveys. The surveys provide data on public satisfaction with highways and enable comparison with other authorities. In 2022 111 local authorities took part in the annual NHT Survey

General Levels of Satisfaction: Footways Maintenance

The following table shows the Reading Borough Council (RBC) results for indicators associated with the maintenance of footways. The column labelled 'Overall Average' shows the average result for all 111 local authorities which participated in the 2022 survey. All the average values for the footways are below 45%. This is a national reflection of the low satisfaction the average customer has of how their local footways are maintained.

RBC's results are all in the top quartile of the 111 participating authorities.

A trend has been calculated based on two years of data. This shows that all the indicators are 'getting worse'. The results for 2022 are below those achieved in 2020. The reductions

are all quite small, 3 or 4% so with only two years data it is not possible to know if this is really a trend.

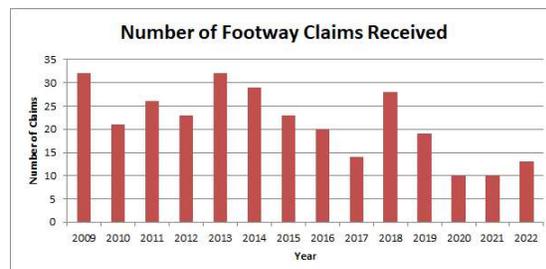
Highway Maintenance Benchmark Indicators - Footways						
Ref	Indicator	RBC 2020	RBC 2022	RBC Trend	Overall Average	Quartile
HMBI23	Speed of repair to damaged pavements	42%	39%	↓	35%	1
HMBI24	Quality of repair to damaged roads	49%	45%	↓	42%	1
HMBI25	Weed killing on pavements	52%	49%	↓	40%	1

Customer Contact/ Potholes

In 2022/23 there were 115 public enquiries relating to the footway. This increased from 81 recorded in 2021/22. Public contact at this level, is a generator of work in terms of both inspection and subsequent repair of defects that warrant repair/meet intervention levels.

3rd Party Claims

13 3rd party claims were received during 2022/23 relating to footway defects. This was slightly more than 2019/20 and 2020/21 but below the average over the last 10 years.



The council can repudiate claims where it can demonstrate that its regime of management

(inspection and repair) was reasonable and was adhered to. The council has not had to settle a footway claim since 2018/19.

The repudiation rate for footway claims in 2022/23 was 100% with 1 claim settled without payment. It must be noted that the remaining 12 claims received in 2022/23 are yet to be settled.

The section below reports on compliance in meeting councils repair response times.

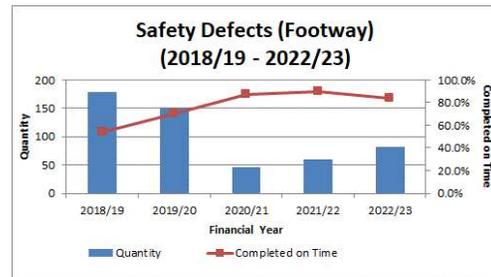
4. Condition

The condition of footways is reflected by the number of defects requiring repair (recorded during inspections) and the lengths of footway that require resurfacing (recorded by condition surveys). Both measures are required to understand condition and the service provided to users.

Safety Defect (Cat R1e and Cat R1 Repairs)

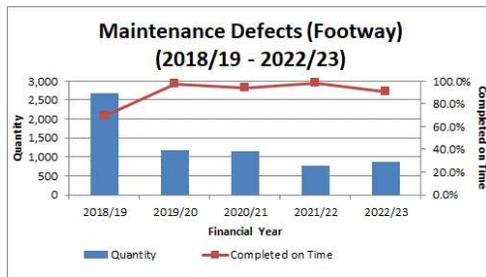
Defects that are considered potentially hazardous to users are categorised as Cat R1e and Cat R1 repairs. Cat R1e are defects classified as those that require the most urgent response, 1 hour. Cat R1 defects must be responded to by the end of the next working day.

- The number of safety defects recorded in 2022/23 was 82.
- 84% of these defects were responded to within the allocated response time.
- 3 year trend shows footway defects are increasing



Maintenance Defects (Cat R2, Cat R3 and Programmed Works)

Maintenance defects are defects that do not require an urgent response. They are allocated either a 7-day response, a 28-day response or recorded to aid future maintenance.



- In 2022/23 a total of 865 maintenance defects were recorded.
- 91% of these defects were responded to within the respective response time.
- The quantity of defects over the last four years has remained steady.

A substantial quantity of repairs is required to keep footways safe and fit for purpose.

Visual Condition Survey

The condition of footways has been measured using a visual condition survey which has been undertaken annually since 2012. The survey is undertaken by the Highway Inspectors in conjunction with the safety inspections based upon a method included in UKPMS.

The rating produces a visual condition score. The table shows how the visual condition scoring has been converted to the three condition levels, 'Acceptable', 'Deteriorating' and 'Poor'.

Condition Level	Visual Condition Score
Acceptable	0 - 9
Deteriorating	10 - 24
Poor	25+

Visual condition information was not available for 2021/22 or 2022/23. Most footways have a low level of annual deterioration with the predominant user pedestrians. The amount of footways renewed every year is low. It is estimated therefore that the condition will not have changed significantly in the last year. The same condition information from 2020/21 will therefore be used within this report.

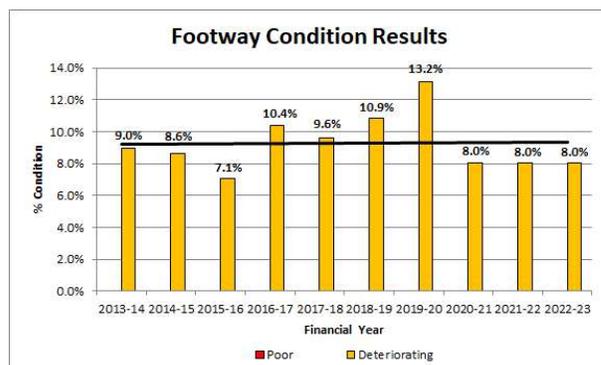
Current Condition

Current footway condition is:

- No footway in a poor condition
- 8.0% (82km) is in a deteriorating condition.

8.0% (82km) of footway is in a condition where resurfacing is desirable.

Condition: Trends



Poor Condition: ■

- Steady at 0%

Deteriorating Condition: ■

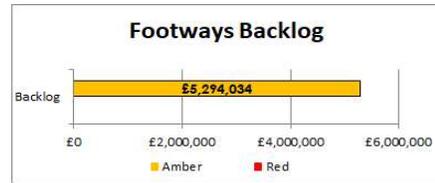
- Increasing (Getting worse)
- (Improvement in last year)

The amount of footway in a deteriorating condition increased between 2013/14 and 2019/20. In 2020/21 deteriorating condition reduced to 8%. This may be a result of works carried out using additional investment monies but may also be partially attributable to variation in ratings in the survey. It should be noted that the accuracy of a visual condition survey is limited. Results may reflect some inconsistencies between the Highway Inspectors views as

well as actual condition. This can be seen in the chart specifically values recorded in 2015/16 and 2019/20. This information provides only an approximate overall state of the footways. It is predominantly used to identify potential schemes.

Total "Backlog"

The total cost of repairing all the lengths of footways identified as deteriorating is **£5.3m**.



Approx. £5.3m would be required to repair all deteriorating (amber) lengths of footways.

Condition Standard Targets & "Maintenance Backlog"

A proposed condition standard of not greater than 1% in poor condition and not greater than 25% in a deteriorating condition is proposed. Current condition is within the proposed target condition level. There is therefore currently no maintenance backlog currently.

Condition Summary

Road Class	Criteria	Standard	Actual 2022/2023	Met?	Trend (last 5 years)
All	Cat R1e & Cat R1 Defects	150	82	n/a	Improving
	Cat R2 & Cat R3 Repair	1,182	865	n/a	Improving
All	Poor Footways#	1%	0%		Steady
	Deteriorating Footways#	25%	8%		Steady

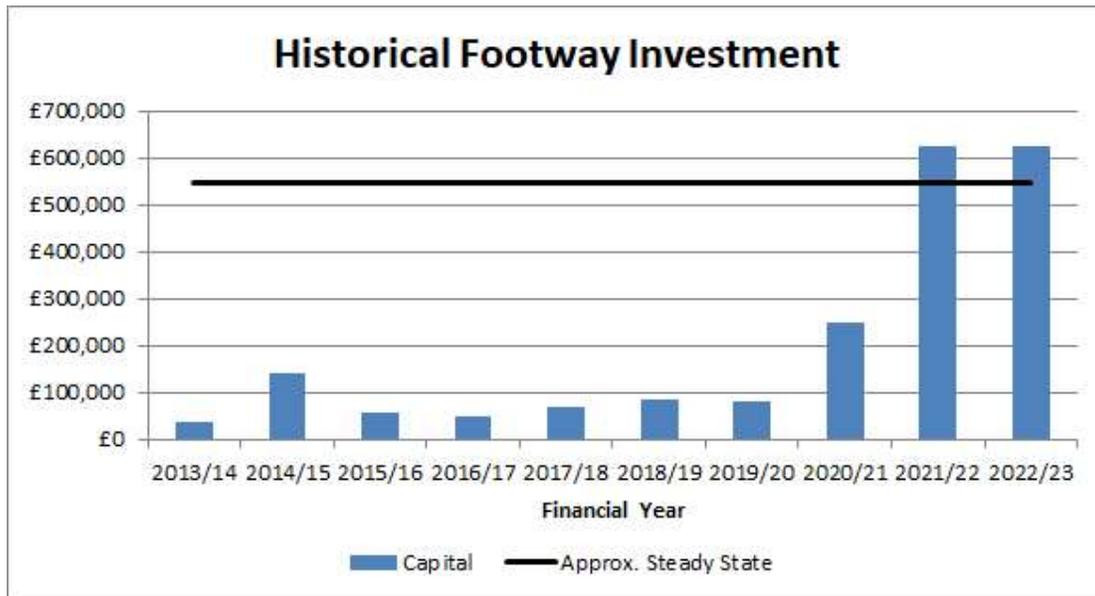
Given the potential for inconsistencies in the visual inspections and the relatively small amount of footways treated it would be hard to make an accurate assessment of condition

5. Investment and Output

The results above have been achieved from investment over the period reported. The levels of investment made to deliver the standards that have been achieved are reported below.

Total Investment

Capital investment in footways has been as shown below in the chart and the table.



	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Capital	£35.0k	£140.0k	£55.4k	£50.0k	£70.0k	£83.6k	£80.0k	£250.0k	£625.0k	£625.0k

Between 2020/21 and 2022/23 RBC provided additional funding of £9m to invest on residential roads over a 3-year period. The above chart shows that £1.5m of the funding was used on footways between 2020/21 and 2022/23.

Revenue investment is made in footway but the cost of this is within budgets that include carriageway repairs and cannot be reported separately.

Average Investment

Prior to the additional investment provided in 2020/21 the average annual investment over the previous 8 years was £76k pa. This was lower than the estimated level of investment required to maintain a steady state of measured condition of £545k pa.

Prior to the additional investment the planned maintenance of footways was at a level predicted to lead to ongoing deterioration.

6. Projection of Condition

Projection of condition has been created using the CSSW* condition projection tool (4FW).

Results

The result of this projection is detailed below.

Option	Annual Investment		Total 10 Year	Network Outturn Condition		
	0 to 3yrs	4 to 10yrs		Condition	Yr. 10	Benefit above Base
1	£400k	£350k	£3.7m	Poor	0%	
				Deteriorating	19%	88km more after 10yrs

(*CSSW = County Surveyors Society of Wales, a group coordinating all Welsh highway authorities who have developed the projection tool used. This has been calibrated against both data from authorities in Scotland and Wales, including several urban authorities with networks similar to Reading).

Projection: Current Budget for Planned and Routine Maintenance

Budget

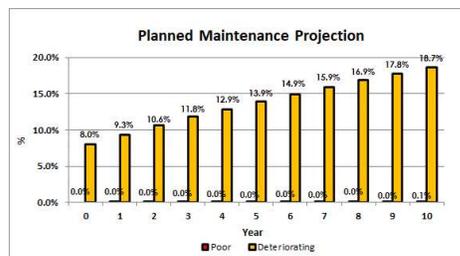
The projection is based on the following assumed funding levels.

- Year 1 to 3: RBC Investment (including additional funding from borrowing)
- Years 4 to 10: RBC Investment

The strategy of the projection is to limit the level of deterioration on footways. All funding will be invested in resurfacing treatments.

Annual Investment	Years 1 to 3	Years 4 to 10
Planned Maintenance – Corrective.	£400k	£350k

Predicted Condition



Years 1 to 3:

Poor Condition: ■

- Steady at 0%

Deteriorating Condition: ■

- Getting worse (from 8% to 12%)

Years 4 to 10

Poor Condition: ■

- Steady at 0%

Deteriorating Condition: ■

- Getting worse (from 12% to 19%)

Predicted Impacts

It is predicted that at the end of three years increased investment there will be no footways in poor condition and 32km more deteriorating footways. However, because of reverting to a deteriorating condition in the subsequent years part of that improvement will be eroded. At the end of ten years there will remain no poor footways but there will be 88km more deteriorating footways than currently exists. It can be expected that the number of reactive repairs and 3rd party claims as well as customer satisfaction will remain consistent in the years of the additional investment and for a period after that. Those benefits however would be progressively eroded if this strategy were adopted.

Option Summary

- Deteriorating condition
- Increasing reactive repairs, 3rd party claims and decreasing public satisfaction with footways

Appendix A: Defect Repair Standards

Footways / Footpaths / Cycleways / Cyclepath etc	Pothole/Spalling	300mm x 300mm	FH1a/FH1	Greater than 20mm	R1e/R1	3hrs/ 24hr
				Less than 20mm, greater than 10mm	R3	Pr.
			FH2/FH3 /FH4	Greater than 20mm	R2b	28d
				Less than 20mm, greater than 10mm	R3	Pr
	Any vertical level difference including slabs, kerbs, ironwork** etc.	All sizes	FH1a/FH1	Greater than 20mm	R1e/R1	3hrs/ 24hrs
				Less than 20mm, greater than 10mm	R3	Pr
			FH2FH/3/ FH4	Greater than 20mm	R2b	28d
	Gap/Crack	1m minimum length		Less than 20mm, greater than 10mm	R3	Pr
	Any horizontal displacement between adjacent kerbs or setts		FH1a/ FH1	Greater than 20mm depth and 40mm wide	R1e/R1	3hrs/ 24hrs
				Less than 20mm, greater than 10mm	R3	Pr
			FH2/FH3/ FH4	Greater than 20mm depth and 40mm wide	R2b	28d
				Less than 20mm, greater than 10mm	R3	Pr
All defects		All	Less than 10mm	NA		

Appendix B: CSSW Footway Condition Projection Tool

CSSWales has created a footway cost projection tool designed to enable the condition of footways to be predicted into the future. The tool recognises that limited data is available for most authorities on their footway asset but that footways do over time deteriorate from a result of use and age.

The tool has been based upon the data available for condition coupled with experienced practitioners estimates of the deterioration rates of different footway materials. The approximate rates of deterioration used in the tool are based upon the following assumed lives:

- Bituminous: 40yrs
- Concrete: 100yrs
- Blocks and Stone Slabs: 60yrs
- PCC slabs 50yrs

Appendix C: Visual Condition Survey Categories

Poor Condition

Footways in a state where structural maintenance should be considered, e.g., strengthening.

Footways in this condition typically **require a structural treatment** e.g., reconstruction or resurfacing to restore the surface and the strength of the footway (# stock image used as there are no footways in this condition in Reading)



Deteriorating Condition

Footways in a state where maintenance should be considered, e.g., resurfacing.

Footways in this condition typically only **require a resurfacing treatment** to renew the surface as the underlying structure is still considered to be acceptable.



Acceptable Condition

The footway is in an acceptable condition.

Footways that require no work to be carried out them.





Annual Status & Options Report Structures, 2022/23

Summary

This report presents the status of the council's structure in terms of condition and investment at March 2023. The report states:

- **Condition (inspection results):** Out of a stock of 275 highway structures, 10 are currently rated to be in a very poor condition and a further 31 in a poor condition.
- **Investment:** Over the next 5 years £3,000k pa is to be invested in structures maintenance which will enable 7 very poor and 9 poor structures to be refurbished. The investment will address over 20 structures and reduce the current structures backlog to approximately £6.5m
- **Steady State:** It is estimated that on average approximately £1.3m pa is required to counteract ongoing deterioration, in addition to any investment made in refurbishing structures in a deteriorated (very poor or poor state).
- **Backlog:** The estimate cost of repairing all the defects identified on the structures "total backlog/workbank" is £21m. Within this there is £9.4m worth of works required to structures that are in a "very poor" or "poor" condition.
- **DfT Investment:** from time to time the department of Transport release funds that the council can bid for structures works. The council will continue to bid for those when they are available. #

The prediction in this report do not assume any DfT monies are available. An updated report will be produced should DfT structures funding become available to the council

1. Purpose

This report provides managers and elected members with information to enable standards to be set and included in the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) for highway structures

2. Scope

Status

The report describes the status of the council's highway structures in terms of condition and investment as of March 2023.

Options and Impacts

Options are presented for how future investment may be directed. The options consider variation to the budget allocated for structures works and how that budget is spent.

The impact of different options is reported to the extent that current data and prediction methods allow.

3. The Asset

Scale

The council manages 275 highway structures ranging from large bridges to small culverts and retaining walls, made up as follows:

- 46 road bridges
- 21 footbridges
- 89 retaining walls
- 40 culverts
- 36 high mast lights
- 8 subways
- 11 CCTV supports
- 9 traffic signal arms
- 12 gantries and
- 3 chambers

None of the structures are considered to be unusual to the extent that they require their own specific plans for maintenance. None of the structures are currently subjected to a special monitoring regime.

Value

In 2022 the total replacement value (gross replacement cost, GRC) of the highway structures asset was estimated at £160m.

4. Condition

Condition of Stock

Structure's condition is reported using a bridge stock condition indicator (BSCI).

Bridge Condition Indicators (BCIs) use information collected during inspections to give a rating that reflects the condition of the structure. Two ratings are given BClave and BCcrit. BClave gives an average of the condition scores given all the components of the structure. BCcrit gives an average of the condition of the components that are considered critical to the structure. These indicators provide information that enable structural engineers to form a view of the maintenance needs of the structure. BCI score are grouped into bands ranging from very poor to good. The BCIs score is used to aid the planning of maintenance.

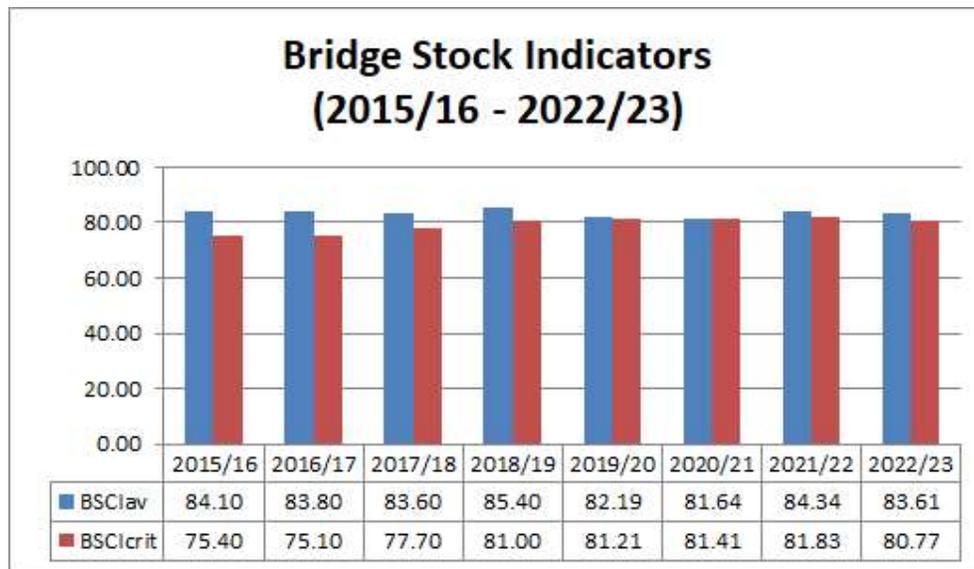
Structures in very poor condition (based on the BCI scores) are generally still safe to use. The structure will only be considered unsafe if the structural integrity has been compromised. Where, following an inspection, the structural engineer is concerned about the structural integrity of a structure a further investigation may be undertaken and an assessment of its structural capacity made. If a structure is assessed to be weak restrictions on use such as weight restrictions, lane restrictions or closure to vehicles may be imposed, or a monitoring and testing regime used to enable the structure to continue to be safely used.

BSCI figures are indicators of the total stock of structures managed by an authority. Large number of structures in a very poor or poor condition indicate that there is a need for maintenance in the short term. It does not mean that the stock or in fact any individual structure is unsafe for use.

The figures reported are at a stock level i.e., the average for all structures and are:

- BSCI_{ave}; the average condition of the stock based upon the rating given to all components of the structures and
- BSCI_{crit}; the condition based upon ratings of components of structures that are considered critical to the load carrying capacity of the structure i.e., "critical components" only.

The results are shown below for the last 8 years.



The results show that the average condition of the stock over the last 8-years is relatively stable.

Strengthening Need

A structure in need of strengthening has typically had a structural assessment completed on it and been identified as being weak. Management of these structures can include monitoring, the use of weight or other use restrictions.

- 25 structures have been identified for strengthening improvements.

Refurbishment Need

Stock level indicators are based on figures that include the numbers of structures in a very poor or poor condition. Structures deteriorate slowly over time. Timely routine maintenance can greatly assist to ensure that structures require the minimal amount of the more expensive major refurbishment works but there will come a time in most structures lives when refurbishment is required. Refurbishment usually includes works to several components and will restore it to a good condition.

Structures in Very Poor Condition (based on their BClrit values)

Structures with a BClrit value of less than 40 are deemed to be in a very poor condition.

- **10 structures are in a “very poor” condition (including 2 road bridges)**
- (The estimated cost addressing these structures is £3.7m)

Structures in a Poor Condition

In addition to the very poor condition structures a further 31 structures are deemed to be in a poor condition with BCIcrit values between 40 and 65.

- **31 structures are in a “poor” condition (including 6 road bridges)**
- (The estimated cost addressing these structures is £5.7m)

Parapet Upgrading

Parapets provide protection for users to limit the risk of falling from the structures (as a pedestrian or more likely in a vehicle). The parapets on many structures do not meet modern design standards. The risk associated with these parapets is a function of their use, some pose a higher risk than others.

- **6 structures have been identified for parapet upgrading**

Reactive Maintenance Needs

In addition to the specific deficiencies noted above there is an ongoing need to carry out reactive maintenance, for example where vehicle impact requires repair and routine maintenance. Reactive maintenance needs are unpredictable. They are best predicted by reference to historical costs.

- **Historically reactive maintenance needs have been met from a budget of c£8k**

Routine Maintenance Needs

Routine maintenance works are “good housekeeping”, work is small in scale and cost but necessary to prevent more costly repairs being required in the future. Typical works include vegetation removal, drainage cleansing, minor repointing, minor concrete repairs etc. CSSWales* has created an initial model that has been developed to estimate a range of budget levels appropriate for routine maintenance needs. Applying this method of estimating to Reading’s stock gives an indicative routine maintenance budget need range of £90k to £120k pa.

- **Estimated Total Routine Maintenance needs is in the range of £90k to £120k pa**

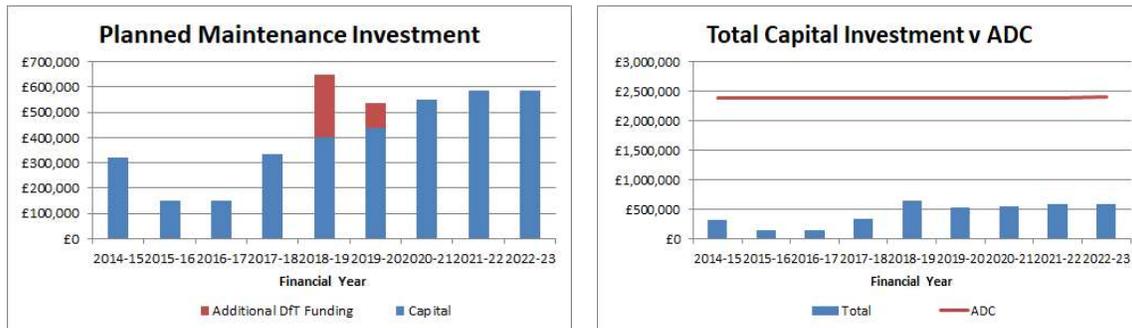
(*CSSW = County Surveyors Society of Wales representing the 22 Welsh highway authorities. Under their ongoing national highway asset management project CSSW has created estimating methods for forecasting a broad assessment of routine maintenance needs for structures)

5. Historical Investment

The results above have been achieved from investment over the period reported. The levels of investment made to deliver the standards that have been achieved are reported below.

Total Investment

Historical investment in structures has been as shown below with council capital funding shown in blue and additional DfT monies in red.



Planned Investment (Capital)

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Capital	£323k	£150k	£150k	£336k	£400k	£440k	£550k	£585k	£585k
Additional DfT Funding	£0	£0	£0	£0	£250k	£97k	£0	£0	£0
Number of Structures	10	11	2	9	20	3	2	2	1

Average Investment

The average investment in planned maintenance between 2014/15 and 2022/23 is £430k pa.

Annual Depreciation Charge (ADC)

In 2019 the ADC of the structures asset was estimated at £2.4m. The ADC represents the average investment in replacement of the asset required each year over its lifespan to keep it in service. It is theoretically additional to the investment required to address the maintenance backlog.

Investment/Cost of Routine, Reactive and Cyclic Maintenance

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Revenue (Works)	£86.7k	£90.7k	£99.1k	£103.1k	£134.6k	£134.6k	£134.6k	£134.6k	£134.6k
Revenue (Fees)	£106.1k	£106.1k	£108.6k	£111.1k	£132.3k	£132.3k	£132.3k	£132.3k	£132.3k
Total	£192.8k	£196.8k	£207.7k	£214.2k	£266.9k	£266.9k	£266.9k	£266.9k	£266.9k

The average investment in routine, reactive and cyclic maintenance works between 2014/15 and 2022/23 was £117k pa.

6. Service Standards

The options presented below are based on the following service standards assumptions.

Reactive Maintenance

It is assumed that the funding required to meet reactive repair needs, estimated based upon recent expenditure to be £10k, will continue to be provided.

Routine Maintenance

It is assumed that the funding required to meet routine maintenance need, estimated to be approximately £105k will continue to be provided.

Proposed Condition Standard

The proposed condition standards are adopted based upon setting targets for the number of structures in very poor and poor condition.

		Standard
Number of structures in a poor condition; the number of structures with a BCIcrit of very poor kept below		To not exceed 9 no.
Number of structures in a poor condition (BCIcrit); the percentage of structures with a BCI of poor kept below		To not exceed 33 no.

7. Option

Reactive Repair

Assuming the historical level of reactive repair need are typically £8k pa a figure of £10k has been allowed as required to meet reactive repair needs. It should be noted that reactive repair needs fluctuate a one-year reduction does not indicate a trend of long-term reduction in need.

Routine Maintenance

CSSW has created an initial estimate of routine maintenance needs based upon the experience of an authority with a stock in good condition and a well-developed routine maintenance regime that has been in place for many years. Applying this method of estimating to Reading's stock give an indicative routine maintenance budget need range of £90k to £120k pa. Based upon this method an average figure of £105k pa is required to meet routine maintenance needs.

Works Already Planned

A programme of works for the next 5 years (2023/24 – 2027/28) has already been prepared and prioritised. A copy of the programme is included in Appendix A. It is assumed that the condition of the structures in this programme will be refurbished to a 'good' level.

Further investment will be required from 2028/29 to undertake works on structures which have are in 'poor' or 'very poor' condition at that time.

Option 1

The following table provides a summary of the Option

Work Category	Financial Years	Approximate Annual Funding
Reactive Maintenance	All	£10k
Routine Maintenance	All	£105k
Planned Maintenance	2023/24 – 2027/28	£3,000k

During this period deterioration of structures will continue unless investment is made to counteract ongoing deterioration. The estimated annual cost of counteracting ongoing deterioration is £1.3m pa.

Appendix A: Funded Works

Financial Year 2023/24 Programme			
Structure and Works Description	Financial Year	BCI Crit	Costs £k
KENNETSIDE RETAINING WALL STRENGTHENING	2023/24	50.3	£550k
ORBIT FOOTBRIDGE DECK REPAIRS AND REPAINTING	2023/24	28.1	£300k
BERKELEY AVENUE CANAL BRIDGE REFURBISHMENT	2023/24	78.9	£450k
BERKELEY AVENUE RAILWAY BRIDGE REFURBISHMENT	2023/24	28.1	£450k
DENBEIGH PLACE CULVERT STRENGTHENING WORKS	2023/24	28.0	£450k
HERON ISLAND CONCRETE REPAIRS	2023/24	50.3	£200k
IDR FOOTBRIDGE DECK WATERPROOFING REPLACEMENT	2023/24	58.0	£250k
DUKE STREET CULVERT INVESTIGATION AND REPAIRS	2023/24	50.3	£100k
HIGH BRIDGE REPAIR / REPLACEMENT OF STONE PARAPET	2023/24	58.0	£250k
		Total	£3,000K

Financial Year 2024/25 Programme			
Structure and Works Description	Financial Year	BCI Crit	Costs £k
CAVERSHAM BRIDGE DECK WATERPROOFING REPLACEMENT AND CONCRETE REPAIRS	2024/25	80.0	£650k
OXFORD ROAD BRIDGE – REPLACEMENT OF BEARINGS AND EXPANSION JOINTS	2024/25	78.9	£1,400k
CASTLE STREET NORTH BRIDGE – REPLACEMENT OF BEARINGS AND EXPANSION JOINTS	2024/25	81.0	£900k
CASTLE STREET SOUTH BRIDGE – REPLACEMENT OF BEARINGS AND EXPANSION JOINTS	2024/25	81.0	£900k
CHATHAM STREET NORTH BRIDGE – REPLACEMENT OF BEARINGS AND EXPANSION JOINTS	2024/25	81.0	£850k
CHATHAM STREET SOUTH BRIDGE – REPLACEMENT OF BEARINGS AND EXPANSION JOINTS	2024/25	81.0	£850k
IDR KENNET BRIDGE – REPLACEMENT OF BEARINGS AND EXPANSION JOINTS	2024/25	81.0	£1,135k
PODIUM STRUCTURE (STATION APPROACH UNDERSTRUCTURE EAST) INFILLING	2024/25	58.0	£600k
CAVERSHAM MILL FOOTBRIDGE DECK REPLACEMENT	2024/25	55.5	£50k
		Total	£7,335K

Financial Year 2025/26 Programme

Structure and Works Description	Financial Year	BCI Crit	Costs £k
KENNETSIDE RETAINING WALL STRENGTHENING	2025/26	50.3	£500k
RANDOLPH ROAD CULVERT STRENGTHENING	2025/26	40.0	£400k
ADDISON ROAD CULVERT STRENGTHENING	2025/26	40.0	£400k
		Total	£1,300K

Financial Year 2026/27 Programme			
Structure and Works Description	Financial Year	BCI Crit	Costs £k
NEWPORT ROAD CULVERT STRENGTHENING	2026/27	28.0	£400k
BROOK STREET WEST RETAINING WALL STRENGTHENING	2026/27	50.3	£750k
		Total	£1,150K

Financial Year 2027/28 Programme			
Structure and Works Description	Financial Year	BCI Crit	Costs £k
HOLLY BROOK RETAINING WALLS STRENGTHENING	2027/28	50.3	£400k
SWANSEA ROAD CULVERT STRENGTHENING	2027/28	40.0	£400k
DE MONFORT ROAD CULVERT STRENGTHENING	2027/28	55.0	£400k
		Total	£1,200K

Appendix B: Structures in Very Poor Condition (based on BCIcrit)

Ref	Structure Name	BCI _{crit}	Total estimate of works
1273	FOBNEY	26.3	£230,000.00
1291	BERKELEY AVENUE RAILWAY	28.1	£450,000.00
1820	KINGS MEADOW FOOTBRIDGE	28.1	£225,000.00
2618	DENBEIGH PLACE CULVERT.	28.0	£450,000.00
2619	RANDOLPH ROAD CULVERT.	40.0	£400,000.00
2620	ADDISON ROAD CULVERT.	40.0	£400,000.00
2621	NEWPORT ROAD CULVERT.	28.0	£400,000.00
2624	SWANSEA ROAD CULVERT	40.0	£400,000.00
2629	KINGS MEADOW ROAD CULVERT	36.6	£440,000.00
2684	ORBIT	28.1	£300,000.00
			£3,695,000.00

Approximately £3.7m worth of works is required to address structures currently identified to be in a very poor condition.

Appendix C: Structures in a Poor Condition (Based on BCIcrit)

Ref	Structure Name	BCI _{crit}	Total estimate of works
1127	SOUTHAMPTON STREET SIGN GANTRY	55.5	£20,000.00
1267	HIGH	58.0	£250,000.00
1282	ROSE KILN BROOK	58.0	£80,000.00
1283	WILLOW STREET	58.0	£45,000.00
1286	IDR FOOTBRIDGE	58.0	£250,000.00
1292	CAVERSHAM ROAD CULVERT	55.0	£130,000.00
1303	CAVERSHAM MILL FOOTBRIDGE	55.5	£50,000.00
1304	KINGS (READING)	63.6	£310,000.00
1732	ALBION PLACE RETAINING WALL	55.5	£85,000.00
1762	SEWAGE FARM CULVERT	58.0	£25,000.00
1809	HOLY BROOK RETAINING WALL 1	55.5	£100,000.00
1812	HOLY BROOK RETAINING WALL 4	50.3	£100,000.00
1814	HOLY BROOK RETAINING WALL 6	55.5	£100,000.00
1815	HOLY BROOK RETAINING WALL 7	55.5	£100,000.00
2203	WATER SLUICE RETAINING WALL	55.5	£100,000.00
2208	BROOK STREET RETAINING WALL	58.0	£9,000.00
2229	GREYFRIARS CENTRE RETAINING WALL	58.0	£35,000.00
2239	KENNET SIDE RETAINING WALL	50.3	£550,000.00
2244	KENNET MOUTH RETAINING WALL	55.5	£950,000.00
2423	FORBURY ROAD BRICK RETAINING WALLS	55.5	£14,000.00
2424	SURLEY ROW RETAINING WALL	55.5	£23,000.00
2487	ROSE KILN LANE CULVERT NORTH	50.3	£100,000.00
2528	DUKE STREET (HOLYBROOK)	50.3	£100,000.00
2535	BRUNEL ROAD ALLOTMENTS	55.5	£40,000.00
2537	HERON ISLAND	50.3	£200,000.00
2538	HILLS MEADOW FOOTBRIDGE	55.5	£15,000.00
2623	YORK ROAD CULVERT	64.5	£50,000.00
2625	DE MONTFORT ROAD CULVERT	55.0	£400,000.00
2626	LYNMOUTH ROAD CULVERT	65.0	£76,000.00
2633	STATION APPROACH UNDERSTRUCTURE EAST	58.0	£600,000.00
2738	BROOK STREET WEST RETAINING WALL	50.3	£750,000.00
			£5,657,000.00

Approximately £5.7m worth of works is required to address structures currently identified to be in a poor condition.

Appendix D: Parapet Upgrading

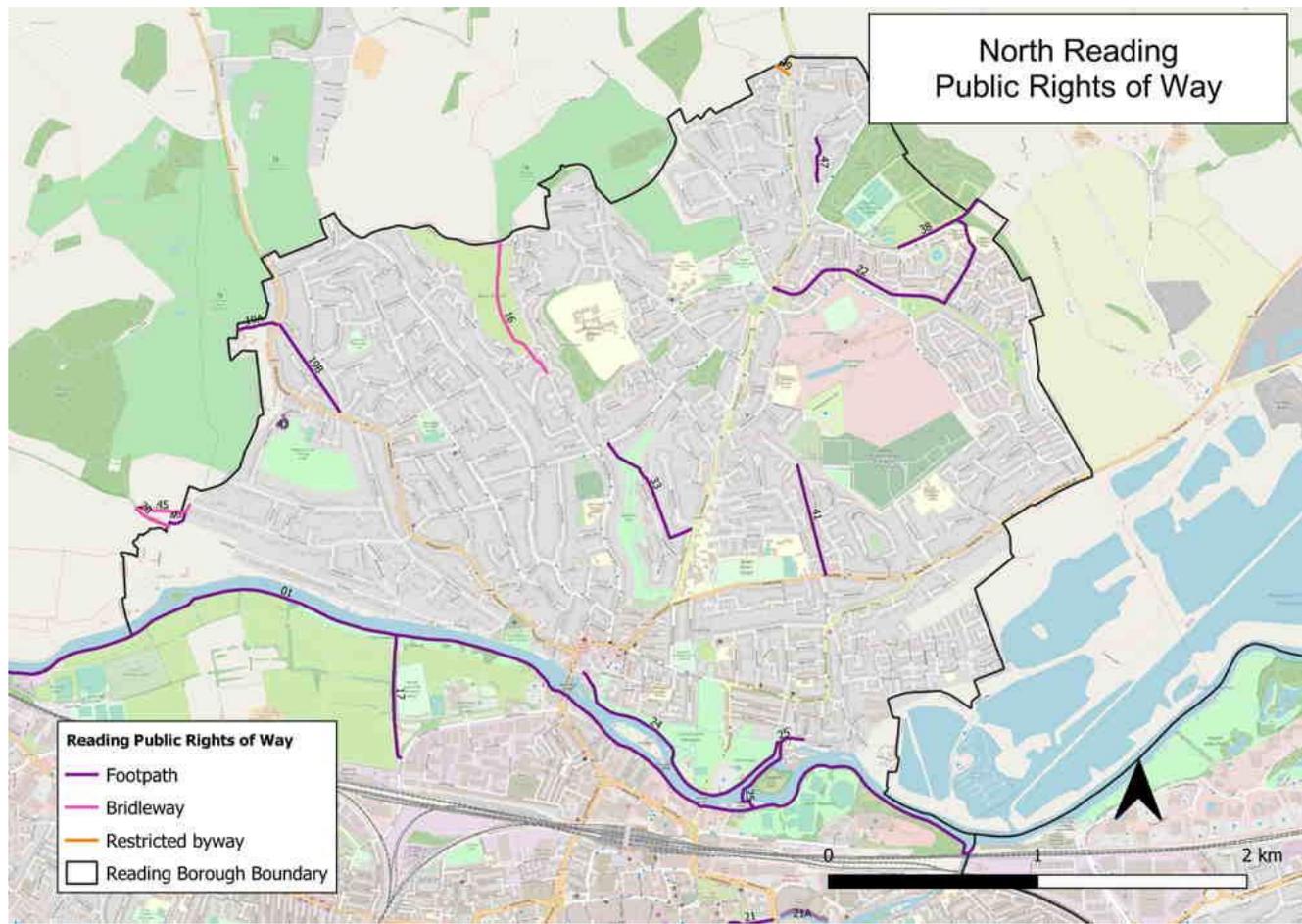
Ref:	Structure Name	Cost (£)
2239	KENNET SIDE RETAINING WALL	£69k
2240	SAPPHIRE PLAZA RETAINING WALL	£32k
2242	BLACKES LOCK RETAINING WALL	£72k
2243	GAS WORKS RETAINING WALL	£30k
2244	KENNET MOUTH RETAINING WALL	£24k
2729	GEORGE STREET HILLS MEADOW CULVERT	£7k
2738	BROOK STREET WEST RETAINING WALL	£57k
	Total	£291k

Appendix 4 – Reading Public Rights of Way

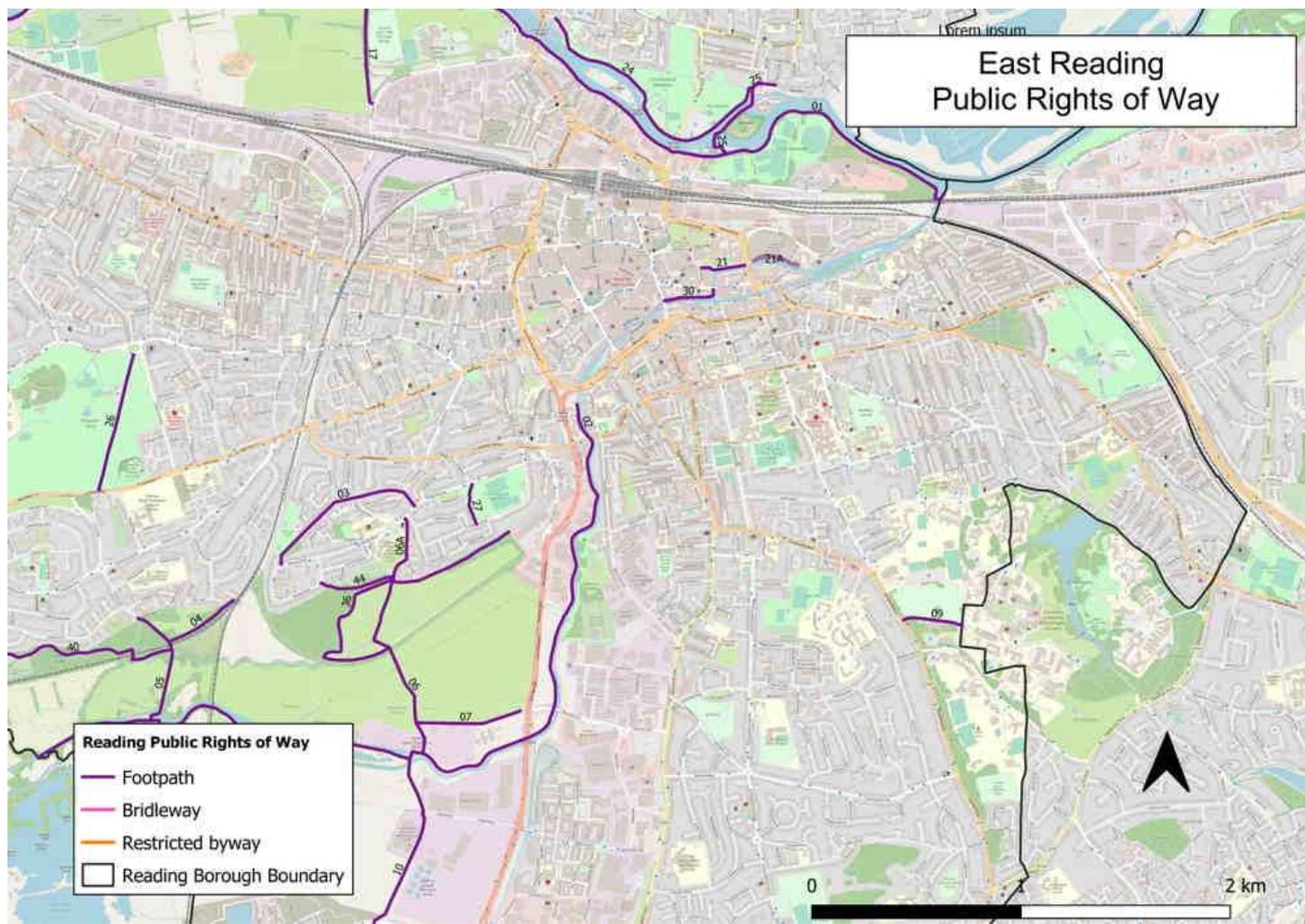
Link to Reading Borough Council webpage: [Public Rights of Way - Reading Borough Council](#)

Map of PRowS:

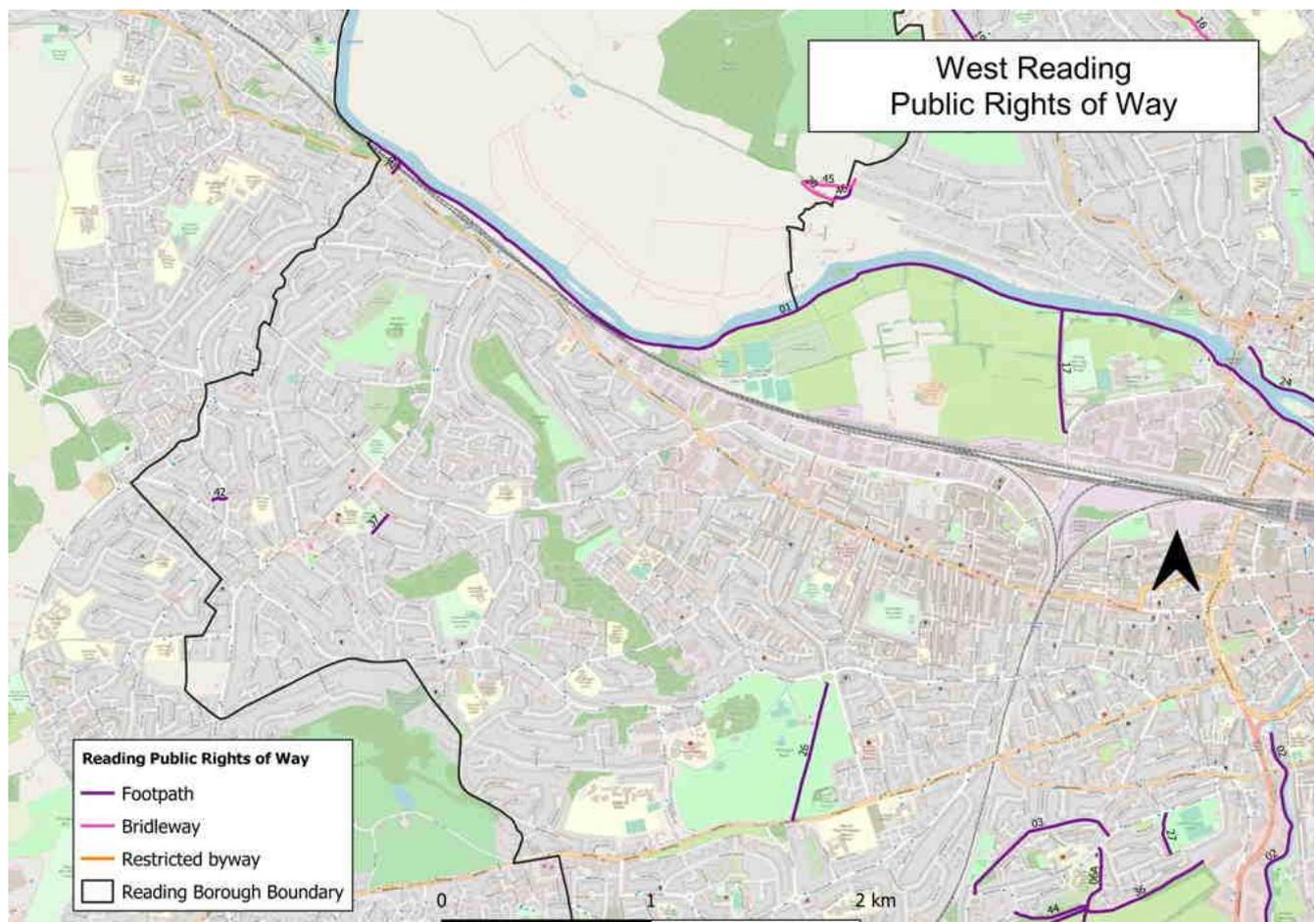
North Reading



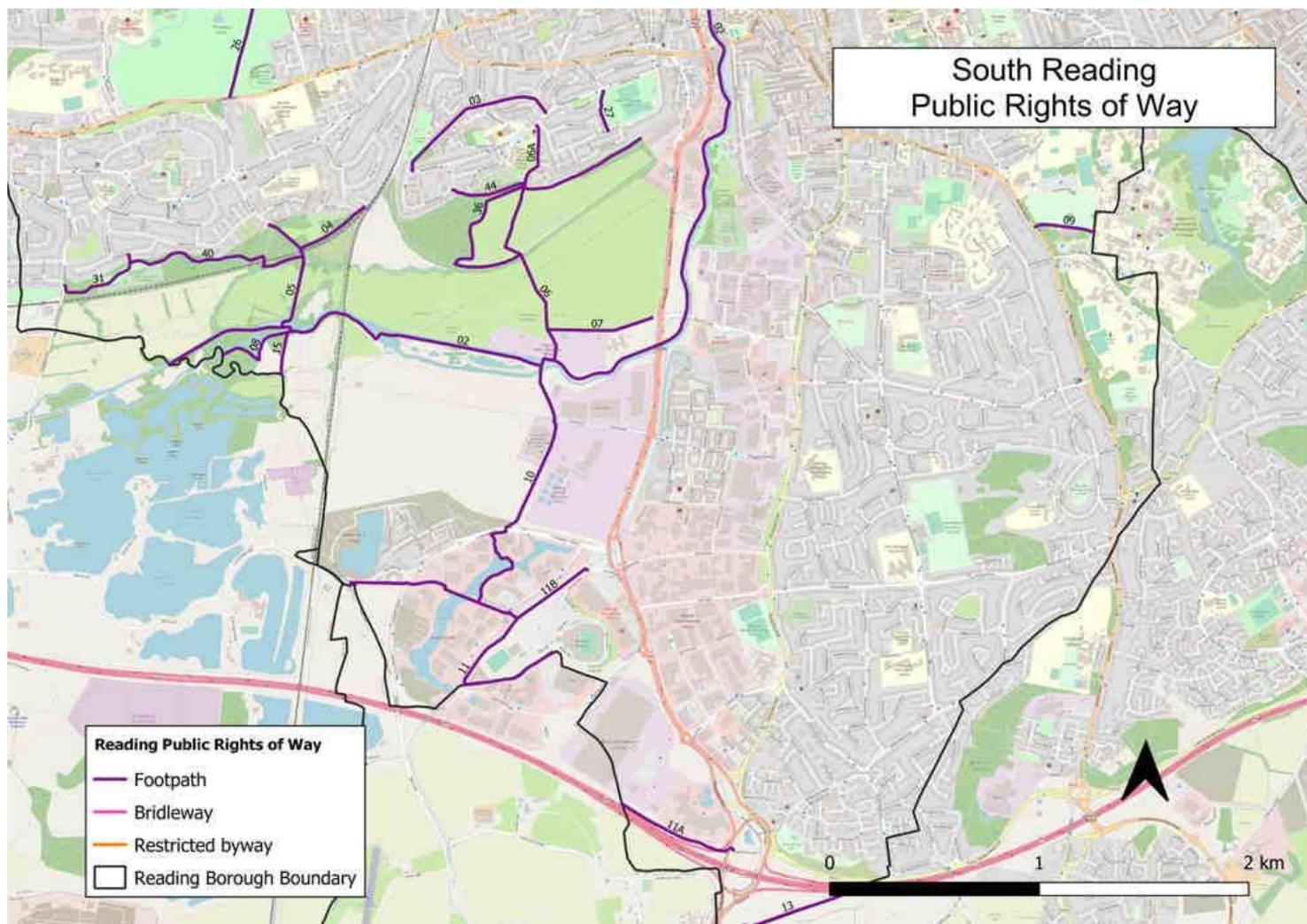
East Reading:



West Reading:



South Reading:



Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

06 July 2023



Reading

Borough Council

Working better with you

Title	Allotments – Consultation - Fees & Charges Review
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Graeme Rasdall-Lawes, Neighbourhood Services Manager
Lead Councillor	Karen Rowland, Environmental Services & Community Safety
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Members note the proposed rationale for increasing allotment rents and reducing related discounts. 2. That Members approve the Allotment Rent & Discounts Consultation Plan to commence in August 2023. 3. A further report will be brought back to a future HNL Committee for approval on the new proposed Allotment Rent & Discount structure following the consultation exercise being completed. This is required to give plot holders 12 months written notice of the new rent/discount structure to be implemented.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To update Members of the Committee of progress on the Allotment Rent Review, seek approval to consult on changes to Allotment discounts and rent.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. This proposal is written in context with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, to permit delivery of a balanced and affordable budget that ensures the Council's finances are sustainable over the medium and longer term. The Strategy is informed by the Council's Vision: "to ensure that Reading realises its potential – and that everyone who lives and works in Reading can share in the benefits of its success", as well as its Corporate Plan themes:
 - Healthy Environment
 - Thriving Communities
 - Inclusive Economy.
- 2.2. The provision of allotments is a statutory service. Under Section 23 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908, a Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient allotments, to be let to residents who want to cultivate, and harvest produce from them.
- 2.3. The Council continues to meet its duty and to support social, health and environmental benefits of allotments through the provision of allotment sites.
- 2.4. The Council's Corporate Plan 2022–2025 'Investing in Reading's Future' sets out the Council's priorities, which include promoting healthy lifestyles, as well as good education, leisure, and cultural opportunities for people in Reading.

- 2.5. In view of the declared climate emergency and against the backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis, the provision and use of allotments remains important to those residents who use them and needs to be supported as a cost-effective, local, sustainable food source.

3. The Proposal

3.1. Current Position

- 3.1.1 The Council owns and manages 20 allotment sites, currently with 1,413 worked plots across 41.5 ha of land. Half are Statutory sites and thus have some protection under the Allotments Act 1925. 'Temporary' sites have no security beyond planning system requirements.
- 3.1.2 Allotment rental income for the calendar year 2023 is projected to be £39,500. The annual cost of providing services in a normal year is approximately £85,000.
- 3.1.3 Rents vary by site depending on whether a water supply is present. Rental income is also variable depending on whether the tenant receives one of the two available discounts offered. These discounts are either General or Concessionary available to tenants with a "Your Reading Passport" (YRP) as detailed in 3.2.1.

Table 1 below sets out the current Rent Matrix for plots of 125sqm.

Site Category	Full Fee	General YRP Discount – 10%	Concessionary YRP Discount – 84%
A Water supply across site	£40.50/year	£36.50/year	£6.48/year
	£0.78/week	£0.70/week	£0.12/week
B Partial water supply on site	£30.00/year	£27.50/year	£5.00/year
	£0.58/week	£0.53/week	£0.10/week
C No water supply	£20.50/year	£18.00/year	£3.50/year
	£0.39/week	£0.35week	£0.07/week
Tenants on full fee or discount	904	170	339
Total No. of Tenants	1,413		

- 3.1.4 Plot sizes were reviewed in 2017, the mean size of newly let plots has been reduced from 180sqm to 125sqm.
- 3.1.5 Since August 2020, the service has sought tenant's opinion on potential rent and discount changes through the August 2020 Allotment Consultation and ongoing work on the Allotment Self-Management Project whilst calculating what changes would meet service needs without causing major hardship to low-income tenants.
- 3.1.6 A key aim of the Allotment Self-Management Project was to reduce service running costs. Examples of improved service efficiency arising from uptake of self-management ideas were set out in the HNL report of January 2023.
- 3.1.7 Site Liaison Representatives on sites where whole-site improvements have been carried out report that they feel tenants will now be amenable to rent increases because they have witnessed the Council's renewed commitment to allotments.

3.2 DISCOUNTS

3.2.1 There are two levels of discount, based on the Your Reading Passport (YRP), that plot tenants can claim. The discounts are General or Concessionary categories:

- General Discount (10%). Tenants can claim the 10% discount by virtue of residency in the Borough being a YRP holder.
- Concessionary Discount (74%). In addition to the General discount, YRP holders who are aged 60+, on low income or with a disability can claim also claim for this additional discount giving them a total discount of 84%.

It is not possible to analyse YRP data to see how many of these relate to either age, disability, or low-income criteria.

Of the Council's 1,413 current allotment tenants, 509 (36%) claim one of the two discounts.

3.2.2 The aims of reviewing allotment discounts are as follows:

- To continue to use Discounts to support tenants in financial hardship.
- To simplify the Rent Matrix. Removal of the 10% General Discount will cut three lines from the Rent Matrix and simplify the application and billing processes.
- To standardise the number of Discount levels with other Council Discount schemes, which only offer a single level of discount.
- To align Discount levels with national averages.
- To contribute to the Council Medium Term Financial Strategy.

3.2.3 The Association for Public Service Excellence "State of the Market" Report 2022 states that 56% of allotment providers offer some form of discount. There was a 10% fall in providers offering any discounts over the previous period. 40% of all providers offer discounts for pensioners, over 60's and/or retired people, 32% for unemployed or low-income households, 21% for people with disabilities, and 18% for students. The national average discount offered is 40-50%.

3.2.4 In relation to the "State of the Market" report, the Council's current Concessionary Discount rate of 84% is generous. Tenants on Concessionary Discounts currently pay between £3.50 and £6.50 rent per year for a 125sqm plot. These rent levels are lower than the cost of allotment administration (postage, billing, processing enquiries and complaints) for plots subject to discount.

3.2.5 All tenants who are Reading residents can claim the 10% General Discount. Tenants who are not Reading Borough residents pay full charge because they cannot qualify for YRP.

3.2.6 The General Discount adds three lines to the Rent Matrix. It also means that the service offers more levels of Discounts than other Council services. It is therefore proposed to remove the 10% General Discount all together to bring in line with other Council services and also to simplify the rent matrix for easier understanding.

3.2.7 There is no statutory duty to consult on changes to rent/discount levels but there is a duty to give tenants 12 months written notice of changes. Case law suggests that it is for the Local Authority, and nobody else, to decide on rent/discount levels, but states that Councils should "listen to representations made by or on behalf of its allotment tenants" (Harwood v Borough of Reigate and Banstead 1981).

3.2.8 The Council will not only "listen to representations made by or on behalf of its allotment tenants" but will use the stakeholder feedback to inform the final design of the fee and discount structure for future HNL Committee consideration and approval.

3.2.9 The Rent Review Consultation followed the same successful method of the 2020 Allotment Consultation. Site Liaison Representatives and volunteers who were not in place in 2020 enhanced the reach of consultation.

3.2.10 The following four options were considered:

	General Discount	Concessionary Discount	Assumed Rent Increase per Year
Option 1 <i>No Change</i>	10%	84%	4%
Option 2	10%	40%	4%
Option 3	Withdrawn 0%	40%	20% (2024) 4% (2025)
Option 4 <i>2017 Proposal</i>	0%	84%	100% (2024) 4% (2025)

3.2.11 The changes in rent levels and the change in total annual rent income by Option are set out in table below. Options 1 and 4 are not considered, only included for comparison:

- Option 1 - Does not raise rent income enough to improve the service.
- Option 4 - Results in Full Charge tenants paying rents at a level unacceptably higher than the national average. The retention of the 84% Concessionary Discount rate does not reflect the national picture and the increases in this model raise only minimal funds for service improvement.

OPTION 1. BUSINESS AS USUAL.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep 10% YRP General discount. • Keep 84% Concessionary discount. • Assume 4% Rent increase/year 	
<p>PROS. Simplicity as no change. Discounts continue to protect low-income households.</p>	<p>CONS. Below inflationary rent increase when set against increased service running costs equates to a reduction in budget that negatively affects service quality and the ability to support the drive toward self-management. Does not address the present subsidy level of allotments. Will not fund service improvements, including reactive and planned site maintenance, tenancy management issues or the cost and efficiency of administrative functions, the most pressing being a new allotment data management system.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rents remain below benchmarked average. • Discounts remain considerably above national average. • 2025 annual rent income is £4,000 higher than in 2023 	
<p>The effect of this increase on the highest and most discounted rates is set out below. Full Charge tenant on a Cat. A site pays:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £40.50/year for a 125 sqm plot. (£0.78p/week) in 2023. • They would pay £43.80/year, (£0.84/week) in 2025 after receiving 12 months' notice. <p>Concessionary Discount tenant on a Cat. C site pays:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £3.50/year for a 125 sqm plot. (£0.07/week). • In 2025 they would pay £3.80 /year (£0.07/week). 	

OPTION 2. REDUCE CONCESSIONARY DISCOUNT TO NATIONAL AVERAGE.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep 10% YRP General discount

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce YRP Concessionary discount from 84% to 40%. • 4% Rent increase/year 	
<p>PROS. Simple administrative change to Concessionary Discount. Low-income tenants still receive Concession.</p>	<p>CONS. Below inflationary rent increase only partially addresses current subsidy level and will not fund service improvements, the most pressing being a new allotment data management system. Low-income tenants will see their rents treble, costing them extra annual rent of between £9 and £19.</p>
<p>Rents remain below benchmarked average. Discounts match national average. 2025 annual rent income is £11,000 higher than in 2023</p>	
<p>The effect of this increase on the highest and most discounted rates is set out below. Full Charge tenant on a Cat. A site pays:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £40.50/year for a 125 sqm plot. (£0.78/week) in 2023. • They would pay £43.80/year, (£0.84/week) in 2025. <p>Concessionary Discount tenant on a Cat. C site pays:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £3.50/year for a 125 sqm plot. (£0.07/week). • In 2025 they would pay £13.30/year (£0.19/week). <p>Note that those on Concessionary Discount would experience rent increases of around 300% though the increases differ according to Site Category.</p> <p>Those on Category A sites would need to pay an extra £0.39/week for a 125 sqm plot in 2025, and for a Category C site, they would need to pay an extra £0.19/week.</p>	

<p>OPTION 3. REDUCE CONCESSIONARY DISCOUNT & INCREASE RENT BY 20% IN 2024 AND 4% IN 2025</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrap 10% YRP General discount. • YRP Concessionary discount reduced to 40%. • 20% rent increase 2024. Assume 4% increase in 2025 	
<p>PROS. Low-income tenants receive a Concession that aligns with national benchmark. Increase in annual rent income from 2025 reduces current subsidy level.. Reduces number of lines in rent matrix by 30% Would fund a new allotment data management system that officers believe will generate further efficiency savings and allow the service to apply discounts at application stage.</p>	<p>CONS. All tenants' rents increase by 25%, but low-income tenants will see their rents more that treble, costing them extra annual rent of between £12 and £24. This may dissuade lower-income households from retaining or applying for plots. Increase in rent income contributes toward savings target, but too little for significant service improvements.</p>
<p>Rents reach projected 2025 benchmarked average. Discounts match national average. 2025 annual rent income would be £18,000 higher than in 2023</p>	
<p>The effect of this increase on the highest and most discounted rates is set out below. Full Charge tenant on a Cat. A site pays:</p>	

- £40.50/year for a 125 sqm plot. (£0.78/week) in 2023.
 - They would pay £50.50/year, (£0.90/week) in 2025.
- Concessionary Discount tenant on a Cat. C site pays:
- £3.50/year for a 125 sqm plot. (£0.07/week).
 - In 2025 they would pay £15.40/year (£0.23/week).

Note that those on Concessionary Discount would experience rent increases of between 339% and 386% as rates differ according to Site Category.

Those on Category A sites would need to pay an extra £0.46/week for a 125 sqm plot in 2025, and for a Category C site, they would need to pay an extra £0.23/week.

OPTION 4. THE 2017 Allotment Review PROPOSAL

- Scrap 10% YRP General discount.
- Keep 84% YRP Concessionary discount.
- 100% rent increase 2024. Assumed 4% increase in 2025

PROS.

Retaining the 84% Concessionary Discount protects low-income tenants, though they would pay between 6 and 13 pence per week more than currently. Reduces present subsidy level. Allowing for service improvements, most importantly a new allotment data management system. All tenants whether paying Full Charge or Concessionary rate experience the same percentage rent increase.

CONS. 100% increase in rents across the board takes the average Full Charge rent significantly above the benchmarked average rent. Tenants paying Full Charge continue to 'subsidise' low-income tenants' rents with Concessionary Discount being more than double the national average.

All tenants' rents increase by 25%, but low-income tenants will see their rents more that treble, costing them extra annual rent of between £12 and £24. Increase in rent income contributes toward reducing the present subsidy of allotments, but too little for significant service improvements. Rental income for one Concessionary tenant is covers 15 minutes of officer time in a year.

2025 annual rent income would be £18,000 higher than in 2023

The effect of this increase on the highest and most discounted rates is set out below.

Full Charge tenant on a Cat. A site pays:

- £40.50/year for a 125 sqm plot. (£0.78p/week) in 2023.
- They would pay £84.20/year, (£1.62/week) in 2025.

Concessionary Discount tenant on a Cat. C site pays:

- £3.50/year for a 125 sqm plot. (£0.07/week).
- In 2025 they would pay £6.80/year. (£0.13/week)

3.2.12 Options 2 and 3 are 'preferred' because they "take into account all relevant circumstances in a broad common-sense way" per the principles of *Harwood v Borough of Reigate and Banstead* 1981. To 'come to a right and fair conclusion' about future rent/discount levels, the Council will consult tenants on the preferred options and give appropriate weight to stakeholder feedback.

3.2.13 A further report will be brought back to a future HNL committee to seek approval for tenants to be given 12 months written notice of the decision of the consultation outcomes. Greater awareness of the decision will be broadcast via Site Liaison Representatives and their social media outlets, signage on allotment gates, and posting the decision of the Council's website.

3.3 RENT LEVELS

- 3.3.1 It is now proposed that Rent Review will be subject to tenant consultation from July to August 2023, put before HNL Committee in November for approval and then subject to the 12-month written notice period before being applied from April 1st, 2025. All consultation documents will be finalised following input from the Lead Member for Environmental and Community Safety and the Council's communication team.
- 3.3.2 For calendar year 2023, allotment fees were increased by 4% in line with the annual DEGNS Fees and Charges Schedule for 2023/24. The Rent Review originally planned in 2022 for implementation in 2023 was postponed a year to reduce financial hardship during a period of high inflation, the cost-of-living crisis. However, the service can no longer afford to postpone a 'significant' (above inflation rate) rent rise without reducing the quality of service and compromising the progress being made under the Self-Management Project.
- 3.3.3 BENCHMARKING. In calculating reasonable rent for allotments, landlords are recommended to benchmark rates against other providers. Rent levels for 2021/22 have been assessed at sites managed by Local Authorities in the Southeast, Parish and Town Councils in Berkshire, and private providers within Reading Borough. The exercise found a mean rent level charged for standard (non-discounted) plots in 2021/22 to be £8.60 per 25 sqm, £0.40 higher than charged by Reading Borough Council in 2022. The landlords studied were:

Managing Authority	Avg. Cost for 25 square metre per year
Reading Borough Council	£8.20
Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead, Basingstoke, Guildford, London Councils, Milton Keynes, & Southampton Councils.	£9.00
Parish & Town Councils in Berkshire	£7.50
Tilehurst Poor Lands (private charity-run site within Reading Borough)	£12.00
Roots Allotments	£138.00*

*For reference only and not included in benchmarking exercise, Roots Allotments charge £138.60 per 25 sqm. Roots Allotments are a new business that offers a more expansive service than traditional allotment providers. They have sites in Bath and Bristol, are planning a new site in Wokingham and have expressed interest in setting up a site in Reading.

- 3.3.4 The Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) reports that in 2022, two-thirds of allotment providers were continuing to or plan to increase rents. Based on benchmarking, and considering service needs, it is not proposed to set new rents higher than the current benchmark average or the expected 2024/25 benchmark level.
- 3.3.5 The principles of *Harwood v Borough of Reigate and Banstead* 1981 as follows apply when considering changes to rent levels.
The Local Authority should:
- listen to representations made by or on behalf of its allotment tenants.
 - consider all relevant circumstances in a broad common-sense way.
 - give such weight as it thought fit to various factors in the situation; and

d) come to a right and fair conclusion.

In advance of the consultation (a – above), the following factors and circumstances (b and c – above) are being taken into consideration.

3.3.6 Whether an increase is 'significant' would be subject to consideration under section 10 of the Allotments Act 1950 and the Consumer Rights Act 2015. s10 Allotments Act 1950 states that allotments shall be let at such rent as a tenant may reasonably be expected to pay.

- Increasing rents above the inflation rate is considered "significant". However, this must be viewed in the context of their current below market position.
- Current rents are below the local benchmark rents.
- Current allotment rents are considerably lower than or comparable to other recreation/leisure activities.

3.3.7 Mitigating the negative impact of rent increases on the least able to pay.

- The current 84% Concessionary Discount is double the national average discount. Retaining this discount but at a reduced level affords financial relief to those on lowest incomes.

3.3.8 Timing of agreed rent increases in terms of the required notice period and the current cost of living crisis.

- To implement the new rent levels in April 2025, the decision to increase rents will be taken after consultation and must be taken before April 2024.

3.3.9 Setting the service on a robust financial footing and contributing to service savings needed, especially when combined with efficiency derived from self-management.

- Rent income is normally 46% of service running costs. Given the massive increase in site works and service improvements, rent income is currently just 29% of service running costs. Increasing rent income and generating savings through self-management will help to the service return to an acceptable level of subsidy.
- The average cost of running an allotment service across the country was £96,000/year in 2022 (APSE 2022).
- Two thirds of Local Authorities implement charges which cover most of the cost of allotment maintenance.
- The Council does not cover site maintenance costs (a minimum of £45,000 per year but costs have increased to £85,000 in the last two years due to all the delivered site improvement works carried out).
- The service is faced with a choice of reducing service running costs or increasing income levels. Reducing costs would lead to a deterioration of plots and sites that would increase maintenance costs in the long term, and would undermine the Self-Management drive, as stated by Site reps and tenant bodies.
- There has been a general deterioration of many allotment sites through under-investment, with current site conditions also reflecting a lack of allotment supervisor for many years which has been steadily addressed since the 2002 consultation. Outdated and inefficient allotment data systems have resulted in tenant concerns not being responded to in a timely manner which led to customer dissatisfaction and an increase in complaints about service.
- Further investment is required to maintain an acceptable standard level. Increased income generation through rent increases would provide the Council the finance to make delivering the service more efficient and help to reduce the need for further significant rent increase for years to come.
- The rate of increase in rents falls is historically lower than the increase in service costs, in effect leading to a reduction in budget. This in part explains the deterioration of the service in the last decade. There is a need to reset rent levels so that the level

that the income/running costs/subsidy level that do not cause any further reduction in service offer.

3.3.10 Valuation of Allotments to decide what tenants would be expected to pay. Use of 'agricultural rent' as a comparison.

- The Council values allotment sites at £0.
- DEFRA value "Informal General Cropping" agricultural rent across England at £80 per 125 sqm. Note that DEFRA values are based on large land areas without the maintenance costs of allotment sites.
- MHCLG values "Agricultural land in the Southeast at £312 per 125 sqm and residential land at £60,000 per 125 sqm.

3.3.11 Benchmarking against rent levels at other sites.

- Current rents are below local benchmark average (see 4.3.4 below)
- Investigation of other providers' consultation feedback suggests that plot holders, when presented with a need for significant rent increases, have stated they would accept a given increase if it is not followed with another the next year. It is good practice to commit to a low rent increase in the year (or two) after a significant rent increase is introduced. The Council is therefore proposing that in Year 2, rent increases are fixed at no higher than RPI level or 4%, whichever is the highest.

3.3.12 Considering the level to which the Council subsidises the service and comparing that level to other subsidised Council services.

- The APSE 'State of the Market report 2022' found that two-thirds of providers continue to subsidise allotment services from other budgets. *Harwood v Borough of Reigate and Banstead* (1982) held that Local Authorities did not have to subsidise the provision of allotments.
- Reading's allotments are heavily subsidised with annual allotment income of £39,000 and normal running costs of £85,000. Costs have been higher from 2021 till now because of the recruitment of the Project Officer and because of waste costs arising from the programme of whole-site overhauls. Rent increase, uptake of self-management and proposals to reduce waste disposal costs will all combine to shrink the subsidy gap but will not result in a cost-neutral service.
- There are few other comparable subsidised Council services. Allotments offer a mix of leisure/hobby/well-being/exercise/community plus produce. Some may view allotments to produce better quality and cheaper produce than the shops, though only the most dedicated plot holder with the best ground that remains free from pests, diseases and bad weather will save significant sums by growing their own. The overall running cost of a 'properly cultivated' plot can include tools, seeds, plants, fuel, crop protection, fertiliser, and travel. These generally exceed the average rent paid for a plot.

3.3.13 Reinvestment of increased rent income in allotment infrastructure and support for Allotment Societies as part of the Allotment Self-Management Project aims.

- Tenants have been explicit that their further contribution towards self-management are wholly dependent on the Council bringing sites up to standard and making ongoing commitment towards the future maintenance and upkeep of the Council's allotment sites.

3.4 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

3.4.1 The consultation will follow the same plan as the highly successful Allotment Self-Management Consultation of Autumn 2020 with the following changes, but seek opinion on options for rental rates.

- The 2020 consultation took 13 weeks to set-up, run, and collate. It had been the first time the service had carried out such a comprehensive consultation and required significant groundwork to set up. Furthermore, the officer devoted significant time to developing good rapport with tenants and sites who were not used to having their opinion sought. It required efforts to overcome cynicism and scepticism. This consultation does not need the same time preparing the ground because productive relationships have developed out of that consultation and through the ongoing Allotment Project.
- Council to tenant and on-site communication is much improved since 2020 with the emergence of Site Liaison Representatives (SLRs), Allotment Societies/Committees and their own social media. SLRs and Societies/Committees are more engaged than before and are appraised of the rationale for changes to rents and discounts. They are also highly effective at disseminating information and gathering feedback from their own stakeholders.
- The coverage of on-site meetings in 2020 by the Project Officer cannot be replicated as the officer was full-time in 2020 and is now on a 2-day per week contract. A single site visit will be arranged for each site, instead of two or three as per 2020.
- In 2020, equal weight was given to each response, be it from an individual tenant or from a site's collective response. This year, more weight will be given to whole-site responses. This will enhance collective working of each sites' community and it reflects the Council's recognition of those sites that are taking more responsibility for their own community development.

3.4.2 The consultation plan is as follows:

6 th July 2023	HNL Committee approval of proposals.
July 2023	Start 6-week consultation phase.
August 2023	Consultation ends. Analysis and weighing up commences.
September 2023	Outcomes and proposals for final preferred rent/discount model are collated.
November 2023	Further update report brought back to HNL advising of consultation outcome and recommending rents and discount to be applied from 1 st April 2025
1 st April 2024	The Council gives all tenants 12 months written notice of changes to rent and discounts.
1 st April 2025	New rents and discounts can be implemented.

3.4.3 Information about all four Rent options will be presented to stakeholders (current tenants and those on waiting lists), but that consultation material makes it clear that options 1 and 4 have been considered and rejected. Consultation material will provide the rationale and pros and cons (to plot holders and to the service in the context of wider Council financial considerations) so that stakeholders can make informed choices.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1. Reading Borough Council's vision is:

To help Reading realise its potential – and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

- 4.2. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:

Creating a healthy environment.

- Allotments provide residents with an opportunity to produce food locally and to reduce food miles. Access to nature in urban settings contributes to improved mental and physical health and a healthy lifestyle.

Creating thriving communities

- Allotment gardening offers benefits to all residents, that help to improve the lack of social capital embodied by loneliness and enables citizens to contribute to society, especially beyond retirement as part of like-minded communities with a shared goal and shared achievements.

Creating an inclusive economy.

- Allotment gardening offers informal learning opportunities for users of all ages.
- Allotment grown produce can be sold and offers a cheap source of healthy food to residents.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. The Council has made commitments relating to climate change and the UK Government declared a Climate Change emergency in 2019. As a result, a high-level assessment has been undertaken on the switch from Council management to self-management of statutory allotments on carbon emissions.

Energy Use – No known impacts.

Waste Generation – Residents will be encouraged to compost more arisings and dispose of non-compostable items themselves. Management groups will check materials brought onto site which will reduce the frequency of fly-tipping. These factors will result in less waste being generated and removed from sites by the Council. Calculating site waste tonnage and potential pro-rata Waste Levies will continue through 2023. However, as tenants take responsibility to dispose of their own waste, it is likely tenant trips to recycling centres may increase.

Transport – As maintenance is gradually taken over by tenant's self-management groups this will result in fewer journeys to allotments for Council vehicles.

It has also been assessed whether the decision will improve resilience to climate change impacts.

- Heatwaves – No known impacts
- Drought – No known impacts
- Flooding – No known impacts
- High Winds/Storms – No known impacts
- Disruption to Supply Chains – No known impacts

The overall rating assigned to this decision is a low positive one.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. The foundation for this report and direction of the Allotment Plans is the 2020 Allotment Consultation Report and is updated through ongoing dialogue with existing and emerging allotment committees and societies.
- 6.2. The foundation for this report and direction of the Allotment Plans is the 2020 Allotment Consultation Report and is updated through ongoing dialogue with existing and emerging allotment committees and societies.

- 6.3. Ongoing feedback is gathered through service requests, site meetings and discussions with Site Liaison Representatives (in person, phone and through the SLR e-mail group).
- 6.4. Site Liaison Representatives have reported that Council input to date has helped them develop more on-site collaborative approaches and goodwill towards the service. They also convey their gratitude for the Project and for what the Council has achieved given resource constraints.
- 6.5. Site Liaison Representatives, Committees and elected Allotment Societies are growing in confidence and now offer suggestions and solutions to problems and are more willing to develop and trial their own policies and approaches.
- 6.6. Though the overhaul of the Allotment webpage is delayed, it will be operational before January 2024 and will become another conduit for two-way engagement through a suggestions section and through direction to on-line consultation material.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, 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.
- 7.2. The Council has reviewed the scope of the project as outlined within this report and considers that the proposals have no direct impact on any groups with protected characteristics.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. None.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. Rights and responsibilities relating to allotments provision are defined in the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. Where available, bids will be made for funding in to make improvements to infrastructure are identified in this report.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. Detailed in 3.4.2.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices – delete if there are none

1. Appendix A – Allotment Action Plan 2022
2. Appendix B – Allotment Self-Management Plan and Case Studies

Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

06 July 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Weed Control Management – Trial of Market Available Options
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Graeme Rasdall-Lawes, Neighbourhood Services Manager
Lead councillor	Cllr Karen Rowland, Environmental Services & Community Safety
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee notes the current position on The Trial of Alternatives to Glyphosate. 2. That Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee approve the continued controlled use of glyphosate as the most cost effective and efficient method for the control of unwanted vegetation on paved areas and in and around grass verges. 3. That Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee agree that any new contract issued will include a requirement for the successful bidder to work with the Council to seek a suitable alternative to glyphosate. 4. That the Streetscene Team will continue to explore and monitor the 'Herbicide Market' for any suitable new alternatives to glyphosate. The Streetscene Team will also remain vigilant as to how other councils are dealing with this issue.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update to Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee on the trials that took place between May 2022 and October 2022 to explore the alternatives to the current weed control practice of using glyphosate to control unwanted vegetation across the borough.
- 1.2 This report seeks to inform the Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee of progress to date and inform the Committee of the alternative methods trialled.

2. Background

- 2.1 Reading Borough Council remains committed to reducing the use of herbicides across its public estate wherever possible and has over previous years reduced its use considerably. There is however a necessary requirement to provide effective weed control on its highways network to protect the condition of its carriageways and footways. It also helps to maintain the quality of the investment Reading has made over the past 3 years and is continuing to make in its roads and pathways.
- 2.2 Reduction of herbicide use compliments the Wildflower Plan which is one of a suite of policies supporting Reading's declared climate emergency and included within the Climate Emergency Strategy and the Biodiversity Action Plan, as well as Reading Borough Council's Corporate Plan.
- 2.3 Initiated in 2020, the Rewilding Project identified large verges where more species-rich long grass could be grown in corridors along the highway and in limited areas in parks

and open spaces. An internal assessment was carried out, and feedback from residents proactively sought. Feedback was substantially positive, and the internal assessment concluded that the experiment had worked in most areas from the point of view of both maintenance and appearance. To date 48 hectares of parks and open spaces have been rewilded. Enhancing and where possible increasing those areas continues to be an aim of the Wildflower Plan.

- 2.4 Consistent with the majority of Local Authorities in the UK, Reading Borough Council employs a system of weed control, either through its own operations or via contracted services, that uses glyphosate as the principal chemical for the control of unwanted vegetation on land within its ownership. This process is currently carried out 4 x per year (March, Late May, Early August & Mid October) using a controlled droplet application (CDA). All applications are weather dependant and carried out when vegetation is actively growing.
- 2.5 Glyphosate based herbicides have been available for over 40 years and are generally considered cost effective, efficient and readily available. They are a systemic, non-residual, contact herbicide which will kill actively growing vegetation at the time of application but will not stop new vegetation from growing. Prior to this many Local Authorities used residual based herbicides as a preventative method, which could be sprayed without unwanted vegetation being present due to their capacity to remain in soil and detritus. Concerns around the environmental impact of residual herbicides led them to be banned.
- 2.4 The use of glyphosate-based products is legal in the UK, being licenced until December 2025. Nonetheless, a report from the International Agency for Research on Cancer in 2015, found that glyphosate was “a probable human carcinogen”, sparking a worldwide debate as to the validity of its continued usage. Recent court rulings in the USA have found in favour of claimants who cite glyphosate use as having caused them to develop cancer. The scientific data is however conflicting, with the European Food Safety Authority and the European Chemicals Agency’s Committee for Risk Assessment having found no safety concerns that would prevent continuing approval.
- 2.5 Weed control in public areas including footpaths and roadside channels is a crucial service undertaken by the Council on behalf of communities. A good quality, consistent weed control programme reduces slip and trip hazards and reduces the damage caused by root growth to the public highway and also improves aesthetic appeal.
- 2.6 Reading Borough Council manages a diverse range of green space including over 60 parks and open spaces which include play areas along with a number of public rights of way.
- 2.7 Through the use of mulches, growth retardant and weed suppressing membranes, as well as traditional hoeing and strimming on hard surfaces, the grounds maintenance teams have stopped using glyphosate in children’s play areas and parks and reduced the use around open spaces.
- 2.8 The use of glyphosate has been used for spot treatment of weeds only and to reduce growth around obstructions such as benches, trees and signs and has not been used in and around playgrounds for some time. It is also the most effective herbicide treatment for Japanese Knotweed.

3. The Trial

- 3.1 The trial of alternative methods was carried out on Northumberland Avenue which was identified as the preferred highways trial site as it easily subdivides into different areas and has a mixture of land use types (grass verges, footways, parking bays) as well as having areas of on-street parking. This made the effects of the alternative treatments easier to compare and quantify.
- 3.2 Rabson’s Recreation Ground and Cintra Park were chosen as parks trial sites as they are physically linked to Northumberland Avenue and as such offered practical advantages.

3.3 The alternative methods used are as follows:

1. Fatty acid (Pelargonic Acid) spray.
2. Hot water and steam and manual removal.
3. Hand Removal.
4. Glyphosate
5. Acetic acid spray.

3.4 Northumberland Avenue was divided up as shown in the table below:

3.5 The alternative treatments were chosen in relation to the practicality of their use in the different sections of the road. For example, steam and hot water cannot be used in area 1 for safety reasons due to on-street parking.

Area	Extents	Length (km)	Wards	Treatment
1.	Christchurch Gardens to Hexham Rd	0.62	Katesgrove, Redlands	Pelargonic Acid
2.	Hexham road to Buckland Rd	0.42	Church, Katesgrove, Redlands	Steam and hot water
3.	Buckland Rd to Honiton Rd	0.33	Church, Whitley	Hand removal
4.	Honiton Rd to Hartland Rd	0.68	Church, Whitley	Glyphosate
5.	Hartland Rd to Whitley Wood Rd	0.64	Church, Whitley	Acetic Acid
6.	Rabson's recreation ground		Church	Hot air and steam and hot water
7.	Cintra Park		Park, Redlands	Hot air and steam and hot water

3.6 The trials were designed to measure:

- How effective are the proposed alternatives compared to glyphosate as a herbicide?
- The optimum frequency of each treatment required to keep weed coverage at a level similar to that achieved when using Glyphosate.
- The reaction of the treatment.
- What are the costs of alternative weed control?
- Seek member and resident feedback to the various methods used.

4. Findings

4.1 Treatment 1 – 19/5/22

Weather conditions – passing clouds, warm – no rain.

Area treated	Linear metres	Ratio of chemical to carrier ML	Time taken in mins	Usage	Inspection 1 to 3 days	Inspection 5 days	Inspection 10 days
Pelargonic acid	(1) 1200m	0.1:1	25 min X 1 operative	1 litre	Signs of kill within 1 day. Leaves turning black and wilting.	Treated plants dead. Some signs of regrowth.	Weed beginning to recover and new shoots appearing. New plants visible.
Steam HOT WATER	(2) 1600m	<u>NA</u> 400 litres of water per hour	217 min X1 operative	800 litres	Some weeds jettied off; plant matter disappears, some damage to untarmacked areas.	Regrowth of perennial weeds.	Re-established perennial weeds and new annuals present.
Hand removal	(3) 1320mm	<u>NA</u>	60 min X1 operative	NA	Instant removal of overground vegetation.	Some new weeds.	New weeds and perennials have returned.
Glyphosate	(4) 1280mm	0.025:1	41 min X1 operative	0.25 litres	Some effects visible, slight wilting of plants with some discolour.	Plants wilting and discolour to leaves.	Nearly all treated plants are dead - no sign of new plants growing.
Acetic	(5) 1200m	0.33:1	36min X1 operative	3.33 litres	Visible effects within 1 hour of spraying. Yellowing vegetation. Strong aroma detected.	Treated plants dead. Some signs of new growth.	New annuals and perennial plants have returned. New growth detected.
Steam and hot water	Rabson's Rec	<u>NA</u> 400 litres of water per hour	40 min X1 operative	260 litres	Some plants jettied off; plant matter disappears, some damage to untarmacked areas.	Regrowth of perennial plants.	Re-established perennial plants and new annuals present.
Steam and hot water	Cintra Rec	<u>NA</u> 400 litres of water per hour	45 min X1 operative	300 litres	Some weeds jettied off; plant matter disappears, some damage to untarmacked areas.	Regrowth of perennial plants.	Re-established perennial plants and new annuals present.

4.2 Treatment 2 – 6/7/22

Weather conditions – passing cloud, warm – no rain

Area treated	Linear metres	Ratio of chemical to carrier ML	Time taken in mins	Usage	Inspection 1 to 3 days	Inspection 5 days	Inspection 10 days
Pelargonic acid	(1) 1200m	0.1:1	25 min X 1 operative	1 litre	Signs of kill within 1 day. Leaves turning black and wilting.	Treated plants dead. Some signs of regrowth.	Regrowth of some treated plants particularly Mare's tail.
Steam HOT WATER	(2) 1600m	<u>NA</u> 400 litres of water per hour	217 min X1 operative	800 litres	Very little impact on anything with underground tap root system. Removes grass and soil in places.	Regrowth in places.	New weeds and regrowth in places.
Hand removal	(3) 1320mm	<u>NA</u>	60 min X1 operative	NA	Instant removal of overground vegetation.	Some new plants visible.	New plants and perennials present.
Glyphosate	(4) 1280mm	0.025:1	41 min X1 operative	0.25 litres	Some effects visible, slight wilting of plants with some discolour.	Treated annual plants dying. Signs of wilting of perennials.	Nearly all treated plants are dead - no sign of new plants growing.
Acetic	(5) 1200m	0.33:1	36min X1 operative	3.33 litres	Visible effects within 1 hour of spraying. Yellowing vegetation. Strong aroma detected.	Treated plants dead. Some signs of new regrowth.	New plants and old regrowth in places where perennials are present.
Steam and hot water	Rabson's Rec	<u>NA</u> 400 litres of water per hour	40 min X1 operative	260 litres	Very little impact on anything with underground tap root system. Removes grass and parts of resin bonded surface in places.	Regrowth in places.	New plants and regrowth in places.
Steam and hot water	Cintra Rec	<u>NA</u> 400 litres of water per hour	45 min X1 operative	300 litres	Some weeds jetted off; plant matter disappears.	Regrowth in places.	New plants and regrowth in places.

4.3 Treatment 3 – 4/10/22 (Hot water / Steam 11/10/22)

Weather conditions – overcast, cool – some overnight rain

Area treated	Linear metres	Ratio of chemical to carrier ML	Time taken in mins	Usage	Inspection 1 to 3 days	Inspection 5 days	Inspection 10 days
Pelargonic acid	(1) 1200m	0.1:1	25 min X 1 operative	1 litre	Signs of kill within 1 day. Leaves turning black and wilting.	Treated plants dead. No signs of regrowth.	Minor regrowth of some treated plants particularly Mare's tail.
Steam HOT WATER	(2) 1600m	<u>NA</u> 400 litres of water per hour	217 min X 1 operative	800 litres	Very little impact on anything with underground tap root system. Removes grass and soil in places.	Minor regrowth in places.	Minor new weeds and regrowth in places.
Hand removal	(3) 1320mm	<u>NA</u>	60 min X1 operative	NA	Instant removal of overground vegetation.	Minor regrowth in places.	Minor regrowth in places.
Glyphosate	(4) 1280mm	0.025:1	41 min X1 operative	0.25 litres	No real difference in appearance.	Some effects visible, slight wilting of plants with some discolour.	Annual weeds visibly wilting, little to no effect on perennials.
Acetic	(5) 1200m	0.33:1	36min X1 operative	3.33 litres	Visible effects within 1 hour of spraying. Yellowing vegetation. Strong aroma detected.	Treated plants dead. No new signs of new regrowth.	Minimal growth on perennials.
Steam and hot water	Rabson's Rec	<u>NA</u> 400 litres of water per hour	40 min X1 operative	260 litres	Very little impact on anything with underground tap root system.	Minor regrowth in places.	Minor regrowth in places.
Steam and hot water	Cintra Rec	<u>NA</u> 400 litres of water per hour	45 min X1 operative	300 litres	Some weeds jetted off; plant matter disappears.	Minor regrowth in places.	Minor regrowth in places.

5. Options Considered

5.1 Pelargonic Acid - Pelargonic acid occurs naturally in many plants and animals.

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not glyphosate • Fast acting (plants show signs of treatment within 2-3 hours) • Organic • Can be applied using knapsack system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a classification as an irritant/COSHH • Requires training to NPTC Level PA1 & PA6 (National Proficiency Test Council) • Harmful to bees • Non systemic does not kill root system • High application rate • Significantly more expensive than glyphosate or acetic acid • Weather dependant • Unpleasant aroma • Kills surface growth only

5.2 Hot water / Steam

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonchemical application • No issue with drift • Non residual • Not harmful to bees or pets • No licence required • Non-hazardous to health • Not weather dependant • Instant results • Can be used near water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High water usage • Rapid cooling which reduces effectiveness • Labour intensive/slow • Use of fuel to heat water • Plant roots are not killed • Potential damage to surfaces • Ineffective against perennial/established vegetation • Access issues in area with on street parking • Potential to increase weed growth

5.3 Hand Removal – use of mechanical and handheld tools

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonchemical • Instant result • Not weather dependant • Environmentally friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour intensive/slow • Potential for increased work-related injuries • Roots may remain • Access issues in areas with high on street parking • Increased disposal costs

5.4 Glyphosate - a systemic, non-residual, contact herbicide

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translocated properties, work throughout the plant. Kills roots • Gives a complete kill • Low CO2 impact on the environment • Lower application rate compared to Acetic acid and Pelargonic acid • Speed of application • Cost effective • Can be mixed with a carrier to lessen drift • Biodegradable in soil • Reduces the need for strimming • Broad spectrum herbicide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor public perception/negative press • Requires training to NPTC Level PA1 & PA6 (National Proficiency Test Council) • Weather dependant. Needs 6 hours before it is rain fast • Manual handling issues / COSHH • Harmful to bees • Less effective in drought conditions. Weeds need to be actively growing at time of application. • Non residual • Can take up to 2 weeks for desired result

5.5 Acetic Acid - also known as ethanoic acid, is a clear colourless liquid which has a pungent, vinegar-like odour.

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not glyphosate • Fast acting (plants show signs of treatment within 2-3 hours) • Biodegradable • Broad spectrum herbicide • Can be applied using knapsack system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a classification as an irritant • Requires training to NPTC Level PA1 & PA6 (National Proficiency Test Council) • Manual handling issues / COSHH • Harmful to bees • Cost • Non systemic • Unpleasant aroma • Non broad spectrum • Low strength • Weather dependant • Slower and greater application rate

6. Summary

- 6.1 Glyphosate application was the least labour intensive of the methods tested at 0.47 hrs per Km. Pelargonic and Acetic acid were more labour intensive than glyphosate at 0.59 and 0.58 hrs per Km respectively. The next most labour-intensive process was hand weeding at 1.97 hrs per Km and lastly, the most labour intensive, hot water / steam at 2.35 hrs per Km.
- 6.2 Product use, glyphosate used the least of the three chemical applications using 0.25 Lt/Km. Pelargonic acid used 1.13 Lt/Km and Acetic acid the largest at 3.75 Lt/Km.
- 6.3 Water usage was similar for all 3 products and would typically use between 10 - 12 Lt/Km but the hot water / steam method would use up to 78 times more water at 940 Lt/Km. The use of Pelargonic and Acetic acids would require 5 treatments per year, as opposed to 4 treatments using glyphosate, and would therefore use an additional 20% extra water per year.
- 6.4 Fuel use across all three chemical applications would again be very similar at approximately 0.18 Lt/Km. However, the use of Pelargonic and Acetic acids would

require 5 treatments per year, as opposed to 4 treatments using glyphosate, and would therefore use an additional 20% additional diesel fuel. The fuel use for hot water / steam is estimated to be 12.00 Lt/Km for diesel and 2.25 Lt/Km for petrol.

6.5 If weed control is understood to be necessary, it must be accepted that the management approach selected will involve compromises. The results of the trial show that glyphosate was the most effective and efficient weed control method used. Whilst hot water and steam produced effective results it is unsustainable and not as efficient as the other methods tested. Hand weeding had the least environmental impact but is not a sustainable option. Pelargonic and Acetic acid treatments produced quicker results but is less efficient, more costly and requires the use of more chemicals.

6.6 The table below details the financial implications for each of the options trialled

Application	Cost per application	No applications	Total £000 per annum
Pelargonic	£45000 (Est)	5	225
Steam / Hot water	£73000	4	292
Hand Removal	£66000	4	264
Glyphosate	£13133	4	52.5
Acetic	£35000 (Est)	5	175

7. Contribution to Strategic Aims

7.1 Reading Borough Council's vision is:

To help Reading realise its potential – and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

7.2 The Control of Unwanted Vegetation will contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan 2022 - 2025

- **Healthy environment** - Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active
- **Inclusive economy** - Providing infrastructure to support the economy
- **Thriving Communities** - Remaining financially sustainable to deliver these service priorities and to ensure everyone has an equal chance to use the public highway

7.3 **Together** – Collaborative working approach between the Council, property owners, volunteers and the public

Efficiency – Identifying the most cost efficient and appropriate method for the control of unwanted vegetation across the borough.

Ambitious – Investing to improve the public realm

Make a Difference – Providing a safe, welcoming and inclusive public realm for all

8. Environmental and Climate Implications

8.1 The Council has made commitments relating to climate change and the UK Government declared a Climate Change emergency in 2019 and as such recognises the need to minimise the climate impacts of its decisions.

- Energy Use – No known impacts.
- Waste Generation – which ever method is used to control the growth of unwanted vegetation there will be little impact on waste. Products used for these works are

purchased in 'bulk' and decanted into small receptacles for transportation – the receptacles are then refilled and reused.

- Transport –The use of glyphosate requires less applications and therefore requires the least amount of vehicle movements, 4 applications rather than 5.

It has also been assessed whether the decision will improve resilience to climate change impacts.

- Heatwaves – No known impacts
- Drought – No known impacts
- Flooding – No known impacts
- High Winds/Storms – No known impacts
- Disruption to Supply Chains – No known impacts

The overall rating assigned to this decision is low impact.

- 8.2 There will be some marginal increase in water usage if we use a hot water / hot water / steam process as a result of this proposal. This will also mean a very small increase in the use of fuel to power the pressure washer unit.
- 8.3 The use of the alternative control methods other than glyphosate will require extra applications to produce the same results – this will increase the use of fuel by a minimum of 20%
- 8.4 The chemicals that are used for the treatment of unwanted vegetation are standard industry chemicals which are neutralised in soil. The chemicals are also 'Expected to be ultimately biodegradable'.
- 8.5 The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council in November 2020, highlights the importance of adapting to climate impacts as well as reducing the emissions which are driving climate change.

9. Community Engagement and Information

- 9.1 The Council involves local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".
- 9.2 Residents were notified of the trial by formal letter and information boards were erected along Northumberland Avenue including QR codes to give further details if required.

10. Equality Impact Assessment

- 10.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, 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.
- 10.2 There is no overall change to service delivery at this time and all users will have an improved public realm. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

11. Legal Implications

- 11.1 Section 89(2) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 places a duty on Local Authorities in respect of publicly maintainable highways in their area, to ensure that the

highway or road is, so far as is practicable, kept clean – meaning the removal of detritus as well as litter and refuse. The removal of detritus is deemed to be practicable from metalled surfaces only. Weed growth from seeds germinating in moist detritus would therefore be considered as requiring removal by the Council under the Act.

- 11.2 UK law requires operators hold at least NPTC PA1 and PA6 certifications to use glyphosate professionally. Training covers the safe use, storage, and handling of pesticides with emphasis on techniques that minimise use and off-target drift. All staff and contractors who use the product are suitably qualified. The specific PPE requirements are always detailed in the product label.

12. Financial Implications

The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report are set out below: -

12.1 Revenue Implications

Current method – use of Glyphosate 4 x applications per year.

	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Employee costs (see note1)			
Other running costs		51.6	52.5
Capital financings costs			
Expenditure		51.6	52.5
Income from:			
Fees and charges (see note2)			
Grant funding (specify)			
Other income			
Total Income			
Net Cost (+)/saving (-)		51.6	52.5

13. Background papers

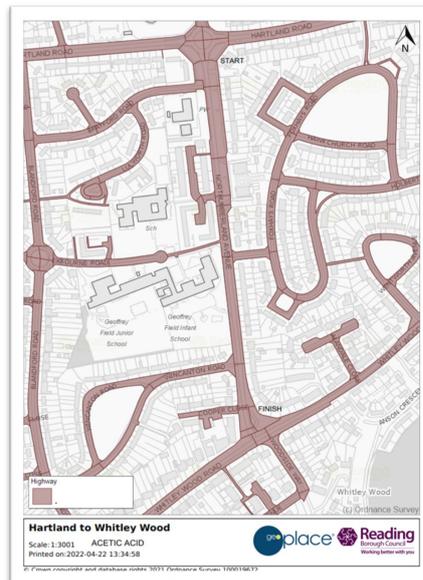
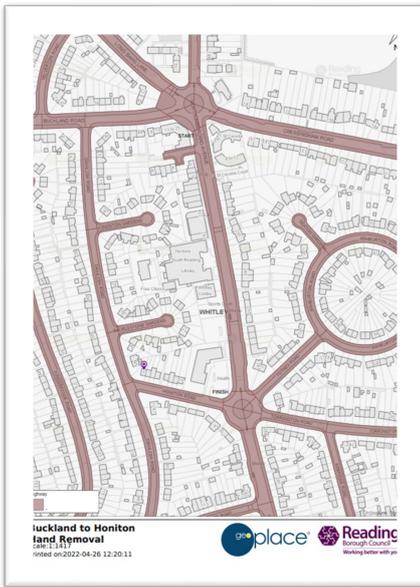
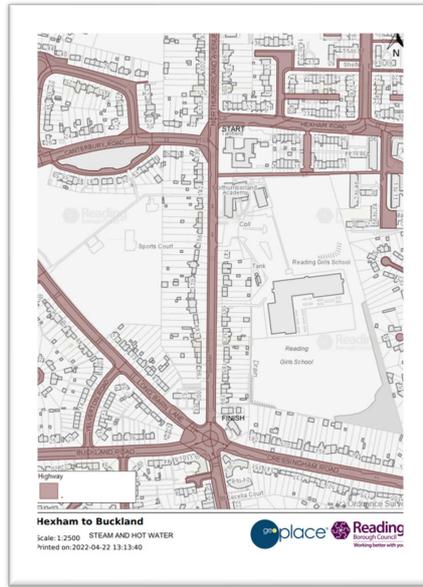
- 13.1 There are none.

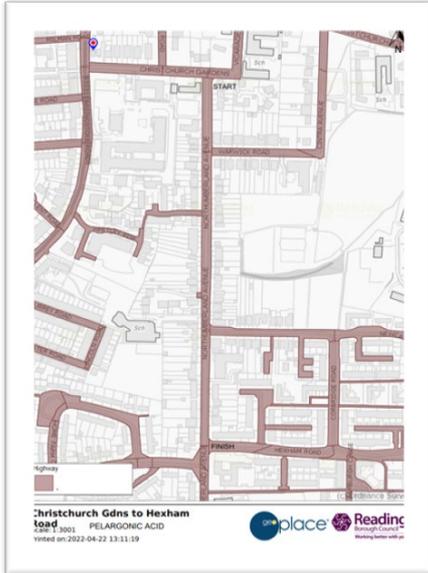
14. Appendices

- Appendix 1: Location Maps

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Appendix 1: Location Maps





Appendix 2: Preliminary Financial Implications for each option

Application	Cost per application	No Applications	Total £000
Pelargonic	£45000 (Est)	5	225
Steam / Hot water	£73000	4	292
Hand Removal	£66000	4	264
Glyphosate	£13133	4	52.5
Acetic	£35000 (Est)	5	175