

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES - 12 MARCH 2025

Present: Councillors Cross (Chair), Ballsdon, Ennis, Goss, Griffith, Hornsby-Smith, Juthani, Keeping, Leng, McElroy, McGrother, O'Connell and Rowland.

Also in attendance via Microsoft Teams: Councillors Magon and McCann.

Apologies: Councillors Lanzoni and Stevens.

20. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

The Minutes of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 27 November 2024 were received and noted.

22. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were received and noted:

- Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Local Liaison Committee - 7 November 2024.
- Cleaner Air and Safer Transport Forum (CAST) Forum - 28 November 2024.
- Reading Climate Change Partnership Board - 17 October 2024.

23. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A question on the following matter was asked in accordance with Standing Order 36.

Questioner	Subject
Councillor Hornsby-Smith	Local Plan Update

(The full text of the question and reply was made available on the Reading Borough Council website).

24. JANUARY 2024 FLOOD UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received an update report on the progress that had been made towards implementing actions contained within the 'January 2024 Flood Event Options Report' as agreed by Policy Committee on 8 July 2024 ([Minute 15 refers](#)). The following documents were appended to the report:

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- Appendix 1 - January 2024 Section 19 Flood Investigation Report
- Appendix 2 - January 2024 Options Report
- Appendix 3 - Updated Sandbag Policy
- Appendix 4 - Flood Risk Roles & Responsibilities

The report provided the Committee with an update on the progress that had been made towards implementing the agreed actions and summarised the further actions that needed to be taken to reduce the impact and risk of flooding along with the 'lessons learned' following a review of the January 2024 flood incident. The report also sought approval to update the Council's Sandbag Policy which had been amended following the January 2024 flood event.

The report provided the Committee with the background to the January 2024 flood event during which the Reading area had been affected by flooding from the River Thames, River Kennet and Holy Brook, and their associated ditches and tributaries. During the event 21 residential properties, three commercial properties and one static residential caravan had been flooded. Following this the Council, acting in its capacity as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), had commissioned Stantec to investigate and produce a 'Flood Options Report'. The 'Flood Options Report' had included a list of recommended actions for the Lower Caversham, Southcote/Kennet Meadows and Scours Lane areas, as well as a number of recommended administrative actions for the Council and Environment Agency. The report provided updates on each of the recommended actions, including on those actions, that had been carried out or were currently in progress, and gave detail of the actions where there were ongoing requirements.

The report also asked the Committee to approve an amended version of the Council's Sandbag Policy. The amended Policy stated that the Council would continue to provide sandbags to Council-owned properties and that private property owners would remain responsible for resourcing/storing their own sandbags. However, the policy had been amended to recognise the fact that during extreme events there were a limited number of vulnerable properties that could flood and that the Council might therefore decide to deploy sandbags to residential locations that were at risk of imminent flooding.

At the meeting the Highways and Traffic Services Manager advised the Committee that Council would be writing to residents affected by the January 2024 flood event to provide them with information on a proposed open day at which residents would be able to obtain useful information relating to flooding. He further advised the Committee that the Council was seeking to establish a flood warden system that would enable residents to proactively monitor flood events, provide assistance during flood events and act as a link between residents and the Council. Following discussions at the meeting the Highways and Traffic Services Manager advised that officers would explore adding further useful information for residents about flooding, including on how to obtain sandbags, and where to get help during a flood event on the Council's website.

Resolved –

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- (1) That the progress made towards implementing the recommended actions set out in the 'January 2024 Flood Event Options Report' approved by Policy Committee on 8 July 2024 be noted.
- (2) That the Council's updated Sandbag Policy, as summarised in section 3.15 of the report, and attached at Appendix 3, be approved.

25. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT SCHEMES UPDATE

The Committee received a report that provided an update on the progress made towards the delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes in Reading. The programme included several major enhancements to public transport and active travel facilities. The programme aimed to encourage more healthy lifestyles, reduce pollution and carbon emissions and support sustainable economic growth in the Borough. The report contained updates on the following individual schemes and initiatives:

- Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Programme - including details on ticketing and bus service enhancements and an update on the delivery of bus lane packages on London Road and Oxford Road
- South Reading Bus Rapid Transit
- Electric Bus Programme
- Tilehurst Station Upgrade
- Active Travel Fund Programme – including updates on the Shinfield Road and Bath Road active travel schemes
- School Streets Programme
- Active Travel Behavioural Change Programme

The report also provided the Committee with an update on grant funding allocated to Reading by the Department for Transport (DfT) for 2025-26 for the Bus Service Improvement Plan and the Active Travel Fund programmes. A condition of both grant allocations required the Council to prepare and submit associated Delivery Plans to the Government detailing how the grants would be utilised to deliver against each programme.

Resolved -

- (1) That the progress made towards the delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes, as summarised in the report, be noted.
- (2) That the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Active Travel Fund grant funding allocations from the Department for Transport for 2025/26 be noted, both of which required the Council to submit associated Delivery Plans to Government.

26. FORMATION OF A TASK-AND-FINISH GROUP TO SCRUTINISE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL'S ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY

The Committee received a report that had been prepared following a request made by Councillor Cross, Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee,

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for the Committee to conduct an overview and scrutiny exercise focusing on the implementation of the Council's Active Travel Strategy.

The report set out the process for the Committee to establish a Councillor-led, cross-party task-and-finish group to scrutinise the implementation of the Council's Active Travel Strategy and to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of its objectives. The proposed terms of reference for the task-and-finish group were attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that Group Leaders had been consulted and had put forward the names of councillors from their respective groups to sit on the task-and-finish group. The proposed membership of the group was set out in the report and in the terms of reference.

At the meeting it was proposed that the terms of reference should be amended to emphasise the need for the task-and-finish group to look at equality and inclusivity objectives within the Local Transport Plan within the context of active travel.

Resolved –

- (1) That a task-and-finish group be established to scrutinise the implementation of the Council's active travel strategy;**
- (2) That point 5 within the terms of reference, as attached to the report at Appendix 1, be amended to read as follows:**
“5. *To assess how the implementation of active travel schemes is meeting the Council's Local Transport Plan objectives especially inclusion and equality of access.*”
- (3) That, subject to (2) above, the terms of reference of the task-and-finish group, as set out in Appendix 1 of report, be agreed;**
- (4) That the membership of the task-and-finish group, as set out in section 3 of the report, be agreed;**
- (5) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee setting out the task-and-finish group's findings and recommendations.**

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.01 pm)