

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 19 NOVEMBER 2025

Present: Councillor Cross (Chair);

Councillors Hornsby-Smith (Vice-Chair), Ennis, Goss, Juthani, Keeping, Lanzoni, Leng, McCann, McGoldrick, McGrother, Moore and Rowland.

Also in attendance via Microsoft Teams: Councillor Magon.

Apologies: Councillors Ballsdon, Davies and McElroy.

8. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

The Minutes of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 11 September 2025 were received and noted.

10. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings of other bodies were received and noted:

- Joint Waste Disposal Board on 18 September 2025.
- Reading Climate Change Partnership Board on 24 April 2025 and 17 July 2025.

11. DELEGATED DECISIONS

The Committee received and noted the list of delegated decisions from previous meetings.

12. ELDON SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

The Committee considered a report that sought approval to conduct a public consultation on the draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal during November and December 2025. The following documents were appended to the report:

- Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2 - Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal (November 2025)

The report explained that the Eldon Square Conservation Area had first been designated in 1972 under the Town & Country Planning Act 1971 (as amended) and had been the first conservation area established in Reading. In 1982 the area had been extended to include Watlington Street, Eldon Street, Victoria Street and Montague Street. The most recent full appraisal of the Eldon Square area had been completed in 2007.

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The report stated that, under Section 69 of the List Buildings and Conservation Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework, planning authorities had a responsibility to review their existing conservation areas and to designate any areas of special architectural or historic significance. Historic England also recommended updating conservation area appraisals every 5 to 10 years. The report explained that conservation area appraisals were a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications, were specifically referenced in policy EN3 of the Local Plan and provided key evidence for the preparation of planning policy.

Following a review of the Council's approach to the town's historic environment, the Council had supported the formation of the Reading Conservation Areas Advisory Committee (CAAC). One of the CAAC's key concerns was the amount of time elapsed since many of the town's conservation area appraisals had been prepared and adopted. Best practice recommended that appraisals be updated every five to ten years and several in the town had been identified as being due for renewal. It had been agreed that the CAAC would lead on reviewing conservation area appraisals, working in consultation with local communities.

The Eldon Square review was the fourth to be carried out by the CAAC, following St Peters in 2018, Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road in 2020 and Christchurch in 2024. The review had been a community-led project conducted primarily by the CAAC, with assistance from RBC planning officers and other interested local community representatives. As recommended by Historic England, the appraisal review had utilised a locally adapted version of the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit which set out a methodology to assess the character of the landscape and build environment of the area. The appraisal document (Appendix 2) had been updated as a result of the assessment.

The report summarised the various findings and recommendations within the updated appraisal, these included recommendations to expand the boundary of the conservation area to include properties at 84 Queens Road, 77 London Road, 32 Eldon Terrace and, 46 and 48 Eldon Terrace. The report also listed various issues and vulnerabilities that had been identified during the review process and detailed the recommended measures set out within the appraisal's Action Plan. The recommendations included:

- The expansion of the Eldon Square Conservation Area at the four locations listed above;
- To reduce the number of buildings of townscape merit;
- An Article 4 direction to prevent loss of original features;
- Addressing the issue of domestic bins in front gardens and obtrusive pipework on the front of buildings;
- Improve the blight caused by main roads and residential car parks;
- Address the poor maintenance of the George V Memorial Garden; and
- Address signage, street clutter and material.

The report stated that, if approved, the CAAC would manage the implementation of the Action Plan but that responsibility for certain actions would lay with the Council. The report noted that an informal consultation exercise had been conducted by the CAAC which had attracted 13 responses. The report recommended that the Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal, as attached at Appendix 2, be approved for formal public consultation. The

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proposed public consultation would be undertaken by the Council and responses received during the consultation process would be considered when preparing the final draft appraisal document. Subject to the results of the consultation process, it was anticipated that a report would be submitted to the meeting on 11 March 2026 at which approval would be sought to adopt a final version of the Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal document.

At the invitation of the Chair, Evelyn Williams, Chair of the Reading CAAC, delivered a presentation on the work that had been carried out by the CAAC in order to conduct the Eldon Square appraisal and to prepare the draft appraisal document.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal be approved for public consultation;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets, prior to the start of consultation on the draft document.**

13. READING CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY 2025-30 AND ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2024/25 ON (I) THE READING CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY 2020-25 AND (II) CORPORATE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS.

The Committee considered a report that sought approval to adopt the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy for the period 2025 to 2030. The report also introduced the annual performance reports for the current Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 and the Council's Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2024-25. The following documents were appended to the report:

- Appendix 1. Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-2030
- Appendix 2. Reading Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-2030
- Appendix 3. The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 - Annual Report 2024/25
- Appendix 4. Reading Borough Council Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Report 2024/25

At the invitation of the Chair, Ben Burfoot, Sustainability Manager and Dylan Parkes, Co-Chair of Reading Climate Change Partnership Board (RCCP), delivered a presentation on the work that had been carried out by the Council and the RCCP since the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019, and on the development of the updated Reading Climate Emergency Strategy for 2025-30.

The report and presentation set out the national and local policy context. At its meeting in February 2019, the Council had declared a Climate Emergency and had set a target for the borough to reduce emissions to net zero by 2030. The Council had subsequently adopted the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 based on the net zero by 2030 ambition. At the same time the Council had adopted its own Carbon Plan for the period covering 2020

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to 2025 which had included an interim target for the Council to reduce its corporate carbon emissions by 85% by 2025 on route to net zero by 2030.

The report stated that the transition to net zero would take some time to achieve and that the 2030 date should be considered as a key milestone towards achieving the ambitious net zero goal. The report explained that modelling now focused on 2040 with the ambition of achieving a close to 90% reduction against the 2005 baseline by that year, provided that national policies enabled this to happen.

The report set out the impacts of Climate Change globally, nationally and in Reading. It stated that the summer of 2025 had been the warmest summer on record for the UK with a mean temperature of 16.1°C meanwhile, the winter of 2024/25 had been the eight wettest on record, and that eight out of the ten of the warmest and wettest winters had occurred since the turn of the century. This demonstrated the reality of global warming which drove a range of impacts, risks and costs at home and abroad including floods, heatwave, storms and wildfires. Consequently, there was an increasing need for the Council and its partners to adapt to the impacts of climate change and to plan for, as well as mitigate, the associated risks.

Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025 to 2030

The report introduced the new Reading Climate Emergency Strategy for the period covering 2025 to 2030 (Appendix 1) and recommended its adoption, along with the associated Action Plan (Appendix 2). Developed by the Reading Climate Change Partnership in association with 'Dialogue Matters', the updated Strategy had been designed to accelerate progress toward a net zero town that was resilient to the impacts of climate change.

The report explained that the updated Strategy had built on the collective efforts of partner organisations without duplicating existing approaches and strategies that were already driving progress. It recognised that, while significant progress had been achieved, further work would be required beyond 2030 to reach net zero. The updated Strategy remained a five-year plan, with an emphasis on laying the groundwork for a faster transition. It also sought to strengthen partnerships and to enable member organisations to contribute effectively and implement their own strategies.

Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 (Annual Report for 2024/25)

The report also introduced the annual report for 2024/25 on the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 (Appendix 3). The annual report had been prepared by the RCCP and reflected the activity of a range of partners across Reading, not just the Council. The annual report set out examples of projects that had been delivered during the period and provided emissions data for 2023 (the latest year for which data was available). The report stated that, in 2023, emissions had fallen compared to 2022. This showed a continuation of the year-on-year reductions which had now fallen to 57% below the 2005 baseline. The represented the lowest level that emissions had been in Reading to date and was the 12th largest recorded reduction in emissions out of 374 UK local authority areas. The modelling had been carried out using the latest report from the National Committee on

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Climate Change (7th Carbon Budget Report) and indicated that a 75% reduction towards net zero could be possible by 2030 from the 2005 baseline if delivery kept on track.

The annual report for 2024-25 listed a number of achievements over the period of the 2020-25 Strategy by partners in Reading, including several Council-led initiatives such as zero carbon bus travel, a zero carbon depot (including electric waste vehicles), decarbonisation of the Library, Civic Offices and Hexagon Theatre, a Green Events Code of Practice for Reading Festival and the Reading Climate Festival, 12-years of model climate conferences, rewilding and nature initiatives, and an 'A Rating for Climate'.

The annual report acknowledged good progress toward net zero but warned that current trends made achieving the 2030 target challenging. The UK Clean Power Plan, launched nationally, aimed to deliver a 95% clean energy mix by 2030 and to cut emissions to less than 25% of current levels. This reinforced the need for the Council and its partners to accelerate the transition of heating and transport to electrified sources. Electric heat pumps and vehicles were approximately three times more efficient than fossil-fuel alternatives, presenting a major opportunity to further decarbonise. By replacing boilers and vehicles with electric equivalents at the end of their service life, substantial decarbonisation would be achieved by 2040.

RBC's Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Annual Report for 2024/25)

The report also introduced the Council's Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions annual report for 2024/25 (Appendix 4). The report tracked the progress made towards the implementation of the Council's Carbon Plan and the targets set within it. The report highlighted that the Council's carbon footprint had been cut by 73.4% since 2008/09 (or 75% if renewable energy generated by Council assets is considered). This figure remained ahead of that of the Borough reductions which demonstrated that the Council had been leading by example and represented a small improvement on the previous, albeit accepting that reductions had plateaued over the last three reported years.

The report stated that, should the Council's emission reductions be achieved in the 2025/26 year, the Council would likely achieve a 75-80% reduction in its carbon footprint against the current carbon plan target of 85% by the end of 2025/26. However, it noted that a greater amount of investment in decarbonisation in the 2025 to 2030 period would be required to realise the Council's target of net zero by 2030.

The report explained that the most effective way to reduce carbon emissions was to reduce energy consumption and that the Council had been reducing its consumption and emissions consistently against the baseline year. The cumulative avoided costs associated with this, set against the cost if no action had been taken, was estimated as £34.9m to date with the figure for 2024/25 alone at £6.4m.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025 to 2030 be adopted;**

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- (2) That the publication of the annual performance report for the Climate Emergency Strategy 2020 to 2025, which showed progress in reducing Reading Borough's carbon emissions, which had fallen by 57% since 2005, be noted;**
- (3) That the publication of the Council's Annual Greenhouse Gas Report 2024-25, which reported on the progress in reducing Reading Borough Council's corporate emissions, which had fallen by 73.4% since 2008/09, be noted;**
- (4) That it be noted that, whilst progress was being made, the Council and other partners would need to redouble efforts to reduce fossil fuel consumption and switch to electricity powered heat and transport to achieve net zero;**
- (5) That it be noted that 2024/25 had been the eighth wettest winter on record and that the summer of 2025 had been the warmest on record in the UK and that the increased risks that climate change posed for both the Council and residents required the implementation of adaptation strategies.**

14. REPORT OF THE ACTIVE TRAVEL TASK & FINISH GROUP - FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee considered a report that introduced the findings and recommendations of the Active Travel Task and Finish Group, following the completion of the Group's scrutiny exercise. The report also recommended that appropriate officers conduct a review of the Group's recommendations and that they submit an evaluation for consideration at a subsequent meeting of the Committee. The following documents were appended to the report:

- Appendix 1 - Terms of Reference and Membership of the Active Travel Task and Finish Group.
- Appendix 2 - Active Travel Task and Finish Scrutiny Group Report.

The report explained that a councillor-led Task and Finish Group had been established by the SEPT Committee at its meeting on 12 March 2025 ([Minute 26](#) 2024-25 refers) at which the Terms of Reference for the Group and its cross-party membership had been agreed. The purpose of the Task and Finish Group had been to scrutinise the implementation of Reading's Active Travel strategy, a sub-strategy of the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 (the Local Transport Plan for the Borough), and to submit a report setting out its findings and recommendations back to the Committee.

The report explained that the scrutiny exercise had been conducted in line with the Council's scrutiny procedure rules. The Task and Finish Group had gathered evidence from Council officers, local community groups (including the Reading Cycle Campaign) and from other local authorities through various means of written correspondence, online and in-person meetings as well as other evidence gathering activities which were summarised in

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the report. The report stated that Council officers had provided a significant amount of information to the Task and Finish Group throughout the scrutiny process, that covered a wide range of areas that included central Government guidance and funding, the Council's statutory duties, roles and capacities of teams within the Council, previous decisions taken by Committees and detailed information regarding specific designs of active travel schemes. The report explained that there was an opportunity to implement recommendations from the Group through the refresh of the Council's adopted Local Cycling Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), which would be reviewed in the context of the challenging financial circumstances faced by the Council and the need to prioritise available resources, both financial and in terms of staffing, to the most effective way in order to meet the overall objectives set out in the Reading Transport Strategy 2040.

The Active Travel Task and Finish Group's findings and recommendations were set out in its Scrutiny Group Report, a copy of which was attached at Appendix 2. The Task and Finish Group had found that, whilst a strong commitment to active travel existed and that good progress in Reading towards modal shift had been made, the effective implementation of active travel schemes faced certain operational challenges and that there was an opportunity for local improvement to allow the Council to better meet its strategic goals. At the same time the report acknowledged the financial situation faced by the Council. It had therefore not made any recommendations for unfunded expenditure but instead looked at how processes could be improved and how existing funding could potentially be better utilised and prioritised. The report included 12 recommendations, categorised into three themes, set out under the following headings:

Scheme Design And Prioritisation

1. Avoidance of missing links;
2. Increased use of wands for better value versus effect ratio;
3. Considered use of shared spaces where appropriate;
4. Continuous footways and informal side-road zebra crossings;
5. Cyclist-level traffic lights;
6. Pavement parking and accessibility for disabled pedestrians;

Funding

7. Making best use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 (S106) Contributions;
8. Consideration of other sources of income, including demand management measures;

Implementation

9. Reprioritisation of the Waiting Restrictions Review Programme;
10. Setting out a clear pathway from scheme request to implementation;
11. Embedding active travel across the Council;
12. Senior leadership oversight and project management to ensure delivery at pace.

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At the meeting it was noted that, in addition to requiring consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport, the Terms of Reference should have also included reference to the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services also consulting with the Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets, when it came to deciding on the acceptance and/or priority given to the Task and Finish Group's recommendations. Consequently, the Committee agreed that the Terms of Reference be adjusted so that they included reference to the Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets being consulted by officers when they prepared their evaluation report in response to the Task and Finish Group's findings.

At the meeting the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport said that, to continue the positive cross-party work of the Task and Finish Group, he would be requesting that officers discussed the content and findings of their evaluation report with members of the Task and Finish Group prior to the evaluation report being considered by the Committee.

The Committee also agreed to include a specific reference to the ROWIP (Rights of Way Improvement Plan) within paragraph 4.6 of the Task and Finish Group's Scrutiny Group Report and for the report to be updated accordingly.

Resolved -

- (1) That the findings and recommendations of the Active Travel Task and Finish Scrutiny Group, as set out in Appendix 2, be noted;**
- (2) That appropriate officers review the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and provide an evaluation report to a future meeting of the Committee;**
- (3) That the Terms of Reference be adjusted to ensure that the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport and the Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets were both consulted when officers considered the acceptance/prioritisation given to the Task and Finish Group's recommendations;**
- (4) That paragraph 4.6 of the Task and Finish Group's Scrutiny Group Report (Appendix 2) be updated to insert: "*and ROWIP (Rights of Way Improvement Plan).*", at the end of the sentence that read: "*Currently, the various request lists and the CIL request lists include the Request for Traffic Management Measures, the Cycle Forum request list and the CIL request list, as well as the LCWIP.*"**

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm closed at 8.32 pm)