

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

3 AUGUST 2020

COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor White to ask the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport:

Giving pedestrians more priority

My Green Party colleagues and I were delighted that when the London Road pedestrian crossing over from Liverpool Road to Palmer Park was fixed it was also made far more responsive to pedestrians pressing the button. We had been asking for this for some time. It has now gone from being one of the slowest crossings in Reading to one of the quickest ones with an almost instant change of the lights. My understanding is that many crossings could be reprogrammed to give more priority to pedestrians fairly easily. What is the longest pedestrian wait time at the three slowest pedestrian crossings in Reading? As part of the council's response to Covid-19 and promoting walking, what other crossings have been made more responsive and what plans are there for future work on this?

REPLY by Councillor Page (Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport):

I thank Councillor White for his question.

The operation of pedestrian crossings by traffic signals will vary depending on the location. The wait time for a pedestrian or cyclist wishing to cross the road will in most cases be determined by a safety period to ensure a vehicle can stop in time when the traffic signals change.

The crossing on the A4 near Liverpool Road is linked to the corridor of traffic signals along London Road, which is why the pedestrian wait time will vary at certain times of the day. This occurs to ensure that any congestion and associated poor air quality along the whole corridor is minimised as much as possible.

As Councillor White mentions, the Council's Active Travel Programme is focussed on improving facilities for pedestrians and cyclists which aligns to supporting social distancing as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

The Department for Transport has allocated funding to local authorities to make substantial improvements to their networks to support walking and cycling and, as a part of that work in Reading, I will ask officers to review traffic signal pedestrian crossings to ensure wait times, where appropriate, are as low as possible.

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COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 2

Councillor White to ask the Lead Councillor for Education:

Preventing holiday hunger for schoolchildren

Green councillors backed the campaign for Free School Meals to continue over the summer. This scheme is vital to prevent holiday hunger for our schoolchildren. Please can the Lead Councillor update me on how this is working in Reading?

REPLY by Councillor Pearce (Lead Councillor for Education):

Thank you for your question Cllr White. We too backed the campaign for free school meals to continue over Summer which will help keep thousands of young people across Reading fed in the upcoming weeks. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank Marcus Rashford in public, for his work in pressurising the Government to take this issue seriously, if he ever gets bored of Old Trafford he'd always be welcome at the Madejski.

Before the summer break all headteachers were contacted and reminded of the importance of registering families on the Government national scheme run by the company Edenred. The Covid Summer Food Fund enables all children who are eligible for benefits related to free school meals to claim vouchers for the six-week holiday period.

We have confidence in our excellent school leaders in Reading that they will have done all they can to ensure no child goes hungry throughout the summer. I have already heard of the many letters sent, homes visited and chasing up of those eligible to sign up. Yet again we would like to publicly thank our head teachers and all school staff for the incredible work they have done over the last few weeks and months in helping our young people and families.