

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 1

Mr A Pegg to ask the Chair:

Proposed Trial full closure of the entrance into Eastern Avenue at junction with Wokingham Road

"I would like to ask the Committee whether they support the residents of Eastern Avenue who are calling for a trial full-closure of the entrance into Eastern Avenue at its junction with Wokingham Road.

To give this question a little context, I first wrote to Cllrs. Tony Page, David Absolom and Rob White on 4th December 2017, to voice residents' concerns about the high volume of rat-running vehicles entering Eastern Avenue from Wokingham Road. I expressed my concerns that any traffic reducing measures implemented in Crescent Road would, in all likelihood, significantly increase rat-running in Eastern Avenue unless measures were taken at the same time to mitigate this.

After learning of the Crescent Road School Street proposal in August of this year I wrote again to Cllrs. Page and Absolom. I was concerned that, whilst extremely laudable, the School Street proposal would displace traffic at peak-times, thus exacerbating the already existing problems of rat-running traffic in our road. To address this issue many of the residents have called upon our Councillors to support a trial closure of the entrance to Eastern Avenue from Wokingham Road (at present a one-way-plug) to coincide with the implementation of the 'School Street'. A recent survey carried out by our councillors Rob White and Josh Williams to assess residents' support for this trial had results that were overwhelmingly in favour of this proposal.

I request that this committee gives this proposal their full consideration."

REPLY by the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by Councillor Page, Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport:

I thank Mr Pegg for his question.

The Council currently has no proposals to introduce 'traffic-reducing measures' on Crescent Road.

The School Streets initiative is being explored by local schools and consideration will need to be given to any potential impact on surrounding streets.

It is important to note that the intention of the School Streets initiative is that any approved schemes would be managed by the school(s) and implemented for relatively short periods around school arrival and departure times only. Clearly, this would only take place when the schools are open, so would operate on a Monday to Friday basis and during term-time only.

The closure of any street needs to take into consideration the impact across the wider area and the possible displacement of traffic to other streets. Any full-time closure would obviously have a much greater and longer-lasting impact than any short-duration closure.

We have yet to hear from the schools, following their recent informal consultations, and whether or not they wish to proceed with a school streets application.

If there is a proposal from the schools it would be considered by this Sub-Committee and, if supported in principle, would then be subject to formal statutory consultations with the local community. Any objections would then be brought back to this Sub-Committee for consideration prior to a final decision being made.

ENDS

QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor Whitham to ask the Chair:

Cycle scheme underspend

Where there is an Active Travel Tranche 1 cycle scheme underspend on the money obtained from the government recently, what happens to this underspend. In Redlands Road for example the scheme was estimated to cost £30,000 but only a very limited scheme was put in costing £10,000. What is the total Tranche 1 underspend or overspend so far and what will happen to this money?

REPLY by the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by Councillor Page, Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport:

I thank Councillor Whitham for his question.

As I answered in reply to your question to Council on 20th October, the £30k for Redlands Road was reported in an update to TMSC in July along with figures for other proposed temporary schemes. This figure was an estimate based on the original bid to the DfT for 'Tranche 1' emergency funding to introduce schemes supporting active travel and social distancing as part of the COVID pandemic.

At this point we did not know if we would be successful with our bid and did not have a concept scheme design. Like many other Councils we did not receive the total funding allocation and officers have reassessed the original thinking, adjusting the proposals to fit the funding offered. Despite not receiving all of the funding, the Council was still committed to delivering, as best as possible, all of the proposals. Consequently, the reduced funding was easier to achieve on some schemes than others.

It is important to understand the context of these Active Travel schemes in that they are a response to COVID and intended to be temporary. The funding reflects that the situation will change and some of these temporary measures may be adjusted or removed as the impact of the pandemic evolves.

At this time, the delivery of the Tranche 1 schemes is incomplete, so we do not have the total scheme costs yet. Officers have also reconsidered some aspects of the Redlands scheme, for example, proposing to move from virtual cushions to physical measures. You will note that there is a report later in the agenda with these proposals.

The costs of any implemented scheme, including these Active Travel schemes, are the whole costs including design, procurement and delivery and not just the physical measures on street. The cost of these measures in Redlands Road to date will be nowhere near the original estimate, however the overall package of measures delivered across Reading is expected to be to the grant value that we received. ENDS

QUESTION NO. 2

Councillor Whitham to ask the Chair:

Electronic visitors' permits

Residents often complain about the inflexibility of the visitors' permit system. A while ago electronic visitors' permits were mentioned by the council as something that was being progressed. A resident would have an allocation of visitor hours per year and could spend it using an online system in small chunks rather than the case at the moment where sometimes a resident will use a whole permit for a short one hour visit. Can I get an update on progress towards implementing electronic visitors' permits?

REPLY by the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by Councillor Page, Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport:

I thank Councillor Whitham for his question.

As a member of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee you will be aware that there have been regular reviews of the residents' parking scheme, and discussions of ideas for potential improvements that officers have brought to us.

The Council is fully committed to delivering improvements to the Resident Permit Parking scheme. Officers are working through different options (including the example mentioned in your question) and how these can link with the Council's wider customer improvement strategies.

It is important at this time that we ensure that this work is developed in a holistic way as part of these corporate strategies and does not become a standalone initiative.

Reports will be brought to this Sub-Committee as the work progresses.

ENDS