

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
15 MARCH 2021

Present: Councillor Gittings (Chair);
Councillors Debs Absolom, Ayub, Challenger, Duveen, Eden, Emberson, Maskell, McGonigle, Page, Robinson, Stanford-Beale and R Williams.

Apologies: Councillor Carnell

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Eden declared a personal interest on Active Travel Programme and Schools Street Item (item 18) on the basis that she was Chair of West Reading Together (a resident-led community association) which had had some involvement with the School Streets project.

13. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 18 November 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

14. MINUTES OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meetings of Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 12 November 2020 and 14 January 2021 were received.

15. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- Joint Waste Disposal Board - 23 January 2021
- AWE Local Liaison Committee - 18 November 2020
- Reading Climate Change Partnership - 3 October 2020, 8 December 2020 and 9 February 2021.

16. QUESTIONS

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

Questioner	Subject
Johnathan Moore	Planting More Trees on Residential Streets

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

17. ANNUAL GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS REPORT 2019/20

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on progress made by the Council in reducing corporate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for the 2019/20 year against the baseline year 2008/09, the targets set out in the 2015-20 Carbon Plan and the previous financial year 2018/19. The report advised

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that in 2019/20 the Council's corporate carbon footprint was 63.5% lower than the baseline year of 2008/09, substantially exceeding its Carbon Plan target of a 50% cut by 2020. This had represented a reduction of 1% on the previous year 2018/19.

In addition, emissions arising from schools and 'managed services', which did not form part of the corporate carbon footprint calculation, also fell over the last year - by 9.4% and 13.7% respectively.

Appendix 1 to the report provided the full Reading Borough Council's Greenhouse Gas Protocol Report 2019-20 report.

The report stated that the estimated cumulative costs avoided by the Council from reduced energy consumption since 2008 was in the region of £13 million (excluding standing charges and other contract charges), compared to if no action had been taken. The report provided information regarding on-going and new initiatives which would be needed to deliver the more challenging targets set out in the new corporate Carbon Plan 2020-25 as the Council worked towards net zero carbon operations by 2030.

The report set out the accepted protocols used by the Council to measure greenhouse gas emissions, which were classified into three categories (scope 1, scope 2 and scope 3). The Council's headline corporate footprint measure was calculated by adding scope 1 and 2 plus an element of scope 3, which was considered 'corporate'. In addition, the Council measured its 'wider influence' carbon footprint, which was calculated by adding together everything in scopes 1, 2 and 3. This meant that it was possible to track both the change in emissions under the Council's direct control and the change in emissions under the wider influence of its activities.

The report provided an analysis of the Council's carbon footprint data for 2019/20 as set out in tables to illustrate the changes by percentage. It also summarised the key factors driving corporate carbon reduction.

In addition, the report identified some of the key considerations for the Council in the journey to becoming a net zero council by 2030.

Resolved -

- (1) That the continued reduction in 2019/20 of the Council's carbon footprint, which has fallen by 63.5% compared to the 2008/09 baseline figure, be noted;**
- (2) That the achievement of the target set in the Council's Carbon Plan 2015-20 of a 50% cut by 2020, which was exceeded by 13.5% be noted;**
- (3) The need for the Council to redouble its efforts to meet the more challenging targets set out in the new corporate Carbon Plan as it works towards becoming a net zero Council by 2030 be noted.**

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18. ACTIVE TRAVEL PROGRAMME AND SCHOOL STREETS UPDATE

Further to Minute 10 of the meeting held on 18 November 2020, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing an update on the delivery of the Council's Active Travel Programme. The report also provided an update on the Council's School Streets Initiative, including seeking authority to progress experimental School Street schemes for Wilson Primary School and Thameside Primary School.

The Council's Active Travel Programme

The report advised that the delivery of the Tranche 1 Schemes had been undertaken during spring/summer 2020 and a list of the schemes that had been delivered were set out in the report. It was noted that these schemes were temporary in nature in line with Department for Transport (DfT) guidance. A review of the temporary schemes would be undertaken after a final decision on which Tranche 2 scheme(s) would be taken forward for delivery had been made. Further updates on this review would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

In respect of Tranche 2, the Council's bid to the DfT had included a programme of high-quality cycle and pedestrian infrastructure proposals on some of Reading's most strategic routes. Due to the level of funding made available by the DfT at this stage, the top four schemes from the bid had been taken forward to the next stage of development work. These were as follows: -

- Southampton Street and Oracle Roundabout (Pell Street - Inner Distribution Road/Bridge Street) - creation of a segregated cycle lane along Southampton Street, with changes at the junctions at either end, linking with existing cycle infrastructure through the reallocation of road space from general traffic. An alternative option to create a shared cycle and bus lane - with cyclists catered for within a separate lane - was also being considered.
- Bath Road/Castle Hill (Southcote Lane - Inner Distribution Road/Castle Street) - creation of cycle facilities on this route to and from the town centre.
- Shinfield Road (Christchurch Green - Whitley Wood Road) - creation of segregated cycle facilities linking to the tranche 1 schemes on Redlands Road and Christchurch Road.
- London Road (Borough boundary to Crown Street) - re-allocation of road space from general traffic to create an inbound shared bus and cycle lane from the Borough boundary to Cemetery Junction. The scheme would continue between Cemetery Junction and Crown Street, offering a segregated cycle lane in both directions, by reallocating road space from general traffic.

Initial feasibility work on these four schemes had been undertaken in accordance with the DfT's guidance on the delivery of Tranche 2 schemes and an engagement exercise was launched on 24 February 2021. The report set out the indicative timeline for the delivery of the tranche 2 programme, including consultations taking place from 24 February to 23 April 2021 (phase 1) and Summer/Autumn 2021 (phase 2). It was anticipated that the scheme would be delivered from Winter 2021 onwards.

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Officers would continue to seek further funding opportunities from the DfT and other external sources so as to progress additional schemes set out within the Council's tranche 2 programme. The location of the Tranche 2 schemes, as well as those delivered in Tranche 1, were illustrated on a Map at Appendix A.

The Council's School Streets initiative

The report provided an update on the Council's School Streets initiative, which had been launched in Spring 2020. Park Lane Primary (Junior School) had been the first school to submit an application and the Committee had granted approval in November 2020 to implement an experimental School Street on Downing Road and Lambourne Close.

The report advised that further School Street applications had been received from three different schools - namely Wilson Primary School, Thameside Primary School and a joint application from Maiden Erlegh school in Reading, University Technical College (UTC) Reading and Alfred Sutton Primary School.

The following appendices were attached to the report:

Appendix B: Wilson Primary School - School Street Traffic Management Plan
Appendix C: Wilson Primary School - Summary of Consultation Responses
Appendix D: Thameside Primary School - School Street Traffic Management Plan
Appendix E: Thameside Primary School - Summary of Consultation Responses

Park Lane Primary (Junior School) School Street was due to commence on 18 January 2021, but because of school closures as a result of the latest Covid-19 lockdown, the introduction of the scheme had been delayed. Progress to date had included School Street marshals identified by the school undertaking specific training on road safety, conflict management and the general role and responsibilities involved. A further Stage 2 Road Safety Audit had also been completed.

Wilson Primary School had undertaken an informal consultation with affected properties and parents/carers on the proposal to implement an experimental School Street in Wilson Road, the details of which were shown on Appendix B and the consultation responses were at Appendix C. Officers had carried out parking and traffic surveys on the proposed School Street and neighbouring streets to determine the current baseline usage of the streets. A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit had been undertaken by an independent road safety auditor on the proposal and no safety concerns had been identified within the report. As a result of the assessment, and in agreement with the Wilson Primary School, Officers recommended that a School Street, covering a reduced area, be approved.

Thameside Primary School had undertaken an informal consultation with the affected properties and parents/carers on the proposal to implement an experimental School Street on Harley Road, details of which were shown on Appendix D and a summary of the consultation responses received were shown at Appendix E.

The report advised that Officers had carried out traffic surveys on the proposed School Street and neighbouring streets. A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit had been undertaken by an independent road safety auditor on the proposed School Street, and

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no safety concerns had been identified. In view of this assessment, Officers recommended that a School Street on Harley Road be approved.

Subject to approval of these two School Street proposals, a Stage 2 Road Safety Audit would be carried out on each of them prior to implementation. This would include monitoring the impact of the School Streets on neighbouring roads during the initial trial period in response to concerns raised by some residents during the consultations.

The report sought agreement for the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to be granted delegated authority to make the appropriate traffic regulation orders, covering the experimental order for a period of 6 months and subject to no objections being received during that time, to make the traffic regulation order permanent. Any objections received during the experimental trial period of School Streets operation would be reported back to Committee at the appropriate time.

In respect of the joint application from Maiden Erlegh school in Reading, UTC Reading and Alfred Sutton Primary School, the schools had undertaken an informal consultation on the proposal with affected properties and parents/carers. The consultation had resulted in a significant number of responses. Officers were currently undertaking a full review of this application and the supporting information provided by the schools, prior to bringing a recommendation regarding the proposal to a future meeting of the Committee.

Resolved -

- (1) That the progress with development of the Active Travel and School Streets Scheme be noted;**
- (2) That the indicative programme for delivery of the Active Travel Tranche 2 programme be approved and notes that the initial consultation results will be reported to the Committee at its next meeting;**
- (3) That experimental School Street schemes for Wilson Primary School on Wilson Road and Thameside Primary School on Harley Road be approved;**
- (4) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, Ward Councillors, be authorised to make the appropriate (experimental) Traffic Regulation Orders for the proposed School Streets on Wilson Road and Harley Road in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996;**
- (5) That subject to no objections being received during the experimental trial period of School Streets operation, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the experimental order permanent;**

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- (6) That if objections are received, they be report back to the Committee at the appropriate time;
- (7) That the recommendation regarding the proposed School Street on Crescent Road be brought forward to a future meeting of the Committee.

(Councillor Eden declared a personal interest on this item on the basis that she was Chair of West Reading Together, a resident-led community association, which had had some involvement with the School Streets project)

19. HIGHWAY POLICY: ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING ON PUBLIC HIGHWAY LICENCE - PROPOSED ONE YEAR TRIAL

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the proposed one-year trial to allow residents to enter into a licence agreement with the Council to privately charge their Electric Vehicle (EV) parked on the public highway.

The report explained that encouraging private vehicle owners to move from higher polluting petrol and diesel vehicles to electric would contribute to the ambitions set out in the Council's Climate Change Strategy. Given that the move to EVs would result in the need to charge electric and hybrid vehicles on the public highway, the Council had already installed 15 lamp column and six other public 22KW EV charge points Boroughwide, with additional sites to be installed as funding opportunities materialized.

The purpose of the one-year trial was to look at a range of options to safely charge electric vehicles from private properties to the electric vehicle parked on the public highway. The Council had already been approached by 23 residents requesting EV charging on or across the highway and the intention was to approach these residents to be included in the EV charging trial.

The property owner/occupiers would enter an 'Electric Vehicle Charging Licence' as part of the proposed one-year EV Charing trial. The Licence would include a range of criteria and conditions to reduce the risk to the public and the applicant.

The trial would be promoted via a press release, using the Council's webpage and its social media platform.

Resolved -

- (1) That the one-year trial of the Electric Vehicle Charging on or across the public highway be approved;
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Environmental and Commercial Services in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment Planning and Transport, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services and the Assistant Director of Finance be given delegated authority to enter into the 'Electric Vehicle Charging Licence', as described in this report.

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20. ADOPTION OF THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the proposed adoption of the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), for use in determining planning applications for new developments in Reading. The SPD provided further details to supplement the affordable housing policies (policies H3 and H4) in the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted November 2019) to ensure that developments contributed towards meeting affordable housing needs.

The report advised that although there was some level of detail regarding affordable housing within policies H3 and H4, there was a need for an Affordable Housing SPD to provide further details, particularly on matters such as the specific tenure sought and on implementation details.

The report explained that a draft Affordable Housing SPD had been approved for consultation by Policy Committee on 28 September 2020 (minute 49 refers). Consultation took place from 2 October 2020 to 13 November 2020 and involved contacting all those on the Council's policy consultation list, around 1,200 contacts in total. A total of 13 responses had been received.

A Statement of Consultation, summarising the process and the responses received, had been included in Appendix 1. In light of those responses, a revised version of the SPD had been prepared, as set out in Appendix 2.

The report set out the other options considered. These were, firstly, not to proceed with the SPD at the current time or secondly, to base the SPD around different tenure expectations for on-site affordable housing

The report recommended the adoption of the revised version of the Affordable Housing SPD as set out in Appendix 2. Once adopted, the SPD would be used to supplement the Local Plan in determining planning applications.

Resolved -

- (1) That the results of the consultation on the Draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document, undertaken during October and November 2020, as set out in the Consultation Statement at Appendix 1, be noted;**
- (2) That the Affordable Housing SPD (Appendix 2) be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.**

(In accordance with Standing Order 38, Councillor Duveen requested that his vote against resolution (2) be recorded)

21. ADOPTION OF THE DESIGN GUIDE TO HOUSE EXTENSIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the proposed adoption of Design Guide to House SPD for use in determining planning

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applications for new developments in Reading. The SPD provided user-friendly guidance on how planning applications for house extensions would be decided in line with the Council's Local Plan, which had been adopted in November 2019.

The report explained that a draft design guide to House Extensions SPD had been approved for consultation by Policy Committee on 20 July 2020 (Minute 22 refers). Consultation took place from 31 July to 25 September 2020. A total of 10 responses had been received and a summary of the main points raised was set out in the report. A full Statement of Consultation, detailing the consultation measures and the responses received, was set out in Appendix 1.

The report set out the main changes that had been made to the SPD compared to the version that had been consulted upon. It also set out the implications if the Committee decided not to adopt the SPD and instead continue with the existing Design Guide dating from 2003. The report explained that many of the policies contained within the existing guidance were now out of date, which would affect the weight it could be given in decision-making.

The report recommended the adoption of the revised version of the Design Guide to House Extensions which was set out at Appendix 2. Once adopted, the SPD would be used to supplement the Local Plan in determining planning applications.

Resolved -

- (1) **That the results of the consultation on the Draft Design Guide to House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document, undertaken between July and September 2020, as set out in the Consultation Statement at Appendix 1, be noted;**
- (2) **That the Design Guide to House Extensions SPD (Appendix 2) be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.**

22. MAJOR TRANSPORT SCHEMES & FUNDING BIDS UPDATE

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing an update on progress with delivery of the current programme of major transport projects in Reading which were as follows:

- Reading Station Interchanges
- South Reading Mass Rapid Transit
- Thames Valley Park, Park and Ride
- Reading Green Park Station
- Reading West Station Upgrade
- National Cycle Network Route 422

The report also gave an update on the development of future schemes and associated funding opportunities which were as follows:

- Third Thames Crossing East of Reading
- Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

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Resolved -

- (1) That the progress with delivery of the current programme of major transport schemes be noted;
- (2) That the progress with developing future schemes, including the submission of funding bids, be noted.

23. VEHICLE CROSSINGS - SHORT FRONTAGE LICENCE TRIAL OUTCOME AND POLICY

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing the outcome of the 'Short Frontage Agreement' trial for vehicle crossings where the minimum 4.8 metres depth requirement could not be met. The minimum property frontage depth was reduced to 4.3 metres with a requirement that the applicant prove that they could safely park a vehicle wholly within their property and not overhang the public highway causing an obstruction. Failure to comply would result in the vehicle crossing being removed and all costs recovered from the property owner.

There had been two applications for 'Short Frontage' licences agreed with the Council, both of which had been installed during the trial period and had been proving to be managed by the residents in a successful manner.

The Committee was asked to approve the adoption of the updated 'Short Frontage Agreement' Policy, as set out in paragraph 5 of the report and Appendix 1. This was as follows:

- Retain the standard vehicle crossing minimum depth of 4.8 metres, as per the current Vehicle Crossing Policy.
- To enter into a 'Short Frontage' Agreement where applications could only achieve a minimum depth of 4.3 metres minimum depth, as per the completed 'Short Frontage' trial.
- To include additional criteria for those applications that could only achieve a minimum depth of 4.1 metres as an absolute minimum, but subject to the following additional conditions:
 - There was a minimum 1.8m footway width adjacent the proposed vehicle crossing is available.
 - The proposed vehicle crossing was on an unclassified residential road, (not on a high traffic volume main 'classified' road e.g. A4 Bath Road).
 - That the pedestrian footfall passing the proposed vehicle crossing was at an acceptably low level.
 - That there was sufficient visibility on exiting the property.

The cost of the licence would be borne by the applicant with current fees for Legal Services to produce the licence being up to a maximum of £500, with the Highway fees for the application being set to match the vehicle crossing application fee, which was currently £75.

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Resolved -

- (1) That the outcome of the ‘Short Frontage Agreement’ trial be noted;
- (2) That the updated ‘Short Frontage Agreement’ Policy, as set out in paragraph 5 of the report and Appendix 1, be approved;
- (3) That the Assistant Director of Environmental & Commercial Services in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment Planning and Transport, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Assistant Director of Finance, be granted delegated authority to enter into the ‘Short Frontage Agreement’ licences, as described in the report.

24. HIGHWAY ASSET MANAGEMENT - INTERVENTION CRITERIA AND REPAIR FREQUENCY REGIME

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report, seeking the Committee’s approval to amend the intervention level criteria regarding highway defects for a trial six-month period as well as seeking a change to highway safety defect repair times.

The report set out the current position in relation to an actionable carriageway defect, which was classed as having a minimum of 50mm depth over an approximate area of 300mm x 300mm. It also set out the five options to consider in relation to the intervention criteria, with Officers’ comments on each of them.

The report recommended option 2 - the introduction of a 6-month trial to amend intervention level to over 40mm depth over an approximate area of 300mm x 300mm, which would address defects earlier on, thereby improving customer satisfaction and reducing risk. A six-month trial period would allow the full impact of the policy change to be considered, including resource and financial implications.

The report also recommended an amendment to Category R1 of the Council’s current highway safety defect repair frequency regime so as to provide some practical tolerance to the R1 response time. Analysis of the data for repairs for Category R1 had shown that the repairs had been completed the next day but not within 24 hours of the defect having been identified for repair. In the majority of cases, these defects had been repaired between a few minutes to an hour after the 24 hours had passed. Whilst this meant that technically, the Council had not complied with its stated policy for repair of an R1 defect, the fact that the matter had been dealt with and made safe the next working day was not unreasonable. Officers recommended that from April 2021 Category R1 repairs be amended to:

“Category R1 - Correct/repair or make safe by the close of the next working day. If it is not possible to correct/repair by the close of the next working day, (i.e. the defect has only been made safe), a permanent repair should be carried out within 28 calendar days. The exception to this was where more substantial maintenance/improvement works were planned within a medium timescale. This timescale should be appropriate to the defect type, location, road/footway classification and usage.”

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Resolved -

- (1) That the 6-month trial to reduce the carriageway safety defect intervention level criteria be approved;
- (2) That the change to the highway safety defect repair times in respect of Category R1 with effect from April 2021 be approved.

25. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2020/2021 & 2020/2021 HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE UPDATE

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing an update on the progress of year-1 of the three-year £9 million Highway Capital Investment Programme 2020-2023. The report also informed the Committee of year 2 (2021/22) and year 3 (2022/23) of the 3-year £9 million Highway Capital Investment Programme 2020-2023.

In addition, the report informed the Committee of the Town Centre £450k Capital Investment programme and the £847k Capital LED Streetlighting Investment programme and sought spend approval for each programme.

Further, the report informed the Committee of the one-year Highway Maintenance Award of £1.838m, as well as the £1.592m Transport Award for 2021/2022, as announced by the DfT Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement. Spend approval for the proposed 1-year programme was sought.

Finally, the report provided an update on the completed Highway Maintenance 2020/2021 DfT Local Transport Block Funding Capital Works Programme.

The report contained the following appendices:

Appendix 1	3-year £9 million Highway Capital Investment Programme 2020-2023 - Year 1 Programme update 2020-21
Appendix 2	Public Information leaflet - "Road Improvements in Your Local Area"
Appendix 3	Highway Maintenance 2021/2022 DfT Local Transport Block Funding Capital Works Programme 2021-2022 - covering major road surfacing programme and bridge maintenance programme
Appendix 4	Highway Maintenance 2020/2021 DfT Local Transport Block Funding Capital Works - Programme Update 2020-21

The report included the following topics:

- The background to the £9M Council Funded Highway Investment
- Highway Maintenance Spend Proposal for 2021/2022

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- Pavement Resurfacing (£625,000) - financed by the £3.75 million Year 2 Council Investment (Year 2 of the £9 million over 3 years)
- Other carriageway maintenance works - to be financed by the remaining £7.5 million Council Investment in years 2 and 3 of the £9 million 3-year investment
- Town Centre Capital Investment - a range of works had been identified as requiring attention to rejuvenate the Town Centre pedestrianised areas
- Streetlighting Capital Led Investment Programme
- Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport and Highway Maintenance) settlement for 2021/22
- The Council's award for 2021/2022 - including the proposed work allocation based on the DfT settlement for Carriageways & Bridges, the Lead Local Flood Authority Flood Alleviation award & the remaining LED Streetlighting Dft Award
- Highway Maintenance Delivery Update 2020/2021

Resolved -

- (1) That spend approval for the proposed Road & Pavement Maintenance Year-2 Programme 2021/2022 be granted;**
- (2) That spend approval for the proposed Town Centre Capital Investment Programme be granted;**
- (3) That spend approval for the proposed Streetlighting LED Capital Investment Programme be granted;**
- (4) That spend approval for the DfT Local Transport Block Funding Highway Maintenance Grant and proposed Programme 2021/2022 be granted;**
- (5) That the Assistant Director of Environmental & Commercial Services in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment Planning and Transport, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Assistant Director of Finance be granted delegated authority to enter into relevant contracts required to undertake the proposed 2021/22 Capital Highway Maintenance Programme, as per paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 of the report.**

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 8.11 pm)