

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE - 30 June 2021

COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 1 in accordance with Standing Order No.36

Councillor McElroy to ask the Chair of Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee:

Local Authority Enforcement of Moving Traffic Offences

From December, local authorities will be able to enforce moving traffic offences, such as banned turns, box junctions and driving in formal cycle lanes. We will be expected to use these powers to improve connectivity, boost active travel, and increase air quality by reducing congestion. How does the Council intend to use these new powers?

REPLY by the Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee:

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

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

I thank Cllr McElroy for his question.

We have been enforcing moving traffic offences (in Bus Lanes) in Reading since 2006. The latest announcement from Government to extend these powers to other contraventions is welcome and long overdue.

Ever since the Traffic Management Act 2004 became law I have been involved in lobbying successive Governments to permit these powers to be made available to highway authorities outside of London, such as Reading. Following increased representations from the Local Government Association, as well as many individual authorities including Reading, I am grateful that Grant Shapps, the Secretary of State for Transport, has finally agreed that these important enforcement powers should be made available to English local highway authorities.

However, the latest announcement by Government is still quite vague. I would caution that, whilst there has been a general statement from a junior Transport Minister (Baroness Vere) about starting these powers in December, considerable preparatory work still needs to be completed by the Department.

Based on the Government's record of promising these additional enforcement powers it could be well into the middle of next year before we actually have all the necessary legal approvals, including confirmation of the relevant Statutory Instruments.

The aim of enforcing against moving traffic offences is to stop dangerous manoeuvres, improve road safety and reduce traffic congestion. We are already using our 15 years of

experience to identify the worst problems that annoy and frustrate our law-abiding residents, bus passengers, cyclists and pedestrians alike.

There are a number of junctions on the main routes in and around the Borough that get blocked by selfish drivers undertaking illegal turns or other actions that cause avoidable delays. In addition, officers are assessing all of the current yellow box junctions, and will be bringing a report to Traffic Management Sub-committee in September. Officers will also be looking at accident data, the most complained about abuses of No Entry, one-way street and banned turns so as to develop priorities for other locations for enforcement action.

Many of these restrictions exist to create safer streets which, in turn, should encourage people to make healthier and more sustainable travel choices by walking and cycling more.

Officers are also looking at how these new powers will support our School Streets trials. School Streets currently require a physical closure which is staffed by local volunteers to allow legitimate access. We need to be sure that any School Street is a permanent feature, rather than an experiment, before we commit to the considerable expense of CCTV enforcement. As part of the process of evaluating School Streets, and the longer term signing requirements, officers will look to use the CCTV vehicle for some monitoring as part of the experimental Traffic Regulation Order period. This will also form part of the review into the new powers.

These enforcement powers are long overdue and are essential to improve road safety and the greater use of walking, cycling and public transport. I look forward to the further work of officers and to considering their recommendations.