

QUESTION NO. 1

George Mathew to ask the Chair:

Kendrick Road

Talking to residents in Kendrick Road recently, they have raised concerns and are worried about the traffic calming measures that have recently been put in place; especially that it has increased travel time and reduced safety.

Would you be able to give an update on the scheme and if it's had an adverse impact on travel, time and safety ?

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 Mathew for his question.

Road safety is measured by reviewing Police-supplied casualty information, so that any patterns in the locations and causes can be considered. Kendrick Road has a good safety record.

The recent features introduced on Kendrick Road were part of a wider package of enhancements in the Redlands Ward area that were, and are, intended to improve compliance with the 20mph zone restriction.

Being a residential street, expediting journey times along the length of Kendrick Road was not a focus of the scheme. The build-out elements were implemented within existing parking bays, and the speed cushions are intended to deter speeding, so the measures are not likely to have impacted on journey times compared to previous compliance with the legal speed limit and navigation around on-street parking.

There are no indications that the scheme has reduced safety as has been suggested. Officers communicate closely with Thames Valley Police, who were also statutory consultees on the scheme. The scheme designs were independently road safety audited ahead of implementation, as has been reported previously to this Sub-Committee.

As was stated at the time of scheme approval a post-implementation audit will be commissioned, and Officers will review any items arising from this process. A report will then be brought back to this Sub-Committee later next year.

ENDS

QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor Whitham to ask the Chair:

Church Road Pedestrian Crossing

Church Road is in need of a pedestrian crossing over from Parkers estate agent to the Co-op. Many children cross Church Road here and this would improve road safety. Green councillors have been encouraging Wokingham Council to keep moving on this initiative. I understand that Wokingham Council transport planners have been talking to Reading Council transport planners about plans for a crossing here. Please can I get an update on progress.

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.

Earlier this year Transport officers were asked for feedback on a concept idea from Wokingham Borough Council that involved banning certain vehicle movements at this junction. The concept was proposed to enable adjustments to the traffic signal timings that were intended to improve the crossing of Church Road and peak-time traffic flow.

However, the concept would have required certain traffic movements being diverted along nearby residential roads within Reading Borough, and Transport officers understandably raised their concerns about this. Officers also asked their Wokingham BC colleagues whether consideration had been given to implementing a pedestrian crossing phase.

At present our Transport officers have not heard about any further proposed alterations at this junction which, I would emphasise, is the responsibility of Wokingham Borough Council.

ENDS

QUESTION NO. 2

Councillor Whitham to ask the Chair:

Electric Car Charging

Electric cars charged using green electricity can help cut pollution. Please can I get an update on the council's trial of licensing residents to charge cars with a cable over the pavement and a device to stop people from tripping over the cable.

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 colleagues will be aware the COP26 Conference in Glasgow is rightly highlighting the urgent need to reduce our carbon footprint, as the Council moves towards a net zero-carbon based position.

As Cllr Whitham is fully aware the Council adopted the Reading Climate Change Strategy 2020-2025 in November 2020. This focuses on reducing Reading's carbon footprint by, among other activities, reducing transport emissions by encouraging walking, cycling, public transport and a switch to electric vehicles. Reading has also declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) based on the exceedance of the air quality objective for NO₂.

As part of these measures the Council approved a one-year trial for Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging on the public highway at Strategic Environment Planning & Transport Committee on 15th March 2021 to encourage private vehicle owners to move from higher polluting petrol and diesel vehicles to electric, which will contribute towards the ambitions set out within the Reading Climate Change Strategy. The trial would provide a cost-free licence agreement to electric vehicle owners to legally and safely charge their vehicles over the public highway and the outcome will ultimately inform the Council's policy going forward.

The Council recognises that the move to electric vehicles will result in the need to charge electric and hybrid vehicles on the public highway and has already installed 15 lamp column and 6 other public 22kW EV charge points Boroughwide with additional sites to be installed as funding opportunities materialise.

The Council also recognises that suitable on-street EV charging points are not always available due to the nature of Reading's urban environment and the large number of narrow terraced streets/roads within the road network, where no off-street parking is possible. This clearly presents a challenge in relation to charging infrastructure and is not unique to Reading, although we have a much higher proportion of residents living on terraced streets.

Residents in these streets/roads usually have no alternative but to charge their electric vehicles from their property while parked on the public highway. The trial proposes two options, either a slot type drain excavated into the pavement or a covering mat that allows all users of the public highway safe passage without creating an obstruction or a trip hazard.

I can confirm that 67 expressions of interest have been received by the Council so far. Those residents who provided an email address have been invited to participate in the trial and the letters to the remaining residents are in the process of being posted. There was a delay in inviting our residents while the Highways Team prioritised the extensive Council funded £9M 3-Year Residential Roads and Pavements Investment programme. Highways have assured me that the EV charging trial is now prioritised and underway and a full year will be given to residents to ensure as many as possible can engage with this important trial.

Initial feedback comments on the trial have flagged up concerns from residents in roads where there are heavily subscribed residents parking schemes, about how they can secure a parking space directly outside of their own property to charge their vehicle. Currently the trial is looking at safe options to charge a private vehicle over the highway and the Highway Authority is not currently in a position to designate what would be effectively private parking spaces on the public highway within residents parking schemes.

The Council recognises that this issue needs to be further explored especially with the growing demand for electric vehicles. Although currently not an ideal situation, at least residents will be able to safely charge their vehicles when they are able to park outside their property, in advance of any possible parking/EV charging bay solution. This is, of course, a problem that exists across the country in urban terraced areas and we will be looking to draw on the experience of other authorities as well as the LGA and professional organisations.

A report will be brought back to SEPT Committee next year with the outcome of the trial and advice gained from other authorities, and the findings will inform our future policy on charging electric vehicles on the public highway.