

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	15 JUNE 2022	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	ACTIVE TRAVEL FUND TRANCHE 1 - RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEMPORARY SCHEMES		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides recommendations for the temporary active travel schemes that were implemented using the governments emergency 'Tranche 1' funding that was awarded during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.
- 1.2 The report recommends Sub-Committee agreement to the majority of these schemes being considered as permanent measures, supporting cycling within the borough. However, it recommends that the temporary scheme on Sidmouth Street, which requires a Traffic Regulation Order, proceed to statutory consultation to openly seek public feedback on whether it should become permanent. This is in the context of future potential to increase linking to the wider surrounding cycle network.
- 1.3 Appendix 1 - Scheme details, plans and recommendations.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- 2.1 That the Sub-Committee notes the content of this report.
- 2.2 That the Tranche 1 Active Travel Schemes in the following locations be considered as permanent measures:

**George Street (Reading Bridge);
Southampton Street, Silver Street, Mount Pleasant and Whitley Street;
Oxford Road;
Christchurch Road; and
Redlands Road**

2.3 For the Tranche 1 Active Travel Scheme on Sidmouth Street:

2.31 That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake statutory consultation processes for the proposed (permanent) implementation of the scheme in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

2.32 That the Highways & Traffic Services Manager, in agreement with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport, be able to make minor alterations to the agreed proposals.

2.33 That subject to no objections being received, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the Traffic Regulation Order.

2.34 That should any objection(s) be received during the statutory consultation period, that these be reported to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee for consideration and decision regarding scheme delivery.

2.4 In relation to the petition received for the removal of the Sidmouth Street scheme (referred in Appendix 1 and Item 11.1) that the lead petitioner be informed of the decision of the Sub-Committee.

2.5 That subject to the Sub-Committee decisions regarding each scheme, Officers are authorised to undertake investigations for the additional enhancements referenced in Appendix 1, subject to funding, and reporting to appropriate Committees as may be necessary to obtain scheme and spend approval.

2.6 That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The proposals compliment - and are complemented by - the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP), Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The proposals will complement the Council's Climate Emergency Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy by removing barriers to the greater use of sustainable, healthy transport options.

4. THE PROPOSAL

Current Position

4.1 In 2020, the Government launched a £2billion package to create a new era for cycling and walking in the UK. As part of this, a new Active Travel Fund was released, consisting of a number of 'Tranches'.

In May 2020 an urgent report to the Council's Policy Committee set out high-level proposals for short, medium and long-term initiatives to encourage greater use of active and public transport options. The short-term proposals were

specifically addressing the immediate need to promote active travel options and facilitate social distancing based on the government advice at the time, with scheme and spend approval being sought, subject to the forthcoming ‘Tranche 1’ government funding allocation.

- 4.2 Reading Borough Council was successful in receiving an initial Tranche 1 funding allocation in May 2020 so that it could develop and implement these proposals with a necessarily short development period. The below table summarises the schemes that have been delivered:

Table 1: Tranche 1 schemes

	Location	Summary
1	George Street (Reading Bridge)	Removal of general traffic lane to create new advisory cycle lanes
2	Southampton Street, Silver Street, Mount Pleasant and Whitley Street	Reallocation road space and removal of a general traffic lane on Whitley Street to create new cycle facilities, which are predominantly mandatory cycle lanes
3	Oxford Road	Reallocation of road space to create new advisory cycle lanes (predominantly in Tilehurst) and the addition of cycle symbols (lining) along this route.
4	Christchurch Road	Reallocation of road space to create new advisory cycle lanes
5	Redlands Road	Introducing cycle logos alongside a separate major scheme that introduced enhancements to the area 20mph scheme to improve motorist compliance with the speed limit.
6	Sidmouth Street	Temporary Traffic Regulation Order to create a one-way restriction and removal of one general traffic lane to provide a segregated two-way cycle lane.
7	Gosbrook Road and Westfield Road	This scheme initially sought to reallocate road space to create a segregated, shared-use footway/cycleway and one-way restrictions, but the Council, however it was decided to remove the scheme following a short initial trial period.

These schemes were implemented as temporary schemes and the Sub-Committee is now asked to consider the future for these facilities, based on officer recommendations.

Options Proposed

- 4.3 Appendix 1 provides detail about each scheme and the officer recommendations.

In summary, schemes 1 - 5 (as per Table 1) have been implemented in a way that means that they could be retained as permanent schemes by agreement of the Sub-Committee with little additional work being required.

Scheme 6 (Sidmouth Street) would require a Traffic Regulation Order to be introduced in order for it to be retained as a permanent scheme. It will also require some civils works to replace elements temporary traffic management and improve certain elements.

- 4.4 It is acknowledged that these schemes may not be the optimum solution and separate reporting in relation to the Tranche 2 and 3 schemes demonstrates the level of funding that is required for such substantial alterations to the Highway. However, they do provide a level of facility that did not previously exist, send a clear message that the carriageway is not just for motor-vehicle use and aim

to increase cyclist confidence in using the road, thus encouraging greater uptake. They create a good foundation on which to build.

Scheme 6 (Sidmouth Street) has received criticism, which is explained in Appendix 1. However, the Council doesn't necessarily receive positive feedback from those persons who are using, or who would use the facility. A statutory consultation could help to provide that opportunity so that all feedback can be considered. It should also be noted that since the original delivery of the scheme, it has the increasing potential to be a key link to the existing and future cycle network expansion set out in the LCWIP and BSIP.

Although these schemes have been temporary schemes, an independent road safety auditor was commissioned to review the schemes alongside officers and the outcomes of these audits has contributed to the scheme-specific alterations noted in Appendix 1.

- 4.5 It is recommended that schemes 1 - 5 are retained and considered as permanent schemes.

It is recommended that scheme 6 (Sidmouth Street) progresses to statutory consultation and that the feedback is reported back to the Sub-Committee in September 2022. Should no feedback be received during this consultation, it is recommended that the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the Traffic Regulation Order.

The Temporary Traffic Regulation Order that is currently enabling this scheme - and has already been extended - will expire in October 2022. Unless a decision is made to retain the facility no later than the September meeting, the scheme will be removed.

- 4.6 Should the Sub-Committee agree that schemes 1 - 5 are to be considered as permanent schemes, a separate report to an appropriate committee may be required for scheme and spend approval (depending on the funding source) to address the relatively minor additional works that would be required in the short-term and which are indicated in Appendix 1.

Should the Sub-Committee agree to undertake the statutory consultation for scheme 6 (Sidmouth Street) and agree to its permanent implementation thereafter, officers will undertake investigations into options that will facilitate greater linking to the surrounding cycle network and aim to enhance the use of this facility. These works will be costed, designed and funding sources investigated. A report to an appropriate committee for scheme and spend approval will follow.

Other Options Considered

- 4.7 Any of these schemes could be removed. However, this would result in removing facilities that are being used currently and would not send a positive message in the context of the Council's policies and strategies, as indicated in Item 3.1. Many of these schemes already provide important links to other sections of the growing cycle network. Additionally, there will be cost implications to the removal of schemes. While this will vary scheme-by-scheme, lining removal is likely to be the most significant cost.

Officers are not recommending further options at this time.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 This proposal contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan themes as set out below:

- **Healthy environment**

The implementation of cycle facilities can remove barriers to cycling and lead to an increase in uptake of this active and healthy transport mode. This can lead to a reduction in motor-vehicle journeys, particularly short local journeys, which can be some of the most polluting, improving air quality by reducing emissions.

- **Thriving Communities**

Cycling is a lower-cost transport mode that also provides exercise. Providing cycle-prioritisation facilities and, therefore, removing some barriers that may exist toward cycling offers an appealing and beneficial transport option for our communities.

- **Inclusive economy**

The schemes referenced in this report provide useful links between destinations and other parts of the cycle network across the borough. With the addition of future schemes, such as Shinfield Road, they make Reading an increasingly attractive place in which to cycle and visit sites of cultural significance, retail and entertainment venues and enjoy its geographical benefits (e.g. the River Thames and River Kennet).

5.2 Full details of the Council's [Corporate Plan](#) are available on the website and include information on the projects which will deliver these priorities.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

6.2 A Climate Impact Assessment has been conducted, which considers a net 'Low-negative' impact as a result of the Sub-Committee agreeing to the recommendations of this report.

The recommendations will result in an impact for the production of the on-street notices that are required for the statutory consultation on the Sidmouth Street scheme and potential transport modes to erect notices on street. However, this impact is expected to be near-negligible for the scale of the works.

Should the Sub-Committee decide to remove schemes, this will have a negative impact. In addition to the loss of benefits that the scheme provides in encouraging active travel modes, contractors will be required to remove associated lining, signing and other infrastructure from the Highway.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 Advertising of Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders has been conducted in accordance with appropriate legislation, with notices having been advertised on-street and in the local printed newspaper.
- 7.2 A dedicated 'Active Travel' page has been maintained on the Reading Borough Council website that has provided information about the schemes in each funding 'Tranche'.
- 7.3 Press releases were issued to provide public information about the schemes being introduced.
- 7.4 The Council has been receiving and responding to correspondence and feedback regarding these schemes.
- 7.5 Statutory consultation required for the Sidmouth Street scheme (if agreed) will be conducted in accordance with appropriate legislation. Notices of intention will be advertised in the local printed newspaper and on-street within the affected area. The Police and other statutory consultees will be directly notified. The consultation will be hosted on the Council's website (the 'Consultation Hub'), where details and plans will be available. Feedback received during the consultation will be considered as part of the scheme implementation decision process at a future meeting of the Sub-Committee.
- 7.6 Policy Committee and Traffic Management Sub-Committee are public meetings. The agendas, reports, meeting minutes and recordings of the meetings are available to view from the Council's website.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8.2 It is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant as the proposals are not deemed to be discriminatory to persons with protected characteristics, nor do they significantly vary existing operations. Statutory consultation processes will be conducted, where applicable, providing an opportunity for objections/support/concerns to be considered prior to a decision being made on whether to implement the proposals. The Council has also been monitoring feedback during the period that these schemes has been temporarily implemented.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 New, or changes to existing, Traffic Regulation Orders require advertisement and consultation, under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. The resultant Traffic Regulation Order will be sealed in accordance with the same regulations.
- 9.2 This report seeks agreement for the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to undertake these processes for the scheme on Sidmouth Street.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The only immediate financial implications resulting from the recommendations of this report will be for the advertising costs in conducting the statutory consultation for the Sidmouth Street scheme. These costs will be relatively low and are estimated in the table below.

Following the consultation, there will be additional costs to make/seal the resultant Traffic Regulation Order, should this be agreed by the Sub-Committee.

- 10.2 Should the Sub-Committee not agree to the recommendations of this report, the removal of schemes will have a significant financial implication. The works will be costed and funding will need to be identified, with spend approvals being sought if necessary, as per Item 10.3.
- 10.3 Following the decisions of this Sub-Committee, officers will consider the next steps and obtain costings to undertake these. Should scheme and spend (or other) Committee approvals be required, this will be reported to the appropriate Committee.

Capital Implications

	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure: Local Traffic Management and Road Safety Schemes	1	0	0
Funded by Grant (Integrated Transport Block)	1 0	0 0	0 0
Total Funding	1	0	0

Value for Money (VFM)

It is considered that the recommendations of the report provide value for money.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Petition Receipt: Petition Against the Cycle Lane in Sidmouth Street, Reading (Traffic Management Sub-Committee - 4th March 2021)
- 11.2 Re-Allocation of Road Space - Reading's Active Travel Proposals (Traffic Management Sub-Committee - 16th September 2020)
- 11.3 Active Travel Programme and School Streets Update (Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee - from July 2020 onwards)
- 11.3 Active Travel Programme Report (Policy Committee - 18th May 2020)