

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
14 MARCH 2022

Present: Councillor Gittings (Chair); Ayub, Carnell, Challenger, Khan, McElroy, McEwan, McGonigle, Mitchell, Page and Stanford-Beale.

Apologies: Councillors Duveen, Eden and R Williams.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Stanford-Beale declared a prejudicial interest in Item 32, on the basis that she was a Council-appointed Non-Executive Director of Reading Transport Limited.

24. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 16 November 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25. MINUTES OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meetings of Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 11 November 2021 and 13 January 2022 were received.

26. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- AWE Local Liaison Committee - 30 November 2021
- Joint Waste Disposal Board - 7 September 2021
- Reading Climate Change Partnership - 30 November 2021.

27. QUESTIONS

Questions on the following matters were asked in accordance with Standing Order 36.

| Questioner | Subject |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Councillor Challenger | Consolidated Figures |
| Councillor Ayub | CityFibre/Instalcom |
| Councillor McGonigle | Engine Idling |

(The full text of the questions and replies were made available on the Reading Borough Council website).

28. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2022/2023 & 2021/2022 HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE UPDATE

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing the Committee with an update on the progress of year two

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(2021/22) of the three year £9m Highway Capital Investment Programme 2020/21 to 2022/23. The report also informed the Committee of the proposed year three (2020/23) of the three year £9m Highway Capital Investment Programme 2020/21 to 2022/23 and to give spend approval for the remaining £3.75m investment and of the Highway Maintenance 2022/23 Award announcement from the Department for Transport (DfT) Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport and Highway Maintenance) settlement and to give spend approval. Finally, the report provided the Committee with an update on the completed Highway Maintenance 2021/2022 DfT Local Transport Block Funding Capital Works Programme. The following appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 £9M Residential Roads & Pavements 3-Year Programme (2020/21 to 2022/23);
- Appendix 2 DfT Bridges Programme (2022/23) & 5-Year Rolling Programme;
- Appendix 3 Financial Implications Report

Sam Shean, Highways and Traffic Services Manager, provided the Committee with an update on year two of the three year programme reporting that, 122 residential roads had been resurfaced, 62 in the first year, with 307 roads having been resurfaced in total. When the programme came to end it had been estimated that close to 500 roads would have been resurfaced. There was an extensive communication package in place that explained that the work was carried out in a two-stage process. The work carried a two year warranty and work on any roads that had had to be cancelled would be put to the end of the programme and would be dealt with by one gang that would deal with all works that had not been completed.

The Committee discussed the report and thanked Sam Shean and his team for the work that had gone into coordinating the programme and, with regard to the two-stage process, it was suggested that it should be made clearer to residents that the first of stage was preparation work and not the end of the process.

Resolved -

- (1) That spend approval for the £3.75M Residential Road & Pavement Maintenance Year-3 Programme 2022/2023 be granted;
- (2) That spend approval for the DfT Local Transport Block Grant Funding award for 2022/202 be granted;
- (3) That the Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood 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 2022/23 Capital Highway Maintenance Programme, as set out in section 4 of the report.

29. HIGHWAY ASSET MANAGEMENT - ADOPTION OF CARRIAGEWAY SAFETY DEFECT INVESTIGATORY CRITERIA

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The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Committee of the outcomes for the six month trial to lower the investigatory level safety defect criteria in relation to highway carriageway defects and sought approval to adopt formally the lower investigatory level safety defect criteria in carriageways following the successful six month trial.

The report explained that prior to the six month trial actionable carriageway defects had been classed as having a minimum of 50mm depth over an approximate area of 300mm by 300mm. Defects of a smaller size could also be actioned by the Highway Inspector if there was a concern that leaving them would impose too great a risk based on a number of criteria. The Highways Team had also reviewed their inspection and regime three years previously, this had included the introduction of an electronic system allowing inspections to be carried out using a handheld tablet and then notifying electronically the Highways and Drainage Works Manager who assigned work to the repair gangs directly on their tablets.

The demand on pothole repairs which had enabled the transition to addressing defects of a lesser depth manageable had also been reduced by the Council's £9m Capital Investment into residential roads and pavements over three years and was addressing the residential roads in most need.

The report set out two options and recommended approval of the second which proposed amending the investigatory level criteria to anything over 40mm depth over an approximate area on 300mm by 300mm following the successful six month trial. Due to a proactive residential roads and pavement surfacing programme, there had been a manageable number of potholes that had required repair during the six month trial period, that had resulted in actionable potholes repaired remaining comparable to previous years. The Highways Works Team were repairing the statutory pothole safety defect repairs within repair timescales and the vast majority of 28-day repair orders were being completed within the first week of issue. This had created capacity within the team to not only manage the statutory repair work, but also take on additional income generation opportunities. The initial expected surge in defects requiring repair during the six month trial, had not materialised and was no longer expected to be a concern for the foreseeable future. Performance Indicator monitoring of actionable defects were provided quarterly and this would flag up any increase should the position change.

Resolved -

- (1) That the outcome of the six month trial to reduce the highway investigatory level safety defect criteria in the carriageway be noted;**
- (2) That the proposed change to the highway investigatory level safety defect criteria in the carriageway, as set out in section 4 of the report, be approved.**

**30. CHATHAM STREET & VASTERN ROAD PUMPING STATIONS REFURBISHMENT:
SPEND AUTHORITY TO AWARD CONTRACT**

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Committee of the successful procurement process for the

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refurbishment of the Chatham Street and Vastern Road Pumping Stations and sought spend approval to enter into a contract with the successful tenderer in accordance with Public Contracts Regulations 2051. A Financial Implications Report was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the Council was responsible for the maintenance of a limited number of public highway surface water pumping stations including those at Chatham Street and Vastern Road. The pumping station within the Chatham Street roundabout had been installed to drain part of the Inner Distribution Road in the Town Centre when it had been constructed and the pumping station in the Vastern Road roundabout had been installed to drain the carriageway under the railway bridge which had been constructed at around the same time. The pumping stations had been installed and commissioned approximately 40 to 50 years previously and were maintained and operated by Thames Water on the Council's behalf. Following changes in legislation in 2011, all surface water pumping stations had been handed back to the Council, as they only drained surface water from the highway, not private property. The pumping stations protected strategic routes within the Town Centre for all road users and upgrading them would reduce risks to all road user for the coming 20 to 30 years, reduce the risk to personnel maintaining the equipment and reduce long term operation costs. The requirement was that both pumping stations were to be totally upgraded to current standards with new pumps and equipment and up to date monitoring technology. This was to ensure their long term future and ease of ongoing maintenance burden and reduce any potential liability for the travelling public, the Council and maintenance contractors for at least the next 20 to 30 years.

Resolved -

- (1) That the successful outcome of the Refurbishment of the Chatham Street and Vastern Road Pumping Stations contract procurement be noted;
- (2) That spend approval for the Refurbishment of the Chatham Street and Vastern Road Pumping Stations be granted.

31. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT SCHEMES UPDATE

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing an update on progress with the delivery of the current programme of major transport schemes in the Borough namely:

South Reading Mass Rapid Transit

Phase 4 of the works was currently being constructed on site, which included an outbound bus lane on the A33 between Rose Kiln Lane and Lindisfarne Way, and the upgrade of the traffic signals to an intelligent method of control at the A33/Bennet Road gyratory. Construction of the current phase of works had been delayed initially due to Covid-19 and more latterly due to significant technical delays with implementing the enhanced traffic signal arrangements on Bennet Road gyratory. However, the signal upgrade works had been substantially completed and the new signals had been successfully operating the junction since January 2022. The

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resolution of a few minor snagging issues with the signal upgrades were on-going to enable the full Phase 4 scheme to be fully completed.

Reading Green Park Station

With regard to Reading Green Park Station, following a review of scheme progress to date, additional funding of £2.25m from Great Western Railway and £2.015m from Network Rail had been secured to support the delivery of both Reading Green Park and the Reading West Station Upgrade scheme. Construction of the station and multi-modal interchange had continued on site for the duration of the pandemic, but there had been impacts on the schedule resulting from Covid and Brexit impacts, material shortages, which had resulted in further delays to the programme. The current timeline indicated construction works would be complete by spring 2022 and once complete, the station would go through a period of testing before its official opening and public use. The Council was working with Network Rail and GWR to ensure that the station was open as soon as possible after construction works were completed.

Reading West Station Upgrade

Works to the northern footway, as part of the Reading West Upgrade, had been completed and works to the southern footway were due to be finished in summer 2022, with the remaining work to be carried out by utility companies to finish the required diversion works. Following completion of these works GWR would take possession of the southern footway and commence their station building construction programme. The overall project was currently projected to be complete by the end of 2022. The Council would continue to work with railway partners, including Network Rail, to seek opportunities to secure funding for a full rebuild of the platforms, which was not currently affordable within the funding envelope for the current scheme.

Tilehurst Station Upgrade

Network Rail had successfully secured funding to install lifts at Tilehurst station and the lifts would be added to the existing station footbridge which had passive provision designed in, which when complete would provide step free access to all platforms at the station. The indicative timeline for delivery of the lift improvement works was set out in the report.

Active Travel Fund - Shinfield Road

A public consultation on the latest scheme designs for Shinfield Road, being delivered through Tranche 2 of the Active Travel Scheme, had been carried out between 26 October and 6 December 2021. The feedback was currently being reviewed and incorporated into the final designs for scheme and an indicative timeline for delivery of the scheme was set out in the report.

School Streets Programme

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A further joint School Street trial scheme for Maiden Erleigh School in Reading, UTC Reading and Alfred Sutton Primary School on Crescent Road had commenced on 28 February 2022, following preparations that had been carried out by the schools, local residents and the Council. The scheme was currently running during the morning period from 8.15 am to 9.00 am as the school sought further volunteers to act as marshals for the afternoon period from 2.45 pm to 3.30 pm. The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order for the scheme ran for six months from this date, which included the opportunity for comments and objections to the scheme to be submitted to the Council. A decision on whether to make individual School Street schemes permanent would need to be made within 18 months of the trial scheme commencing and applications to establish new School Street schemes were being encouraged, alongside monitoring of the existing scheme to identify any improvements which could be made to help encourage an increase in levels of walking and cycling for children, parents and carers.

Councillor Page informed the Committee that he had spoken to Reading Friends of the Earth with GWR the previous week about Reading Green Park Station and one of the points that had been raised was about the mix of the buildings in the area that might change. However, irrespective of the mix of buildings, Green Park would require a good rail service and good transport and cycling links. With regard to Reading West Station, lifts could not be installed until the platforms had been made wide enough and the go ahead for the segregated cycle scheme for the Bath Road, which had been submitted to the DfT for funding through the third tranche of the Active Travel Fund, should have been received, but the Council was still waiting for an announcement on funding.

Resolved -

- (1) That the progress made on the delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes as outlined in the report be noted;**
- (2) That the additional funding of £2.25m secured from Great Western Railway and £2.015m from Network Rail, which would support the delivery of Reading Green Park Station and the Reading West Station Upgrade scheme be accepted and noted;**
- (3) That the completion of the Funding Agreement with Great Western Railway for the Reading West Station Upgrade scheme be noted.**

32. BUS ENHANCED PARTNERSHIPS

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval from the Committee to establish an Enhanced Partnership agreement with local bus operators. The Enhanced Partnership Plan was attached to the report at Appendix A, the Enhanced Partnership Scheme was attached at Appendix B and a letter in response to objections that had been received from local bus operators was attached to the report at Appendix C.

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The report explained that the agreement had been prepared to be in accordance with the Council's published Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), and it was a requirement of the National Bus Strategy for all local highway authorities to establish an Enhanced Partnership with all operators in the local area. A BSIP had been published for the local area in October 2021 and set out an ambitious programme of measures to improve bus services in Reading. Following adoption of the BSIP the Council had led the process to establish an Enhanced Partnership (EP) with local bus operators, in order to be in a position to deliver further bus service improvements. As part of this process external legal advice and guidance had been obtained from Freeths LLP who had specialised knowledge of the regulations that were needed to set up an EP.

The EP consisted of two documents, the EP Plan and the EP Scheme. The Plan set out proposals that covered the period 2021 to 2026 and drew on text from the adopted BSIP and did not add any proposals that were not part of the BSIP. Its proposals aligned with the objectives of the National Bus Strategy. The EP Plan reflected the ambitions for local bus services as set out in the approved BSIP, this included a range of enhancements and included improvements to service frequencies, a programme of bus priority measure and upgrading the bus fleet including the move to electric buses, subject to securing grant funding, in a number of categories as follows:

- More frequent and reliable services;
- Improvements to planning/integration with other modes;
- Improvements to fares and ticketing;
- Higher specification buses;
- Improvements to passenger engagement.

The report explained that the EP Plan included detailed arrangements as to how the partnership would work, on-going governance and partnership working arrangements with all stakeholders, including local operators, including the establishment of an EP Board and EP Forum. In addition, officers were currently working with the other Berkshire authorities to establish a Berkshire wide Forum to discuss cross-boundary services.

The second document was the EP Scheme that contained only some of the proposals from the EP Plan that would take effect from 1 April 2022 in a number of categories that were set out in the report. It was anticipated that this first EP Scheme would be reviewed once more detail was known about the availability of Government funding. The Plan contained a variation mechanism to enable additional element to be added to the EP Scheme if funding was made available for element which did not currently sit within the EP Scheme.

In line with the relevant legislation, the EP Plan and Scheme had been sent formally to all local bus operators at the start of the 28 day objection period on 12 January 2022, with the bus operators having until 10 February 2022 to lodge an objection. Objections had been received from Arriva and Thames Travel, specifically regarding the proposed governance arrangements for the EP. However, further legal advice had confirmed that the objections did not meet the threshold required to stop the EP

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process and therefore the statutory consultation had been able to proceed as planned. The Council was keen to continue to work closely with both operators to ensure the EP continued to be a constructive process.

Following a delay to the original programme to enable legal advice to be considered fully, the statutory consultation had commenced on 18 February 2022 and had closed on 4 March 2022. Responses had been received from the consultees with some useful feedback which would be used to refine further version of the EP and the on-going operation of the EP arrangements.

Resolved:

- (1) That the adoption of the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Enhanced Partnership Scheme from 1 April 2022 be approved;**
- (2) That the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport and the Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee, be delegated authority to make any amendments to the EP Plan and/or Scheme as a result of further announcements from the Department for Transport;**
- (3) That the current funding circumstances as announced by the DfT and the implications for the future funding ambitions of bus services in Reading be noted,**

(Councillors Stanford-Beale declared a prejudicial interest in the above item, on the grounds that she was a Council-appointed Non-Executive Directors of RTL. She left the meeting and took no part in the debate or discussion.)

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 7.33 pm)