

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	7 <sup>th</sup> JULY 2022	AGENDA ITEM:	
TITLE:	TRAFFIC SERVICES CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/2023		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	CLIMATE STRATEGY & TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	ENVIRONMENTAL & COMMERCIAL SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGH WIDE
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#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the Council's additional £ 0.4M 2-year (2022/23 to 2023/24) Traffic Signals Capital Investment Programme and to give spend approval for this investment.
- 1.2 To inform the Committee of the Council's additional £ 0.3M 2-year (2022/23 to 2023/24) Digitising of Traffic Regulation Orders Investment Programme and to give spend approval for this investment.
- 1.5 Appendix 1: Financial Implications Report

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee grants spend approval for the Council's £ 0.4M 2-year (2022/23 to 2023/24) Traffic Signals Capital Investment Programme.
- 2.2 That the Committee grants spend approval for the Council's £ 0.3M 2-year (2022/23 to 2023/24) Digitising of Traffic Regulation Orders Investment Programme.
- 2.3 That the Committee gives delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Environmental & Commercial Services in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy & Transport, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Director of Finance to enter into relevant contracts required to undertake the proposed Capital Traffic Services Programme, as per section 4 of this report.

### **3. POLICY CONTEXT**

- 3.1 The Corporate Plan 2022-2025 sets out the Council's priorities for Reading and provides direction for staff in delivering services to meet the needs of the communities within the Borough whilst working to a budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) agreed at Council in February 2022.
- 3.2 The Council's Corporate Plan supports the delivery of new transport & highway infrastructure in order to manage levels of congestion, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions, whilst accommodating the significant levels of planned economic growth.
- 3.3 The Council's current Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out the transport strategy for Reading to 2026. Consultation on a new Local Transport Plan (LTP) was undertaken from 4th May to 30th August 2020. The new strategy is being developed to help achieve wider objectives including the Reading 2050 Vision, the Climate Emergency and improved air quality. The LTP will be heavily focused on addressing these wider challenges through a package of solutions to provide realistic sustainable alternatives to the private car, including enhanced cycling and walking routes to improve air quality. The new strategy is being aligned with other Council strategies including the Local Plan and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.
- 3.4 To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.
- 3.5 To make travel more secure, safe and comfortable for all users of the public highway.
- 3.6 To provide a public highway network as safe as reasonably practical having due regard to financial constraints and statutory duties.

### **4. THE PROPOSAL**

#### **BACKGROUND**

- **ADDITIONAL £0.4M COUNCIL FUNDED TRAFFIC SIGNAL 2-YEAR (2022/23-2023/24) INVESTMENT PROGRAMME**
  - **ADDITIONAL £0.3M COUNCIL FUNDED DIGITISING TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER'S 2-YEAR (2022/23-2023/24) INVESTMENT PROGRAMME**
- 4.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is informed by and supports delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities including its commitment to address the climate change emergency and seeks to ensure that the Council is "fit for the future", with sound finances that allow the Council's future funding challenges and spending pressures to be met in as sustainable a way as possible.
  - 4.2 The underpinning rationale of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is to deliver a balanced and affordable budget that ensures the Council's finances are sustainable in both the short (one year) and medium term (three years). The Strategy is also informed by the Council's Vision: "to ensure that Reading

realises its potential - and that everyone who lives and works in Reading can share in the benefits of its success”, as well as its Corporate Plan priorities:

- Securing the economic success of Reading
- Improving access to decent housing to meet local needs
- Protecting and enhancing the life outcomes of vulnerable adults and children

- 4.3 The Strategy builds on work over the previous 3-4 years to stabilise the Council’s financial position and build reserves back to a more robust level and seeks to facilitate vital investment in core infrastructure to drive efficiency improvements, facilitate service redesign and thereby manage pressures within demand led services. This invest to save approach provides for a robust financial position going forward and enables vital and valued services can continue to be delivered.
- 4.4 As part of MTFs an ambitious capital investment programme is being delivered with the Council investing **£ 0.4M** in Reading’s traffic signal assets to address the ageing ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ assets to improve their condition and reverse these deteriorating Council assets over a 2-year period (2022/23 to 2023/24).
- 4.5 The Council is also investing **£ 0.3M** in Digitising Reading’s Traffic Regulation Orders to modernise the process, to streamline TRO creation and the consultation processes, to significantly reduce costs and to reduce the pressure on available resources over a 2-year period (2022/23 to 2023/24).
- 4.6 The Council has and will continue to actively bid for appropriate external funding including Department for Transport (DfT) grants to maximise the use of available funding to improve the condition of all its highway & traffic assets.

## **THE PROPOSAL**

### **PROPOSED PROGRAMME - Traffic Services Proposal 2022/2023**

- 4.7 The Council carried out a further Residents’ Survey with its Citizen Panel in December 2021 as part of the Council’s on-going conversation with residents. The aim of the survey was to gather information to inform customer service delivery in a number of ways. More specifically, the survey asks about residents’ views of their neighbourhoods and of Council services, which has helped the Council to understand what residents really value in their local areas and services, in order to make decisions on budgets and services that reflect those values.
- 4.8 83% of respondents (compared with 77% in 2020) said that they were satisfied with their local area as a place to live. Respondents were asked what they thought needed improving and the number one consensus 38% (compared with 47% in 2020) said that the condition of roads & pavements needed improving.
- 4.9 The council also partake in the annual National Highways & Transport Satisfaction surveys and the 2021 outcome is showing some encouraging signs of resident’s satisfaction levels improving with Reading coming 3<sup>rd</sup> best performing Council with 11 indicators coming out top, predominately in Transport areas.

- 4.10 The Council continues to listen to the residents of Reading and is investing **£0.4M** into the ageing traffic signal assets which will improve traffic flows, reduce congestion and pollution, modernise the traffic signal assets and future proof in a rapidly changing environment.
- 4.11 The Council is also investing **£ 0.3M** in Digitising Reading's Traffic Regulation Orders to modernise the process, to streamline TRO creation and the consultation processes, to significantly reduce costs.

#### **Traffic signal investment programme 2022/23**

- 4.12 Financed by the **£0.4M** 2-year Council funded traffic signal investment programme (2022/23 to 2023/24).
- 4.13 It is recognised that the Council has an ageing traffic signal asset on the strategic transport network that is nearing the end of its maintenance life and require urgent modernising and replacement.
- 4.14 The Council will commission an asset condition survey to not only determine the current condition of our traffic signal assets, but to accurately record their locations, the equipment on street and to provide a priority listing to enable the funding to be targeted to address the assets in most need.
- 4.15 The programme will help reduce the high number of faults currently being experienced on the network, improve journey times, reduce pollution and waiting times and bring our traffic signal assets up to current market standards.
- 4.16 The Council will continue to actively bid for appropriate external funding including Department for Transport (DfT) grants to maximise the use of available funding to improve the condition of all traffic services assets.

#### **Digitised Traffic Regulation Order's**

- 4.17 Financed by the **£0.3M** 2-year Council funded Digitising Traffic Regulation Orders investment programme (2022/23 to 2023/24).
- 4.18 Introduction of a fully digitised and web-published Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) management system will consist of integrated drawing and measuring tools, map creation from plotted restrictions, management of the TRO process (consulting, amending, sealing), maintenance of an auditable history of changes to restrictions and the ability to import and export data in common formats, in line with the government's desire for open data and system integration.
- 4.19 This system will cover TROs for waiting (parking) restrictions and bus lane/gate restrictions as the initial priority, with expansion to moving traffic TROs also (e.g. banned vehicle movements, one-way restrictions, speed limits).
- 4.20 The process will involve the surveying of all on-street restrictions and creation of a new digitised and map-based TRO for the restrictions as represented on street. This will form the basis for future alterations.

- 4.21 This will reduce the time and resource requirements to deliver schemes - it streamlines the TRO creation and consultation process. Supports enforcement through availability and transparency of information. It also addresses potential TRO overlaps/errors that exist and reduces the risks of occurrence in the future, that otherwise exist in the current 'paper' based system.
- 4.22 It futureproofs the department in readiness of connected, autonomous vehicles and changes to the way that the kerbside can be managed. The government is currently undertaking a study around availability of digitised TRO information nationally, which could likely conclude that local authorities need to produce this data.
- 4.23 It will also improve transparency and stakeholder (internal and external) access to information, the public will be able to view all TRO's via the website which will reduce officer time dealing with queries and challenges to Penalty Charge Notices (PCN's).
- 4.24 A tender is being prepared to invite suitably qualified and experienced companies to conduct detailed surveys within the Borough and then prepare the back-office systems to enable implementation.

## **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

### **5.1 Reading Borough Council's vision is:**

To help Reading realise its potential - and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

### **5.2 The Highways & Traffic Services Programmes will contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan 2022/2023 objectives of:**

- Healthy environment - Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active
- Inclusive economy - Enabling the infrastructure to continue to support the economy
- Thriving Communities - Remaining financially sustainable and to ensure everyone has an equal chance to use the public highway

### **5.3 TEAM Reading values:**

Together - Collaborative working approach between the Council, consultant, contractors and the public

Efficiency - Continue to explore efficiency savings within the contract

Ambitious - Investing into the public traffic assets

Make a Difference - Providing a safe inclusive public highway network for all users

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council declared a climate emergency at its meeting in February 2019 and as such recognises the need to minimise the climate impacts of its decisions. To this end, Council on 15th October 2019 formally adopted of the 'Unite Construction Charter' where the Authority supports the 'Get Britain Building'

campaign, which is aimed at supporting and sustaining the British construction industry. All relevant construction contracts will be required to comply with the Authority's Sustainable Buying Standard for Highways and Construction Materials, which requires structural steel and other relevant materials to be covered by BES 6001 Responsible Sourcing of Construction Product certification, or equivalent.

- 6.2 Tenders for any subsequent contracts that are necessary will be invited to submit Environmental Implications proposals which will form part of the quality element of the tender evaluation. A social value quality submission will also be required to be submitted with tenders and evaluation.
- 6.3 Tenders also needed to include carbon reduction targets and improved sustainability within tender returns. The intent is to reduce the amount of carbon used to produce the materials at source, using recycled materials, lower temperature bitumen's, reducing the uncontrolled waste in the environment to reduce pollution of the natural environment, use of electric vehicles and plant, as well as how they will achieve their own carbon reduction targets.
- 6.4 The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council in November 2020, highlights the importance of adapting to climate impacts as well as reducing the emissions which are driving climate change.

## **7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 7.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".
- 7.2 The public can report traffic asset defects to the Council, including traffic signal equipment condition concerns, which are assessed and included within the annual review of the traffic services assets that inform the 'Annual Status Option Reports' (ASOR) with the proposed high priority schemes brought to Committee for consideration and approval should they meet the assessment criteria.
- 7.3 This report will be available on the Council's website following Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee approval processes.

## **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 The Traffic Services Capital programme 2022/2023 consists of improvement work to the Council's existing public highway network and will be making improvements to existing traffic assets. There is no overall change to service delivery at this time and all users will have a safe & efficient public highway. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Borough Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway.
- 9.2 The Borough Council, as Traffic Authority, has a duty under the Traffic Management Act 2004 to manage the Council's network to ensure a safe and efficient network.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The Highways & Traffic Services programme 2022/2023 will be fully funded by the following:
- The Council's £ 0.4M Investment into traffic signal assets.
  - The Council's £ 0.3M Investment in Digitising Traffic Regulation Orders.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 There are none.