

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES - 15 NOVEMBER 2023**

**Present:** Councillor Cross (Chair); Hornsby-Smith (Vice-Chair), Ballsdon, Ennis, Griffith, Keeping, Lanzoni, Leng, Magon, McElroy, Moore, R Singh and Terry

**Apologies:** Councillors Juthani and Page

**10. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 29 June 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**11. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Minutes of the meetings of Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 4 June 2023 and 13 September 2023 were received.

**12. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES**

The Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- Joint Waste Disposal Board on 2 March 2023 and 15 June 2023
- Reading Climate Change Partnership on 20 April 2023 and 20 July 2023

In response to a question from Councillor Moore relating to the minutes of the Joint Waste Disposal Board held on 15 June 2023, Councillor Cross undertook to arrange for the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety to respond to Councillor Moore's query concerning Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment in writing.

**13. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

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

<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Subject</b>
Councillor Singh	Number 18 Bus Route

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

**14. THAMES WATER SCRUTINY**

Further to the Motion passed by Council on 27 June 2023 (Minute 18 refers) and at the invitation of the Chair, Richard Aylard, Sustainability Director, James Bentley, Operations Director, and Nikki Hines, South Thames Valley Stakeholder Engagement Manager, of

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Thames Water gave a presentation and answered questions on Thames Water's investment plans for Reading and on the company's work and operations within the Borough. Thames Water's presentation covered several different topics including:

- Recent leadership changes, the company's liquidity position and shareholder investment;
- Thames Water's refocused three-year Turnaround Plan;
- Thames Water's recently published five-year PR24 Business Plan (for the period 2025-2030);
- An overview of how a Sewage Treatment Works functioned, including an explanation of storm discharges and the reasons for needing to make them;
- Ways that storm discharges from Sewage Treatment Works could be reduced;
- An explanation of why flows in foul sewers increased after heavy rainfall;
- A demonstration of Thames Water's interactive storm discharges map;
- An overview of storm discharge points within the Borough;
- A summary of the number of storm discharges that had taken place within the Borough in the previous four years;
- An assessment of Reading's performance in relation to storm discharges compared to the average across the rest of the Thames Water network;
- An overview of Thames Water's plan to reduce the number of storm discharges it made by the Government's 2050 target date;
- An overview of the impacts of pollution on river water quality and the Reasons for Not Achieving Good (RNAG) status in the Thames River Basin area;
- Planned investment at the Reading Sewage Treatment Works;
- Past, current and planned sewer maintenance works within the Borough;
- A brief overview of Thames Water's approach to dealing with sewer abuse from residential properties and food service establishments;
- Guidance on what customers should do if sewer flooding affected their home and ways to report problems to Thames Water;
- An overview of how Thames Water communicated with Council officers, including detail on the resumption of regular liaison meetings.

The Committee discussed the presentation and asked several questions and some of the points raised included:

- Thames Water and the Council's Highways & Traffic Services Manager advised the Committee that regular liaison meetings between relevant RBC officers and their counterparts at Thames Water had been reestablished to proactively address problems within the Borough. Thames Water had also provided Council officers with its Professional Partners Line number and its dedicated Highways Authority number to allow professionals from both sides to communicate effectively on a routine basis and in emergency situations.
- Thames Water responded to concerns that the Council had invested large amounts of money resurfacing roads in the Borough only for the newly

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resurfaced road to be dug up shortly afterwards by Thames Water to conduct repairs and maintenance. Concerns were also raised about the effectiveness of traffic management measures put in place by Thames Water and by their contractors when conducting emergency repairs and maintenance in the town. These often resulted in traffic problems, particularly at pinch points in the town. Recent examples included the Thames Water works in Caversham and on Shinfield Road, Oxford Road and Castle Hill.

- Thames Water responded to concerns about an apparent lack of communication with residents when conducting emergency repairs and general maintenance works. This included a need to keep local residents informed about how and when repair works would be taking place and whether they would affect residents' access to their homes. The Committee also expressed concern around the lack of explanative signage at roadworks that would allow people to know who was conducting certain roadworks and therefore who they should contact if there was a problem.
- Thames Water responded to concerns relating to sewage/storm discharges into the Foudry Brook from the Reading Sewage Treatment Works. They advised that the treated effluent that came out the works was generally of good quality and met with Environment Agency standards. However, there had been occasions when untreated effluent had been discharged from the site. Such discharges had taken place when the works were working at full capacity and so were unable to process and treat the large volume of sewage travelling through the site. This tended to occur during periods of heavy rainfall which increased the amount of sewage needing to be processed. In such instances Thames Water had a permit from the Environment Agency to allow it to discharge effluent into the Foudry Brook. Thames Water took measures to avoid needing to discharge untreated effluent and, whenever possible, sewage would be stored in storm tanks and then treated, however this was not an option if the tanks had reached capacity. Thames Water advised that there had been a long-term average of 8 discharges from the location per year. The number of spills that took place each year would vary depending on if it was a wet year or a dry year. The current long-term average of 8 per year was below the Government's target of 10 spills on average per site, per year by 2050. Thames Water reassured the Committee that it wanted to reduce the number of discharges from the site as much as possible and that a considerable amount of money had been invested to make improvements at the site that would hopefully help to bring the number of discharges down further.
- Thames Water responded to concerns relating to the odors and smells that sometimes came from the Reading Sewage Treatment Works and which particularly affected residents living in Whitley Ward. A considerable amount of work had taken place to investigate the causes of the smells and to try pinpoint the source. Thames Water outlined some of the remedial measures that had been instigated on the site, including targeted maintenance/repair

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works, changes to operational procedures and regular inspection visits from Environmental Health officers. All of which it was hoped would help to minimise unpleasant odors coming from the facility. Thames Water also encouraged residents to report incidents of strong smells emanating from the site as soon as possible so that any problems could be swiftly investigated and addressed.

- Thames Water explained that its key performance indicators (KPIs) were approved by the regulator Ofwat and were published on its website. Performance against KPIs was reported in the company's annual performance report. There were financial penalties if the company fell short of targets and bonuses for outperforming them. The KPIs and performance reports were available for public scrutiny on the company's website.
- Thames Water responded to concerns relating to surface water flooding and blocked drains and gullies on roads in the Borough. Some examples included the regular problems with flooding on Woodcote Road (A4074) and along Caversham Park Road. Thames Water advised that the causes of flooding could vary and that a holistic approach was required to investigate and resolve problems. Resumption of regular liaison meetings with Council officers would help to identify, establish responsibility for and address issues at problem locations. Thames Water undertook to investigate the specific locations mentioned above further.
- Thames Water responded to concerns following the Crown Court judgment that saw the company issued with a £3.4m fine for allowing untreated sewage to enter a river near Gatwick Airport. Thames Water also described what it was doing to reduce sewage discharges into the tidal River Thames.
- Thames Water responded to concerns about senior executives' salaries, bonuses and perks in the wider context of rising customer bills. Thames Water advised that its former Chief Executive Officer and the current Interim Co-Chief Executive Officer both forwent any payment that might have been made to them in the previous year in recognition that Thames Water services needed to improve.
- Thames Water responded to concerns about its customer services and to a request for the company to implement a call queuing system on its emergency helpline. Thames Water explained that it operated a priority services register for vulnerable customers which anybody over a certain age or who had a medical condition could register. Those who had signed up to the priority services register would receive a personal bespoke service should they experience any issues with services provided by Thames Water and, if they contacted the emergency helpline by phone, would go straight to the front of the queue. It was for this reason that a call queuing system could not be introduced as it was possible that a caller's place in the queue would change if a priority user called in. Thames Water also advised that it had multiskilled

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its customer services staff so that all staff were trained to take emergency calls during busy periods.

- Thames Water responded to questions relating to the company's finances. They advised that the company's liquidity position was good. The Committee heard that Thames Water's shareholders had invested significant amounts of money into the company and also that dividends had not been paid out to them for six years. Thames Water undertook to provide the Committee with a written technical explanation of what an "internal dividend" was.
- In response to a question relating to the number of outstanding Section 81 notices in the Borough (a Section 81 notice was a notice that could be served to a utility company, in this case Thames Water, if their apparatus was found to be defective) Thames Water advised that it did not have the compliance statistics relating to the resolution of Section 81 notices to hand but that, generally speaking, Reading, whilst not one of the better performers, was not one of the worst performers either.

It was suggested at the meeting that Thames Water could attend the Committee on a regular basis to provide updates on the company's performance and talk on specific topics such as the Climate Emergency.

**Resolved – That Thames Water's representatives be thanked for their attendance and for their presentation and for responding to the Committee's questions.**

### **15. ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2022/23 ON: (I) READING CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY AND (II) RBC'S GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS**

The Committee received a report presenting two Annual Reports for 2022/23 on key elements of Reading's response to the climate emergency.

The 2022/23 Annual Report on the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 was attached to the report at Appendix 1. The Annual Report had been prepared by the Reading Climate Change Partnership and reflected the activity of a range of partners across Reading, not just the Council. The headline messages from the report were that, in common with the rest of the UK, emissions for 2021 (the latest year for which data had been available) had risen in comparison to 2020. This was because emissions had rebounded following the lifting of pandemic restrictions. The long-term trend remained positive, however, with Borough emissions having fallen by 51% since 2005. This was down from the 55% reduction reported in 2020, but Reading had still seen the 8<sup>th</sup> largest reduction in emissions out of 374 UK local authority areas. Reading's per capita emissions also remained the lowest in Berkshire. The pace of emissions reduction would, however, need to increase significantly to get back on track to achieve the Strategy target of 'net zero by 2030'. A summary of the key conclusions drawn from the Annual Report 2022/23 on the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy were set out in the report.

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A copy of the 2022/23 Annual Report on the Council's Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions was attached to the report at Appendix 2. The Annual Report, which was produced annually by the Council, tracked the progress made towards the implementation of the Council's Carbon Plan and the targets contained within it. The headline message from the report was that the Council's carbon footprint had been cut by 73.9% since 2008/09, a further reduction from the 71.3% figure that had been reported in 2021/22. This meant the Council remained broadly on track to meet its interim target of an 85% cut in emissions by 2025. However, further action and investment would be needed to achieve this target, and to make progress towards the ultimate target of becoming a net zero organisation by 2030. A summary of the key conclusions of the Council's Annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions report for 2022/23 were summarised in the report.

The Head of Climate Strategy provided the Committee with an update and explained that, since the publication of the report, the Council had received the results of the annual assessment that had been carried out by the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), an international non-government organisation that operated a reporting process for corporations and councils which was regarded as the 'gold-standard' for climate reporting. The Council had first submitted its data to the CDP in 2021 and had been added to the A-List of Councils that demonstrated good practice. The Head of Climate Strategy reported that, following this year's assessment, the Council had retained its position on the CDP's A-List.

The Head of Climate Strategy also informed the Committee of a correction to the figures contained in the Council's Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions report (Appendix 2). It had been noticed that figures relating to the emissions reported from leisure facilities were higher than expected. Following an investigation, it had been discovered that there had been an issue with the meter exchange at Meadway Leisure Centre which had resulted in an overestimate of the gas consumption for the site. The actual consumption figures had since been obtained and were significantly lower than the estimated consumption. Consequently the Annual Report attached at Appendix 2 significantly overstated the emissions from the Council's leisure estate. The Head of Climate Strategy advised that the thrust of the report otherwise remained accurate and that the Council had improved its leisure offer at the same time as reducing emissions. However, the reduction in overall leisure emissions compared to the last pre-covid year (the most meaningful year for comparison) was in fact 31% and not the 20% reported. The Head of Climate Strategy advised that the corrected figures would be reflected in the final version when it was published on the Council's website.

### **Resolved –**

- (1) That the progress in reducing Reading Borough's carbon emissions, which have fallen by 51% since 2005, be noted;**
- (2) That the progress in reducing Reading Borough Council's corporate emissions, which have fallen by 74% since 2008/09, be noted;**

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- (3) That it be noted that, while progress was being made, the Council and other partners needed to increase the pace of emissions reduction to meet the targets for a net zero Reading, and a net zero Council, by 2030;**
- (4) That the corrections to be made to the leisure estate emissions figures in Appendix 2 to the report be noted.**

**16. AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN REVIEW**

The Committee received a report on the development of the Reading Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2028. The report sought the approval of the Committee to conduct a public consultation on the on the draft Reading Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2028 and outlined the next steps for its adoption. A copy of the draft Reading Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2028 was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that, whilst air quality had improved in the town, there were still some locations where nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels were above recommended UK and World Health Organization (WHO) air quality limits. The Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) sought to target these locations to make them compliant with UK and WHO standards and at the same as air quality across Reading as a whole. The draft AQAP identified the areas where the Council needed to improve air quality and set out the actions that officers planned to take over the next five years.

The previous Air Quality Action Plan, which had run between 2016 and 2020, had focused on actions to reduce nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels in order to achieve compliance with national objectives. The report listed several of the successful initiatives that had been delivered through the last action plan and provided figures gathered from the Council's monitoring network that demonstrated that there had been considerable improvements in NO<sub>2</sub> levels between 2018 and 2022.

The new draft AQAP aimed to continue with efforts to reduce NO<sub>2</sub> levels but also placed a new emphasis on targeting and reducing fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) emissions. The new emphasis was required due to the mounting evidence that pointed to PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions being extremely harmful to human health and meant that the new AQAP aligned with the changes that had been made to national policy in response to this latest evidence. Measures to address PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions had therefore been given considerable weight throughout the new draft AQAP.

The initial draft AQAP (attached at Appendix 1) had been produced working with the support of environmental consultants Phlorum. The draft AQAP contained updated baseline data figures and trajectories for Reading, updates to align the AQAP with changes made to local and national policies over the last two years, updates to align the AQAP with the Reading Transport Plan and current thinking relating to air quality practice and listed the members of the Air Quality Steering Group (AQSG) who had contributed to the development of the draft AQAP. Policies outlined with the AQAP included direct policy interventions, infrastructure schemes and education/enabling options that would help to support Reading's ambitious plans and UK strategies going forward. Policy options would

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also include strategies to encourage or accelerate the uptake of low to zero emission vehicles, non-diesel vehicles, increase modal shift and discourage vehicle usage in certain areas where people lived or went to school. Active Travel and health options were also prioritised, alongside specific measures to reduce particulate matter (PM) concentrations.

The report explained that, subject to the approval of the Committee, a consultation process, as prescribed in Local Air Quality Management guidance, would be carried out to ensure that all the required stakeholders were able to comment and provide feedback. The consultation would include members of the Air Quality Steering Group, statutory consultees and the public. A report setting out the results of the consultation would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee at which the approval would also be sought to adopt a final version of the Air Quality Action Plan.

At the meeting the Principal Air Quality Project Officer advised the Committee that the Council were required to submit an annual progress report on air quality to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and that the same report could be shared with the Committee as a means of tracking the progress of the AQAP.

### **Resolved –**

- (1) That the draft Air Quality Action Plan be approved to be taken forward for consultation;**
- (2) That it be noted that a further report would be submitted to the March 2024 meeting following the consultation to adopt the final Air Quality Action Plan.**

### **17. OUTCOMES OF ‘THE STRATEGY ROOM’ PROJECT**

The Committee received a report and presentation on the outcomes of The Strategy Room Project. The Strategy Room was a project designed to engage people in discussions about climate change led by Nesta, the innovation agency, University College London’s Climate Action Unit and Fast Familiar, a Reading-based digital agency. It was described as “an immersive experience which uses facilitated deliberation, interactive polling and collective intelligence to identify the climate change policies that would best help a local area to reach net zero emissions”; and as “a way for people to walk in off the street, and within 90 minutes imagine together the benefits of a Net Zero future, and help create a strategy for their local area on how to get there”.

In late 2022, the Council had been invited to be one of 12 local authorities to take part in the pilot phase of the project. The Council had welcomed the opportunity to participate and had worked with partners to organise five workshops in March 2023. Three sessions had been arranged for residents, one for Reading Climate Change Partnership (RCCP) Board members and one session for Councillors. The project team had also worked with the University of Reading who had hosted a session so that six workshops were held in total in Reading with 67 people taking part, over 10% of the total participating in the entire pilot.



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Reading had achieved the highest participation rates of any of the 12 pilot areas with a good turnout at all of the workshops.

The report explained that, following the workshops that had been held around the country in spring 2023, the data that had been gathered had been analysed and published at a launch event on 12 July 2023. The results could be interrogated via a new website that had been created for the project at [strategyroom.uk](https://strategyroom.uk). The website gave further details of the scenarios and policy prescriptions that had been discussed at the workshops and allowed the results from Reading to be compared against the national results. The report explained that the Councillors who had participated in the workshop in March 2023 had expressed an interest in receiving a presentation on the findings of the project.

The presentation gave an overview of the Strategy Room project nationally, explained the project's general approach and methodology, and set out the project's headline findings. The findings had shown that there had been a strong level of support for net zero ideas across energy, travel and food scenarios and that levels of support for policies that tackled climate change were higher than the current political debate would suggest. The project also found that climate 'deniers' were rare, there had been only one out of the 639 participants and the 70 people who had taken part in the co-creation workshops. The project had found that disagreements tended to be about what should be done about climate change and what policies were felt to be meaningful and fair. The project had also found that people really valued the opportunity to discuss climate change even if it was with people who held different opinions to themselves. Overall, the support for policies had increased following discussions. However, the project had also found that the biggest obstacle faced in tackling climate change was a perceived lack of trust. People felt they were living through a crisis of trust and that it was hard for people to buy-in to systematic measures of change whilst that trust did not exist.

The presentation provided a summary analysis of Reading's Strategy Room Project data. Ten policy ideas had been presented to participants who had then ranked them from those that they recommended the most to those they recommended the least. The presentation compared Reading's results to the results of the rest of the UK. Reading participants of the Strategy Room project were comparatively more supportive of policies to make social housing more energy efficient, policies to redevelop the town centre in order to cut traffic and community renewable energy schemes. By contrast Reading participants were comparatively less supportive of subsidised car clubs, policies to provide more electric vehicles and infrastructure, environmental ratings for supermarkets and policies to trade-in schemes for petrol/diesel cars. It was noted however that all ten of the policies had achieved a level of at least 50% support from participants.

The Head of Climate Strategy advised the Committee that the Strategy Room Project had provided some useful data and insights and that consideration was being given as to whether it could be used as a tool to form part of the future engagement plan to inform the review of the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy which would take place over the next two-year period.

**Resolved –**

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- (1) That the outcomes of ‘The Strategy Room’ project to engage residents in discussions about climate change, as summarised in the presentation, be noted;**
- (2) That the organisers, The Strategy Room Project, be thanked for their work and presentation.**

**18. READING CLIMATE FESTIVAL 2023 EVALUATION**

The Committee received a report and watched a short video clip that gave an evaluation and overview of the 2023 Reading Climate Festival. A copy of the Gaia Evaluation Report, which included a full legacy plan, was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the Festival had taken place between 10 and 21 June 2023 with the stated aim of “inspiring and encouraging positive action on climate change”. The Festival, which had been held annually since 2020, had been organised and curated by the Reading Climate Action Network (RCAN), the public-facing brand of the Reading Climate Change Partnership, a multi-agency partnership for which the Council were the ‘host’ and accountable body. The Festival’s strategic priorities were; (1) to showcase the important role that Reading played on the world stage in understanding and addressing climate change; (2) to inform and engage the community about the work of RCAN/partner organisations in working towards a net-zero climate resilient town by 2030; and (3) to inspire and facilitate individuals/families to make clear pledges to adopt greener behaviours in support of the community’s effort to address climate change.

To help realise the ambitions of the Festival and given the ability of arts and culture to reach new audiences and to act as a vehicle to have wide ranging conversations, Luke Jerram’s iconic artwork Gaia had been brought to Reading Town Hall as a key focal point for the Festival. Gaia was chosen as a unifying piece of artwork that met all partners’ strategic priorities. It was a piece that spanned all audiences, and which could very easily be linked to the climate narrative in a positive and informative way. It was also internationally known and drew people from other parts of the country.

Gaia had been hosted in the Concert Hall at Reading Town Hall between 10 and 18 June 2023. The partnership had collaborated to deliver 57 public ticketed sessions, including ‘Twilight’ (evening) sessions and ‘Relaxed’ events (aimed at neurodivergent audiences). Sessions were charged at £2 per ticket for over 16s, with free admission for under 16s. There were 10 curated events and 10 school sessions that sat alongside Gaia. An additional 19 events had taken place as part of the Reading Climate Festival programme. The cost of bringing Gaia to Reading had been recovered through ticket income and the joint investment from partners thereby delivering high value for money at no cost to the public purse.

The report set out the key outcomes of the 2023 Reading Climate Festival and explained that using Gaia as the Festival’s centrepiece had increased the Festival’s reach to around 13,000 people. This compared to previous year’s audiences of around 1,000 and

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represented an increase of 1200%. The success of Gaia demonstrated the potential that cultural events and the arts had to attract new and different people to the climate change discussion. The report added that plans for the 2024 Reading Climate Festival were already in development with the same partners and centered around Show Your Stripes Day on 21 June 2024. The report explained that the partnership was keen to build on the success of the 2023 Festival and arts and culture would therefore continue to feature strongly in future years.

### **Resolved –**

- (1) That the evaluation of the 2023 Reading Climate Festival, as outlined in Appendix 1 attached to the report, be noted and the efforts of the partners be recognised;**
- (2) That the impact of Luke Jerram’s Gaia on participation and engagement in the Reading Climate Festival 2023 be noted;**
- (3) That the value of arts, culture and creativity in engaging people in wider social issues, in this case climate change, be noted.**

### **19. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT SCHEMES UPDATE**

The Committee received a report that provided an update on the progress made towards the delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes in Reading. The programme included major enhancements to public transport and active travel facilities, aimed at encouraging more healthy lifestyles and helping to address the Climate Emergency. The programme included the following schemes and initiatives:

- Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Programme
- South Reading Bus Rapid Transit
- Reading West Station Upgrade
- Tilehurst Station Upgrade
- Shinfield Road Active Travel Scheme
- Bath Road Active Travel Scheme
- Active Travel Behavioural Change Programme
- School Streets Programme

The report provided a summary of the position concerning the delivery of the individual schemes and initiatives listed above. At the meeting the Strategic Transport Manager provided an update on the ongoing work taking place at Reading West Station and informed the Committee that the footpath at the station was due to reopen on 20 November 2023 and that, following this, the nearby traffic management measures would be removed and the process to bring the new station building into use would start.

The Strategic Transport Manager also provided an update on the programme of works relating to the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and reported that, on 1 November 2023, bus operators in the area had launched a ‘tap on tap off’ contactless payment

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system. To promote the launch of contactless payment an introductory offer of £3 for all-day travel, funded by the BSIP grant, would run until 31 December 2023. The statutory consultation for six proposed new bus lanes in the Borough had also started and would run until 7 December 2023. Plans for the new bus lanes had also been available to view at the various public drop-in sessions that had been held in relation to the draft Transport Strategy so that members of the public could see the plans and speak to officers about them.

**Resolved – That the progress made on delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes, as summarised in the report, be noted.**

### **20. LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL UPDATE CONSULTATION ON SCOPE AND CONTENT**

The Committee received a report on the Local Plan Partial Update. The report sought approval from the Committee to conduct a consultation on the scope and content of the Partial Update.

The report explained that the Reading Borough Local Plan had been adopted in 2019 and that there was a statutory requirement to undertake a review of the Local Plan within five years of its adoption. To comply with this requirement, a Local Plan Review had been conducted which had identified the need to undertake a Partial Update. At the meeting held on 23 March 2023 the Committee had agreed to proceed with a Partial Update according to the timetable set out within the Local Development Scheme (LDS) (Minute 36 refers). This included a ‘Regulation 18’ consultation on the scope and content of the Partial Update that would begin in November or December 2023.

The report therefore recommended that the Committee approve a ‘Regulation 18’ consultation on the scope and content of the Local Plan Partial Update to take place between November 2023 and January 2024. The proposed consultation document was attached to the report Appendix 1.

The scope and content consultation document sought views on the proposed approach to updating those policies that formed part of the Local Plan, including matters such as the overall provision of housing as well as initially consulting on the sites that had been put forward for consideration for development. The consultation document did not include specific draft policies at this current stage, instead it outlined the proposed approach for updating each of the policies within Local Plan Partial Update and therefore asked targeted questions to garner stakeholders’ views on the proposed direction of travel. The results of consultation would be used to inform the next stage of the Local Plan Partial Update, the pre-submission draft, planned for August 2024.

The report explained that there had been a variety of changes made to national policy, including a new version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2021 and an updated version of the standard methodology for assessing housing need, which placed a particular emphasis on the largest urban areas (including Reading) to deliver more housing which was the main reason for needing to conduct the Partial Update.

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The scope and content consultation document also included proposals for additional sites for development or other uses. The consultation sought views on the potential inclusion of all additional sites that had been nominated through the “call for sites”. The report emphasised that the Council had not yet decided on whether or not the sites should be included as part of the Partial Update but that the consultation was the only opportunity to consult on all the sites prior to the production of the full draft document. The report stated that many of the sites in the consultation document might ultimately not be considered suitable for inclusion when the full draft Partial Update was produced. The consultation document therefore included substantial caveats, but nevertheless afforded a vital opportunity for community involvement and to obtain feedback to ensure that any subsequent decision made about the inclusion or exclusion of the sites was as robust as possible.

The report also recommended that some small amendments be made to the agreed Local Development Scheme (LDS). The proposed changes mainly affected the timetable for the production of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), namely the Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD, the Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD, and the Sustainable Transport and Parking SPD. The changes did not alter the timetable for undertaking the Partial Update. The LDS timetable had been amended to ensure that pre-consultation draft versions of the SPDs could be submitted to future meetings of the Committee in 2024. A tracked changes version of the LDS containing the new proposed timescales was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the Local Plan Partial Update Consultation on Scope and Content, as attached at Appendix 1, be approved for consultation;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the Local Plan Partial Update Consultation on Scope and Content in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets, prior to the consultation;**
- (3) That the amended Local Development Scheme, as attached at Appendix 2, be agreed;**

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.52 pm)

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