

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2024**

Present: Councillor Cross (Chair),

Councillors Hornsby-Smith (Vice-Chair), Ballsdon (for items 21-27), Ennis, Griffith, Juthani, Keeping, Lanzoni, Leng, Magon (for items 21-27), McElroy, Moore, Page, R Singh and Terry

21. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meetings of Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 13 November 2023 and 11 January 2024 were received.

23. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Local Liaison Committee on 9 November 2023; and
- Joint Waste Disposal Board on 21 September 2023 and 11 January 2024.

24. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A question on the following matter was asked in accordance with Standing Order 36.

Questioner	Subject
Councillor Singh	Sinkholes and Subsidence Issues

(The full text of the question and reply was made available on the Reading Borough Council website).

25. DRAFT CHRISTCHURCH CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

The Committee considered a report that sought approval of the draft Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal for public consultation between March and May 2024. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2 Draft Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal
- Appendix 3 CAAC 2023 Progress Update

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2024

The report explained that, following discussions over its approach to the historic environment, the Council had agreed to support the setting up of a Reading Conservation Areas Advisory Committee (CAAC). One of the primary concerns of the CAAC was the length of time since many conservation area appraisals had been prepared and adopted. According to best practice appraisals should be updated every five to ten years and many of these appraisals were therefore in need of review. It was subsequently agreed that the CAAC would lead on reviews of conservation area appraisals in consultation with local communities. The Christchurch Conservation Area had first been designated on 19 November 1987 under the Town & Country Planning Act 1971 (as amended) and the most recent full conservation area appraisal had been produced in 2010.

The report explained that the draft Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal was the third review to be completed, following the St Peters Conservation Area review in 2018 and the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road review in 2020. The draft Appraisal had been prepared by the CAAC, with assistance from Council planning officers and from interested local community representatives. The draft Appraisal contained various recommendations for boundary extensions, that included:

- The addition of 1-81 (odd) and 70-72 Whitley Street;
- The addition of the mainly terraced properties at 114-128 (even) Whitley Street and 2-34 (even) Basingstoke Road;
- The addition of Reading Hindu Temple on Whitley Street;
- The addition of 2-40 (even) and 1-27 (odd) Milman Road;
- The addition of 1-11 Glebe Road (odd) and 23-25 (odd) and 12 Christchurch Gardens;
- The addition of 8-26 (even) and 11 Cintra Avenue as well as the green to the east and 32-34 Christchurch Road.

The draft Appraisal and associated documents also included maps that showed the proposed boundary extensions (see above), a Statement of Special Interest that summarised the area's character and justified its designation as a Conservation Area, a detailed appraisal of the area that described its particular historical and architectural character, a section highlighting the area's negative features including various issues of concern and opportunities for enhancement and, a section that made recommendations that were set out in an Action Plan. It also included details of the results an initial public consultation that had been conducted by the CAAC in 2022.

The report asked the Committee to approve the draft Appraisal to go out for public consultation which would take place over an eight week period in March and May 2024. The results of the consultation would feed into a revised final version of the Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal which would be adopted later in 2024.

At the invitation of the Chair, Evelyn Williams, Chair of the Reading CAAC and Richard Bennett, Vice-Chair of the Reading CAAC, gave a presentation on the work that had been carried out by the CAAC to conduct the review and to prepare the draft Appraisal. They also provided a short summary of the progress that had been made by the CAAC in 2023.

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2024**

Resolved –

- (1) That the Draft Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal, attached to the report at Appendix 2, be approved for consultation;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the Draft Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets, prior to the start of consultation on the draft document;**
- (3) That the Conservation Area Advisory Committee’s 2023 Progress Update, attached to the report at Appendix 3, be noted.**

26. AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN REVIEW

Further to Minute 16 of the meeting held on 15 November 2023, the Committee considered a report that provided an update on the outcome of the public consultation that had been held in order to obtain feedback in relation to the proposed Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2029. The report asked the Committee to consider the comments that had been received during the consultation process and sought its approval to adopt a final version of the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). The following documents were appended to the report:

Appendix 1	Summary Report of Consultation Responses
Appendix 2	Graph showing the reasons given for why AQAP will not effectively address air pollution
Appendix 3	Graph showing the additional measures people would like to see included in the AQAP
Appendix 4	Draft Reading Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2029

The report explained that whilst air quality (NO₂) in Reading had improved there were still some locations in the town where air quality levels were above UK and World Health Organization (WHO) limits. The draft AQAP (attached to the report at Appendix 4) aimed to target those locations to achieve compliance with UK and WHO limits and sought to further improve air quality across the Borough as a whole. The new AQAP would continue to focus on reducing nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels in order to achieve compliance and would also target the reduction of Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM_{2.5}) which new evidence had suggested was extremely harmful to health. Measures to address PM_{2.5} emissions had therefore been given considerable weight throughout the new draft AQAP.

The Action Plan had identified the areas where the Council needed to work together with businesses, the public and across Council departments such as Transport, Planning, Public Health and Sustainability in order to improve air quality. The Action Plan set out a range of measures (Table 5 of Appendix 4 refers) that officers had identified for implementation, and which would be worked towards by the Council over the next five years.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2024

The report explained that a consultation exercise had been carried out on the content of the draft AQAP between 6 December 2023 and 17 January 2024. The Council had received a total of 217 consultation responses which had included feedback from residents, an appraisal of the draft AQAP from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and feedback from other interested groups such as Friends of the Earth. A summary of the feedback and recommendations that had been received following the consultation exercise was set out in the report with a further detailed analysis of the consultation results provided in Appendices 1 to 3. Overall, the public consultation had found there to be strong approval for most actions but low confidence in them being effective in addressing air pollution.

As a result of the consultation exercise, some minor changes had been made to the content of the AQAP. A recommendation had been received from Defra to include, in instances where the data was available, better quantification of the impact that individual measures would have on air quality. The report explained that, in line with Defra's recommendation, efforts had been made to quantify the impact that each action would have on NO₂ levels but that this was not possible for some of the transport measures due to the early stage that they were at in their development. Officers had agreed with Defra to use available data where possible and to update the Action Plan as further data became available. Defra had also asked for a definitive estimated year of compliance to be provided in the Action Plan.

The report explained that almost all of the measures that members of the public had put forward for inclusion had already been included within AQAP. There were however some recommended changes to the measures listed in Table 5 of the AQAP. They were as follows:

- The addition of a 'Tree Planting and Greening' measure to the list of action to align the AQAP with the Council's Tree Strategy in order to maximise tree planting and greening along 'tree corridors' (Appendix 4, Table 5.2 refers, Measure Number RDQA26);
- The addition of a 'Council Fleet Electrification' measure to the list of actions to show that the Council intended to lead by example by continuing to upgrade its fleet to low emission vehicles (see Appendix 4, Table 5.1, Measure Number RDQA18);
- The removal of the 'Cross Thames Travel Scheme' measure (previously listed in Table 5.1 of the AQAP as RDAQ10) from the table of actions. It was noted that whilst the measure was popular it was unlikely to be achievable in the lifespan of the AQAP.

At the meeting Councillor Ennis tabled an amendment to the recommended action to retain the 'Cross Thames Travel Scheme' measure (Measure No: RDAQ10) in the list of actions (Table 5.1 of the AQAP), noting that, whilst it was unlikely to be achievable within the lifetime of the Action Plan, the Cross Thames Travel Scheme remained a long-term goal of the Council and so should be retained in the final version of the AQAP.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2024

It was also noted that the consultation results set out in Point 9 of Appendix 1 (Summary Report of Consultation Responses) had been listed using the Council's old Ward boundaries. The Committee asked that when the final version of the AQAP was published that the results be presented using the Council's current Ward boundaries.

Resolved –

- (1) That the 'Cross Thames Travel Scheme' measure be retained as Measure Number RDAQ10 within Table 5.1 in the final version of the approved Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2029;**
- (2) That, subject to (1) above, following the conclusion of the public consultation the Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2029, attached to the report at Appendix 4, be approved for adoption;**
- (3) That the final approved version of the Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2029 be sent to Defra to obtain statutory approval to allow formal adoption;**
- (4) That the final published version of Appendix 1 (Summary Report of Consultation Responses) be amended so that the data provided at point 9 reflected the Council's current Ward boundaries.**

27. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT SCHEMES UPDATE

The Committee received a report that provided an update on the progress that had been made towards the delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes in Reading. The programme included several 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 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 in respect of the BSIP programme noting in particular the continuation of the bus ticket discount scheme and the successful instruction of 'Tap on Tap off' payment technology onboard buses operating in the town. In relation to the bus lane programme. The Committee heard that construction work had begun on the of the Oxford Road scheme (the section between Zinzan Street and George Street) and that work to

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2024

deliver the next phase of the South Reading Bus Rapid Transit Scheme was expected to start in two weeks.

The Strategic Transport Manager also provided an update on the work carried out by the Council, Network Rail and First Great Western to enhance passenger facilities at Reading West Station. The Committee heard that, since the report had been published, all of the approvals to sign-off the upgrade works at the station had now been obtained and that the new station building was expected to reopen for train passengers in a week's time. The Committee also heard that works by Network Rail to install lifts at Tilehurst Station had also started.

The Strategic Transport Manager also highlighted that, at its meeting on 6 March 2024, the Traffic Management Sub-Committee had approved an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to create an experimental School Street scheme on Great Knolly Street for Civitas Academy (Minute 50 refers).

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

28. ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

Further to Minute 6 of the meeting held on 29 June 2023, the Committee considered a report on the changes that had been made to the draft Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) Strategy following the completion of the associated public consultation. The report also sought the Committee's approval to adopt a final version of the Strategy. A copy of the proposed Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy was attached to the report at Appendix A.

The report stated that that EVCI Strategy would become a sub-strategy to the emerging Local Transport Plan (The Reading Transport Strategy 2040) which aimed to address environmental, air quality, and health and wellbeing issues associated with the Council's transport choices. The overarching aim of the EVCI Strategy was to accelerate the transition to electric vehicles (EVs) for necessary travel in Reading doing so within the wider context of the Local Transport Plan and its aspirations to reduce the need to travel by vehicle, reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality and promote sustainable and active travel.

The Strategy set out the background relating to the delivery of EV charging infrastructure and described the future pathway the Council would look to take to support the increased uptake and use of electric vehicles by residents, visitors and local businesses in the town. It included detail on the national policy context relating to EVs, provided a description of existing charging infrastructure in the town, set out the options available to the Council in terms of delivering infrastructure in order to encourage EV take up (both in terms of the types of charging technology to be installed and the funding options and opportunities available to deliver it) and included a delivery plan that detailed how the Council planned to deliver the necessary charging infrastructure in the short, medium and long term. The

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2024

Strategy also included references to the charging infrastructure needs of other types of electric vehicles (not just cars), including electric buses, car clubs, e-bikes and e-scooters.

The draft Strategy had been built around five key objectives. The first objective was to build a Reading wide approach, working with residents and stakeholders to facilitate and encourage the increased use of EVs as an alternative to necessary petrol and diesel car trips, the second objective was to deliver a safe, reliable and equitable charging network, the third objective was to seek to provide renewable energy sources for EV charging, the fourth objective was to embrace and deliver innovation that benefited Reading's residents and the fifth objective was for the Council to lead by example with the electrification of its own fleet.

The report explained that a six-week public consultation on the draft Strategy had taken place between 8 August and 18 September 2023. The Council had received 64 responses, which had included responses from private residents, from local groups such as the Caversham and District Resident's Association (CADRA) and responses from industry bodies such as the Energy Savings Trust. The key feedback that had been obtained from the consultation exercise was set out in the report. Following an analysis of the consultation responses the draft Strategy document had been updated to reflect the feedback that had been received. The key changes made to the draft Strategy were as follows:

- Factual updates throughout the document to reflect the latest data relating to growth in EV uptake;
- Updates to reflect the recent Government announcement that the timescales to end the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles would change to 2035 from the previous policy of 2030;
- The objectives of the strategy had been condensed and more closely aligned with the delivery plan;
- Strengthened statements on social inclusion and the provision of fair and equitable charging rates for on-street residential charging;
- Updates to reflect feedback on issues relating to considering conservation areas and avoiding removing trees where possible to implement on-street EV charging facilities;
- Updated considerations for the procurement of charging infrastructure including the need to ensure future proofing, reliability and quality of service had been built into any future procurements;
- Strengthened statements on the potential for hydrogen powered vehicles, including the challenges of generating truly green hydrogen and the need for hydrogen fuel stations;
- Updates to reflect the recent change in categorisation of EV charger by speed of charger;
- Approximate costings for each element of the Strategy had been added to the delivery plan to give an indication of the level of investment required to deliver the strategy.

Resolved –

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2024**

- (1) That the additions and updates made to the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy in order to reflect the feedback received following the public consultation be noted;**
- (2) That the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy, as attached to the report at Appendix A, be approved for adoption.**

29. ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) CHARGING IN READING TENDER

The Committee received a report on the intention to tender for a suitably qualified and experienced partner in order to roll out an Electric Vehicle (EV) charging programme within Reading. The report stated that any installations carried out as part of the resultant programme would need to be in line with and adhere to the requirements set out in the Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy that had been approved by the Committee earlier in the meeting (see Minute 28 above).

The report stated that the Council recognised that the move to Electric Vehicles (EVs) would result in the need to charge electric and hybrid vehicles on the public highway. The Council had already installed 15 lamp column and six other public 22kW EV charging points in the town and needed to find, through a tendering process, a suitably qualified, approved and experienced partner in order to deliver and expand the provision of EV charging points across the Borough.

The report explained that the tender would call for experienced contractors to deliver a range of EV charging solutions, including lower energy power charging from streetlighting columns or from bespoke charging bollards to various fast to rapid charging solutions within Council car parks or on other Council-owned land with potential charging speeds of 5 to 350kW. It was expected that the delivery programme would commence in Autumn 2024 and would take two-years to fully roll out. The programme would not require any direct funding from the Council, part of the funding for the project would come from the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Grant money (£860K) that had been secured by the Council with the other part being provided by the successful tenderer, either privately themselves or by them having successfully secured grant funding from Government-backed schemes such as the Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund (CIIF).

A long-term, concession-based contract would be sought that would last up to 15-years in order to provide financial stability for both the Council and the successful tenderer. The successful tenderer would own the above ground and below ground infrastructure and would be responsible for its operation and maintenance costs for the duration of the contract. At the end of the contact asset ownership would revert to the Council. Successful tenderers would be required to enter a contract with the Council that would include conditions requiring them to maintain any equipment and apparatus at their own cost. As a part of the bidding process, successful tenderers would also be required to put forward a long-term revenue/profit share or equivalent option for the Council to consider and would also need to demonstrate social value as well as a strong commitment to sustainability targets and carbon reduction principals in line with the Council's Carbon Net Zero pledge and the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy. Furthermore, the Council would also review

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2024**

bids to ensure that its priorities and strategic aims were being met, such priorities included the provision of charging points in socially deprived parts of the town as well as achieving the best possible price per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for residents who paid to use charging points.

The report explained that it was anticipated that the potential income to the Council over the lifetime of the contract would fall below the threshold whereby Committee approval would be required in order to award the contract. Nevertheless, a report would be submitted to a future meeting and in advance of any tender award, to provide an update on the outcome of the tendering process and to, if necessary, seek Committee approval to award the contract.

Resolved –

- (1) That the intention to tender for a suitably qualified and experienced partner to roll out an Electric Vehicle (EV) charging programme within Reading be noted;**
- (2) That any planned installation would be carried out in line with the Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy be noted.**

30. ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) CHARGING ACROSS PUBLIC HIGHWAY LICENCE - TRIAL OUTCOME

The Committee received a report on the outcome of the Electric Vehicle (EV) charging on the public highway trial that had commenced in April 2021. The report also sought the Committee's authorisation to formally permit the Assistant Director of Environmental & Commercial Services to enter into 'Electric Vehicle Charging Across the Public' licences with applicants using the terms and conditions described within the report. The following documents were appended to the report:

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| Appendix 1 | EV Charging Solutions |
| Appendix 2 | EV Charging Application and Conditions |

The report explained that encouraging private vehicle owners to move from higher polluting petrol and diesel vehicles to electric vehicles would contribute towards achieving the ambitions set out within the Reading Climate Change Strategy. However, the nature of Reading's urban environment and its high number of narrow and terraced residential streets meant that, in many parts of the town, many residents did not have any off-street parking which in turn presented a challenge in relation to the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure. It recognised that in order to encourage more residents to use EVs there needed to be options for those residents whose electric vehicles would be parked on the street outside their homes. This necessitated the need to plan for and allow charging on or across the public highway.

The Council had conducted a trial that enabled residents to enter into a licence agreement with the Council to allow them to privately and safely charge their electric vehicle whilst it was parked on the public highway outside their home. The trial had garnered 71

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2024

expressions of interest following which eight properties had entered into a licence agreement with the Council. Of the eight trial properties two had opted for a cable protector solution, two had chosen a drainage channel solution and four had opted for the 'Kerbo channel' slot drain solution. Details of two of the solutions were set out in Appendix 1 attached to the report. The main reasons given by the enquirers who had not proceeded to the trial stage were that they were either still in the process of purchasing an electric vehicle and so were not yet able to proceed and/or that they were conscious that the licence did not secure a parking space in front of their house to guarantee that they could charge their vehicle overnight.

The report sought the Committee's permission to formalise the process for the issuing of Electric Vehicle Charging Across the Public Highway licences. The terms of the licence included a range of criteria and conditions to reduce the risk to the public and to the applicant. A copy of the proposed conditions were included within Appendix 2. The cost of the licence would be borne by the applicant, with the Highway fee for the application set to match the vehicle crossing application fee, which was currently £75. The fee would be reviewed regularly as part of the annually 'fees & charges' review.

The cost of the channel installation and/or cable protector options would initially be covered by money in the LEVI fund, as part of the on-street EV Charging rollout scheme delivery programme. However, once the delivery programme had been completed all new applications would be required to cover the cost of installation themselves. A report on the progress of the EV charging installation programme would be submitted to the Committee on an annual basis and would include details on the uptake of the channel installation and/or cable protector solutions.

Resolved –

- (1) That the outcome of the Electric Vehicle charging on or across the public highway trail be noted;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Environmental & Commercial Services be authorised to enter into 'Electric Vehicle Charging Across the Public Highway' licences with applicants under the terms and conditions described within the report and set out in detail in Appendix 2 attached to the report.**

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.26 pm)