

# Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee

27 June 2024



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
*Working better with you*

<b>Title</b>	Department of Transport Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant Award – Scheme Approval
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Sam Shean
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy & Transport
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Healthy Environment
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. That the Committee note the Department of Transport’s Capital Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant award of £561k over 2-financial years 2024/25 &amp; 2025/26.</li><li>2. That the Committee provide scheme and spend approval for the Department of Transport’s Capital Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant award 2024/25 &amp; 2025/26.</li></ol>

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To inform the Strategic Environment Planning & Transport Committee of the Department of Transport (DfT) Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant (TSOG) Award for Reading Borough Council of £ 561,230.58 to replace ageing and obsolete traffic signals in Reading during 2024/25 & 2025/26.
- 1.2. To obtain Strategic Environment Planning & Transport Committee scheme approval for the delivery of the Department of Transport (DfT) Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant (TSOG) Award 2024/25 & 2025/26 for Reading Borough Council.

## 2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Department for Transport (DfT) published the Transport Decarbonisation Plan ‘Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain’ in July 2021 to set the pathway and key principles underpinning the approach to delivering net zero transport in the UK by 2050.
- 2.2. The Council’s Corporate Plan 2022-2025 sets out the 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.
- 2.3. The Council’s Corporate Plan supports the maintenance of a secure and safe highway and strategic road network to keep vital services moving, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions, whilst accommodating the significant levels of planned economic growth.

- 2.4. The aim of improving the ageing traffic signal assets is to provide an effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service. Our Local Transport Plan outlines investments in walking and cycling initiatives, public transport, and electric vehicle infrastructure that will make it easier for residents to make healthy choices, and feel the benefits of clean, green neighbourhoods.
- 2.5. To make travel more secure, safe, and comfortable for all users of the public highway network and to provide conditions that are as safe as reasonably practical having regards to financial constraints and our statutory duties.

### **3. The Proposal**

- 3.1. The Council has 160 traffic signal sites, including junctions and various pedestrian crossings within the Borough. It is recognised that the Council has an ageing traffic signal asset portfolio on the public highway and strategic transport network that is nearing the end of its maintenance life and approx. 60% of these assets require modernising and replacement.
- 3.2. Many of these traffic signal assets are now obsolete and securing suitable replacement parts is becoming more challenging. These older assets are prone to faults and breaking down, which has a detrimental effect on pedestrian access and traffic flows causing unnecessary delays, congestion, and higher pollution levels. These older units use much higher amounts of energy and many still have halogen type lamps, which use 4 times more energy compared with the modern LED equivalent lamps and controllers.
- 3.3. The Council's Traffic Services secured a 2-year Council capital funding of £400k for 2021/22 & 2022/23 to 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, and to address critical end of life sites needing urgent replacement. While also aligning with requirements necessary to qualify for future funding bits from the department of Transport.
- 3.4. The outcome of the traffic signal assets condition assessment flagged up a total backlog at that time of ageing and obsolete assets of approx. £7.2M.
- 3.5. Funding this backlog 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.
- 3.6. The Department for Transport (DfT) announced in November 2023 that is to award £70m funding for the period 2024/25 to 2025/26 to English local transport authorities with responsibility for traffic signal maintenance and upgrading. Three funds were established as follows:
  - **£30m Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant (TSOG)**, from the Local Transport Capital Block Funding (Integrated Transport and Highway Maintenance) Specific Grant Determination for 2023/24
  - **£20m Green Light Fund (GLF)**
  - **£20m Intelligent Traffic Management Fund (ITMF)**
- 3.7. The DfT automatically allocated £10m of TSOG funding to eligible local authorities currently in receipt of Highways Maintenance Block (HMB) and / or Integrated Transport Block (ITB) funding based on the transport metrics within

the ITB formula mechanism. For the remaining £20m of TSOG and all GLF (Green Light Fund), awarded additional funding in blocks of £500,000 to around 80 local authorities based on the demonstration of appropriate policies and procedures through a challenge process. It is a requirement of Local Authorities to have an up-to-date Asset Database with condition assessment and GIS Mapping Co-ordinates to make any funding bids to DfT.

- 3.8. The Council made a successful bid for the TSOG fund and secured the **£500,000** maximum grant available from the challenge fund element of the award and was also awarded **£61,230.58** based on the ITB formula with a total award of **£561,230.58** to address obsolete traffic signal assets in Reading.
- 3.9. The proposed 12 sites selected for replacement and modernising are all Pedestrian Crossings and have shown to be the sites with the most faults and failures requiring the most reactive maintenance. All these sites have obsolete controllers and halogen lamps and are the highest priority sites following the condition survey assessment. Many have old columns that are starting to fail with several falling over in the last year. The sites are as follows:
  - Site 1 (PR186) Whitley Wood Road j/w Northumberland Avenue
  - Site 2 (PR181) Basingstoke Road j/w Hartland Road
  - Site 3 (PR155) Northumberland Avenue nr Sports Centre
  - Site 4 (PR 178) Whitley Street j/w Essex Street
  - Site 5 (PR146) London Road j/w Watlington Street nr RBH
  - Site 6 (PR197) Tilehurst Road j/w Brunswick Hill
  - Site 7 (PR191) Tilehurst Road j/w Water Road
  - Site 8 (PR151) George Street j/w Queens Street
  - Site 9 (PR172) Oxford Road j/w Selborne Gardens
  - Site 10 (PR173) Oxford Road nr Tilehurst Rail Station
  - Site 11 (PR102) London Road j/w Liverpool Road
  - Site 12 (PR171) Oxford Rd j/w Norcot Road
- 3.10. It should be noted that it is not possible to simply replace halogen lamps with LED alternatives, as the controllers, (the cabinet with the controlling hardware), needs to monitor lamps are working for safety, and the older units cannot monitor the LEDs. All the sites above have older obsolete controller units that require replacement, which will enable the LED upgrades to take place, and this is part of each of these site replacements.
- 3.11. The designs of all 12 sites have been completed during the last financial year in anticipation of a successful TSOG Grant award and following this Committees scheme approval, the necessary Purchase Orders will be raised and works programmed in to commence in January 2025 with a 6-month expected delivery programme.
- 3.12. It is also noted that there are additional and welcomed funding allocations from various Transport and Environmental Health capital grant schemes that may be upgrading and replacing obsolete traffic signal assets as part of those schemes, which will also be addressed in the current budget year including the following:

- Bus Service Improvement Scheme (BSIP) will part fund traffic signal replacements on the bus strategic routes at:
  - (PR116) Oxford Rd j/w George Street
  - (TR026) Oxford Road j/w Beford Road
  - (TR027) Oxford Road j/w Grovelands Road
  - (TR043) Southampton Street Roundabout (design completed, parting funding)
- Active Travel Funding may fund improvements to traffic signals on the cycle lane scheme routes subject to available budget at:
  - (TR046) Castle Street Roundabout with IDR
  - (TR041) Forbury Road j/w Forbury Gardens
  - (TR058) Queens Road j/w Sidmouth Street
  - (TR009) Queens Road j/w Watlington Street
- Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) Grant Award will fund improvements to traffic signal junctions along the A33 at:
  - (TR049) A33 j/w Rose Kiln Lane North
  - (TR065) A33 j/w Rose Kiln Lane South
- If it can be shown that the signal upgrades will result in air quality improvements, £350k surplus JAQU Bus Retrofit Grant would be made available to provide replacement traffic signals along Caversham Road (IDR) at:
  - (TR014) Great Knollys Street j/w Caversham Road (IDR)
  - (PR157) Caversham Road j/w Northfield Rd (IDR) near former Drew site.
- The remaining £400k Council Capital Award 2022/24 is funding traffic signal improvements at:
  - Full Asset Management Survey and Location Mapping (completed).
  - (TR019) Berkeley Ave j/w with St Saviours and Rose Kiln Lane North
  - (TR001) London Road j/w Cholmeley Road (competed).
  - Provision of 30 micro sensors to replace failed traffic loops and improve communications and control of strategic junctions, (in delivery).

3.13. The above capital schemes will assist the Council in addressing the backlog of obsolete traffic signal assets and make a positive impact on traffic flows, reduce congestion, and reduce pollution levels in Reading.

3.14. The Council will continue to actively bid for. appropriate external funding including Department for Transport (DfT) grants to maximise the. of available funding to improve the condition of all traffic services assets.

#### **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 4.1. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
  - Healthy Environment
  - Thriving Communities
  - Inclusive Economy
- 4.2. These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:
  - People first
  - Digital transformation
  - Building self-reliance
  - Getting the best value
  - Collaborating with others
- 4.3. Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website - [Corporate plan - Reading Borough Council](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective, and economical.
- 4.4. The TSOG investment together with the BSIP, BRT, Clean Air Grants & Council Capital Investment will address obsolete traffic signal assets and meet the Council's stated aim of providing a healthy environment, support the economy of the Town, improve traffic flow, reduce traffic congestion, improve cycle safety, reduce carbon pollutants and provide energy efficient assets that will reduce pressure on the Council's revenue budgets.

## **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers), and as such recognises the need to minimise the climate impacts of its decisions.
- 5.2. To this end 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.
- 5.3. A Climate Impact Assessment has been completed which suggests a 'net medium positive' impact arising from the traffic signal improvement programme. To achieve the Council's sustainable transport vision and meet our climate change goals, we will need to reduce car use both within and through the borough by providing attractive and viable alternatives through prioritising and promoting public transport and active travel schemes. However, the Council's Transport Strategy recognises that private vehicle use, car, and van trips, will remain for many the most appropriate mode of transport. Therefore, by improving traffic signal assets and optimisation, vehicle trips can be made to be more sustainable with a lower impact on the environment and climate change as well as reducing the impact of poor air quality in Reading.
- 5.4. 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.

- 5.5. 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, 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.
- 5.6. Efficient traffic signal equipment will result in the improved operation of the network, facilitate movement of pedestrians, cyclists, buses and deliver transport improvements that will reduce the requirement for costly infrastructure schemes. The use of ITS based traffic monitoring equipment will assist in monitoring the network and assist Officers with data to target congested areas. The above will reduce environmental impacts of transport, enhance safety, and improve operational efficiency. In addition, the contract will enable energy efficiency improvements and encourage innovation.
- 5.7. 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.

## **6. Community Engagement**

- 6.1. 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".
- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3. This report will be available on the Council's website following Strategic Environment Planning & Transport Committee approval processes.

## **7. Equality Implications**

- 7.1. 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.
- 7.2. The Traffic Signal Capital programmes for 2024/25 & 2025/26 consists of improvement work to the Council's existing traffic signals on the public highway 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.

## **8. Other Relevant Considerations**

8.1. There are none.

## **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 Traffic Signal Capital Improvement programme will be fully funded by the following:

- DfT Traffic Signal Obsolete Grant of £561,230.58
- BSIP Grant Award up to £ 500,000
- Reading Borough Council Traffic Signal Capital Award £ 400,000
- JAQU Bus Retrofit Grant up to £ 350,000

## **11. Timetable for Implementation**

11.1 The necessary Purchase Orders for the TSOG schemes will be raised in July 2024 following this Committees scheme approval and works programmed to commence in January 2025 with a 6-month expected delivery with provisional completion July 2025.

## **12. Background Papers**

12.1. There are none.