

Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

12 March 2025

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| Title | Formation of a Task-and-Finish Group to Scrutinise the Implementation of the Council's Active Travel Strategy |
| Purpose of the report | To make a decision |
| Report status | Public report |
| Report author | Andrew Wood (Principal Committee Administrator) |
| Lead Councillor | Councillor John Ennis (Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport) |
| Corporate priority | Healthy Environment |
| Recommendations | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That a task-and-finish group be established to scrutinise the implementation of the Council's active travel strategy;2. That the terms of reference of the task-and-finish group, as set out in Appendix 1, be agreed;3. That the membership of the task-and-finish group, as set out in section 3 of the report, be agreed;4. That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee setting out the task-and-finish group's findings and recommendations; |

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report has been prepared following a request made by Councillor Will Cross, Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee, to conduct an overview and scrutiny exercise focusing on the implementation of the Council's active travel strategy.
- 1.2. The purpose of this report is to allow the Committee to consider formally establishing a councillor-led task-and-finish group to conduct an overview and scrutiny exercise focusing on the implementation of the Council's active travel strategy and to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of its objectives.
- 1.3. The proposed terms of reference and membership of the task-and-finish group are set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (SEPT) Committee is responsible for the statutory and non-statutory functions relating to transport within the Borough. Under the Constitution, the Committee is also responsible for the overview, service performance and improvement and scrutiny of all functions for which it is responsible.
- 2.2. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, are set out in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution (pages 133-135 refer). They state that Committees may set up and appoint task-orientated, time-limited task-and-finish groups to undertake overview and scrutiny exercises and report back to the appointing Committee.
- 2.3. Active travel refers to modes of travel that involve a level of activity such as walking and cycling. On 15 October 2024, following a recommendation from SEPT Committee, the

Council adopted the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 as the Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the Borough (Minute 21 refers). The LTP includes within it the Council's active travel strategy and sub-strategies, including the Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. It is proposed that a cross-party, councillor-led, task-and-finish group be established to provide overview and scrutiny focusing on the implementation of the Council's active travel strategy.
- 3.2. The proposed terms of reference for the task-and-finish group are set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.3. It is proposed that the membership of the task-and-finish group be on the basis of 4:1:1:1 (Labour: Green: Conservative: Liberal Democrat). Group Leaders have been consulted and were asked to notify the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services of the appointment(s) from their groups.
- 3.4. Group Leaders have proposed that the following councillors be appointed to the task-and-finish group:

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| Labour | 4 | Cllr Will Cross (Chair) Cllr Andrew Hornsby-Smith Cllr Jacopo Lanzoni Cllr Jenny McGrother |
| Green | 1 | Cllr Josh Williams |
| Conservative | 1 | Cllr Stephen Goss |
| Liberal Democrat | 1 | Cllr James Moore |

- 3.5. The task-and-finish group will be chaired by Cllr Will Cross.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. As set out under the 'Healthy Environment' theme within the Council's Corporate Plan, the Council are working towards a clean, safe town where the need to travel by car is minimised, and where people feel the benefits of clean air and active travel. The formation of a task-and-finish group will help to provide overview and scrutiny of the Council's active travel strategy and will contribute towards this priority being achieved.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. Active travel measures help to reduce carbon emissions, congestion and help to improve air quality by taking private cars off the road. Scrutinising the implementation of Council's active travel strategy will help to ensure that this goal is met.
- 5.2. There are no specific environmental and climate implications resulting from the recommendations contained in this report.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. The task-and-finish group will be Councillor-led and have cross party membership (see section 3 above).

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not considered relevant to the report or its recommendations.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. There are none.

9. Legal Implications

Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules

- 9.1. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules are set out in Part 4 of the [Constitution](#) (pages 133-135 refer).
- 9.2. The Constitution states that Committees may set up and appoint task-orientated, time-limited task-and-finish groups to undertake an overview and scrutiny exercise and report back to the appointing Committee.
- 9.3. When establishing a task-and-finish group the appointing Committee is required to determine the specification or terms of reference for the group's scrutiny exercise. In general terms groups will be charged with carrying out an in-depth investigation into a specific service area or policy or any issue of genuine importance to the town.
- 9.4. The appointing Committee is responsible for appointing Members to sit on the task-and-finish group. Councillors may be appointed to the task-and-finish group on the following basis:
 - the group be small, and focused on outcomes;
 - at least two political groups on the Council be represented on the group;
 - to include at least one Member of the appointing Committee, to be appointed to chair the group;
 - other Councillor members to be agreed in consultation with Group Leaders, and need not be members of the Committee.
- 9.5. Task-and-finish groups are not established as Sub-Committees under the Local Government Act 1972, and Committees will not be expected to make the appointments in accordance with the proportionality rules set out in Sections 15-17 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. There are no quantifiable financial implications as a result of the recommendations at this stage, although the establishment of a task and finish group will have some limited resource implications in terms of staff time to support the process.
- 10.2. Due to budgetary constraints resourcing of the overview and scrutiny exercise will be managed from within existing budgets.
- 10.3. It is intended that task-and-finish group will be councillor-led to minimise the resource implications on staff.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. If established the task-and-finish group will conduct its scrutiny exercise and will submit a report containing its findings and recommendations to the meeting of the Strategic Environment and Planning Committee in November 2025.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Active Travel Task and Finish Group - Terms of Reference.