

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	15 JULY 2019		
TITLE:	ESTABLISHING A CLEANER AIR AND SAFER TRANSPORT FORUM		
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 At Full Council 22 May 2019 a new interest group 'Cleaner Air & Safer Transport Forum (Transport Users' Forum)' was formed. The Council was advised that the terms of reference for the Forum would be agreed at a future meeting of the Policy Committee.
- 1.2 The formation of the group responds in the main to the Council's declaration of a climate emergency. The terms of reference for the group are attached at Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Terms of Reference for the Cleaner Air & Safer Transport Forum be approved as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- 2.2 That the membership of the Forum be agreed at the meeting on the basis that all groups would be given the opportunity to be represented on based on the following proportionality:

(4 Labour: 1 Conservative: 1 Liberal Democrat: 1 Green).
- 2.3 That the appointment of Councillor Barnett-Ward as the Chair of the Forum at the Council meeting held on 22 May 2019, be noted.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 'Shaping Reading's Future' 2018-2021 (refreshed Spring 2019) sets out the key priorities for the Council. The Plan sets out key themes and projects which support sustainability and climate change initiatives including infrastructure provision, revised planning policy to secure high environmental building standards, energy efficiency measures and clean, green and safe initiatives.

3.2 At Full Council on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers), the Council resolved:

'Reading Borough Council (RBC) believes the world is now clearly in the midst of a climate emergency and that more concerted and urgent action is needed at local, national and international level to protect our planet for future generations. As such, this Council commits to playing as full a role as possible - leading by example as well as by exhortation - in achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.' (etc)

3.3 At Full Council 22 May 2019 members received a paper updating on the Council's Constitution (item 9) including an updated Terms of Reference of Consultative Committees and Forums (Appendix C). The report noted that a new group 'Cleaner Air & Safer Transport Forum (to replace the current Transport Users' Forum)' had been formed and that the terms of reference for it would be agreed at a future meeting of the Policy Committee. The Council also appointed Councillor Barnett-Ward as the Chair of the Forum (Minute 11(4) refers).

4. WAY FORWARD

4.1 In declaring a climate emergency the Council noted that it had already set out a number of ambitious policies and actions which will help to pave the way for the delivery of a Zero Carbon future such as:

- 'Zero Carbon Standards' within its draft Local Plan,
- The RBC Carbon Plan
- The forthcoming consultation on options, such as a Clean Air Zone, for improving local air quality and reducing congestion prior to publishing our draft Fourth Local Transport Plan
- The Reading Climate Change Partnership and Strategy - Reading Means Business on Climate Change
- The Launch of Reading Community Energy Society

4.2 In the same motion the Council set out further potential measures that could accelerate the timescale for reducing carbon dioxide emissions to zero by 2030, whilst recognising that this date can only be achieved with substantial policy changes from national government. This included:

- Detailed and practical proposals for retrofitting private and public housing stock, where the Green Deal failed.
- Upgrade social housing energy efficiency to higher standards.

- More support for renewable electricity and heat (and not taxing them unfairly).
- More support for establishing renewably powered heat networks.
- More support for the smart technologies and storage and connecting to local power grids.
- More support for electric vehicle infrastructure and ownership, whilst incentivising the scrappage of older polluting vehicles.
- More national investment in cycling and walking policies, and the expansion of public transport and car clubs using the latest zero carbon technology.
- Working with local businesses to improve their energy efficiency.
- Putting solar arrays on most of the suitable roof space and erecting more large wind turbines.
- Developing local energy storage facilities.
- Establishing national recycling standards on industry and supermarkets whilst supporting the roll-out of food waste collection and its use for the generation of clean local energy.
- Building a town centre district energy system which harnesses heat from local rivers or watercourses.
- Establishing the widespread use of ground-source heat pumps and potentially air source heat pumps.
- Amending local authority procurement powers to require the delivery of carbon neutral environmental strategies by private sector suppliers.

4.3 The Cleaner Air & Safer Transport Forum's focus will be on a range of 'transport' based topic areas that discuss, reviews best practice and seeks to recommend ways forward which, through partnership working, brings about positive change to support the Council's climate change agenda.

4.4 Key topic areas will focus on cross cutting themes around transport related matters such as:

- air pollution
- electric charging infrastructure
- staff travel planning and policies
- education initiatives
- school initiatives

and other transport initiatives which promote sustainability, healthy living, energy efficiency and carbon reduction.

4.5 The new forum will incorporate the work of the Cycle Forum, whilst allowing for an annual 'conference' or meeting. The draft terms of reference for the Cleaner Air & Safer Transport Forum incorporate the scope of the Cycle Forum.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 Given the transport focused remit of the new forum and the scope of its work the forum will support the delivery of the priority to 'Keep Reading's environment, clean, green and safe'. The forum will also support the following Corporate Plan Service Priorities:

- Securing the economic success of Reading
- Protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children
- Promoting great education, leisure and cultural opportunities for people in Reading
- Ensuring the Council is Fit for the Future

5.2 The Forum will also support the Council's declaration of the Climate emergency and The Council's ambition to ensure the town is carbon neutral by 2030.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 Representatives of local community, environmental or transport groups who have a constitution and hold an AGM will be invited to the forum. National interest groups such as Friends of the Earth will also be invited.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 A Forum is not a decision making body. The Forum may make recommendations which the Council would consider at relevant Committee meetings including Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee and the Council's Policy Committee.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to 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 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to the setting up of this group. Any recommendations arising from the group would need to be assessed for any impacts.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There is no dedicated budget for the Forum which will be serviced from current officer resources. Any recommendations arising from the group would need to be assessed for any financial impacts.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Motion to Full Council on 26 February 2019, entitled 'CLIMATE EMERGENCY - TOWARDS A ZERO CARBON READING'.

APPENDIX 1:

Cleaner Air and Safer Transport Forum - Terms of Reference

Duties

- To propose measures to improve air quality across Reading Borough.
- To evaluate, improve and promote transport sustainability across the Borough.
- To influence Council policy and facilitate the development and direction of the Council's sustainability agenda.
- To identify and share best practice in relation to clean and green 'healthy streets' initiatives which promote sustainability, healthy living, energy efficiency, sustainable transport and carbon reduction.
- To identify and develop potential low traffic neighbourhoods.
- To promote and raise awareness of sustainable initiatives within the Borough and to promote improved performance across the Council and its partners
- To extend networking to other relevant organisations and to maintain currency of knowledge and information within the context of transport sustainability and climate change matters.
- To make recommendations to the Council on sustainability and climate change matters.
- Support road safety initiatives, particularly for vulnerable road users.
- To discuss progress and delivery of the Cycling Strategy in order to identify, prioritise and optimise actions to meet the objectives of the Cycling Strategy:
 - To improve the cycling environment;
 - To provide better facilities for cyclists;
 - To influence travel behaviour; and
 - To develop skills and capacity.

Governance arrangements

- The Group will work together to ensure the responsibilities are met. Membership will comprise of officers of Reading Borough Council, community representatives and elected Councillors (see Membership below). The Group is able to co-opt other members onto the group or invite anyone along to the meetings as and when considered necessary and appropriate.
- The Forum will make recommendations to the Council as and when decisions are required It will report the progress of its work.
- The Forum will endeavour to work within and complement existing national and local policy frameworks
- The group will link with other groups both within the community area and across the wider Thames Valley, where this will help deliver its' objectives.
- The Forum will normally act on a consensual basis and in the unlikely event that this is not possible any groups can request that their dissent is recorded

Membership

- Officers and Councillors of Reading Borough Council with all political groups on the Council being given the opportunity to be represented on the Forum. An RBC councillor will chair the Forum.
- Representatives of local community, environmental or transport groups who have a constitution and hold an AGM.
- National interest groups.

Frequency

- Meetings will normally be held quarterly. Additional meetings may be scheduled where necessary.

Review

- The Terms of Reference of the Forum shall be reviewed by Full Council at least annually.