

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
9 JULY 2019

Present: Councillors Barnett-Ward (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Ayub, Carnell, Challenger, Duveen, Eden, Emberson, Maskell, McGonigle, Page, Robinson, Stanford-Beale and R Williams.

Apologies: Councillor Debs Absolom

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 1 March and 22 May 2019 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

3. MINUTES OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meetings of Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 7 March and 12 June 2019 were received.

4. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were submitted:

- Joint Waste Disposal Board of 24 January 2019 and 25 April 2019.

Resolved - That the Minutes be noted.

5. PETITION

Enrico Petrucco presented a petition on behalf of Reading Friends of the Earth, in the following terms:

“I want my Council to adopt a Pollinator Action Plan.

We rely on bees and other pollination insects for so many plants and crops. But too often we forget they need somewhere to live. Your Council plays a vital role in taking care of your local area.”

RESPONSE by Councillor Page (Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport):

I thank Mr Petrucco for presenting the petition.

This Council is committed to keeping Reading’s environment clean, green and safe, and identifies this as a priority in the latest refreshed version of our Corporate Plan 2018-21 approved at full Council on 25th June.

Achieving this priority must involve taking care and supporting the biodiversity of the town, particularly in view of the recently declared climate emergency. The Council recognises that pollinating insects are an essential part of this biodiversity.

Reading’s existing Biodiversity Action Plan dates from 2006, and is now due for review. The Council proposes to commence this review later this year. Alongside a wide range of other elements, this will detail the actions that the Council and other

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
9 JULY 2019

partners will take to take to stem the decline in pollinator (and other invertebrate) numbers. This will be delivered in time to inform actions anticipated to start next year.

As part of the review and updating of the Reading Climate Change Strategy, which is covered under item 9 on today's agenda, I would draw Mr Petrucco's attention to the Natural Environment section and the existing reference in T3SP1.4 on page 11 to aligning our active and long-standing local work with the National Pollinator Strategy.

It is worth stressing the fact that the Council is already undertaking actions to help pollinators and has been for over ten years. This is also covered in my answer to a question to this Committee in a few minutes, and includes the management of approximately 36 hectares of grassland as hay meadow, including the restoration of wildflower rich grassland at Clayfield Copse, McIlroys Park, Arthur Newbery Park and Prospect Park.

In determining planning applications, the Council also requires developers, where appropriate, to plant predominantly native and wildlife friendly species in new landscaping schemes.

6. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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

Questioner	Subject
Councillor McGonigle	Encouraging and Protecting Wildlife in the Borough
Michael Sage	Lobbying Government on the Climate Emergency
Michael Sage	Resources for Tackling the Climate Emergency
Michael Sage	Business Participation in the Climate Change Strategy 3

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

7. PETITION FROM RESIDENTS - OBJECTION TO ENVIRONMENT AGENCY LOWER CAVERSHAM FLOOD REDUCTION SCHEME

Further to Minute 15 of the Council meeting held on 25 June 2019 and Minute 36 of this Committee held on 18 March 2019, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on a petition objecting to the Environment Agency's (EA) Lower Caversham Flood Reduction Scheme. The report explained that EA's Lower Caversham Flood Alleviation Scheme was looking to reduce the impact of flooding to properties and infrastructure in Reading during a severe flooding event and stated that the Council was committed to reducing the risk from Flooding in Reading, in accordance with the requirements of the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 responsibilities.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
9 JULY 2019

The report stated that Council was a consultee in the process but the final design proposals had not yet been submitted to it for a formal response. In the meantime, the Council was working with the EA and would continue to raise concerns that needed to be addressed as part of the design process. The proposed scheme would require Planning Consent and a full consultation process would be required when the scheme was ready for submission. The report confirmed the Council had not committed any funding for this project in its capital programme and that it would be just one source from which the EA would discuss funding requirements. All Planning Applications that were submitted to the Council were vigorously assessed in line with the Council's policies, taking into account the statutory flood reduction obligations and the Climate Change Emergency announced by the Council. The Council would invite the Environment Agency to commence a detailed pre-planning application process and to attend a future Strategic Environment Planning & Transport Committee to present their flood reduction proposals.

(Mr Goddard was present at the meeting and addressed the Committee in accordance with Standing Order 36).

Resolved -

- (1) That Mr Goddard be thanked for the submission of the petition on the Environment Agency's lower Caversham flood reduction scheme;**
- (2) That the petition and its contents be recorded as an objection to the Environment Agency Proposed Lower Caversham Flood Reduction Scheme;**
- (3) That it be noted that the Council would continue to work with the Environment Agency in order to raise concerns that needed to be addressed as part of the design process while recognising the reduced flood risk benefits the scheme would create;**
- (4) That it be noted that the scheme would require planning permission where the proposals would be assessed against the Council's planning policies and other material considerations;**
- (5) That the Environment Agency be invited back to a future Strategic Environment Planning & Transport Committee to present the progress on the Lower Caversham Flood Reduction Scheme.**

8. CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which outlined the Council's progress to date in tackling climate change, work in progress and set out the proposed approach to responding to the climate emergency declaration made by the Council on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). The matters raised in the report and recommendations would form the basis of a report to Policy Committee on 15 July 2019.

The following documents were appended to the report:

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
9 JULY 2019

- Appendix 1: Modelling a Zero Carbon Pathway;
- Appendix 2: Existing Projects;
- Appendix 3: Item 11 Full Council, 26 February 2019, Council Climate Emergency Declaration;
- Appendix 4: Reading Climate Change Strategy 2013-20 Action Plans;
- Appendix 5: Draft Clean Air Safer Transport Forum Terms of Reference.

The report stated that the Terms of Reference of the Committee had been amended to include: 'Climate Change Strategy - To contribute to and adopt the relevant parts of the Climate Change action plan.' A new Cleaner Air and Safer Transport Forum had also been set up. The draft terms of reference were shown in Appendix 5.

The report stated that the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (SEPT) Committee's key work areas would include overseeing actions which would flow from the various 'theme action plans' of the Reading Climate Change Strategy, which fell within its area of responsibility. The report added that the Committee would need to consider a wide range of factors relating to these, including, but not limited to:

- The carbon footprint of operational facilities;
- The opportunity for renewable energy infrastructure;
- Travel and transport plans including cycling electric vehicle charging facilities etc;
- The sustainable design and construction of new facilities/buildings;
- The supply chains and procurement arrangements for services commissioned;
- Communication of environmentally positive behaviours to staff and users;
- The maintaining and enhancing of natural environments;
- The consideration of risks to vulnerable groups (for example fuel poverty);
- The use of natural resources;
- Encouragement and support for educational campaigns;
- Involvement of service users in the Reading Climate Action Network;
- Educational programmes relating to the national curriculum;
- The development of key skills relating to a low carbon, clean growth future.

Councillor Page, Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport proposed an additional recommendation, which was agreed, to ask officers to investigate the feasibility of generating more renewable energy, through solar panels and wind turbines etc and report back to the Committee on any suitable sites that had been identified.

(Mr Kinton was present at the meeting and addressed the Committee in accordance with Standing Order 36).

Resolved:

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
9 JULY 2019

- (1) That the progress made to date by the Council's proactive approach to addressing climate change issues and impacts in Reading be welcomed, while the scale of the on-going challenge be noted;
- (2) That the climate emergency declaration be embedded across all Council services, activities, plans and other relevant work to ensure a fully integrated and systematic approach to the Council's own response to this challenge and the change to the Terms of Reference to include "Climate Change Strategy - To contribute to and adopt the relevant parts of the Climate Change action plan." be noted;
- (3) That the Council work with and through the long-established Reading Climate Change Partnership and Reading UK to align respective strategies to ensure the active participation of residents, business and other organisations across Reading;
- (4) That the Chief Executive be asked to write to the Government and local MPs setting out the urgent need to equip Local Authorities with the policy framework, powers and funding necessary to deliver this critical agenda;
- (5) That all future Committee reports include a section on environmental implications and necessary mitigations, plus the impact of the decisions they would be taking on the Council's ability to respond to the Climate Emergency and achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030;
- (6) That officers be asked to consider options to provide additional capacity to generate renewable energy and report back to a future meeting on any suitable sites that had been identified for this purpose.

9. DRAFT SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the work being undertaken to replace its existing development plans, which consisted of the Core Strategy, Reading Central Area Action Plan and Sites and Detailed Policies Document with a new single local plan to set out how Reading would develop up to 2036. In order to implement the new Local Plan upon adoption, a new Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was needed, which would replace the existing Sustainable Design and Construction SPD adopted by the Council in July 2011. Once adopted, the new SPD would be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The report sought the Committee's approval to undertake community involvement on a Draft Sustainable Design and Construction SPD, which was appended to the report. The outcomes from the community involvement exercise would be taken into account in preparing the final version of the SPD, which would be submitted to a future meeting for adoption.

Resolved -

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
9 JULY 2019

- (1) That the Sustainable Design and Construction (SPD), as appended to the report, be approved for consultation through a community involvement exercise;**
- (2) That, prior to consultation, the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the SPD that did not alter the policy direction, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport.**

10. MAJOR TRANSPORT PROJECTS UPDATE

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing the Committee with an update on key progress and milestones associated with the current programme of major transport and highways projects in Reading namely:

- Reading Station Area Redevelopment (Cow Lane Bridges)
- South Reading Mass Rapid Transit
- Reading Green Park Station
- Thames Valley Park Park & Ride
- National Cycle Network Route 422
- Reading West Station Upgrade.

The report also gave an update on the following unfunded schemes:

- South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (Future Phases);
- Tilehurst Station Access Improvements;
- Third Thames Crossing East of Reading.

Resolved -

- (1) That the progress on delivery of the programme of major transport schemes as set out within the report be noted;**
- (2) That the completion of Cow Lane scheme to unlock the historic bottle neck at Cow Lane by providing two lanes for traffic alongside a continuous shared path for pedestrians and cyclists be noted;**
- (3) That the submission of the Third Thames Crossing scheme for prioritisation by Transport for the South East (TfSE) for possible funding through the DfT's Large Local Major Schemes programme be noted.**

11. EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS PLANS - ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report updating the Committee on progress with the implementation of planning policies concerned with promoting Employment and Skills Plans (ESP). The report stated that the Council had adopted the requirement for ESP under a 2013 Supplementary Planning Document that sought to implement adopted Core Strategy Policies CS9:

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
9 JULY 2019

Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities, and CS13: Impact of Employment Development to improve the work and training opportunities of local people. An ESP requirement was attached to any new development or any regeneration or extension programme where more than 1,000 square metres of new non-residential floor space or 10 dwellings were being created, or where the cost exceeded £1million.

The report stated that Reading UK was the main agent for implementing the policy. The process enabled the developer to opt to enter into a delivery plan, through Reading UK and working with local partners, or to pay a financial contribution towards the delivery of training and employment programmes. The financial contribution was based on a simple percentage of the anticipated construction costs and would be confirmed by a S106 legal agreement which was entered into by the developer before planning permission was granted. In 2018/19, this Committee had agreed a drawdown of cash contributions to a total cost of £205,000 against a plan of activity covering a two year period. In the first year 2018/19 the fund had been used to deliver the activities shown in Appendix A to the report. The report also had attached at Appendix B the details of the programmes to be delivered in 2019/20, which included continuing to work to support local people in self-employment, sector skills, and finding good quality work.

Resolved -

- (1) That the ongoing delivery of employment and skills outcomes, as enabled by Section 106 Employment and Skills Plans, be noted and welcomed;**
- (2) That the benefits of the delivery of employment and skills outcomes to the local economy and in particular to local residents by assisting residents to find good quality, permanent employment within the Borough be noted and welcomed.**

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 8.05pm)