

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 26 JUNE 2025

Present: Councillors Cross (Chair), Hornsby-Smith (Vice-Chair), Davies, Ennis, Goss, Juthani, Keeping, Lanzoni, Leng, McCann, McElroy, McGoldrick, McGrother and Rowland.

Also in attendance via Microsoft Teams: Councillor Magon.

Apologies: Councillors Ballsdon and Moore.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 12 March 2025 and 21 May 2025 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

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

The Minutes of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 6 March 2025 were received and noted.

4. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were received and noted:

- Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Local Liaison Committee on 24 April 2025.
- Cleaner Air and Safer Transport (CAST) Forum on 1 April 2025.
- Joint Waste Disposal Board on 27 February 2025 and 24 April 2025.
- Reading Climate Change Partnership Board on 16 January 2025.

5. 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 McElroy	Hospital Bus Stop in Town Centre

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

6. ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) CHARGING IN READING TENDER AWARD

The Committee considered a report on progress relating to the tender to find a suitably qualified and experienced partner to roll out an on-street Electric Vehicle (EV) charging programme within Reading. The report also sought delegated authority from the Committee

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to authorise the Assistant Director of Environmental & Commercial Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Director of Finance, to enter into a 15-year contract with the successful bidder (with a possible one-year extension) to deliver EV charging in the borough.

The subject of the tender was the provision of a network of EV charging infrastructure across the borough that would support the delivery of the Council's EV Charging Strategy (a key aspect of the Council's Local Transport Plan). The key objectives of the EV Charging Strategy included increasing public EV charging provision to ensure the uptake of EV technology was not constrained by a lack infrastructure and to ensure that that same infrastructure was appropriately distributed to ensure equitable access across the town.

The report summarised the procurement process and explained that the Council had completed stage one of a two stage open procurement process and had shortlisted five experienced contractors to return tenders. The successful tenderer would be required to enter into a contract with the Council to install, operate, and maintain at least 1,500 standard-speed on-street EV chargers, across the town, primarily utilising the existing lamp column power network. In locations where the lamp column power network could not be used, the contractor would be required to install alternative power and charging apparatus.

The report stated that a long-term contract of up to 15 years, with the option of a one-year extension, would be entered into to ensure financial security for both the Council and the successful bidder. The contract would include protections for the Council should the contractor go out of business, that would allow the Council to take over the assets and seek to award a contract to an alternative provider. At the end of the contract the Council would be in a position to either have the units removed by the contractor or seek another suitable contractor via an open procurement process to take over the running and maintenance of the assets.

The successful bidder would be required to secure suitable funding themselves either privately or through the Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund (CIIF), to deliver the installation programme over a two-year period. The project would not require capital funding from the Council but would utilise £766k of the £866k of LEVI (Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure) Grant funding that the Council had already secured from Government. The remaining £100k from the secured LEVI grant fund would be retained to support resident applications for cross-pavement EV charging solutions.

The successful bidder would be expected to cover the risks associated with the delivery of the scheme, including bearing the costs of any on-street charging units that did not achieve the expected usage. Tenderers would be also required to demonstrate social value and a strong commitment to carbon reduction principles within their submissions. The Council would agree the successful tenderer's delivery programme to ensure that the Council's priorities were met, including enhancing opportunities in socially deprived areas of the town and achieving the best possible price per kilowatt hour for residents who would use the charging points.

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The report stated that, whilst the estimated income over the lifetime of the contract fell below that where Committee approval would normally be required, delegated authority to authorise officers to enter into a contract with the successful bidder was being sought from the Committee as the potential total value of the concessionary contract with the provider could theoretically reach over £190m over the 15-year lifetime of the contract. The report explained that an annual rebate of £65K (increasing annually in line with RPI) had been mandated to cover the cost of a contract manager. The rebate would commence in April 2027 after LEVI capability funding for the LEVI project lead had elapsed. The Council had set a gross margin share (revenue minus cost of energy) rebate rate of 3% that it would receive if or when income met or exceeded the £65K (plus RPI) mandatory annual rebate payment figure. Therefore, the Council's direct revenue costs would be completely covered.

Tenderers would be required to detail their approach to tariff pricing within their respective bids, including setting an appropriate tariff ceiling (the current prices for Electric Vehicle charging within the tender returns ranged between 39p/kWh and 85p/kWh). Tenderers would also be required to submit a transparent cost model detailing how their tariff figures were calculated. The successful tenderer would be permitted to request an increase to the tariff ceiling twice a year under the change mechanism in the contract. Any tariff increase would need to be supported by an up-to-date cost model and provide appropriate benchmarking figures to evidence why a price increase was required. It was anticipated that the successful tenderer would need to carefully consider any increases to its tariffs in order to remain competitive with other providers.

The report explained that at years 5, 8, 10, and 12 of the contract the Council could opt to review the gross margin share rate. This gave the Council leeway to make adjustments if necessary. Additionally, if annual income surpassed the £65K mandatory rebate figure the Council could choose to decline to accept the extra revenue and instead channel those funds towards community benefit (eg lower tariffs or expanded infrastructure). The checkpoints were therefore not just financial but offered strategic moments for the Council to evaluate the contract's overall effectiveness, including value for money for residents.

Resolved –

- (1) That the progress made towards the tender to find a suitably qualified and experienced partner to roll out an on-street Electric Vehicle (EV) charging programme within Reading be noted;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Environmental & Commercial Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Director of Finance, be authorised to enter into a 15-year contract with the successful bidder (with a possible 1-year extension) to deliver EV charging in Reading.**

7. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT SCHEMES UPDATE

The Committee considered a report on the progress 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 schemes and initiatives

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that were aimed at encouraging more healthy lifestyles, reducing pollution and carbon emissions, and supporting sustainable economic growth in the Borough.

Each of the strategic transport schemes outlined in the report were fully aligned with the Council's new Local Transport Plan (the Reading Transport Strategy 2040) and its sub-strategies, with the delivery of each individual scheme contributing towards achieving the Strategy's overall vision.

The report contained progress updates on the following individual schemes and initiatives:

- Public Transport Programme – Electric Buses.
- Public Transport Programme – Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).
- Public Transport Programme – Tilehurst Station Accessibility Enhancements.
- The Active Travel Programme.

The report also sought spend and scheme approval as the Council had recently secured a further £1.3 million of grant funding from the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Zero Emissions Bus Region Area (ZEBRA) fund. This was in addition to the £4.7m the Council had already secured from the fund and would be used to expand the electric bus fleet by a further eight vehicles and to provide those additional vehicles with the necessary charging infrastructure. The report stated that Reading Buses planned to deploy the additional eight electric buses on the Yellow 26 route that served the town centre, Southcote, Ford's Farm and Calcot.

Resolved –

- (1) That the progress made towards the delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes, as summarised in the report, be noted.**
- (2) That spend and scheme approval for the additional £1.3m of grant funding that the Council had secured from Government to increase the roll-out of electric buses in Reading by a further 8 electric buses, including the associated changing infrastructure, be granted.**

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.37 pm)