

AGENDA ITEM 6: QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

**1. Councillor Williams to ask the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport:
Vision Zero**

London has a plan to eradicate deaths and serious injuries from its roads and make it a safer, healthier and greener place by the year 2041. It's called Vision Zero and its goal is that all deaths and serious injuries will be eliminated from its transport network.

They plan to do this with a range of different measures including lowering speeds to 20mph, low traffic neighbourhoods, road pricing, and much more.

It's not inevitable nor is it acceptable that anyone should be killed or seriously injured travelling in Reading. When we leave our homes each day, to go to school, to go to work, to go to the shops, we should be safe on our journey.

Can the Lead Councillor tell us his vision for Reading? When will Reading have no fatalities or serious injuries on its roads, and how does he plan to achieve that?

REPLY by Councillor Ennis Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport.

I thank the councillor for his questions and of course we would all like to see a reduction in road casualties and the council has a role in this.

The Council's overall vision for transport in Reading, which includes road safety as a core element, is set out in the Reading Transport Strategy 2040. The Strategy sets a vision to create healthier, greener and more equal communities through the future provision of travel options. Road safety is a core theme running throughout the Strategy; with a range of policies, schemes and initiatives specifically focused on road safety enhancements and education. The schemes have a focus on providing safe roads and pavements that prioritise and encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

Statutory responsibility for road safety is shared amongst a number of agencies, including the council. As part of our duties for road safety I would highlight that every day we inspect dozens of roads and fill dozens of potholes to ensure our roads are safe and issues are resolved quickly. We have and are continuing to invest in our roads delivering improvements and changes to our roads through resurfacing, improved bus and cycle lanes, reviewing waiting restrictions and developing road safety schemes, including low speed areas and physical interventions where appropriate.

Sadly ,despite the generally high quality of our roads, some drivers continue to act either irresponsibly or drive illegally by speeding and ignoring other rules. The primary responsibility for addressing driver conduct lies with the police and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Clearly there are common aims for Reading and our partners and I would highlight that 2024 saw the formation of a Thames Valley Road Safety Partnership (TVRSP) which is a collaboration between the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and those who have statutory responsibility for road safety including Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service, Local Authorities, Fire and Rescue Services and National Highways. Reading are a member of the new initiative. I would flag the objectives which are:

- Identify opportunities to collaborate, align priorities and achieve consistency to provide an improved service.

- Identify where funding or procurement could be aligned to achieve economies of scale.
- Enhance data gathering, data sharing and the distribution of best practice.
- Provide a collective regional voice for road safety to influence positive change.
- Identify possibilities for utilising and sharing technology and software.

Clearly it is in our interest and that of our partners to work together as far as we can. We will continue to be an active and supportive partner.

Finally, in addition, the Council provides road safety education materials for use by primary schools and engages with the GoDrive programme (which replaced the former Safe Drive Stay Alive shows) which provides road safety advice and information for children aged 16 and above.

2. Councillor Williams to ask the Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets: Reading Cemetery Arch

The Arch at Cemetery Junction is a major historic landmark in East Reading and also the main access to the cemetery itself. For many years residents have been worried about the state of the arch, as larger and larger cracks appeared in the stonework, and at last the Council began restoration work at the beginning of this year.

Defects were uncovered by the cleaning work, and the Arch was closed to the public at the start of April. The planned works to the Cemetery Arch had included structural works, a clean, and the gates repaired and returned. These works were put on hold whilst the Council decided what to do next. The Arch has been closed for almost six months.

Residents are contacting Ward Councillors worried that the Council plans to demolish the Arch to save money.

Can the Lead Councillor tell us what the options are for East Reading's Arch, and when they will be taking a decision over its future?

REPLY by Councillor Leng Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets.

A conservation contractor was commissioned to carry out necessary work to address the western elevation of Reading's Cemetery Arch. This was the only area known to require structural work. These planned works were carried out between January and June 2025 at a cost of £100k. It is during these works that further structural defects were uncovered.

An inspection of previously inaccessible loft areas, now accessed from the scaffold revealed further necessary works, including, brickwork inner linings, timber roof structure and lateral restraints between the western and eastern pediments, which will need to be fitted.

Scaffolding has been erected since this work commenced in Jan 2025 and has remained in place with Heras fencing to protect passers-by. This will need to remain in situ until the necessary works are completed.

The cost to complete necessary works is substantial. As a grade II listed structure, the Council aims to protect its heritage assets however funding to carry out necessary works needs to be made available and will be considered as part of the annual budget setting process.

There are currently two options being proposed:

1. Take no further action – this will mean scaffolding remains in situ to protect passers-by.
2. Proceed with the recommended works.

Once a decision has been made, officers will be able to confirm timings of agreed actions.

3. Councillor White to ask the Leader of the Council:
Genocide in Gaza and Berkshire Pension Fund

The situation in Gaza is appalling. MPs have described it as an abattoir of civilian deaths, a shooting gallery reality around aid distribution, and children dying of starvation.

Greens and other organisations ranging from a recent United Nations commission of inquiry to Amnesty International believe Israeli military operations in Gaza are a genocide. Many people here in Reading, including those with family ties to the region, are beyond deeply distressed and are calling for stronger action. Yet the response of the Labour Government, local Labour MPs and Labour Councillors has been weak.

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Greens and others have been lobbying for Berkshire Pension Fund to divest from companies that supply arms or military technology to Israel. Can the Leader of the Council update me on the latest position of the pension fund including: any lobbying she has done on the issue; what action Reading Council's Councillor representative has taken; and how they voted?

REPLY by Councillor Terry Leader of the Council.

I previously reported in response to a question to Policy Committee in July that the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund (which is administered on behalf of Reading Borough Council by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead) had set up a Task & Finish group to review its published Responsible Investment Policy, and that this review would include consideration of a specific statement in respect of conflict-affected areas, and the Fund's approach to new and existing investments in companies with activities in these areas.

That policy reflects that the Fund is a Responsible Investor, seeking suitable long-term investment returns to enable it to fulfil its fiduciary duty to pay benefits in retirement to its over 87,000 members.

The revised Responsible Investment Policy was considered at the Pension Fund Committee meeting held on 15 September 2025.

After much discussion, the committee agreed to adopt the proposed policy, with the proviso that it be further revised to include more specific reference to the Fund's approach to investments related to conflict-affected areas.

The funds asset managers, LPPI, monitor the Fund's portfolio daily against the United Nations list of companies involved in activities related to settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Currently, the Fund has exposure to just one company on the UN OPT list, representing approximately 0.8% of the Berkshire Pension Fund assets. This investment is at the global parent company level, not in the specific business segments identified as active in the occupied territories which constitutes a small fraction of the company's overall operations.

The committee requested that the Fund actively pursue discussions with LPPI (and its partner funds in the pool) about disinvestment from the company included on the OPT list.

Work has begun with conversations between Fund officers, counterparts at its partner funds and the fund asset manager on this matter, alongside considerations of the appropriate wording for the additional Responsible Investment approach statement.

It is anticipated that a further update will be provided at the next Committee meeting on 8 December 2025.

I can also confirm that the Fund now has no exposure to Israeli government bonds through its investment in the LPPI Fixed Income Fund (FIF).

Reading's representative on the Berkshire Pension Fund Advisory Panel participated in both the task-and-finish group to review the Responsible Investment Policy and the Pension Fund Committee meeting at which it was discussed and adopted.

4. Councillor Raj Singh to ask the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety:
Reading Festival

Residents, particularly in my Ward Kentwood, reported extreme noise and vibration during the final night of this year's Reading Festival - far worse than in previous years. The Council's response appears limited to "feeding back" to organisers, which residents feel is inadequate.

Can the Lead Councillor explain what steps will be taken to:

1. Prevent such excessive noise in future festivals:
2. Review whether the current monitoring and noise thresholds are fit for purpose.

REPLY by Councillor Rowland Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety.

Reading Festival is subject to noise limits set by the premises licence; these limits were agreed by the Licensing Committee in 2009 as part of a licensing variation hearing, upon the advice of sound professionals. There is more than one condition limiting the overall noise level to include the low frequency/bass levels. Council noise officers are present throughout the event to ensure that the festival always operates within the set limits.

The overall noise level is continuously monitored at three locations close to the festival site, to represent the nearest affected residents. The low frequency levels are monitored on a roaming basis at one of seven locations, with the location being selected to represent the worst case depending on wind direction and in direct response to any complaints being received.

This year, for the vast majority of the festival's performance hours, noise levels were within the limits agreed and set for the festival. There was one notable exceedance of the low frequency limit, coming from the west of the site which was recorded at one location north of the river on Sunday, for one 15-minute period. That exceedance was also heard at other locations around the town and as such that exceedance is still being investigated and followed up with the festival team to understand why it happened, and how this is to be avoided in the future. Given that your ward is west of the site, largely bounded on the north by the River Thames, it is quite likely that this noise flare could have easily carried along the river and exacerbated the noise levels reaching residents in your ward this year. This breach was indeed concerning but in reflecting overall on noise levels at this year's Festival, this was felt to be an anomaly and not representative of the festival's noise levels as a whole.

Officers noted an increased number of complaints on the Sunday night during the Travis Scott set, when compared to the total number of complaints received over the weekend (23 complaints received regarding the Sunday out of the 34 received overall).

Day	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Tuesday				1	0	0
Wednesday				3	0	0
Thursday (sound check)	0	2	0	2	17	1
Thursday after sound check				3	8	3
Friday	4	13	9	24	7	2
Saturday	7	14	4	11	20	4
Sunday	6	3	5	5	40	23
Weekend general					8	1
Total	17	32	18	49	100	34

It can be noted that the festival this year fielded fewer noise complaints than in the previous two years, due to ongoing works by Festival Republic to proactively address noise control measures by placing stages strategically and utilising other sound reduction methods to significantly subdue noise levels for the vast majority of Reading's residents.

Noise experienced by residents is affected by the type of music, its frequency content, the weather, their location, and their level of individual noise tolerance. Due to those variances, with wind and weather notably, noise complaints do tend to come in from one area one year, and another the next.

Officers closely monitor the number and location of complaints received. These provide evidence to support decision-making about live monitoring locations during the event. However, Council officers can only take note of complaints where the levels are within the licence limits, no action can legally be taken to reduce the noise being experienced at the time of occurrence.

The process to alter noise limits can be changed following an application to review the festival's premises licence, which would then be reviewed by the Committee. Such a review can be applied for by the various statutory authorities, or by local residents or their representatives. The Environmental Protection team, the lead team for noise nuisance, always strives to ensure that the noise monitoring that is undertaken is as thorough as possible, and reviews this each year, however no significant changes are currently being proposed to the monitoring arrangements as they are considered to remain suitable for judging compliance with the licence conditions. The Environmental Protection team, therefore, advises at present there is not a consideration to make such an application for review due to Festival Republic's strong level of compliance with the current licence parameters and their track record to continually engage with us and review ways to reduce their impact on the town in terms of noise and a range of environmental impact issues.

I would urge you and others to continue to feed information into the Council, as it can directly affect the annual refinements the Festival undertakes in terms of noise control. I can reassure you that the close working relationship with our Licensing Team and Festival Republic, is one that continually seeks to reflect on lessons learned and to reduce any negative impacts and the issues that you raise are being addressed as outlined above.

5. Councillor Moore to ask the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety:

QR Stickers on Bins

Residents often report full litter and dog waste bins to Councillors. South Cambridgeshire has introduced QR code stickers on bins so people can quickly report them. Will the Council look at doing the same here in Reading, linking the QR codes to Love Clean Streets ?

REPLY by Councillor Rowland Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety.

I would like to thank Councillor Moore for his query.

This idea has been considered previously. However, it is important to note that Reading Borough Council already operates a well-established and successful reporting process for full litter and dog waste bins through the Love Clean Streets/ Reading platform, indeed the very platform that such a QR code would link directly to. This system enables residents to report a myriad of environmental issues—such as overflowing bins, fly-tipping, graffiti, or street cleansing concerns—quickly and directly to the Streetscene team, ensuring they are logged, prioritised, and actioned efficiently.

Between April 2025 and September 2025, the Council received a total of 11,391 enquiries via the Love Clean Reading app which demonstrates that the Love Clean Reading system is widely used and remains an effective and reliable way for residents to engage with the Council on environmental issues.

Roughly 10% of those reports dealt with overflowing bins.

Across Reading, the Council manages close to 2,500 litter and dog waste bins. All litter and dog waste bins are scheduled to be emptied at least once per week, with many in high-footfall areas—including the Town Centre, district shopping areas, and parks—emptied daily to maintain cleanliness and reduce the likelihood of bins overflowing.

It should also be noted that misuse of public litter bins for the disposal of general household waste remains a significant contributor of bins becoming full or overflowing. This inappropriate use increases collection demands and can lead to the appearance of poor servicing, even when bins are being emptied daily.

Some local authorities, such as South Cambridgeshire, have introduced QR code stickers on bins to allow residents to report issues directly from the location. Whilst this approach has potential benefits, it also presents practical resourcing ,costs and operational challenges alongside concerns around “quishing” (QR scamming). The national fraud reporting centre, Action Fraud, reported “quishing” scams were up 14-fold in the past five years. Thus, having the potential of 2,500 sites around the town with additional opportunities to allow “quishing” to occur, presents a genuine concern that in this case is not considered at this time to be worth the risk, as we have a robust system in place.

The existing Love Clean Streets/Reading app already provides accurate GPS-based reporting, and QR codes would essentially only duplicate that built-in functionality. Given that the QR code would direct to LCS at any rate, this would not provide any benefit over location identification. Nor would it save any time in reporting. I time tested a report of a hypothetical “overflowing bin” myself on the App, and it took me less than 30 seconds to file the report. If I were to have gotten my phone out and into position to read a QR code and have that then direct to the App that I already have at my fingertips, would have only added more time to what is already an extremely agile and quick system.

However, given the percentage of reports as a total of all reports on LCS, I have asked officers to look into the location of that selection on the LCS App drop down menu, instead of in its current

location under “report an issue about street cleansing” which could reduce that 30 second timing even further.

I hope this clarifies our current position that the potential opportunity for “quishing” and given our own resourcing and budget, this is not something that would be worth the “perceived convenience” that a QR code would provide. The Council will, however, continue to monitor the experiences of other authorities using QR code technology and will consider its potential application in Reading should there be clear benefits to residents and service delivery.

6. Councillor Raj Singh to ask the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety:

Alleyways in Kentwood and Tilehurst

Can the Lead Councillor provide details of the alleyways in the Kentwood and Tilehurst Wards that have been identified as hotspots for anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping, or poor maintenance ?

Will the Council also assess which of these alleyways could benefit from gating, barriers, improved lighting, or other safety measures to make them safer and more accessible for families and vulnerable residents ?

Finally, will the Lead Councillor commit to working with local Ward Councillors, residents, and Thames Valley Police to prioritise these sites for future action ?

REPLY by Councillor Rowland Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety.

I would like to thank Councillor Singh for his query regarding alleyways in Kentwood that are a concern for residents along with his concern for alleyways in the neighbouring Tilehurst ward area.

There is no known official “hotspot list” of problem alleys, but we acknowledge that alleyways can on occasion be places where antisocial behaviour or fly-tipping can be of concern.

Reading Borough Council currently manages 49 housing-owned alleyways serving the rear gardens of properties within the Tilehurst and Kentwood Wards and two Public Rights of Way (PROW) per ward: PROW 37 and 42 in Tilehurst, and PROW 01 and 29 in Kentwood. So, without specifics, and in the absence of a “hotspot list” it is hard to provide specifics, and I can answer your question only generally.

The majority of alleyways are gated to enhance security; however, they are not necessarily equipped with lighting, nor are they capable necessarily of being lit. It is important to note that Public Rights of Way and public highways cannot be gated or closed, as they form part of the legal public highway network. Grounds maintenance on both our alleyways and PROWs is carried out twice annually, focusing on vegetation clearance and waste management to ensure these spaces remain safe and accessible.

Outside of these times, residents are encouraged to report concerns around cleansing or infrastructure issues at any time of the year via the Council’s Customer Contact Centre or the Love Clean Streets/Reading App, which ensures that issues are logged and directed to the appropriate service for resolution.

Likewise, regarding issues around ASB in alleyways, residents are encouraged to get in contact with our ASB/Safer Public Realm (SPR) Team directly via our website at <https://www.reading.gov.uk/crime-and-safety/> and/or to attend the West Reading Safer Neighbourhood Forums to flag concerns.

In cases where ASB is reported, the Council works in close partnership with Thames Valley Police and other stakeholders to assess the nature of the incidents and consider proportionate target-hardening measures.

To that, within the last few weeks, our SPR team along with Thames Valley Police and local residents met around issues regarding one alleyway in particular in your ward, and we are looking at potential target hardening to deal with future issues as a result. Earlier this year, a series of ASB reports were received concerning the use of e-bikes within alleyways in the Tilehurst area. Following a period of monitoring and collaborative intervention, the frequency of these reports declined significantly, and those cases were subsequently closed due to a lack of additional reports.

Each alley way and PROW is different, and bespoke solutions must be applied to any situation. The Council continues to encourage residents to report any new concerns through official channels to enable timely investigation. Information gathered from these reports support the Council and Police in identifying the underlying causes of ASB and determining the most appropriate response, which may include increased patrols, improved signage, or targeted enforcement rather than physical gating, or lighting.

Whilst, at present, there is no dedicated funding for large-scale interventions such as gating, lighting installation, or structural redesign, where evidence and risk assessments justify action, the Council will explore external funding opportunities or consider feasible measures within existing operational resources.

It goes without saying , as explained above that we are always happy to engage with residents to find solutions, and should you have any specifics that would flesh out your question, I'd ask you to get in touch with either our Environmental Services or ASB Officers in regards to those in your role as ward Councillor in assisting us in making those connections. And, as you seemed to include your neighbouring ward, that offer likewise extends to the Tilehurst ward Councillors should they feel officers are unaware of any issues.

Reading Borough Council remains committed to working collaboratively with Ward Councillors, residents, and Thames Valley Police to identify and address areas of concern. We would be happy to explore concerns and the potential steps that may reduce ASB. We do, for example have an excellent reporting process (Love Clean Reading) for environmental issues and of course work extensively with the community and the Police on reports of anti-social behaviour.