

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

TO:	COUNCIL		
DATE:	16 OCTOBER 2007	AGENDA ITEM:	
TITLE:	TRANSPORT PROBLEMS IN CENTRAL READING - ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMISSIONER		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLORS CRISP, LOVELOCK, PAGE AND SUTTON	PORTFOLIO:	LEADERSHIP, COMMUNITY ACTION & REGENERATION PLANNING & TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	ADMINISTRATION	WARDS:	BOROUGH-WIDE
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1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 Further to Minute 19 of the Council meeting on 26 June 2007, to present the recommendations to full Council from Personnel Committee (Appointments) for the appointment of an independent Commissioner to chair the wide-ranging public commission to look at the current and projected transport problems in central Reading. Six people were contacted, of whom details of two were presented to the Personnel Committee (Appointments) on 3 October 2007.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the role of Commissioner be offered to Sir Brian Briscoe, former Chief Executive of the Local Government Association;
- 2.2 That Sir Brian be invited to submit his proposals for running the commission, including his proposals for its terms of reference, composition, process and timescale, within a total budget not exceeding £70,000, to the Personnel Committee (Appointments) for further consideration; and the Committee be authorised to settle these matters with Sir Brian with a view to the commission instituting a public call for written evidence within the next month.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The following strategic and policy considerations set the context for the operation of the public commission :

- The IDR was promoted as part of the Access Plan for Central Reading, which is part of the Local Transport Plan, which in turn feeds into the South East Plan
- The IDR was one of three key strands to the Access Plan for Central Reading - the others are completing pedestrianisation and managing access and movement in the town centre (including freight access, and non-vehicular access)
- The Access Plan, and the LTP, are delivery strands for the City 2020 vision and Reading 2020 Community Strategy and the Transport and Accessible Spaces delivery strand
- The environmental impact and benefits of the IDR should be considered in the context of the Reading 2020 Community Strategy and its Greener and Cleaner Environmental strand.

#### 4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Full Council, on 26 June 2007, resolved to adopt as its present policy the statement on the one-way IDR made by Councillor Crisp at Cabinet on 4 June 2007, which included the following proposal:

“We intend to set up a wide-ranging public commission, with an independent chair, which will look at both the current and projected traffic problems in central Reading and at any proposals for the further development of the Traffic and Access strategy for Reading, which would include environmental benefits. We would also employ a range of methods to allow residents and other interested parties to feed into the commission, including, for example, a local Citizens’ jury, independent surveys of public opinion, the Council’s own scrutiny process and also invite proposals from local residents and organisations, including any from the opposition parties. It would be up to the independent chair how the commission was organised and how long would be needed to conclude its work.”

- 4.2 Cabinet on 9 July 2007 agreed (Minute 47) to ask the Personnel Panel (Appointments) to coordinate and agree the person specification and selection process for the independent Commissioner, and to propose for discussion with the Commissioner the scope and terms of reference and timescale and budget for the Commission’s operation, for recommendation on to Council on 16 October 2007.
- 4.3 Cabinet on 24 September 2007 received a progress report on the Commissioner’s appointment.

#### 5. THE COMMISSIONER

- 5.1 Following the meeting on 9 July 2007, officers drew up a long-list of 14 possible names, following informal consultation with the local business community and the South-East England Regional Assembly (SEERA), which was reduced to a working list of six names, to whom the Chief Executive wrote in

early August 2007. Three of the people contacted expressed an interest in being considered, and provided their CVs.

- 5.2 The Chief Executive and I discussed the three people with the three Group Leaders in early September 2007, who indicated their support for the Chief Executive entering into further discussions with the three interested people to establish their experience, interest, cost and availability, together with an indication of how they would approach the exercise. No other names were suggested. One of the three people subsequently withdrew from the process.
- 5.3 The Chief Executive reported back to the Personnel (Panel Appointments) on 3 October 2007 on the results of her discussions, and presented the Panel with the following information on the two remaining candidates:
- o their curricula vitae
  - o their costs and availability
  - o their outline proposal on how they would run the commission
- 5.4 The Panel was composed of three Group Leaders, the Deputy Leader, and the Chair of the Corporate, Community and External Affairs Scrutiny Panel.
- 5.5 Having considered the information presented by the Chief Executive, the Panel is recommending Sir Brian Briscoe to the Council for appointment as the independent Commissioner. Sir Brian has recently retired as Chief Executive of the Local Government Association, in which post he served from 1996 to 2006, having previously been Chief Executive of Hertfordshire County Council (1990-96) and County Planning Officer for Kent (1988-90). He is a qualified planner (RTPI), and has a first-class degree in Geography from Cambridge University.

## 6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- To Develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley
- To promote social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all

## 7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 Sir Brian had proposed that he should chair a commission of three people (including himself), which will operate to the following outline timetable:

2007	
October	Review of existing reports and background papers
November - December	Public call for written evidence
2008	
January - March	Oral hearings from people submitting written evidence (by invitation)
April - June	Evaluation of evidence submitted
June	Report back to Council

**8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Commissioner will operate under the provisions of Section 2 of the local Government Act 2000 (power of well-being).

**9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Personnel Committee (Appointments) has recommended that a fixed budget of £70,000 should be set for the exercise. This will include the fees paid both to Sir Brian and to the other two commissioners, together with all other expenses. These are matters for the Personnel Committee (Appointments) still to agree with Sir Brian. In addition, the Council will provide some 'in kind' support, including assistance from the Communications Team, and from Committee Services.

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

City 2020 Vision  
Reading 2020 - Community strategy  
Local Development Plan  
Access Plan for Central Reading