

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

TO:	CABINET		
DATE:	9 JULY 2007	AGENDA ITEM:	28A
TITLE:	TRAFFIC IMOVEMENT IN CENTRAL READING - ARRANGEMENTS FOR PROPOSED COMMISSION		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR CRISP	PORTFOLIO:	PLANNING & TRANSPORT
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1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 Further to the debate at Council on 25 June 2007, this report proposes a process to begin to implement the statement, made originally at Cabinet on 4 June 2007, 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 proposals for the ongoing development of the Traffic and Access strategy for Reading, which would include environmental benefits.
- 1.2 The statement said that the Council 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.
- 1.3 The statement was the subject of a motion to full Council on 26 June 2007, which resolved to adopt the statement as its present policy, subject to an amendment to reserve to full Council the responsibility for the ultimate decisions on any measures proposed by the commission, including satisfying itself that any scheme is acceptable to the people of Reading.
- 1.4 The resolution of full Council on 26 June 2007 is attached at **Appendix A**.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Personnel Panel be asked 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 full Council on 16 October 2007.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The motion to full Council concerned traffic problems and congestion in central Reading, and the working of the Inner Distribution Road. Full Council, on 5 September 2006, agreed the policy of converting the IDR to one-way working, in an anti-clockwise direction, as part of a package of measures set out in the Access Plan for Central Reading to address these problems. The required traffic orders to implement this decision were agreed by Cabinet on 25 September 2006, and again by Cabinet on 19 March 2007. They have been the subject of two legal challenges by Wokingham Borough Council, and have not yet been activated.

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

- The IDR has been 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 is 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 The Personnel Panel will need to address the following key issues:

- 1) terms of reference, and the brief to be given to the Commissioner
- 2) person specification and process of selection
- 3) terms to be offered and duration

4.2 Consideration will also need to be given to:

- 1) operation
 - proposals for wider public consultation (citizen's juries, independent public opinion surveys, scrutiny)

- presentation of evidence
- how will the Council be engaged in the commission process?
- access to independent advice

2) budget and costs

3) timescale

4) overall coordination and support

5. 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

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 This will be a matter to settle with the independent Commissioner.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The public commission process has the potential to prove costly, and there is no budget provision for such an exercise. The Personnel Panel will need to give consideration to areas of potential cost, and whether the authority should set a fixed budget which would then be given to the independent Commissioner.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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