

CABINET – 22 JUNE 2021

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions	Answers
<p>1. COUNCILLOR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW</p> <p>The Third Reading Bridge – which would extend the A329(M) into Oxfordshire – is an environmentally damaging proposal driven by Berkshire authorities and is contrary to all our climate change objectives.</p> <p>In 2019 I brought a motion to Full Council stating that should it be built, it should be restricted to public transport, cyclists and pedestrians – it was passed overwhelmingly.</p> <p>Since then, there have been many developments. Of particular interest is Reading Borough Council's desire to link this bridge to an equally environmentally damaging 'North Reading Orbital' which, despite its name, would be located entirely in Oxfordshire.</p> <p>What is the current status of the joint statement by the Cross Thames Travel Group that was due to be issued last January but was put on hold because of an admirably robust objection from the SODC Leader Sue Cooper, and what is the status of the Outline Business Case funding bid which ground to a halt because of Sue's objection?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DUNCAN ENRIGHT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRAVEL AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</p> <p>This project has paused due to a number of reasons but mainly due to feedback from the DfT on details within the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). The DfT wish to see updated transport data and also a refresh of the original SOBC. An update of the SOBC is expected to be quite costly and will not be funded by the DfT. Therefore there is a need to identify funding locally and this has not been forthcoming. The DfT is also keen that any future bids/SOBC which will be submitted have the support of all of the authorities affected. Further work on the SOBC would give the authorities the opportunity to continue to work together to look in detail at the options being assessed.</p> <p>Now local elections have happened officers can see if Members would like to discuss this issue again with the view of getting further updates on the project and also have another Cross Thames Officers working Group.</p>

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<p>2. COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS</p> <p>Can Cllr Bearder assure me that changing the speed limit to 20 mph for the whole of the Botley Road Corridor Scheme from the City 20 mph zone to the Eynsham Road junction with West Way will go out to consultation before phase 6 is started?</p> <p>Can Cllr Bearder agree that a bus service between Oxford and Newbury, preferably using green technology, will be evaluated as part of the evolving Bus Strategy?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS MANAGEMENT</p> <p><i>Yes, this will go out to consultation.</i></p> <p><i>In regard to the bus service between Oxford and Newbury. A roundtable event, hosted by the MP for Newbury, was held on 15 June to discuss the potential for a bus service between Newbury and Oxford. This was attended by Cllr Roberts, officers from Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Councils, and representatives from bus operators and the Berkshire LEP.</i></p> <p><i>Following the event, officers are investigating the possibility of undertaking a joint feasibility study into the potential costs and revenues associated with such a service and are awaiting a response from West Berkshire as to whether they are willing to contribute. In addition, the Council has secured Section 106 funds from Harwell Campus to provide such a link which could be supplemented by funds through the forthcoming Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).</i></p> <p><i>Over the summer both councils will be considering options for our respective BSIPs and there was broad agreement at the roundtable that this would be a potential candidate for inclusion, possibly as a jointly-funded project.</i></p> <p><i>Whilst the potential for future hydrogen operation of services in the Didcot area was discussed at the roundtable, the significant associated costs mean that this could only be done on a depot basis and not for individual routes, and battery electric buses would be unsuitable for the range and terrain. Therefore diesel buses will need to be used, at least for an initial period.</i></p>