

POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 9 APRIL 2018

Present: Councillor Lovelock (Chair)

Councillors Duveen, Eden, Ennis, Gavin, Hacker, Hopper, Hoskin, Jones, Page, Skeats, Stevens, Terry and White.

85. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved -

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of item 86 below as it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

86. HOUSING BENEFITS/COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME - RISK BASED VERIFICATION POLICY 2018/19

The Chief Executive submitted a report proposing to continue the use of a Risk Based Verification process in 2018/19 to verify evidence requirements to support claims for both Housing Benefit payments and Council Tax Support awards, as recommended by the Department of Works and Pensions. The Risk Based Verification Policy 2018/19 was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report noted that the principles of the Council's risk based verification policy principles remained unchanged and that guidance to staff had been updated to reflect changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme.

Resolved -

That the Council continue using a Risk Based Verification approach to evidence for Housing Benefit and Council Tax support for 2018/19.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 7).

87. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

88. QUESTIONS

Questions on the following matters were submitted by members of the public:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Roger Lightfoot	Capital Programme - new swimming pools	Cllr Lovelock
2.	Peter Burt	Bids for Arthur Hill Pool	Cllr Lovelock

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3.	Luke Coltman	Student Housing	Cllr Ennis
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(The full text of the questions and responses was made available on the Reading Borough Council website).

89. THE HEIGHTS SCHOOL TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

The Director of Children's Services, Education and Early Help submitted a report setting out a proposal to purchase additional temporary accommodation for The Heights School, currently based at Gosbrook Road. A site plan of the proposed development was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the current age range at The Heights School was Reception to Year 4, and that as the school grew to incorporate Years 5 and 6 the existing accommodation would be insufficient to accept future intake of Reception pupils. It was therefore proposed to provide new two-storey accommodation for 100 primary aged pupils, together with associated administrative and specialist small teaching (breakout) spaces and toilets, to allow a further two years of pupil intake (50 per annum). Officers had secured agreement from the Birmingham Catholic Diocese and the governors at St Anne's Primary School for the proposed location on part of the St Anne's school playing field, which was owned by the Council. To restrict the impact on St Anne's school the footprint of the new building and land for circulation and informal play would be kept to the minimum required.

The report noted that the ESFA were continuing to seek to develop a site for The Heights School at Mapledurham Playing Fields, but the process to secure a suitable agreement and planning permission had been protracted and a permanent school was unlikely to be available within the next two years. The ESFA had agreed to part fund the cost of the new temporary building, estimated at £1.266m, with a capital grant of £450,000, payable on the signing of a lease at the point of the building being completed in August 2018.

The report proposed that the Council enter into a contract with REDS10 (UK) Ltd, who had built the existing temporary building, to design and build the additional temporary block. The company had the advantage of having detailed knowledge of the site including relevant surveys, and had agreed to provide the new building at costs equivalent to those originally charged to the ESFA. It would be necessary to gain planning permission in respect of both the continued siting of the existing temporary accommodation, and for the additional new temporary building.

The report explained that the lease agreement would not restrain the Council in re-using the accommodation elsewhere after the expiry of the lease period, and that on completion of use by The Heights School the building could be used for further temporary usage, relocated or sold on, depending on the Council's need for temporary accommodation at that time. Likely uses for the building would include the provision of temporary secondary school capacity ahead of the completion of a new permanent secondary school, or additional SEND or primary school capacity.

Resolved -

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- (1) That the proposal to work with the Education Skills Funding Authority (ESFA) to deliver additional temporary accommodation for The Heights School be approved;**
- (2) That the proposal to enter a contract with REDS10 (UK) Ltd to carry out the design, build, and supply of temporary modular accommodation for The Heights School be approved in the estimated sum of £1.266 million including fees, abnormal costs, in accordance with contract procedure rule 4 (2) (a), noting that the development was subject to gaining planning permission;**
- (3) That the proposal for the Council to enter into a lease agreement with the ESFA to occupy the modular accommodation be approved;**
- (4) That approval be given to making an application to the Secretary of State for Education for a General Consent to temporary change of use for part of the Playing Field at St Anne's to accommodate the new building.**

(Councillors Duveen, Gavin, Hopper and Page declared an interest in this item, left the meeting and took no part in the debate or decision. Nature of interest: the Councillors were members of the Planning Applications Committee which had considered an application for a permanent site for the school. Councillor Hoskin declared an interest in this item, left the meeting and took no part in the debate or decision. Nature of interest: Councillor Hoskin was a member of The Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee. Chris Brooks, Head of Legal and Democratic Services declared an interest in this item, left the meeting and took no part in advising the Committee. Nature of interest: Chris Brooks had advised The Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee.)

90. PUBLIC HEALTH BUDGET 2018/19

The Director of Adult Care and Health Services submitted a report setting out for approval the proposed Public Health budget for 2018/19. A detailed budget position for programmes funded from the Public Health Grant was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the proposed budget took into account the national grant reduction of 2.5% and the action the Council would take to manage the reduced allocation in funding. In addition it included savings agreed in previous years and those arising from the 2018-19 to 2020-21 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which had been agreed by full Council on 28 February 2018 (Minute 34 refers). The savings would not result in reduced spend on Public Health in absolute terms, though there would be a re-allocation of Public Health funding to Council directorates to meet public health outcomes in different ways. It was intended to refocus the use of Public Health funding by relying less on services historically funded through Public Health, and funding services in other directorates to impact positively on Public

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Health in the broader context. The proposals were also targeted to at least maintain the Council's position in terms of key public health indicators.

Resolved -

- (1) That the reduction in national grant of 2.5% for the Public Health budget and the action the Council was taking to manage the reduced funding allocation be noted;**
- (2) That the list of savings from the Public Health budget as set out in the table be agreed;**
- (3) That the programmes to be funded from the Public Health Grant for 2018/19 as set out in Appendix 1 be approved, whilst noting that the services detailed in the table at paragraph 4.5 would be negatively impacted to deliver the services within the reduced Public Health budget;**
- (4) That the Director of Adult Care & Health Services, in consultation with the Director of Public Health and the Lead Councillor for Health (and other relevant Lead Councillors as appropriate) be authorised to re-allocate funding and savings from within the Public Health Budget grant for health-related services, where doing so would be in line with the corporate priorities of the Council.**

91. RESILIENCE CONTRACT FOR REVENUES AND BENEFITS SERVICES

The Chief Executive submitted a report setting out proposals to enter into a contract for the provision of ongoing resilience and quality checking services for the Revenues and Benefits Service.

The report explained that the resilience and quality checking services were currently provided by Capita, and supported the delivery of the overall workload in the Revenues and Benefits service, particularly related to the assessment of Housing Benefit entitlement and ongoing amendments such as change of circumstances. Current and future projected workloads meant that there would be an ongoing requirement for the provision of these services, to ensure that residents received Housing Benefits entitlement in a timely and efficient manner.

Resolved -

That the Council enter into contract with Capita Business Services Ltd for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, with a value that not exceeding £181,302, to provide Revenues and Benefits resilience and quality checking services.

(Councillors Hacker and Hoskin declared an interest in this item, left the meeting and took no part in the debate or decision. Nature of interest: the Councillors were employed by Capita.)

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(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 7.18pm).

SIGNED:

DATE: