

8 November 2016

To: Councillor James (Chair);
Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom,
Davies, Dennis, Kelly Edwards, Gittings,
Grashoff, McDonald, McGonigle, O'Connell,
Steele, Terry, Tickner and Rose Williams.

Your contact is: Amy Bryan - Committee Services

**NOTICE OF MEETING - HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE -
16 NOVEMBER 2016**

A meeting of the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee will be held on Wednesday 16 November 2016 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading.

AGENDA

	WARDS AFFECTED	PAGE NO
1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the items for consideration.		-
2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE HELD ON 5 JULY 2016		1
3. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES Community Safety Partnership - 22 September 2016		8
4. PETITIONS Petitions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been received by Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.		-

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5.	<p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS</p> <p>Questions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee’s Powers & Duties which have been submitted in writing and received by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.</p>		-
6.	<p>DECISION BOOK REFERENCES</p> <p>To consider any requests received by the Monitoring Officer pursuant to Standing Order 42, for consideration of matters falling within the Committee’s Powers & Duties which have been the subject of Decision Book reports.</p>		-
7.	<p>RIVERMEAD: SERVICE AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE</p> <p>To receive a presentation from GLL updating the Committee on service and developments at Rivermead Leisure Centre.</p>	BOROUGHWIDE	-
8.	<p>CULTURE AND HERITAGE IN READING</p> <p>This report provides an update on the range of culture and heritage projects and initiatives underway in Reading as Reading’s Year of Culture 2016 enters its final two months.</p>	BOROUGHWIDE	12
9.	<p>WASTE MINIMISATION STRATEGY UPDATE</p> <p>This report provides an update on the progress achieved in the first half of year 2 of the Waste Minimisation Strategy 2015 - 2020 Action Plan.</p>	BOROUGHWIDE	29
10.	<p>PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR CHARTER - UPDATE ON PROGRESS</p> <p>This report updates the Committee on the progress made in delivering the Private Rented Sector (PRS) Charter action points.</p>	BOROUGHWIDE	72
11.	<p>HOUSING REGISTER - RE-REGISTRATION EXERCISE</p> <p>This report sets out the results of the Housing Register re-registration exercise, which the Council conducted for applicants on the Housing Register in preparation for the introduction of a new housing allocations IT system.</p>	BOROUGHWIDE	81
12.	<p>HOMELESSNESS: UPDATE ON DEMAND PRESSURES AND</p>	BOROUGHWIDE	85

ACTIONS TO MITIGATE

This report sets out the pressures facing the local housing authority and the approach to helping those with housing needs. The report also provides an update on the work carried out to manage the homelessness crisis and proposes future activity to help prevent and address arising need.

13. MEETING HOUSING NEED FOR HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY THE BENEFIT CAP BOROUGHWIDE 13

This report considers the impact of the further reduction of the cap to the amount of benefits paid to non-working households in Reading and provides options for responding to these changes and helping households affected.

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HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
5 JULY 2016

Present: Councillor James (Chair);
Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Davies, Dennis, Kelly Edwards, Gittings, Grashoff, McGonigle, O'Connell, Steele and Terry.

Apologies: Councillors McDonald, Tickner and Rose Williams.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of 16 March 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were submitted:

- Community Safety Partnership - 13 January 2016 and 13 April 2016.

Resolved - That the Minutes be received.

3. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

A Question on the following matter was submitted, and answered by the Lead Councillor:

Questioner	Subject
Councillor McGonigle	Dog Warden

(The full text of the question and reply was made available on the Reading Borough Council website.)

4. LOVE CLEAN READING 2

Sam Shean, Streetcare Services Manager, gave a presentation the Love Clean Reading 2 programme. 'LCR2' is the second Love Clean Reading programme where several Reading Borough Council teams were brought together to deep clean streets, alleyways and towpaths around Reading that were hard to tackle due to parked cars or other access issues. Residents were invited to take part in four community events as part of this initiative. The second Love Clean Reading programme started in November 2015, just after the original scheme won a national Clean Britain Award, and was completed in April 2015.

Resolved - That Sam Shean be thanked for his presentation.

5. SOCIAL HOUSING SOLAR PROJECT

Reubena Ovuorie, Principal Property Development Officer, gave a presentation on the social housing solar project, which saw Solar Panels installed on social housing stock across the Borough. The presentation covered the project expectations and

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
5 JULY 2016

achievements, the installation process, tenant feedback, solar performance, income generation and the on-going risks. Reubena reported that solar panels had been installed on 457 Council houses, producing enough power for around 280 homes.

Resolved - That Reubena Ovuorie be thanked for her presentation.

6. READING YEAR OF CULTURE 2016

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that provided an update on Reading's Year of Culture 2016 as it was approximately half-way through the year. The report gave a summary of the background to the Year of Culture, the activity to date and the planned activity through to the end of the calendar year. The report also emphasised that the Year of Culture was not an end in itself but an initial stage in a sustained programme to raise Reading's profile and reputation and to deliver the aspiration of the Culture and Heritage Strategy.

The report also referenced the potential legacy of the Year of Culture, the strong support from Arts Council England (ACE) for strategic ambition and some key activities and work programmes to help make further progress.

The report stated that the concept for the Year of Culture was to umbrella the diverse and extensive range of cultural activity and events already taking place and supplement these with 12 monthly 'Pillar' activities and themes. An outline of the 'Pillars' and a programme of activities was attached to the report at Appendix 1. An interim evaluation, which was submitted to Arts Council England as a condition of the grant funding, was attached to the report at Appendix 2. The 48 grants awarded to local organisations to directly support delivery were listed and summarised in Appendix 3. A list of current sponsors of the Year of Culture were attached to the report at Appendix 4. The July to September What's On Summer Guide was attached to the report at Appendix 5.

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Hacker addressed the Committee.

Resolved -

- (1) That the significant progress made in developing and delivering the Year of Culture 2016 to date, as set out in section 4.1 of the report, be noted;
- (2) That the proposed programme for the remainder of the Year of Culture as outlined in Appendix I, be noted and welcomed;
- (3) That the proposals and work streams to provide a legacy from the Year of Culture as set out in section 4.2 of the report, be welcomed and endorsed.

7. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2016-2021

Further to Minute 13 of the meeting held on 18 November 2015, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which presented the final Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021, which was attached to the report at Appendix

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
5 JULY 2016

1 and the Delivery Plan, which was attached to the report at Appendix 2. The report stated that the Homelessness Strategy established the Council's priorities in order to prevent homelessness and to ensure that appropriate accommodation and support was available for people who were or may become homeless.

The report stated that the final stage of consultation had run from 27 January to 23 March 2016. The report included the results of the consultation and details of the revisions made to the final draft of the strategy document. The consultation questions were attached to the report at Appendix 3 and a summary of consultation responses was attached to the report at Appendix 4.

Resolved -

- (1) That the findings of the final Homelessness Strategy consultation be noted;
- (2) That the final Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 and Delivery Plan be approved.

8. HOUSING ANNUAL REPORT

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report, which set out the work, achievements and performance of the Housing Service over the last financial year and key areas of work for the next 12 months.

The report stated that the Housing Service broadly consisted of Housing Needs, Tenant Services, Sheltered Housing and Housing Property Services (repairs and maintenance). The report set out the key challenges which the service had faced over the past year, mainly around the increase in homelessness and welfare reform and how the service had responded to these challenges.

The report also set out the key achievements of the service in 2015-16, which was a year of high demand on Housing Services with unprecedented change. The report also provided information on the Debt Advice Service which helped to keep rent arrears to a minimum. The report set out the performance of the Housing Service across a number of key performance indicators, which showed that the service had performed well and had improved performance in all six key areas of service. How well the service performed was assessed not only on performance indicators but also the feedback received from tenants. A tenant satisfaction survey had been carried out in 2015 by an independent company and satisfaction levels had been up from the previous year. There had also been a survey of all tenants who lived in blocks of flats and who received a cleaning service and the results had shown that satisfaction levels had gone down since the previous survey in 2009 so an action plan had been put in place.

The report set out the key strands of work that would be delivered by the service in 2016/17 and the areas of performance the service would focus on. The report also gave a profile on the planned programme of works to Council homes and the day to day repair services that would be carried out during 2016/17.

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
5 JULY 2016

Resolved - That the achievements, performance and planned work programme for the Housing Service be noted.

9. COUNCIL HOUSING TENANCY AGREEMENT

Further to Minute 25 of the meeting held on 18 March 2015, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out the results of the consultation with tenants that took place during summer 2015 in relation to the introduction of a new Tenancy Agreement. The report also set out the changes proposed to the draft Agreement as a result of tenants and officers feedback.

The report stated that the Tenancy Agreement was subject to a formal and prescriptive consultation process with tenants. The proposed scope and timeframe for further communication with tenants and the introduction of the new Tenancy Agreement was set out in the report.

The results of the consultation with tenants was attached to the report at Appendix A. The Equality Impact Assessment that had been completed was attached to the report at Appendix B. The proposed final Tenancy Agreement was attached to the report at Appendix C. The main changes to the proposed new Tenancy Agreement were highlighted in Appendix D.

The report set out the results of the consultation. Of the 1417 completed surveys forms that had been returned, 93% of tenants found the new Agreement layout easy to follow, 96% said it was easy to understand, 92% agreed it did not contain unreasonable clauses and 91% said they had not experienced problems not covered by the conditions in the Agreement.

The report stated that following approval the next stage would be to issue a formal Notice of Variation which would be served on all tenants. The Notice would detail any changes that had been made to the Tenancy Agreement and would include a date (no less than four weeks following the serving of the Notice) when the new Tenancy Agreement would become effective. The Notices of Variation were likely to be served during summer 2016.

Resolved -

- (1) That the results of the consultation on the proposed new Tenancy Agreement be noted;
- (2) That the further minor changes to the proposed new Tenancy Agreement and other recommendations identified as a result of the consultation (as set out in Section 4 of the report) be approved;
- (3) That the serving of a Housing Act 1985 Section 103 Variation Notice on tenants formally introducing the new Tenancy Agreement be approved.

10. RE3 WASTE STRATEGY

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which informed the Committee that the re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board had adopted a new

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
5 JULY 2016

waste strategy which was intended as a practical response to the two main waste disposal challenges facing the partnership in 2016 and beyond. These were the need to reduce costs and to achieve the 50% recycling target set by the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 (transposing from the revised EU Waste Framework Directive (2008)) by 2020.

The report stated that the re3 strategy shared the broad aims of the Waste Minimisation Strategy 2015-2020 adopted by the Council in 2015 and set targets for the partner Councils to achieve a 50% recycling rate by 2020. The full strategy was appended to the report. The strategy had four main themes, which were to reduce the net cost of waste, recycle more than 50% by 2020, planning and capacity and supportive systems and communication.

Resolved -

- (1) That the adoption of the re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board Strategy be approved;
- (2) That Councillors and officers continue to work closely with re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board and the other re3 council to achieve the aims of the strategy.

11. WASTE OPERATIONS SERVICE STANDARDS

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out the current pressures on the waste collection service and made recommendations for operational service changes and the adoption of a Waste Operations Service Standard which would make the service more efficient, reduce costs, reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill and improve recycling rates. The service review was one of the high priority actions of the Waste Minimisation Strategy 2015-2020 action plan.

The proposed Waste Operations Service Standards document was attached to the report at Appendix A and the Waste Operations Service Standards Summary was attached to the report at Appendix B. The Equality Impact Assessment that had been completed was attached to the report at Appendix C.

The report set out the main pressures on the waste operations service and it was stated that in order to address the pressures a service review had been conducted and it was concluded that the amount of landfill waste currently being collected must be reduced and the recyclable material in grey bins diverted to the red recycling bins. In order to achieve this some of the current collection practices should be changed and a new Waste Operations Service Standard should be adopted which clearly set out what the Council would collect and the responsibilities of residents.

The report set out the current service that was provided and the main operational changes that were being proposed. The main changes included a closed bin lid policy, no side waste, a one bin policy, the removal of unauthorised bins, rationalisation of the current collection round structure and the introduction of Bank Holiday collections.

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
5 JULY 2016

At the invitation of the Chair, Karen Rowland from the Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association addressed the Committee.

Resolved -

- (1) That the results of the review of section 1K (service redesign) of the Waste Minimisation Strategy Action Plan 2016/17 be noted;
- (2) That the Waste Operations Service Standards documents, as attached to the report at Appendix A and B, be adopted;
- (3) That the existing waste collection rounds be re-configured with the first change being made in October 2016 and with further changes being made as required as of new properties coming on line;
- (4) That Bank Holiday working be introduced from April 2017 subject to the necessary staff consultations being carried out;
- (5) That the Committee be updated on the progress of the changes at the November 2016 and March 2017 meetings.

12. CONTRACT FOR THE PROVISION OF THE FIRST STOP BUS SERVICE

The Head of Customer Services submitted a report which provided details of the procurement process to be undertaken in order to put in place a contract to deliver the First Stop Bus Service and sought delegated authority to award the contract with the most economically advantageous tenderer in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015. The current interim contract with the Mustard Tree Foundation would expire on 8 January 2017 and a full procurement was required to comply with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

The report stated the service had been operational since December 2013 and since then almost 1000 people had been treated on the bus, 83% of those would have required an ambulance to be called or would have gone to A&E and required treatment. The primary objective of the service was to make sure people enjoyed their night out in Reading and it helped to reduce incidents of crime and disorder and admissions to Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments. The bus was staffed by volunteers with the medical treatment carried out by South Central Ambulance Service practitioners.

The report stated that the service also delivered additional functions during the day and was used as an educational resource for schools, youth groups and community groups to offer a mobile health, advice and outreach service to residents. This had included delivering alcohol awareness sessions to Reading school children as part of PHSE lessons and providing free HIV testing outside the railway station.

Resolved - That delegated authority be given to the Head of Customer Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, to enter into a contract with the successful tenderer for the provision of the First Stop Bus Service for a period of three years subject to funding being secured.

13. COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN 2016-2019

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out the Community Safety Plan 2016-2019 for adoption. The report stated that once adopted the Community Safety Plan would run until the end of March 2019. The plan identified three overarching priorities: violent crime, exploitative crime; and vulnerable communities. The Community Safety Plan 2016-2019 was attached to the report at Appendix I.

The report set out the performance against previous priorities in the 2013-2016 plan and the changes in crime focus during this time.

The report explained that Reading's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was required to carry out a strategic assessment of crime for its area. A different approach than had previously been taken, that reflected the changing nature of crime, had been used in the strategic assessment. The priorities had been identified by an assessment against Threat, Harm and Risk and were as follows:

- Violent Crime (night time economy)
- Violent Crime (Domestic Abuse and sexual violence)
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Adult Exploitation (sex-working, human trafficking and cuckooing)
- Vulnerable Communities (Prevent, hate crime and counter terrorism)

The report set out how the CSP structure would deliver the priorities, including who the lead agency was and provided information on the integrated offender management and the drug and alcohol delivery group.

Resolved - That the Community Safety Plan 2016-2019 be adopted.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 8.10pm).

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP - 22 SEPTEMBER 2016

Present:

Cllr Liz Terry (Chair)	Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods, RBC
Steve Beard	Prevention Manager, Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Nicola Bell	Manager, Rahab Project
Anthony Brain	Community Safety Manager, RBC
Geoff Davis	Head of Operations, Thames Valley CRC
Cllr Jan Gavin	Lead Councillor for Children's Services and Families, RBC
Sarah Gee	Head of Housing & Neighbourhoods, RBC
Stan Gilmour	Reading Police, TVP
Tina Heaford	Area Team Leader, Youth, RBC
Cllr Tony Page	Deputy Leader and Police & Crime Panel representative, RBC
Bindy Shah	Service Manager, Early Help, RBC
Lisa Wilkins	Troubled Families Project Manager, RBC
Peter Driver	Committee Services, RBC

Apologies:

Gabrielle Alford	Berkshire West CCGs
Ann-Marie Dodds	Head of Governance & Business Support, DCEEHS, RBC
Jo Middlemass	Anti-Social Behaviour Team Manager, RBC
Natausha van Vliet	Director of Business Development, PACT
Kathryn Warner	Communities Manager, PACT
Nicola Webb	Asst. Chief Officer, National Probation Service

1. MINUTES AND MATTER ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2016 were agreed as a correct record. The following matters of arising were discussed:

Governance Structure for Troubled Families Programme

Further to Minute 1, the CSP discussed the strategic governance oversight for the Troubled Families Programme. CSP was receiving 6-monthly updates on the programme, which was also reporting to the Borough Council's ACE Committee for democratic oversight. There continued to be a need for strategic multi-agency oversight. It was noted that the post-Ofsted review of early intervention would raise questions about the strategic oversight of the Programme.

AGREED: That it remains appropriate for the Community Safety Partnership to act as governing body for the Troubled Families Programme but it is recognised that this position may need to be revisited in the future.

Prevent Programme in Schools

Further to Minute 4, the CSP agreed that the report on operation of the Prevent programme in schools should come to the next meeting, on 10 November 2016.

2. DELIVERY GROUP ACTION PLANS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The four Delivery Groups presented their action plans and performance measure as follows:

a) Domestic Abuse Strategy Group

Sarah Gee reported that the group had met and agreed a set of six priorities, with measures for CSP and output measures for the strategy group over the next year. These were set out within the report.

Jan Gavin reported that Domestic Violence and neglect were the two largest single causes of referral to Children's Services. The Ofsted inspection of Children's Services had required the Council to review almost 1,000 cases where Domestic Abuse and neglect were involved. An external team had been commissioned to undertake this work, to check that the Council had dealt with cases appropriately. The work would highlight common factors which could feed into future practice. There would be a report back on this in the New Year.

Stan Gilmour reminded the group that a key function of the MASH was to identify hidden harm. A lot of assessments might lead to 'no further action' being required but this was an appropriate outcome and referrals should continue to be made.

The group was advised that Berkshire Women's Aid had seen a 46% increase in referrals in the first quarter of 2016-17 compared to the previous year's figures. This was in line with national trends due to improved training and awareness-raising through high profile media coverage.

Sarah Gee highlighted two important pieces of work

- Changing the focus of the Integrated Offender Management programme onto high risk cases
- Looking at how to engage schools - which was being progressed by the Local Safeguarding Children Board

It was noted that the PCC had recently consulted on matters including funding structures and the overwhelming response had been to support the status quo with some attention to changes in the formula. Decisions were expected at the end of October and could be reported to the next meeting if necessary.

b) Violent Crime Delivery Group

The group received the schedule of priorities and related tasks identified by the Violent Crime Delivery Group.

It was noted that the incidence of violent crime was down 2% in Reading, year on year and the figure for the last four weeks was 25% down on the same period the previous year. This positive trend was attributed to strong partnership working.

c) Modern Day Slavery and Adult Exploitation Delivery Group

Nicola Bell introduced the Objectives and Actions identified by the Modern Day Slavery and Adult Exploitation Delivery Group. She explained that target dates and a progress column would be added to the schedule for the next review. The Adult Exploitation group had been amalgamated with the Vulnerable Adult group, resulting in wider representation of agencies. The strategic group was due to meet in early October. The group was establishing good practice, working on how to collect data and with the Police on how to capture information on outcomes - for example that the Police were credited with a successful outcome when vulnerable people were released from an exploitative situation, even when this did not result in a prosecution.

It was recognised that this work had links to agencies working on Child Sexual Exploitation, since a proportion of those children remained at risk when they moved into adulthood. That interface was being investigated and also the wider picture of other forms of exploitation and the cross-overs with other Delivery Group areas.

There was ongoing and positive liaison with the Council's Taxi licensing, trading standards and environmental health staff about how to identify the signs of exploitation of adults.

It was stressed that all cases of vulnerable children identified through the various agencies' activities should be referred into MASH in the first instance.

In conclusion, Nicola Bell advised that there was a lot of work still to do but the groundwork was in place for a productive partnership response to the issues.

d) Vulnerable Communities Delivery Group

Anthony Brain submitted the schedule of priorities and tasks identified by the Vulnerable Communities Delivery Group.

It was noted that a 25% year-on-year increase in the levels of reported Hate Crime could be caused by increased awareness and reporting or the anecdotal change in behaviour patterns since the Brexit referendum.

The priorities under the 'Radical Extremism' heading were linked to the priorities and oversight of the Prevent Management Board.

It was noted that ACRE was currently bidding to the Home Office in respect of funding for community response to Hate Crime and Counter-terrorism.

AGREED: That the Delivery Group Action Plans be received.

3. OTHER AREA UPDATES - Integrated Offender Management

Geoff Davis reported on current developments in Integrated Offender Management. Work was in hand to consider what was available to perpetrators and offenders through the IOM programme. Beneath the IOM partnership group there was a panel convened to consider the individual cases of c40 perpetrators. This tended to be led by the Police and Probation Services as those with operational involvement in the cases. To date the programme had been focused on recidivist burglary and robbery

but the focus was shifting towards domestic abuse and vulnerable groups. This would not be an easy ship to turn round. The IOM group was hoping to demonstrate what value it could add to domestic abuse responses, where current work did not necessarily address perpetrators' behaviour to avoid the resource-intensive need for prosecution and court hearings.

The group welcomed the development of valuable links with the Troubled Families programme, recognising that the IOM programme's data and weightings of offences would need to be expanded beyond serious acquisitive crime into vulnerability, abuse and exploitation. It was also noted that it would be beneficial for IOM programme to link in with the work Berkshire Women's Aid was doing with perpetrators.

AGREED: That it would be valuable for the four chairs of the Delivery Groups to meet with the Troubled Families and Integrated Offended Management programmes to co-ordinate what each group was expected to deliver.

4. CRIME PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

The group received the most recent crime report. Stan Gilmour noted that a year ago the main problem areas in Reading had been drug-related violent crime, with six stabbings per week. This situation had been turned around and there had been no such incidents for several weeks. On-street violence as part of the night-time economy had reduced considerably. Youth Crime was also on a downward trend.

This improved situation was attributed to joined-up inter-agency working and targeting, which underlined the importance of the Partnership.

AGREED: That the report and the successes of partnership working be noted.

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETING

Future meeting dates were confirmed as:

Thursday 10 November 2016, 9.30am
Thursday 2 February 2016, 9.30am
Thursday 27 April 2016, 9.30am

(The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and closed at 11.07 am)

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	16 NOVEMBER 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	8
TITLE:	CULTURE AND HERITAGE IN READING		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	PAUL GITTINGS	PORTFOLIO:	SPORT, LEISURE & CONSUMER SERVICES
SERVICE:	ECONOMIC & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	GRANT THORNTON	TEL:	0118 937 2416
JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF ECONOMIC & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	E-MAIL:	grant.thornton@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 As Reading's Year of Culture 2016 enters its final two months, culminating in 'Light Up Reading' through December (and of course the Christmas Pantomime - Snow White! - see Appendix 1), this report provides an update on a range of culture and heritage projects and initiatives underway in Reading. The report clearly demonstrates that the Year of Culture is not an end in itself but an initial stage in a sustained programme to raise Reading's profile and reputation and to deliver the aspiration of the Culture and Heritage Strategy that:

'By 2030, Reading will be recognised as a centre of creativity with a reputation for cultural and heritage excellence at a regional, national and international level with increased engagement across the town.'

1.2 The report emphasises the strong partnerships that are in place and acknowledges the key contribution of a range of agencies and organisations in developing and delivering a diverse programme of cultural and heritage initiatives and projects. The report also highlights the strong support from both Arts Council England (ACE) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for Reading's strategic ambition and their financial backing for key activities and work programmes to help us make further progress.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 That the Committee notes the wide range of culture and heritage projects and initiatives being delivered and developed as set out in section 4.1, acknowledging that this is only a sub-set of the wide-ranging activities of many organisations in the town.

2.2 That the Committee welcomes and endorses the ongoing direction of travel as set out in section 4.2 of the report, including establishing a legacy programme from the Year of Culture 2016

2.3 That the Committee notes the review underway of the Cultural Partnership's membership and endorses the continuing role of the Cultural Partnership to drive and add value to delivery of the Culture & Heritage Strategy.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The ambition to raise Reading's cultural profile and reputation is about both the outcomes for Reading as a place and delivering better quality of life for residents. The delivery of culture and heritage contributes to achieving the following Corporate Priorities:

- Keeping the Town clean, safe green and active
- Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living
- Providing infrastructure to support the economy.

3.2 Provision of cultural services is a non-statutory function of local government. The Council has for many years operated a number of cultural venues in Reading including the Hexagon, 21 South Street Arts Centre and the Town Hall & Museum (including the Concert Hall). This provision has been set within the context of a cultural strategy that sets a strategic framework for the development and delivery of cultural activity in the town not only by the Council but by a wide range of other agencies and organisations.

3.3 A new Cultural and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030, developed under the auspices of the Cultural Partnership, was endorsed by the Council's Policy Committee in November 2015. This reflects the strong partnership approach in Reading, recognising that it will be a range of organisations working collectively that will be key to delivery and success. The new Culture and Heritage Strategy clearly sets out an aspirational vision for culture and heritage to play a key role in the town's future, enhancing the quality of life for residents and increasing the attractiveness of the town for visitors and investors. The Strategy envisages Reading's profile and reputation as a cultural destination being transformed over the coming years, building from a strong base of arts and heritage organisations and assets and catalysed by a Year of Culture in 2016.

3.4 The new Economic Development Plan led by Reading UK CIC, "Growing Opportunity" has three key objectives of raising Reading's profile, growing opportunities to strengthen the local economy and employment for local people. The further development of arts, culture and digital economy to contribute to these objectives is at the heart of the plan.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position:

Whilst it would be impossible in this short report to do full justice to the range of organisations, activities and outcomes linked with cultural and heritage in the town, it highlights some of the key projects and developments that are together driving delivery of the Culture & Heritage Strategy and its ambition.



MADE READING

Year of Culture 2016

This Committee received an update report on Reading's Year of Culture 2016 at its meeting in July of this year. As well as highlighting key areas of success, this July report also emphasised the role of the Year of Culture as a catalyst for a sustained programme to raise Reading's reputation and profile into the future, delivering a range of benefits to local people and further bolstering economic success.

Some key facts and figures that are illustrative of the success of the Year of Culture to date:

- Alignment of the Council's cultural grants funding of £99,000 to fund 48 Year of Culture projects by local organisations;
- Close working with Reading UK CIC in managing the programme and leveraging over £100,000 of private sector business sponsorship;
- A 130% increase in grant funding from Arts Council England (ACE) to local organisations and a direct ACE contribution to core delivery costs of over £96,000;
- Over 10,000 unique visitors to the website to date and over 100 articles published by Get Reading.

In summary, to date, Reading Year of Culture 2016: has witnessed hundreds of arts and cultural events as part of the programme; new pillar events in every month for the Reading cultural calendar; the engagement of national arts organisations in Reading; the development of new relationships between artists, arts groups, Reading businesses and stakeholders; the unlocking of new funding for the arts in Reading and new platforms and venues for artistic output in the town and an increase in the quantity and ambition of artistic output.

In the final two months of the year, following a highly successful 'reading in Reading' month for October, November's 'Dance Reading' programme led by a new partnership network 'Junction Dance' continues. Also in November the new play 'Henry 1 of England' written by Beth Flintoff and performed by 'Reading Between the Lines' Theatre Company continues until November the 19th (see also a related article on The Guardian website: https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/nov/02/henry-i-reading-cultural-hotspot-reading-between-the-lines?CMP=share_btn_tw).

The Year of Culture culminates with 'Light Up Reading' in December, a magnificent series of light installations in various locations around the town.

Ambition for Excellence

In the July report to this committee it was reported that engagement with Artangel and their plans for a major exhibition in Reading Prison had also resulted in the development of proposals for an ambitious three year visual arts programme 'Reading International', led by the University's new Institute of Heritage & Creativity in partnership with Artangel, the Council and Reading UK CIC. The application submitted to ACE's lottery funded 'Ambition for Excellence' programme was successful with an award of £495,000 confirmed at the end of July. The funding is supporting Artangel's 'Inside: Artists and Writers in Reading Prison' as the 'front-end' of this three year programme and it will culminate in a major exhibition in the

re-opened Abbey Ruins in 2019. This offers an unprecedented opportunity to transform the visual arts in Reading, create a legacy for Reading Year of Culture 2016, deliver a high profile celebration for the reopening of Reading Abbey Ruins, and develop partnerships with local arts organisations, schools and communities. This in turn will generate a culture of artistic ambition, community involvement and audience development in the region.

Launching this three year programme, Artangel's Reading Prison exhibition has been hugely successful attracting 18,000 visitors to date, including a high proportion of Reading residents and a programme of engagement with local schools. This success has meant that Artangel is extending the exhibition until the 4th December having secured the necessary permission from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) - see press release at Appendix 2.

'Reading Abbey Revealed'

In December 2015 the Council received confirmation that its stage 2 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for grant of £1.7775 million towards the £3.154 million 'Reading Abbey Revealed' project had been successful. The project involves the essential conservation programme to the Abbey Ruins and the Abbey Gateway (both Scheduled Monument and Grade I listed); associated branding, signage, interpretation; and a five year engagement programme of events and activities across the heritage site. Reading's Museum service is pivotal for the successful delivery of the project and a rejuvenated 'Abbey Quarter'. The Council received 'permission' to start from the HLF in March 2016. Significant progress is being made and this nationally important project is on-track. Further detail is provided in Appendix 3 which also outlines parallel work and funding from Historic England (HE) to ensure all parts of the Scheduled Reading Abbey site are removed from the HE 'At Risk Register'. The update at Appendix 3 also references the 'Hidden Abbey' project, an exciting research project looking further into the extent and detail of the Abbey below ground, including potentially the exact whereabouts of Reading's buried king Henry 1.

Museum of English Rural Life (MERL)

Reading University's MERL reopened on 18 October after a £3 million redevelopment project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which has radically transformed its public displays. The new museum aims to challenge perceptions about rural England by revealing the historical and contemporary relevance of country life. The new interactive galleries explore questions of identity, environment, technology, culture and health. As with the Abbey Revealed project there is an extensive engagement and activity programme extending into future years.

See new MERL website at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/TheMERL>

Museum Collaboration

In August 2016 the MERL and Reading Museum were awarded £237,500 by Arts Council England for the '#Reading: Town and Country project'. This builds on the two museums ongoing partnership through an 18 month digital engagement project. This will transform the way the museums use technology to bring their collections and communities together.

The first stage will be a digital audit of both museums before Christmas. The project team will then start to develop training for staff and volunteers, before developing innovative digital programmes, inspired by their collections, for targeted local communities.

Link to website new page with more information

<http://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/news/2016/aug/grant-town-country-museums-work-together/>

Library Service

The Council's Library Service is increasingly embracing cultural activities and recent initiatives have included:

- Big Wow Small Wonder
- Celebrating Ram Gopal
- Tales from the Deep!

Appendix 4 provides further details of how these initiatives are supporting the strategic development of the service to engage and benefit local people.

South Street Arts Centre

The Council is currently in the process of refurbishing and extending South Street Arts Centre with the support of a capital grant of £499,999 from ACE. The theatre has been turned through 180 degrees, to enable the creation of backstage dressing rooms for the first time and new retractable seating installed. A new bar area is currently being completed and this will create greater flexibility and capacity for the use of the two main performance spaces as well as give a better service to customers. Disability access has been improved throughout. A number of energy saving measures have also been incorporated into the build to ensure the venue can run as efficiently as possible.

These works are due to fully complete in November with a formal re-launch of the improved venue on the 9th December, although November is already busy with a number of sold out shows. These improvements will enhance the attractiveness of South Street to both artists and audiences, increase the capacity of the venue and support its future financial sustainability. This will consolidate the venue's national reputation for excellence, particularly for its contemporary theatre and music strands, and also enable an expanded outreach and educational programme. The re-opening of the venue will also coincide with the launch of a membership scheme to offer additional benefits to customers and supporters and embed further the strong relationship South Street has with its audiences and local people.

Partnerships

As alluded to above, the Year of Culture has helped to generate or embed a host of collaborations and partnerships within the culture and heritage sectors and it would be impossible to reference them all or all the great work being delivered. However, it is worth noting that the Culture and Heritage Forum chaired by Councillor Sarah Hacker continues to provide a valuable networking and communication opportunity. The Forum is an open one and attended by a wide range of organisations and individuals who have also signed up to receive invitations to meetings and to share information. The growing attendance is indicative of a growing appetite for collaboration and networking and new attendees are always welcome.

In the context of the wide and expanding range of activities, organisations and collaborations across the culture and heritage sectors, the Cultural Partnership is in the process of reviewing its membership and terms of reference in order to ensure that it can drive and add value to delivery of the Culture & Heritage Strategy. Taking forward the legacy of the Year of Culture, key initiatives as outlined above, and facilitating further activity and collaboration will be key objectives.

This includes the Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) that has been set-up with the aim to provide all young people with opportunities to experience high quality cultural activity, especially those young people who otherwise might not have access to such opportunities. The partnership has strong and committed representation from key stakeholders, including Berkshire Maestros, the College, the University, schools and the Culture and Arts Network (CAN). During the development phase of this partnership an initial consultation with young people was carried out and used to inform the creation of an action plan. The delivery mechanism adopted by the CEP for the action plan is through the three partnership subgroups which focus on the following:

1. Support and develop new engagement, especially with young people who do not currently benefit from high quality cultural activity or experiences.
2. Focus on activity that promotes and enables readiness for creative employment or upskilling.
3. Facilitate achievement of 'Arts Award' objectives and target Artsmark numbers (accreditation schemes supported by ACE for the cultural activities of schools and individual young people respectively)

The partnership is preparing to submit a proposal to Artsworld - Arts Council England's Bridge organisation for funding from the Partnership Investment Fund to support delivery of this action plan.

National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs)

ACE's National Portfolio provides regular funding for organisations that have a long-term and sustained commitment to a programme of high quality work meeting their strategic objectives. NPOs are funded in recognition of their high standards and impact and include both nationally renowned organisations such as the Royal Shakespeare Company and more local place specific arts groups delivering excellent work. A key benefit of NPO status, over and above the reputation and kudos it provides, is multi-annual core funding over a 5 year period and applications for the period 2018-22 are now being sought by ACE. Historically Reading has had no local NPOs. ACE share the ambition and potential for Reading to be a regional cultural hub and have been incredibly supportive and integral to many of the initiatives set-out above and informal discussions have suggested that there may be opportunities for some local organisations to bid for NPO status in the current round. The Council is actively pursuing potential NPO status for South Street and for Reading Museum in collaboration with MERL. There may well be other local arts organisations also considering applying and certainly interest has been expressed previously by Open Hand Open Space, Readipop and 'Reading Between the Lines'. Whilst there are no guarantees of success in what is an incredibly competitive national process, this is clearly indicative of a step change locally in ambition and aspiration.

4.2 Options Proposed

All of the initiatives referred to above, and indeed many more from the vibrant arts and heritage sector in the town, are intertwined and are mutually reinforcing Reading's reputation as a cultural hub. Many of the specifically funded projects have delivery timescales extending over the next few years providing a real opportunity to sustain and further develop momentum, including:

- Abbey Revealed and Hidden Abbey projects
- 'Reading International' and the University's Institute of Heritage & Creativity
- MERL and Museum Collaboration
- Cultural Education Partnership
- South Street Arts Centre

For the Year of Culture there are additional events and themes that offer real potential for legacy and added value into the future:

- 'reading in Reading' Book Festival was a roaring success. Both the venue and the organisations would like to continue their partnership into next year.
- Junction Dance cooperation for 'Dance Reading' also has great potential as the partnership that has been created is a very strong proposition for the future.
- Reading Rep Theatre and their collaboration with Reading College.
- Feedback from a survey of arts organisations is that they found the use of monthly themes really useful, that it helped create more synergy between arts groups and fostered cooperation that they feel will continue beyond the year of culture. Many organisations also felt that they had been more ambitious with grant applications.
- The key role of Reading UK CIC in delivering the Year of Culture and embedding the linkages between economic and cultural success.
- Positive and supportive engagement with the business community in supporting and sponsoring cultural events and activity.
- A real appetite to incorporate 'Festivals' of activity into future years' activities and programmes.

Strategically the excellent relationships established with both ACE and the HLF provide a platform for ongoing engagement, dialogue and investment and the potential of the Prison site and the wider Abbey Quarter are of major future significance.

A proactive and effective Cultural Partnership bringing together key stakeholders and influencers offers real potential to drive and add value to Reading's cultural renaissance and ensure that all of Reading's communities derive real benefits from this.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The ambition to raise Reading's cultural profile and reputation is about both the outcomes for Reading as a place and delivering better quality of life for residents. The delivery of culture and heritage contributes to achieving the following Corporate Priorities:

- Keeping the Town clean, safe green and active
- Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living
- Providing infrastructure to support the economy.

5.2 A new Cultural and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030, developed under the auspices of the Cultural Partnership, was endorsed by the Council's Policy Committee in November 2015. This strategy has an over-arching ambition that:

'By 2030, Reading will be recognised as a centre of creativity with a reputation for cultural and heritage excellence at a regional, national and international level with increased engagement across the town.'

5.3 The range of projects and initiatives covered in this report are key building blocks for realising this ambition.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 There has been widespread consultation and engagement in the development of the Culture & Heritage Strategy, indeed it was this consultation that led to the

development and delivery of the Year of Culture 2016. There has also been a specific consultation exercise with young people to inform the action plan developed by the Cultural Education Partnership (CEP). Ongoing engagement and involvement of young people in the work of the CEP will be integral to its success.

- 6.2 At a project level community engagement and activity programmes form a major component of HLF funded projects such as Abbey Revealed and MERL. In part this is to inform how these projects are delivered but it is also about engaging with new and under-represented groups. More broadly information, marketing and engagement is central to audience development across much of the culture and heritage sector.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct this prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2 This report covers a diverse programme of activities and engagement and aims to ensure that culture plays a full role in making Reading a vibrant, tolerant and enjoyable place to live, work or visit. The role of cultural opportunities in combating inequalities and the need to address inequalities in participation in Reading are explicitly acknowledged in the Culture and Heritage Strategy and reflected in the approach to its implementation.
- 7.3 It is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant with regard to the content of this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Provision of cultural services is a non-statutory function of local government.
- 8.2 Legal implications arise from funding agreements with external partners, such as HLF or ACE, and associated grant conditions.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Council's financial contributions to a range of culture and heritage initiatives is being managed within existing constrained resources and budget allocations. The cultural grants budget has been re-focused over the last couple of years to align with the Year of Culture, enabling over £99,000 to be channelled to local groups and organisations to deliver events and activities (it should be noted, however, that because of extreme financial pressure due to government funding cuts, these grants from the Council will no longer be available after the current financial year). Match funding to support the HLF grant towards the Abbey Revealed project is identified within the Council's approved capital programme and derives from accumulated s106 developer contributions sought as part of the planning process for new developments in and around the town centre.

- 9.2 The Council and partners such as Reading UK CIC and the University are working together with arts organisations and stakeholders to maximise the benefits of leveraging external investment into Reading to support the delivery of the Culture & Heritage Strategy. Resources secured to date from ACE, HLF and the private sector through the initiatives identified in this report amount to well in excess of £6m.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-30

'Reading Year of Culture 2016' - Report to Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee 5th July 2016

Appendix 1



**Snow White
The Hexagon
Sat 10 Dec to Sun 8 Jan**

The Imagine team return to The Hexagon with children's TV legend Justin Fletcher for the magical Snow White. Justin stars along with Paul Morse, winner of the UK Panto Fans Award for best Dame. They are joined by Karl Loxley, who was a contestant on The Voice in 2015 and Sarah Accomando as Snow White. Imagine always present a slapstick filled show, and Snow White is shaping up to be our most successful yet with over a quarter of the 49 performances sold out. Running from 10th December to 8th January.

Press Release

12 October 2016

ARTANGEL EXHIBITION AT READING PRISON IS EXTENDED DUE TO POPULAR DEMAND

For the first time in its history, Reading Prison has opened to the public for a major new project by Artangel exploring the work of the prison's most famous inmate, Oscar Wilde. Over 16,000 people have visited **Inside: Artists and Writers in Reading Prison** since it opened on 4 September and the exhibition has now been extended to 4 December due to popular demand.

For Artangel's exhibition, new works have been made in response to the prison's architecture and history by leading artists including **Marlene Dumas, Robert Gober, Nan Goldin, Steve McQueen, Jean-Michel Pancin** and **Wolfgang Tillmans**, and are installed in the prison's corridors, wings and cells.

Audio recordings of **Neil Bartlett, Ralph Fiennes, Kathryn Hunter, Ragnar Kjartansson, Maxine Peake, Lemn Sissay, Patti Smith, Colm Tóibín** and **Ben Wishaw** reading Wilde's *De Profundis*, the extended letter he wrote to his lover Lord Alfred Douglas from his prison cell, will be available to listen to in the prison chapel from 3 November.

Reading Prison, formerly known as Reading Gaol, opened in 1844 and was a working prison until 2013. Oscar Wilde was incarcerated there between 1895 and 1897, enduring the Separate System, a harsh penal regime designed to eliminate any contact between prisoners.

Historical plans, late 19th century mug-shots of inmates and work by **Ai Weiwei, Vija Celmins, Rita Donagh, Peter Dreher, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Richard Hamilton, Roni Horn, Doris Salcedo** and **Jeanette Winterson** are also on display.

The hugely popular one-hour guided walking tours of Reading Prison, presented in association with the National Trust, are also being extended until 26 November. The tours focus on the history and architecture of the Victorian prison.

James Lingwood and Michael Morris, Co-Directors of Artangel, said:

"There has been an overwhelming interest and excitement in *Inside: Artists and Writers in Reading Prison*, and we are delighted to be able to offer even more people the opportunity to experience the remarkable work by artists and writers inside the prison."

Graham Deans, the National Trust's Assistant Director of Operations for Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxon said:

"We are delighted that the tours of Reading Gaol have been extended to December. The first set of tours sold out within days of being released, and have been a great success with many

visitors getting to experience a glimpse into what prison life was like, in the present day and in the Victorian times. We hope with this extension of the tours that many more local people, and members, will be able to enjoy this unique experience that the Trust has had the opportunity to be involved in.”

Inside has been made possible with the kind support of the Ministry of Justice and is presented as part of Reading 2016, Reading’s Year of Culture.

Inside is part of University of Reading’s ‘Reading International’, which is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through the Arts Council’s Ambition for Excellence Programme.

Inside is generously supported by Dayana Tamendarova with further support from Jack Kirkland, Matthew Marks Gallery, Sylvie Winckler and those who wish to remain anonymous.

Press images: http://bit.ly/Inside_Press

For further press information please contact:

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or

Artangel Head of Communications Anna Larkin at anna@artangel.org.uk, Communications Co-ordinator Nick Chapman nick@artangel.org.uk or the Artangel office on +44(0)20 7713 1400

NOTES TO EDITORS

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Address: Reading Prison, Forbury Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 3HY

Open: **4 September – 30 October 2016**
Wednesday – Thursday 11.00 – 19.00
Friday – Saturday 11.00 – 20.00
Sundays 11.00 – 17.00

3 November – 4 December 2016
Wednesdays Closed
Thursdays 11.00 – 17.00
Friday – Saturday 11.00 – 19.00
Sundays 11.00 – 17.00

Entry: Timed entry with strict capacity, advance booking recommended £9, £7 concessions £2 children under 18

Booking: artangel.org.uk/inside, on 0118 960 6060

Visitor Information: artangel.org.uk/inside

A small amount of material is not appropriate for children as it contains nudity and content of a sexual nature.

Public enquiries: info@artangel.org.uk / +44 (0)207 713 1400

Disabled Access: Those with specific access requirements are encouraged to visit the Artangel website to read the full access statement or call the Artangel office for further information before their visit.

Events

24 November 19.00 – 20.00

The history of Reading Prison

A talk by Berkshire Record Office Archivist Mark Stevens in the chapel at Reading Prison

Tickets £9, £7 concessions

Tours of Reading Gaol presented in association with the National Trust

Guided one-hour walking tours of Reading Prison, focusing on its Victorian architecture, taking place on Fridays and Saturdays from 9 September – 26 November.

Fridays, 12noon and 2pm

Saturdays, 12noon, 2pm, 4pm

Tickets: £12 adults, £10 concessions (includes entry to exhibition)

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/readinggaoltours

The dark history of Victorian prison life will be revealed to visitors on the guided and timed tours, presented by the National Trust, which will tell the history of the gaol and the penal regime of the Separate System. Visitors will arrive at the main prison gate before being led into the austere interior of the prison, exploring its corridors and cells as well as the former chapel. A highlight will be the visit to Wilde's cell where his penultimate work, *De Profundis*, was written and which inspired his famous *Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

Reading Prison is a former prison located in Reading, Berkshire, England. The Grade II listed building was designed by George Gilbert Scott and was formerly known as Reading Gaol. The prison became a Remand Centre and Young Offenders Institution in 1992, closing in September 2013.

Oscar Wilde, born October 1854, was a renowned poet, author and playwright. His works include *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). Wilde was incarcerated in Reading Gaol between 1895 and 1897. He spent the rest of his life in Europe, publishing *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* in 1898. He died in Paris on 30 November 1900.

Further reading: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/wilde_oscar.shtml

Artangel produces and presents extraordinary art in unexpected places in London, the UK and beyond. For over 30 years Artangel has generated some of the most talked-about art of recent times, including projects with Clio Barnard, Jeremy Deller, Roger Hiorns, Michael Landy, Steve McQueen, Rachel Whiteread, and more recently Ryoji Ikeda and PJ Harvey and currently Jorge Otero-Pailos's *The Ethics of Dust* at Westminster Hall, Houses of Parliament. Appearing anywhere from vacant apartments stores, to subterranean vaults and London's night sky, Artangel produces art that surprises, inspires and wouldn't be possible within the confines of a gallery.

www.artangel.org.uk

Artangel's commissioning programme is generously supported by Arts Council England, the private patronage of The Artangel International Circle, Special Angels, Guardian Angels and The Company of Angels.



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Appendix 3

Reading Abbey Revealed (RAR) project - update November 2016

Since the 'Permission to Start' from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in March 2016 a lot has happened with the £3.154 million project. The first report to the HLF highlighting all the project's key progress to date was submitted on 6 October 2016.

The implementation of the project's Activity Programme has commenced:

- National Citizen Service (NCS) photography competition project took place in Reading Prison (13 young people) on the 24 and 25 July in partnership with the MoJ. The event was covered by Get Reading and was extremely successful.
- Two paid interns were appointed during the summer. One for two months, in partnership with University of Reading, focussed on the project's social media strategy and developing a social media policy. The second placement was for three months focused on researching Reading Museum's Abbey collections in preparation for developing the project's interpretation content. Both interns were successful in securing heritage-based employment at the end of their internships.
- In September three new volunteers were recruited for the Reading Abbey project to work on research for the project interpretation plan.

Following a review of original proposals to lease the Abbey Gate building once restored, the new agreed use for the Abbey Gate is: 'The restoration of the abbey gatehouse building, to create a new public space and relocate the Victorian schoolroom currently in Reading Museum'. This proposal secured the approval of the HLF on the 23 August 2016.

Two part-time project staff have been recruited to help deliver the project's Activity Plan. The Community Engagement Officer and the Volunteer Coordinator will both start on the 3 January 2017.

In October 2016 Equal Studio Ltd was appointed as consultants to deliver the exciting site-wide Interpretation Implementation Plan.

On 24 October the returned tenders for the main conservation works at the Abbey Ruins and the Abbey Gate were opened. We are in the assessment process and we hope to appoint and to sign a contract with the successful tenderer by mid-December 2016.

Next steps:

- December 2016: Main contractors for the capital conservation works appointed
- November 2016 - May 2018: Delivery of the site-wide Interpretation Plan
- January 2017 - April 2018: Conservation work on site
- Until 2020: Delivery of the activity, events and volunteer programme

Other Reading Abbey Quarter updates

There have also been developments concerning Reading Abbey beyond the scope of the lottery funded RAR project. In May 2016 RBC recognised its ownership of the Refectory Wall and Historic

England (HE) has agreed to grant fund a preliminary survey and any required stabilisation/conservation works. RBC has now signed a contract with HE and the survey work for the Refectory Wall will run in parallel to the RAR conservation works. After these initial conservation works, the future management and maintenance of the Wall will be the sole responsibility of RBC as part of the Abbey Ruins.

The Diocese of Portsmouth, who also owns part the Abbey remains, has appointed Hampshire County Council as its professional advisor (the same architect team than for the Reading Abbey Revealed project) to supervise their conservation works in parallel to the RAR project. These works are also grant funded by HE, and are aimed to ensure all parts of the Scheduled Reading Abbey site are removed from the HE' At Risk Register'.

Work is also progressing on preparing the former Reading Prison site for sale and redevelopment. Archaeological trial trenching should start on the former Prison site in November 2016 and will give all parties a better understanding of the location and survival the Scheduled archaeological remains on the site

Hidden Abbey Project update: Following the GPR survey by Stratascan in June 2016, the final report is now available showing the result of the survey. A landowners' meeting will be held on the 4 November to agree the next steps for this exciting project looking further into the extent and detail of the Abbey below ground, including potentially the exact whereabouts of Reading's buried king Henry 1.

Appendix 4

Expanding Cultural Activities in Reading's Libraries

Big Wow Small Wonder

Arts Council England funded the performance of a 45 minute play for 4-9 year olds in each of Reading's seven libraries during the week beginning October 17 2016. The aim was to engage children who do not generally go to the library, to expose them to creative, imaginative theatre and to inspire them to think about stories and to use a library.

Danielle Corbishley was the project manager for these events and did a brilliant job. She was extremely well-organised and efficient. She contacted several local schools to encourage them to bring a class of children - especially those who need help with literacy. She saw to the publicity and ticket sales using Eventbrite.

She engaged Justin Coe from the Half Moon Theatre Company in East London. He wrote and performed the play about a very small boy who wants to be bigger. As his website says: Told with huge helpings of humour, poignant poetry and original music, this is a tall story about the wonders of being small.

Tickets, which were free, sold out well in advance of the performances. There were about 30 children at each venue. The children were engaged from beginning to end and responded very well. There will be a further round of performances next February.

Celebrating Ram Gopal

SADAA (South Asian Diaspora Arts Archive) in conjunction with the V&A and Heritage Lottery Fund have recently restored Ram Gopal's famous garuda (eagle) costume. Having worked with SADAA before, they approached Reading Library to put on events celebrating the restoration. Two V&A conservators ran a 'protect and repair' textiles workshop throughout the afternoon where people could bring in any old textiles they had and find out the best ways to care for them. There was a talk by Dr Ann David, Head of Dance at Roehampton University on Ram Gopal attended by 45+ people. Most of the audience stayed on to either watch or participate in the dance workshop that followed. The afternoon was finished with a dance exhibition by members of Kalakunj Centre for Performing Arts in Reading and Kala The Arts based in Basingstoke. The Mayor attended the dance exhibition and lots of positive feedback was received by those who attended all the events.

Tales from the Deep!

Tales from the Deep! Is a poetry workshop for families with children between 7 and 13 which is taking place across all Reading libraries between 15th October and 3rd December 2016. Children are beckoned into the watery world of the octopus, to hear a tale about this fascinating creature, created, performed and read by local Spoken Word Artist Becci Louise. Local children's libraries will be transformed into a coral reef, as they create characters, make music and complete artwork to bring the story to life!

DRAFT
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	16th NOVEMBER 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	9
TITLE:	WASTE MINIMISATION STRATEGY 2015-2020 - YEAR 2. HALF YEARLY UPDATE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR LIZ TERRY	PORTFOLIO:	NEIGHBOURHOODS
SERVICE:	TRANSPORTATION AND STREETCARE	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	DAVID MOORE	TEL:	(0118) 937 2676
JOB TITLE:	NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES MANAGER	E-MAIL:	David.moore2@reading.gov.uk

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the progress achieved in the first half of year 2 of the Waste Minimisation Strategy 2015 - 2020 Action Plan. This work has been carried out against a backdrop of stalling national recycling rates and reductions in government funding.
- 1.2 The Council adopted the Waste Minimisation Strategy 2015 - 2020 in March 2015 demonstrating its commitment to promoting waste minimisation through reuse, recycling and composting, to minimise disposal and to achieving the EU Directive target recycling rate of 50% by 2020. Reading currently sends 22.73% of its municipal waste to landfill with 77.12% being recycled, composted or sent for Energy from Waste. The current recycling rate for Reading is 35.16% compared to the national rate of 44%.
- 1.3 The re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board adopted a new strategy in 2016/17 in response to changes in government funding as a result of the central government austerity programme and the requirement of the Revised EU Waste Framework Directive (2008) which sets the 50% target for reuse and recycling to be reached by 2020.

In future the RBC Waste Minimisation Strategy and the re3 strategy will be more closely aligned, using a common format and reporting on the targets

set by the re3 strategy. Both organisations and the re3 partners are working towards the same goals, to save money and to reach the 50% target by 2020.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 That Members note the progress to date of the Waste Minimisation Strategy Action Plan.
- 2.2 That Members agree that the re3 and RBC Waste Minimisation Strategies are aligned and the second annual progress report is brought to the Committee in March 2017.
- 2.3 That Members delegate authority to the Head of Transport & Streetcare in consultation with the lead member to make amendments to the action plan as required.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 One of the service priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan 2016 -2019 is 'Keeping the town, clean safe green and active', to ensure we retain and attract residents and businesses and remain an attractive place to live, work and visit'. One means of delivering this priority is to reduce the volume of waste sent to landfill and improve recycling rates through implementation of the Waste Minimisation Strategy.
- 3.2 The EU Waste Framework Directive 2008 sets a new recycling and re-use target of 50% for certain waste materials from households and other origins similar to households to be achieved by 2020.
- 3.3 On 15th March 2015 HNL Committee approved the Waste Minimisation Strategy 2015 -2020, which set out an approach for working with residents, stakeholders and partners to improve the way waste is managed with a growing population and limited resources. The strategy was subject to a four week web based consultation.
- 3.4 The implementation of the Strategy Action Plan delivers the 4 objectives of the Waste Minimisation Strategy:
 - To increase recycling and re-use rates.
 - To minimise the amount of waste sent to landfill.
 - To increase understanding and engagement in waste and recycling for the local community and key stakeholders.
 - To ensure effective, efficient, value for money service delivery.
- 3.5 The re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board adopted its strategy in May 2016.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Increasing Recycling and reducing contamination- Progress in Quarters 1 and 2 2016/17.

Section G2 of the re3 strategy sets targets for the specific service areas in order to achieve 50% reuse and recycling by 2020. Table 1 sets out the annual targets that represent a pathway towards meeting the 2020 recycling target for Reading and progress against these targets will be reported going forward.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/2020
Reading	Target % Recycled by source			
HWRC	10%	11%	11%	12%
Council Collected	24%	28%	28%	32%
Bring Bank	5%	5%	5%	5%
Total Recycling Rate	39%	44%	48%	50%

Table 1.

4.2 Recyclate Contamination Reduction.

Waste sampling data suggests that there is recyclable material in the waste stream which can be diverted. Every tonne of recyclable material which remains in the residual waste stream represents a higher processing cost and lost income. Table 2 below shows the targets to reduce this contamination by 2020:

Reading	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
	Current	Target contamination rate			
	27%	20%	15%	10%	10%

Table 2.

4.3 Results for Quarters 1 and 2 2016/17.

Table 3 below shows progress towards these targets in Q1 and Q2 of 2016/17 compared to the baseline figure and the target figure. Both targets have shown an improvement in Q1 of 2016/17.

Monitoring					
Period	Review of Activity	Target status	KPI (Baseline)	KPI (Actual)	Target
Q1	Increased kerbside collection	Not met	20%	21%	24%
	Reduce kerbside contamination	Not Met	25%	24%	20%
Q2	Increased kerbside collection	Not met	20%	21%	24%

	Reduce kerbside contamination	Not Met	25%	22%	20%
Q3					
Q4					

Table 3.

Both indicators show some progress towards meeting the 2016/17 target, particularly reducing kerbside recycle contamination. This may be the result of recent door stepping exercises in the Newtown and Baker Street areas where officers checked the contents of recycling bins and if the wrong material was found information was given to residents and where possible face to face conversations took place.

Encouragingly the majority of residents were aware that recycling was a good thing to do but weren't necessarily aware of what was to be put in the recycling bin. Such educational exercises will continue as long as resource can be made available.

4.4 The re3 Partnership and collaborative working.

There is a growing recognition that waste minimisation cannot be tackled in isolation. One of the main aims of the Waste Minimisation Strategy is to work with our re3 partners, Bracknell and Wokingham Borough Councils. In the past 6 months, the re3 partner Councils have set up a number of working groups examining specific waste minimisation themes with the aim of sharing good practice and improving the use of the available resource. The work has focussed on 3 themes:

4.4.1. Recycling in flats/HMO's.

Lead by Reading this project has analysed the current collection methods of the three partners and made the following recommendations:

- To use common, simple communication materials.
- To develop clear consistent policies in relation to dealing with contamination and excess waste across the three Councils
- Investigating the feasibility of collecting other waste streams such as food, textiles and cartons.
- Investigate and trial the issue use of reusable bags for recycling and glass
- Investigate the use of mixed glass, WEEE and textile banks within or close to blocks of flats.

Partners are now working up detailed proposals to introduce some of these initiatives across the re3 area.

4.4.2. Increasing recycling rates.

Lead by Wokingham this project has examined joint working methods to increase recycling rates and will focus on delivering the following initiatives.

- Increase the number of bottle banks to capture more glass.
- Decide how best to offer kerbside food collection for the 3 partners.
- Agree joint promotional campaigns
- Agree joint schools and community group education programme, sharing resources and expertise.
- Align service standards and collection procedures.

4.4.3. Contamination issues in kerbside recycle.

Lead by Bracknell, this group looked at ways to reduce contamination of recycle and agreed to focus on the following joint initiatives.

- Align the collection and recycling services where possible across all three councils to ensure that the most effective methods are used for containment and recycling including reducing contamination
- Investigate feasibility of collecting other materials e.g. mixed plastics, cartons, textiles and food waste.
- Establish material amnesty's for example for textiles.

4.5 Action Plan - progress in the first 6 months of Year 2 (2017-2017).

The updated Action Plan is shown in Appendix A and the most significant successes and progress are summarised as follows;

4.5.1 Introduction of Revised Service Standards.

The revised waste collection service standards will be introduced in February 2017 at the same time as the new collection rounds. All residents will receive a revised collection calendar in the post in early January 2017 and they will also be sent details of the new service standard and why we are having to make the changes. Information will be on the website and a social media campaign will alert people to the changes well in advance.

4.5.2 WEEE Take Back Scheme funding and trial.

Following a successful bid to Central Government in March 2015 we received £30,000 of additional funding from the WEEE Distributor Takeback Scheme Local Project Fund. 4.9tonnes of WEEE material has been collected between the 3rd November 2015 and 4th August 2016.

4.5.3 Love Clean Reading App.

The aim was to increase the number of LCR App users by 10% in 2017/17. So far the number of LCR App users has increased by 148 from 685 to 833 since March 2016, an increase of 18%.

4.5.4 Flats recycling initiative.

Progress to date of the flats recycling project is shown below in Table 5.

No. of sites (households) where project implemented	55 (2850)	All sites now have the correct number of bins, residents have received a pack with a leaflet, reusable recycling bag and letter and signage has been installed in bin store areas.
No. of residents spoken to	868	During initial door-stepping visits
No. of 1100L landfill bins converted into recycling bins/additional recycling bins installed.	69	Equivalent to 305 tonnes of waste being diverted from landfill per annum. Equivalent to £21,800 per annum saving.
No. of sites (households) where recycling introduced	8 (131)	Sites previously had no recycling facilities.

Table 5.

The next phase of the flats project will include the following blocks:

- Charnwood Court - Basingstoke Road - Contamination (15 flats)
- Brayford House - Hartland Road - RBC Flats
- Royal Court - Kings Road (36 flats)
- Kielder Court - RBC Flats (23 flats)
- Denton Court - RBC Flats (23 flats)
- Bispham Court - Contamination (15 flats)

4.5.5 Recycling of Street sweepings

Street sweepings recycling began in 2015 and the tonnages recycled since then are summarised in table 6.

Year	Tonnage recycled (tonnes)
2015 - 2016	627
2016 - 2017 (April to August)	447

Table 6.

The projected yearly recycling tonnage for 2016-2017 is 900-1000 tonnes, and the actual % contribution this makes to the annual recycling rate will be reported in March 2017, but it is likely to be equivalent to 1%.

4.5.6 Schools Initiative.

Reading has not carried out waste minimisation promotions in primary and junior schools for the past 5 years but the programme was re-instated in April 2016. Engaging with children, and indirectly parents, is seen as an essential tool in creating the recyclers of tomorrow and the Table 7 below shows the take up to date of the free assemblies which we are offering.

<u>School Name</u>	<u>Date visited</u>	<u>What type of visit?</u>	<u>How many children?</u>
Alfred Sutton	14/09/2016	Assembly	Juniors
Thameside Primary	26/09/2016	Assembly	Whole School without foundation year
Coley Primary	28/09/2016	Assembly	Whole School, approximately 30 children per year
Meadow Park School	03/10/2016	Assembly + 4 class sessions, years 4, 5, 6	260 (whole school), approx. 30 in each class
Hemdean House	10/10/2016	Assembly	Approx. 100
Caversham Park Primary	20/10/16	Assembly	
Geoffrey Field Junior	09/11/16	Assembly	

Table 7.

We are also currently running a Recycling Mascot Design competition in schools to further increase awareness of recycling. The winning school will be given a prize and the winning design will be used in promotional material in future.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The Waste Minimisation Strategy will contribute to the council's Corporate Plan 2015 -2018 objective of 'Keeping the Town Clean, Safe, Green and Active'.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The Waste Minimisation Strategy was subject to a public consultation via the website and any further significant changes to the waste service will be subject to further web based consultation as required.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Council has duties under various UK and EU legislation to deliver waste collection and disposal services, principally the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the revised EU waste framework directive 2008.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:-

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 An equality impact assessment is not required at this stage. However, as individual elements of the action plan are developed individual equality impact assessments will be undertaken.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The development of the Waste Minimisation Strategy will be funded from existing budgets.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 RBC Corporate Plan.

10.2 HNL Committee July 2016

10.3 HNL Committee March 2015

10.4 HNL Committee 26th November 2013



READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
WASTE MINIMISATION STRATEGY 2015 - 2020.
YEAR 2 2016/17 ACTION PLAN UPDATE OCTOBER 2016 APPENDIX A

This Action Plan describes the initiatives that the Council has identified as being important to improve waste minimisation in Reading over the next 5 years. This Action Plan has been reviewed after Year 1 and some revisions and additions have been made.

ACTION PLAN ‘PRIORITY’ COLUMN

The second column, in the Action Plan below, describes the priority given to each action. A high priority action will be addressed before one with a low priority. Priorities change, however, and the Council will review these actions on an annual basis.

Key to Priority Column

- High Priority: addressed within years 1 and 2
- Medium Priority: addressed within years 3 and 4
- Low Priority: addressed within year 5

The Action Plan will have to be reviewed in the light of the proposed resource changes in the NO, Waste Minimisation and Neighbourhood Support teams to reflect the resources that are available

OBJECTIVE 1. To increase recycling and re-use rates.						
Action	Priority	Links to other objectives	Who	How	Barriers	Resources
<p>1a. Love Clean Reading</p> <p>Promote and embed Love Clean Reading as the waste minimisation and neighbourhood services campaign.</p>	H	2,3,4	<p>Neighbourhood Support team.</p> <p>WMRO's (Waste Minimisation and Recycling Officers), NO's (Neighbourhood Officers), WO's (Waste Operations), Corporate M and Pr.</p> <p>Transport and Streetcare staff.</p> <p>Parks and cleansing teams.</p>	<p>Agree look and feel and use on all equipment, clothing and promotional material.</p> <p>Use of Logo on all promotional material.</p> <p>Targeted PR campaigns.</p>	None	Officer time
<p>Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved.</p> <p>Love Clean Reading is now used as standard as the Waste Minimisation initiatives and the Neighbourhood Services brand. The Love Clean Reading campaign achieved National recognition by the award of a bronze in the Medium Local Authority category of the Chartered Institute of Waste Management (CIWM) Clean Britain Awards.</p>						

The Love Clean Reading 2 programme of deep cleans began in November 2015 and will finish in March 2016. 41 streets and open spaces will be cleaned and 4 community events are planned during the programme.

The Love Clean Reading App is used by staff, Members and residents to report a wide range of environmental issues.

<p>Year 2</p> <p>Increase the number of LCR App users by 10%.</p> <p>Continue to promote and embed Love Clean Reading as the waste minimisation and neighbourhood services campaign.</p> <p>PROGRESS</p> <p>The number of LCR App users has increased by 148 from 685 to 833 since March 2016.</p>	H	2,3,4	All staff	Targeted PR campaigns	None	Officer time
<p>1b. Incentive Scheme</p> <p>Identify an appropriate waste minimisation incentive scheme for Reading, possibly linked with e passport to increase participation. Rewards could be in the form of credits to community groups and</p>	H	2,3,4	WMRO, WO'S, Neighbourhood Support team and Corporate M and Pr.	Identify and introduce most suitable incentive scheme. Work with RSL and M and Pr to create robust scheme.	Procurement route for incentive scheme. RBC procurement pressures.	Officer time, RBC procurement team. Possible additional resource required.

schools for recycling/environmental projects.				Introduce the Initiative.		
<p>Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved.</p> <p>Benchmarking work during year 1 of the strategy has been carried out with our re3 waste partners. The cost of introducing a stand-alone Boroughwide recycling incentive scheme is significant and the Council does not have the necessary administrative or systems resources available to introduce a scheme at present. This may be possible if the Your Reading Passport scheme is developed further in the future.</p> <p>We plan to introduce 2 small-scale community based recycling incentive trials in areas where established community groups or schools have active projects or are planning new projects which would benefit from additional resources. The trials would be based on pledges to recycle and the quality of the re-cyclate produced would be monitored by waste sampling to assess the performance of the trial. Contributions to the community project will then be awarded depending on performance. The aim is to make recycling relevant to the community and give tangeable benefits for improving recycling. The trials will be accompanied by education and awareness campaigns to ensure clarity.</p>						
<p>Year 2</p> <p>Introduce 2 community incentive schemes.</p> <p>Monitor and report on increase in recycling tonnages and quality in trial areas.</p> <p>PROGRESS</p>	H	2,3,4	All staff	Targeted PR campaigns	None	Officer time

<p>There has been no progress to date due to resource issues.</p> <p>PROGRESS</p> <p>Resources will now be refocused on waste minimisation staff and supporting round changes in February 2017.</p>						
<p>1c. Review Communications</p> <p>Continually review and improve the Waste Minimisation Communications Plan. Develop communications channels which use mobile devices, Twitter, Facebook and other social media.</p> <p>Develop and expand use of the Love Clean Reading App.</p>	H	3	WMRO, WO'S, NO's, Neighbourhood Support team and corporate M and Pr.	<p>Review process and make improvements as necessary.</p> <p>Data collection from LCR campaigns.</p> <p>Social media traffic</p> <p>Waste composition, output statistics from MRF review.</p> <p>Information from bin crews on</p>	None	Officer time.

Year 1 progress. This aim has been partially achieved.

Re3 have produced an Overarching Waste Management Marketing and Communications Campaign based on the following 4 main communication themes for 2016. These are shown in Appendix B to this report:

1. Can you still use it?
2. Can you reuse it?
3. Can you recycle it?
4. Are you recycling right?

The campaign will be supported by additional promotional material produced by RBC such as the Waste Collections calendar which has been improved for 2016 and is shown in Appendix D, and the RBC communications plan for 2016/2017, shown in Appendix B.

Refresh of re3 house style

To accompany the quarterly theme-based marketing copy, re3 will also work on a refresh of the re3 house style with the assistance of Reading University graphic design and typography students. A series of templates will be created using a house style that can be adapted to a variety of uses e.g. leaflets, banners, adverts, social media content etc. by the individual council teams for use in the quarterly campaigns. The refreshed design will use the existing re3 logo and branding guidelines e.g. pantone colours. The aim is to have the refreshed house style ready for use in quarterly campaigns starting in Q1 2016.

Factsheets.

As part of the unified marketing and communications approach, a series of 46 recycling and waste process factsheets are also being produced by re3 for use across the partnership. They are being designed to be shared in a variety of formats, including for use online, printed in council publications or used at roadshows. They provide clear messaging on what can be recycled and where, how it is recycled, and tips for people to produce less waste at home.

Example Factsheet - Plastic Bottles



HOW FANTASTIC IS PLASTIC?

1

WHAT IS IT MADE FROM?
The most common types of plastic bottles are High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) and Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET, PETE or polyester). HDPE is used for bottled products including fruit juice, milk, water and cleaning products, while PET is used to bottle water and in food packaging.



2



WHERE CAN IT BE RECYCLED?

- Household Waste Recycling Centre
- Home recycling bins and boxes
- Litter bins

3

HOW IS IT RECYCLED?
Empty plastic bottles are collected and taken to the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) where they are separated from other items, separated and sent for reprocessing. The bottles are then cleaned and separated by type of plastic, ground into flakes and washed and sorted again. The plastic beads and flakes made from the bottles are melted down to make new products.



4



WHAT IS MADE FROM IT?
A variety of new products including garden furniture, compost bins, fleece jackets and more plastic bottles.

5

HOW YOU CAN HELP
Recycle your plastic bottles at home in your recycling bin or bin. Reusable water bottles can save you money and help to cut down waste.



<p>Year 2</p> <p>Implement the communications activities shown in the 2016 Overarching Waste Management Marketing and Communications Campaigns</p> <p>Continue to work closely with re3 partners to develop and co-ordinate branding, messages, communication media and pool resources.</p> <p>Set up an re3 communication officers group</p> <p>PROGRESS</p> <p>Re3 social media and re-tweeting is ongoing built around the 4 communications themes identified in the re3 plan. RBC</p>	H	3	WMRO, WO'S, NO's, Neighbourhood Support team and corporate M and Pr.	<p>Review process and make improvements as necessary.</p> <p>Data collection from LCR campaigns.</p> <p>Social media traffic</p> <p>Waste composition, output statistics from MRF review. Information from bin crews on contamination</p>	None	Officer time.
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<p>comms are aligned as far as possible.</p> <p>PROGRESS</p> <p>Efforts are now centered around the round changes and service standard introduction and green waste charging comms.</p>						
<p>1d. Review current campaigns</p> <p>The Council will review its current waste minimisation campaigns in the light of Neighbourhood working and available budgets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing Welcome Packs for Students, new council tax payers, and Council tenants. • The current Flats project • Roadshows • Educational talks <p>And how we work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Agents and Housing Associations • HMO's (Houses in Multiple 	H	2,3,4	WO's, WMRO's, and Neighbourhood Support team.	<p>Desk study based on current waste data and experience.</p> <p>Identify new tenants, liaise with Housing and Council tax and deliver new packs.</p>	Accurate and timely information on moving dates for new tenants.	Officer time

Occupation) • Schools • Universities and Colleges																		
<p>Year 1 Progress. This aim has been partially achieved.</p> <p>Student Moving In/Out Packs</p> <p>750 'Moving In' and 'Moving Out' packs were delivered to student households in conjunction with the University of Reading, Neighbourhood Action Group and Reading University Students' Union. The packs encouraged students to minimise and recycle their waste.</p> <p>Flats recycling initiative.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>No. of sites (households) where project implemented</td> <td>55 (2850)</td> <td>All sites now have the correct number of bins, residents have received a pack with a leaflet, reusable recycling bag and letter and signage has been installed in bin store areas.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No. of residents spoken to</td> <td>868</td> <td>During initial door-stepping visits</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No. of 1100L landfill bins converted into recycling bins/additional recycling bins installed.</td> <td>69</td> <td>Equivalent to 305 tonnes of waste being diverted from landfill per annum. Equivalent to £21,800 per annum saving.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No. of sites (households) where recycling introduced</td> <td>8 (131)</td> <td>Sites previously had no recycling facilities.</td> </tr> </table>							No. of sites (households) where project implemented	55 (2850)	All sites now have the correct number of bins, residents have received a pack with a leaflet, reusable recycling bag and letter and signage has been installed in bin store areas.	No. of residents spoken to	868	During initial door-stepping visits	No. of 1100L landfill bins converted into recycling bins/additional recycling bins installed.	69	Equivalent to 305 tonnes of waste being diverted from landfill per annum. Equivalent to £21,800 per annum saving.	No. of sites (households) where recycling introduced	8 (131)	Sites previously had no recycling facilities.
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Roadshows. Roadshows were held in Broad Street and Morrisons, Basingstoke Road during Recycle Week in June. Officers spoke to approximately 350 people. Officers also carried out four smaller scale roadshows and attended 6 external events. The most successful roadshows we have carried out in 2016 have been in Broad Street we will concentrate on Broad Street due to high footfall.

Educational talks. Educational talks were carried out at Geoffrey Field School, Norcot Nursery and also at the Older People's Working Group. See Year 2 below.

Management Agents and Housing Associations

HMO's (Houses in Multiple Occupation)

Schools. See Year 2 below.

Universities and Colleges. See 1e below

<p>Year 2</p> <p>Flats project. Introduce the project in the following blocks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charnwood Court - Basingstoke Road - Contamination (15 flats) • Brayford House - Hartland Road - RBC Flats • Royal Court - Kings Road (36 flats) • Kielder Court - RBC Flats (23 flats) • Denton Court - RBC Flats (23 flats) • Bisham Court - Contamination (15 flats) 	<p>H</p>	<p>2,3,4</p>	<p>WO's, WMRO's, and Neighbourhood Support team.</p>	<p>Desk study based on current waste data and experience.</p> <p>Identify new tenants, liaise with Housing and Council tax and deliver new packs.</p>	<p>Accurate and timely information on moving dates for new tenants.</p>	<p>Officer time</p>
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<p>Roadshows. 4 roadshows will be carried out in Broad Street to support the 4 main communication campaigns as set out in the Year 2 Communications planner.</p> <p>We will appoint an additional grant funded Waste Minimisation Officer to focus on roadshows and school and community educational visits and initiatives in March 2016.</p>								
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Year 2				
PROGRESS				
<p>Alice Layzell is in post and working on the Schools Project as well as carrying out door stepping and supporting the waste minimisation team during a period of long term sickness absence. The flats project has suffered due to resource issues but work will be back on track by the end of the year.</p>				
Road shows carried out to date 2016				
May	31/05/16	Fire Station Open Day	Wokingham Rd	10am-4pm
June			Victoria Rec, Tilehurst	11am-4pm
	04/06/16	League of Friends of RBH		

	11/06/16	Water Fest	Forbury Gardens	11am-5pm																								
	30/06/16	Town Centre Roadshow	Broad Street	10.30am-3pm																								
July	02/07/16	Oxford Road Fun Day	Oxford Road	12-4pm																								
August	12/08/16	Fire Station Open Day	Dee Road	10.30am-3pm																								
September	12th - 16th	Recycle Week																										
	12/09/16	Recycle Week Roadshow	Broad Street	10.30am-3pm																								
<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>1e. Reading University</td> <td>M</td> <td>2</td> <td>Neighbourhood Services Manager</td> <td>Continue discussions with Reading University, establish details of the scheme.</td> <td>None</td> <td>Officer time</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="7"> <p>Strengthen the working relationship with the University of Reading's Environmental Science department. Possibly establish Gap Year student scheme.</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="7"> <p>Year 1 Progress. This aim has been partially achieved.</p> <p>Contact has been made with the Environmental Sciences department and discussions will take place with a view to introducing a joint working arrangement in September 2016 for the 2016 - 2017 academic year.</p> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>								1e. Reading University	M	2	Neighbourhood Services Manager	Continue discussions with Reading University, establish details of the scheme.	None	Officer time	<p>Strengthen the working relationship with the University of Reading's Environmental Science department. Possibly establish Gap Year student scheme.</p>							<p>Year 1 Progress. This aim has been partially achieved.</p> <p>Contact has been made with the Environmental Sciences department and discussions will take place with a view to introducing a joint working arrangement in September 2016 for the 2016 - 2017 academic year.</p>						
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<p>Year 2</p> <p>Introduce collaborative working arrangement with Reading University for academic year 2016/17.</p> <p>Revise and agree end of Academic term arrangements for 2016 with RU.</p> <p>No progress</p>	M	2	WMRO, WO'S, NO's and Neighbourhood Support team.	Approach Reading University, establish details of the scheme.	None	Officer time
<p>1f. Recycling and Re-use Organisations</p> <p>Strengthen existing links Create new links with recycling and re-use organisations. Look to introduce innovative ways of working.</p>	M	1	WO'S, WMRO'S and NO's and Neighbourhood Support team.	<p>NO's and WO's will liaise with community groups. Councils will seek to develop a 'dual booking' system to divert re-usable items to charity/voluntary sector partner(s).</p> <p>Co-ordinated campaigns with re3 and their</p>	Officer time available.	Officer time.

				re-use partners. Promotion of re-use websites eg. Freecycle and Reading Freegle.		
1g. WEEE Roadshows Promote recycling of small electrical items	M	1	WMRO's, NO's and Neighbourhood Support team.	Identify suitable venues and events. Promotion of WEEE collections by refuse freighters using freighter mounted decals and posters.	None	Officer time
Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved.						
WEEE roadshows were held in February 2016 at the Academy Sports Centre. Resources will be re-allocated to the 4 Broad Street roadshows and WEEE recycling will be promoted in a combined roadshow.						
Year 2						
Resources will be re-allocated to the 4 Broad Street roadshows and WEEE recycling will be promoted in a combined roadshow. A small number of WEEE 'Bring' events with a 'Give & Take' re-use section will be organised as part of the WEEE project funded by the DTS WEEE Local Project Fund.						

Additions to the Action Plan. Year 1.						
1h. Monitor re3 collaborative working initiatives and communication campaigns monitoring.	1,2,3,and 4	H	All Officers, Members	Re3 co-ordination meetings, re3 board.	Officer time available	Officer time.
1i. Monitoring and reporting of the tonnage of small electrical items collected every year of the Strategy.	1,2	H	WMRO'S and re3 Officers	Small electrical tonnage capture	Officer time available	Officer time.
Year 2						
PROGRESS						
Tonnes per month						
03/11/2015	460					
26/12/2015	300					
11/01/2016	280					
10/02/2016	400					
31/03/2016	480					
14/04/2016	280					
25/04/2016	380					
10/05/2016	400					
24/05/2016	580					
03/06/2016	360					

20/06/2016	480						
04/08/2016	520						
Total	4920kg						
1j. Monitoring and reporting of the tonnage of street sweepings recycled in every year of the Strategy.	1,2	H	WMRO'S and re3 Officers. MRF data.	Street sweepings recycling tonnages	Officer time available	Officer time.	
<p>Year 2</p> <p>PROGRESS</p> <p>1/4/15 - 31/3/16 = 627 tonnes</p> <p>This year 1/4/16 - 2/9/16 = 447 tonnes.</p> <p>Projected year tonnage of 900-1000 tonnes.</p>							
1k. Service redesign - investigate means of reducing residual bin capacity by: Reducing side waste Closed lid policy Bin audit and possible removal of unauthorised wheelie bins Trial a 7.5 tonne RCV to assess its performance in narrow streets and its potential contribution to increasing collection efficiency.	1,2,3,and 4	H	WO'S, WMRO'S and NO's and Neighbourhood Support team.	Monitor recycling and landfill tonnages from MRF compositional analysis. Monitor costs and round frequency.	Officer time available	Officer time.	

Year 2

PROGRESS
 Revised service standards agreed at HNL in July.
 Rounds successfully rescheduled using Webaspx software
 Communications plan prepared.
 Implimentation date February 2017.

PROGRESS
 Round changes to be introduced in February 2017 as well as the implementation of the new service standard.
 See Comms Plan.

OBJECTIVE 2: To Minimise the amount of waste sent to landfill.

<p>2a. Reduce Packaging</p> <p>Encourage local reduction of packaging in waste stream.</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>1, 3</p>	<p>WO'S, WMRO'S and NO's and Neighbourhood Support team.</p>	<p>LCR targeted campaigns eg. at Christmas.</p> <p>Links on website to useful junk mail reduction information sites eg. Royal Mail.</p> <p>Promote bags for life.</p>	<p>Officer time available.</p>	<p>Officer time</p>
<p>2b. Community Groups</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>1,3</p>	<p>WO'S, WMRO'S and NO's and</p>	<p>NO's participation</p>	<p>Officer time available.</p>	<p>Officer time</p>

Establish strong working relationships with Neighbourhood and Community Groups and Associations via Neighbourhood Working and Love Clean Reading			Neighbourhood Support team. Housing Officers	and coordination of community groups and activities.		
Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved.						
2c. Food and compostable Waste Aim: To reduce putrescible waste in residual bins through behaviour change. Review options for increasing food waste recycling, possibly by kerbside collection. Promote 'Love Food Hate Waste' campaign Promote and sustain the use of home composters and food digesters. Re-launch of the Green Cones initiative.	M	1,3,4	WO'S, WMRO'S and NO's and Neighbourhood Support team.	Promotion and education, campaigns such as 'Love Food, Hate Waste'. Review current good practice elsewhere. Discussions with re3. Assess results of appropriate trials, arrange sale/promotion /education, introduce measures to	None	Officer time

<p>Establish a network of Home Composting champions</p> <p>Promote green waste collections</p> <p>Review the promotion of Real Nappy Information Service</p>				<p>support users.</p> <p>Via face to face discussions with Neighbourhood and Community groups.</p>		
<p>Year 1 Progress. This aim has been partially achieved.</p> <p>A review of the current business case for the introduction of kerbside food waste collections was carried out as a High Priority action, the results of which were reported to HNL Committee in November 2015. The report concluded that the introduction of a stand- alone food waste collection service for Reading was not affordable at the current time considering the potential yield, disposal costs and the single bodied configuration of the current collection fleet, but that further discussions with re3 partners should examine the possibility of a joint collection and disposal arrangement between the 3 Boroughs.</p>						
<p>Year 2</p> <p>Continue work with re3 waste partners to investigate the production of a joint food waste collection and disposal business case and to progress the following initiatives as part of the Waste Minimisation Education Officers work programme.</p> <p>Promote ‘Love Food Hate Waste’ campaign</p> <p>Promote and sustain the use of home composters and food digesters.</p> <p>Re-launch of the Green Cones initiative.</p>						

Establish a network of Home Composting champions
 Review the promotion of Real Nappy Information Service

PROGRESS

Joint re3 working group preparing re3 food waste collection strategy.

Meeting with Reading FOE held on Tuesday 12th April, actions agreed and possible collaborative working:

<p>2d. SME'S (Small and Medium Enterprises) Encourage and support SME's to recycling more</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>WO'S, WMRO'S and NO's and Neighbourhood Support team. Coordinate with the trade waste service.</p>	<p>Review current system. Coordinate targeted campaigns.</p>	<p>Officer time and funding availability.</p>	<p>Consultant</p>
<p>2e. Business Waste Review the development of web based waste for businesses through Business link and re3.</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>1,3,4</p>	<p>WO'S, WMRO'S and NO's and Neighbourhood Support team.</p>	<p>Liaison with re3 and Business Link.</p>	<p>Availability of funding.</p>	<p>Consultant</p>
<p>2f. Cardboard Recycling Investigate expansion of the current cardboard recycling scheme in the town centre to include other materials, working</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>1,3,4</p>	<p>WO'S, WMRO'S and NO's and Neighbourhood Support team.</p>	<p>Coordination and discussions with Reading UK CiC.</p>	<p>Reading UK CiC officer time. Participation by town centre</p>	<p>Officer time</p>

with Reading UK CiC.					businesses. Funding.	
<p>2g. Recycling (Bring) Sites</p> <p>Aim to increase the number and quality of bring sites in existing areas, the town centre, schools, colleges and new developments for materials not collected at kerbside.</p>	M	1,3,4	WO'S, WMRO'S and NO's and Neighbourhood Support team.	<p>Analyse location and performance of existing sites.</p> <p>Identify possible locations for new sites, including in new developments.</p> <p>Seek alternative sources of funding, eg. Sponsorship.</p>	Availability of funding	Officer time
<p>2h. Alternative storage</p> <p>Investigate alternative on street waste storage and disposal facilities eg. Underground storage bins in new developments, permanent waste disposal facilities on areas of unused or under-utilised RBC land.</p>	M	1,3,4	WO'S, WMRO'S and NO's and Neighbourhood Support team. Highways and Streetcare.	<p>Identify areas of need eg. Densely populated areas with no front gardens.</p> <p>Identify suitable equipment and</p>	Availability of funding	Officer time

				<p>sites</p> <p>Liaise with Planning, with Highways, Housing, Education and Valuations departments. Carry out research on similar facilities elsewhere.</p> <p>Identify alternative sources of funding.</p>		
<p>2i. On the Go sites</p> <p>Increase the number of “on the go” recycling sites in the borough, especially in the town centre and in local shopping centres.</p>	M	1,4	WO’S, WMRO’S and NO’s and Neighbourhood Support team.	<p>Review of existing sites.</p> <p>Identify suitable bins.</p> <p>Liaison with Highways and Transport about siting requirements</p>	Availability of funding	Officer time

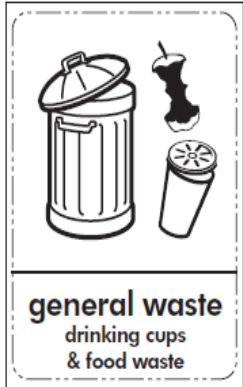
Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved.

50 new 'On the Go' dual waste and recycling bins have been installed in the Town Centre. The recycling is sorted and added to the recycling waste stream.

<p>Year 2</p> <p>Provide additional 'On the Go' bins in district shopping centres if funding can be identified.</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>1,4</p>	<p>WO'S, WMRO'S and NO's and Neighbourhood Support team.</p>	<p>Review of existing sites.</p> <p>Liaison with Highways and Transport about siting requirements</p>	<p>Availability of funding</p>	<p>Officer time</p>
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PROGRESS

A month long bag sorting trial has been carried out on On the Go bins with the following results. Over this period from 13/6/16 - 4325kg were delivered to Bennet Road Transfer Station to be hand sorted and analysed. In order to try and increase the recycling rate a new information graphic will be fixed to the bin to encourage users to dispose of coffee cups and food waste in the 'general waste' side of the litter bin.



Findings

PRODUCT	WEIGHT Kg
PLASTIC BOTTLES	730
CANS	220
CARDBOARD	535
PAPER	600
TOTAL RECYCLED	2085
TOTAL NON RECYLABLES	2240
FOOD	(335)
GLASS	(110)
HOUSEHOLD	(450)

TEXTILES COFFEE CUPS OTHER PLASTIC		(55) (720) (570)				
2j. Tetra - pak Review the provision of Tetra-pak and foil bring banks with a view to increasing numbers.	L	1,4	WO'S, WMRO'S and NO's and Neighbourhood Support team.	Analysis of need and economic viability of providing additional sites. Identify sites	Availability of funding	Officer time
2k. Waste storage - New Housing and Commercial Developments. Discuss the possible links between Planning requirements and the provision of internal waste storage facilities in new developments. Use planning gain contributions to fund bring sites.	M	1,4	WO'S, WMRO'S and NO's and Neighbourhood Support team.	Discussions with Planning and Regulatory Services to establish Planning Gain funding stream.	Availability of funding from Planning Gain	Officer time
Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved. The increase in the number of flats and the conversion of town centre offices to student and short term let flats has highlighted the need for clear guidance on waste minimisation and management for developers which should be provided early in the planning process. To address this issue the 'Waste Management Guidelines for Architects, Property Developers and Managing Agents' guidance document, as shown in Appendix 4, has been produced and will be adopted as supplementary planning guidance.						
2k. WEEE sites Investigate trialling on street WEEE	M		WMRO's Waste Op's	Analysis of need and economic viability of	Availability of funding	Officer time

banks				providing additional sites. Identify sites		
Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved.						
360L WEEE (small electrical) recycling bins were introduced on a trial basis in December 2015 at 2 sites.						
OBJECTIVE 3. The council will seek to increase understanding and engagement in waste and recycling for the local community and stakeholders.						
3a. Neighbourhood Engagement Introduce an outreach/publicity campaign for the 5 year life of the strategy. Use Love Clean Reading and cost comparisons to promote waste minimisation Continually review the strategy and campaign content to respond to changing situations.	H	1,2,4	Neighbourhood Support team. WMRO's NO's (Corporate M and Pr. All Transport and Streetcare staff.	Review available resources and expertise. Identify funding and available resource. Regular Officer coordination and review meetings Committee update reports	Availability of funding for consultant. Availability of Corporate M and Pr. budget and Officer time.	Officer time Investigate using external resource.
Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved.						

The communications strategy for 2016 -17 is described in section 1c above and in Appendix B of this report.						
3b. A-Z Waste Minimisation Guide Update and regularly update an A-Z guide to waste minimisation in Reading.	H	1,2	Neighbourhood Support team. WMRO's NO's (Corporate M and Pr. All Transport and Streetcare staff.	Review successful documents.	None	Officer time
Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved. The A-Z guide has been completed and is available on the Council website.						
3d. Schools and Colleges Continue and develop links with schools to promote Love Clean Reading and the Reduce, Re-use, Recycle and Compost message by promoting term long projects for school children.	M	1,2	Neighbourhood Support team. WMRO's NO's	Direct links with Education Department and Schools	Officer time available. Funding	Officer time
Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved. We will appoint an additional grant funded Waste Minimisation Education Officer in March 2016 to focus on roadshows and school and community educational visits and initiatives.						

PROGRESS						
Logo competition and assemblies initiative ongoing. Good start but will be a gradual build up of interest.						
3e. Review roadshow events through Neighbourhood Working and Community groups and tailor events in areas to specific issues	H	1,2	Neighbourhood Support team. WMRO's NO's Housing Officers	Use the MRF review, WO refuse crew and information from patch-working groups to identify the areas of greatest need.	Officer time available. Education and involvement of Refuse crews	Officer time
Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved.						
The plans for roadshows for 2016/17 is described in sections 1d and 1g above.						
3f. Kerbside Stickers Review and develop kerbside yellow /green stickers and develop a communications strategy as part of LCR.	M	1,2	Neighbourhood Support team. WMRO's and NO's M & PR	Review existing practice and develop a campaign.	None	Officer time
Year 1 Progress. This aim has been partially achieved.						
The use of stickers on bins forms part of the recycling contamination trial as described in section 4b of the action plan.						

3g. External advertising Review all current external advertising eg. Green Pages.	H	1,3	Neighbourhood Support team. WMRO's and NO's	Continue current practice	None	Officer time
Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved. Funding is not available at present. If funding becomes available then the benefits of external advertising will be reviewed.						
Year 2 PROGRESS						
External advertisements will be used in the green waste and service change initiatives.						
3h. Enforcement Review our enforcements practices in relation to current legislation	H	1,2	Neighbourhood Support team. WMRO's NO's	Identification of persistent offenders	None	Officer time
Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved. The issue of PCN's is ongoing and carried out by the Neighbourhoods Team.						
OBJECTIVE 4: The council will ensure that the waste collection and disposal service is effective, efficient and value for money.						
4a. RBC housekeeping	M	1,2	Neighbourhood Support team.	Officer collaboration	None	Officer time

Review RBC internal waste disposal and waste minimisation practices with a view to maximising re-use and recycling.			WO's, WMRO's and NO's	and review of current waste operations at 19 Bennet Road		
4b. Reduce contamination in residual waste More effective identification of contaminators by Waste Operations staff.	H	1,2	WO'S, WMRO's, NO's and Neighbourhood Support team.	Involvement of Neighbourhood Officers Coordination of inspections Establish 'tool box talks' for crews to reinforce reduction of contamination message. Establish 'Crew of the Month' scheme to reward crew with least contamination. Encourage self - monitoring and	None	Officer time.

				reporting systems		
<p>Year 1 Progress. This aim has been partially achieved.</p> <p>Recycling Contamination Trial</p> <p>A key aim of the Waste Minimisation Strategy is to inform residents about what materials can be presented in recycling bins and boxes and what should be put into residual waste bins ie, “Right Waste, Right Bin” message and to educate about why it is essential to recycle. It is important that we can identify and quantify the areas of the borough where recycling contamination is a problem and we plan to introduce a contamination trial in April 2016 in selected areas as follows:</p> <p>Residents will receive a bin hanger with a reminder of what can be recycled in red bins or boxes. The hangers will be delivered to residents w/c 4th April 2016</p> <p>Bin tags and recycling information bin stickers will be used by collection crews to alert residents that they need to make sure they are recycling correctly and to give advice.</p> <p>Monitoring & Evaluation</p> <p>The number and location of contaminated bins in the trial areas will reported by the crews and before and after compositional sampling of both recycling and residual bins will be carried out to identify the main contaminants. This information will then help inform future communications strategies and identify where resources can be targeted in the form of door-stepping and direct face to face contact discussions with residents.</p>						
4c. Shared collection service	M	1,2,3	Joint Waste Disposal Board (JWDB).	Consultation with re3 partners and Members	None	Officer Time and Council processes.
Investigate feasibility and benefits of shared collection services between re3 councils.			All Officers and			

			Members Legal and procurement			
4d. Bulky Waste Review bulky waste collection service and investigate ways of reusing or recycling bulky waste items (especially furniture and WEEE items) collected.	H	1,2,3	WO'S, WMRO'S and Neighbourhood Support team.	Review current costs and operation.	None	Officer time
Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved. This is the subject of a separate report to Committee.						
Year 2 Progress. Revised bulky waste collection service introduced in July 2016, half yearly results will be reported to HNL Committee in March 2017.						
4e. One Bin Policy Review one bin policy	H	1,2,3	WO'S, WMRO'S and Neighbourhood Support team. Members Senior Management	Analysis of waste disposal costs and volumes.	None	Officer time
Year 1 Progress. This aim has not been achieved. This will be considered as part of the service review options to be put together in Year 2						

Year 2						
PROGRESS						
This is included in the new service standards to be introduced in 2016/17.						
4f. 180l Bins Investigate introduction of 180l bins instead of 240l bins for lost/stolen and new bins from April 2016.	M	1,2,3	WO'S, WMRO'S and Neighbourhood Support team. Members Senior Management	Analysis of waste disposal costs and volumes.	Public acceptance.	Officer time
4g. Waste Transfer Station and Weighbridge Carry out a review of the waste transfer station at 19 Bennet Road, including the weighbridge and staff resource, with a view to improved sorting and recycling of valuable materials. Monitor and reduce the amount of residual waste coming into the WTS.	H	1,2	Cleansing, and Neighbourhood Support team.	Officer review Analysis of the waste streams and identification of recycling opportunities. Identifying possible capital expenditure.	None	Officer time
Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved.						
The weighbridge operation has been reviewed and all vehicles are now weighing in and out of the yard to give an accurate picture of materials movements and tonnages of individual materials and their ultimate destination. The weighing software has been upgraded and a new contingency plan is being introduced with re3 partners and FCCE.						

4h. WEEE collections Introduce WEEE collection and recycling by use of purpose built cages on the new freighter fleet.	H	1,2	WO'S, WMRO's, and Neighbourhood Support team.	Publicise WEEE collection via LCR campaign	None	Officer time
<p>Year 1 Progress. This aim has been achieved.</p> <p>Following a successful bid in March 2015 we received £30,000 of additional funding from the WEEE Distributor Takeback Scheme Local Project Fund. The funding is being used to set up and promote the collection of small electrical items from all households in the borough that receive a kerbside recycling collection. It will also be used to fund four WEEE reuse/recycling events at least one of which will be combined with the planned roadshows in Broad Street. The scheme began on the 5th October 2015 with a trial collection from 17,000 households in the east and west of the borough which had been given instructions on what to present and how to get involved from bin hangers which had been distributed in the preceding weeks. The scheme was also publicised by a press release, twitter and facebook updates and the Council's website. Residents were asked to present items on their recycling collection day which were collected in the purpose built cages on the freighters and taken to the Council depot for bulking and onward transfer to the HWRC where they were recycled. Provision for mop up collections were put in place but these have not been necessary. Items collected: irons, toasters, kettles, hair styling appliances.</p> <p>Monitoring & Evaluation</p> <p>Since its introduction 2.5 tonnes of WEEE items have been collected and sent for reuse and recycling diverting material from landfill. The feedback on the trial from the collection crews has been positive As the trial has been a success kerbside WEEE collection will be introduced boroughwide in April 2016</p>						

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	16 NOVEMBER 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR CHARTER		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR RICHARD DAVIES	PORTFOLIO:	HOUSING
SERVICE:	REGULATORY SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	JAMES CROSBIE	TEL:	0118 937424
JOB TITLE:	REGULATORY SERVICES MANAGER	E-MAIL:	james.crosbie@reading.gov.uk

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress made in delivering the Private Rented Sector (PRS) Charter action points.
- 1.2 The PRS Charter aims to build a common understanding of values, standards and requirements for the private rented sector. It further demonstrates the Council's and partners' commitment to improving the sector.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That members note the progress made against the action of the Private Rented Sector Charter and the next steps outlined in the report.

3.0 POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Following Consultation on the Charter between September and October 2015 the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee off 18th November 2015 approved the PRS Charter and this report provides an update on progress across services.
- 3.2 The Private Rented Sector Charter was developed around 'providing a home for those most in need' as outlined in the Corporate Plan 2015-18. A copy of the Charter is attached in appendix 1.
- 3.3 The Charter sets out the key actions that the Council will lead on to help support tenants, landlords, managing and letting agents to deliver a safe, healthy and thriving private rented sector. It promotes tenants choice and

rights, landlords taking responsibility for their properties and delivering robust and effective action where they fail to do so.

4.0 PROGRESS

4.1 The table below shows the progress against the action points in the Charter.

ACTION	PROGRESS
<p>To bring to an end unfair practices which contribute to an negative image of the private rented sector</p>	<p>Over the past 10 months a total of 65 initial Inspections of Letting Agents within the borough have been carried out to ensure they are aware of their legal obligations but in particular with regard to fees and Energy Performance Certificates (EPC)</p> <p>Press release was issued to inform public of Letting Agents obligations in relation to the above.</p> <p>Working in partnership with the 3 Government Approved Redress schemes and Right Move to help with process of Letting Agents compliance with ‘The Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency and Property Management Work (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc.) (England) Order 2014’</p> <p>100% compliance with membership of the Redress scheme has been achieved.</p> <p>The secondment of a Trading Standards Officer into the Private Sector Housing Team has resulted in some effective working across the team and with colleagues at Reading University Housing Advice on specific cases that have turned into Business Advice or Investigations. Also working with other enforcement agencies including Illegal Money Lending Team and the National Estate Agents Team.</p>
<p>To tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency in the private rented housing sector</p>	<p>The Winter Watch Scheme has been actively involved in supporting tenants in the Private Rented Sector. Over the last year 81 tenants have been visited and offered money saving advice and practical guidance about staying warm and preparing for the winter. Tenants are shown how to operate heating equipment such as gas boilers and night storage heaters. The scheme is also on hand during the winter to provide emergency heating and blankets. For private rented tenants in receipt of means tested benefits, advice is provided on warm home improvements such as loft insulation and upgraded boilers through ECO funding. The Scheme will advise both landlords and tenants on what is available.</p>

<p>To increase the number of landlords supplying good quality private rented homes</p>	<p>A Pilot Street Survey of an area in West Reading was carried out in partnership with the Environmental Protection and Nuisance Team, Street Care and the local Residents Association to increase identification of substandard properties within Reading. A number of properties were identified requiring follow up work with the tenants and landlords.</p> <p>The Private Sector Housing Team runs the mandatory Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Scheme which deals with 1,000 properties a year. In addition the team deals with in excess of 1,500 service requests per year relating to enforcement matters.</p> <p>The Housing Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS) launched in September 2016 as a new offer to landlords based on the success of the Deposit Guarantee Scheme, which has been running since 1999. The Scheme seeks to increase access to private sector housing for those in acute housing need and contributes to raising standards in the sector. The main features of the new Scheme are guaranteed rent paid direct to the landlord in advance, and a guaranteed deposit up to the value of six weeks' rent. Since launch, the RGS has been involved in the creation of 150 tenancies within the Borough. The Deposit Guarantee Scheme continues to operate, now focussing on properties which are located just outside Reading Borough boundaries, and across the two schemes 300 households are currently accommodated. Properties on the scheme must meet required standards - every property is inspected before accepting it onto the scheme to ensure it meets legal, and health and safety standards. If work is needed on a property then the Council will advise a landlord on how to meet the standards. Advice and support provided to landlords has been increased and is key to maintaining excellent working relationships in order to raise standards of practice and accommodation and maximise opportunities for preventing homelessness.</p>
<p>To act against criminal landlords to protect tenants</p>	<p>6 landlords have been successfully prosecuted for breaches of Housing legislation with fines and costs totalling £37.7K</p> <p>On-going partnership work with voluntary and community organisations to increase identification of vulnerable groups at risk from rogue landlords.</p>

<p>To work with tenants, landlords and agents to avoid creating a crisis in tenants' lives</p> <p>Tenants and Landlords both take responsibility for the homes they let and live in</p>	<p>The Housing Advice Service will work with landlords to prevent homelessness where ever possible. The team will refer households to the floating support service commissioned by the Council in situations where they would benefit from support to pay rent and manage a tenancy. Officer's will make referrals to money advice services to maximise tenant's incomes and prevent rent arrears as well as applications for Discretionary Housing Benefit to ensure that future rental payments are made in full.</p> <p>The recently appointed Landlord Advisor within the Housing Advice Team is providing advice on a range of topics to include first time landlords, help to find tenants, early intervention to help manage tenancy issues, legal responsibilities.</p> <p>Work is on-going in developing a 'Rent with Confidence Scheme' which will be used to differentiate landlord/letting sub sectors. The scheme will be designed in consultation with the Council's Housing Advice Team, Citizens Advice, Reading Welfare Rights, Reading University and students union and Reading College, Landlords Associations & Letting Agents within Reading and other key stakeholders.</p> <p>A training programme is being developed for tenants to raise awareness of their legal rights and obligations when renting a property.</p> <p>Landlords are encouraged to attend accredited courses run by the National Landlord Association (NLA)</p>
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4.2 The most significant action resulting from the PRS Charter relates to the work with Letting and Managing Agents as follows:-

4.2.1 Letting Agents by virtue of 'The Redress Scheme for Letting Agency Work and Property Management Work (Requirement to belong to a Scheme etc.) (England) Order 2014'. There are three government approved schemes and the requirement is for Letting Agents to belong to one of these. Local Authorities can issue a fixed penalty fine of up to £5,000 to any agent found not to be a member as it is deemed a criminal offence.

Whilst the majority of the Letting Agents registered within the Borough were members of one of the redress schemes, as at the end of December 2015 all 90 agents were registered and no fixed penalty fines were issued.

This action means that landlords and tenants can gain through the redress schemes free and independent service for resolving disputes with Letting Agents which in turn improves the Private Rented market.

The local list of agents is constantly being reviewed and monitored to ensure continued compliance.

4.2.2 Chapter 3, under Part 3 of The Consumer Rights Act 2015 relates solely to letting agents and came in to force on the 27th May 2015.

It is a legal requirement for all Letting Agents in England and Wales to publicise details of their relevant fees; state whether or not they are a member of a client money protection scheme; and give details of which redress scheme they have joined.

The penalty for breaching this legislation is a fine of up to £5,000 for each offence.

Officers have conducted 65 initial inspections of letting agents regarding their legal obligations in all aspects of their business but primarily on their obligations under the Consumer Rights Act 2015. The remaining agents will be visited over the coming months and all agents will be subject to regular monitoring to ensure ongoing compliance.

26 of the agents visited were fully compliant. 36 Letting Agents brought about compliance within the twenty eight day period afforded to them following initial inspection. 2 Letting Agents more recently visited have been given the twenty eight days to bring about compliance and will be re-visited. One agent ignored warnings and was therefore issued a Monetary Penalty for the maximum £5,000. The agent appealed to the First Tier (Property) Tribunal. The Tribunal decision found in the Council's favour and the £5,000 monetary penalty was upheld.

An early press release was published advising the public of the high non-compliance rate and what the agents' obligations actually are.

This action will mean transparency for both tenants and landlords in the fees being charged and will root out unfair and rogue practices which in turn will improve the image of the sector, increase consumer confidence and support tenants particularly those that are vulnerable and provide clarity to landlords.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

5.1 Over the next twelve months it is proposed to;

- Implement and promote a 'Reading Rent with Confidence Scheme'.
- Deliver training to tenants in Reading on their rights and obligations in relation to renting a property including promoting best practice through the promotion of the Private Rented Sector code of practice (RICS) and the Tenants Code of Practice (DCLG).
- Develop and deliver training to Landlords on their obligations.

- Work with enforcement officers and other agencies to increase knowledge in the sector and advise on fraudulent activity such as fake gas and electricity certificates.
- Continue to increase the identification of sub-standard properties. Carry out further street surveys to proactively identify substandard properties.
- Progress the 10 pending prosecutions against landlords for failure to comply with Housing Legislation.
- Rolling programme of annual inspection of Letting Agents to ensure on going membership of Redress scheme, publishing fees and compliance with EPC certificates.
- Launch a new Council-owned Housing Company which will offer responsibly managed private rented sector accommodation at market and sub-market rents. ‘Homes for Reading’ will increase access to safe and suitable housing for homeless households and more widely will help to improve stock condition in the private rented sector.

6.0 CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

6.1 In relation to the Council’s Corporate Plan the following themes are appropriate:

Providing homes for those most in need - the PRS Charter points will result in improved housing conditions and contribute to the health, safety and welfare of residents by driving up physical and management standards in the Private Rented Sector.

Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active - the outcome of this project will reduce the impacts of enviro-crime, reported anti-social behaviour, and build community resilience.

7.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 On-going community engagement to encourage support and further partnership working and to develop and advance actions to improve the PRS.

8.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 Not required at this time.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Regulatory Compliance through The Housing Act 2004 along with other pieces of legislation allows for enforcement action to be taken against Landlords failing to provide properties to the required standards.

9.2 The Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency and Property Management Work (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc.) (England) Order 2014 allows for enforcement against letting agents and property management companies who do not belong to one of the approved schemes.

9.3 The Consumer Rights Act 2015, Chapter 3, Part 3, It is a legal requirement for all letting agents in England and Wales to publicise details of their relevant fees; state whether or not they are a member of a client money protection scheme; and give details of which redress scheme they have joined.

10.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The delivery of the action plan is funded through existing resources in the team.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Private Rented Sector Charter.

Everyone is entitled to a good quality home
 To increase the number of landlords supplying good quality private rented homes
 To raise awareness of what a good quality home is and encourage landlords and agents to provide this
 To act against criminal landlords to protect tenants.
 That the private rented sector helps to meet the housing needs of Reading's residents.
 That tenants and landlords both take responsibility for the homes that they let and live in.

6	Increasing the identification and referral of sub-standard properties by working with partners and stakeholders to further develop our intelligence led approach.	RBC, Citizens advice, Reading Welfare Rights, tenants, landlords associations, lettings and managing agents, University of Reading, Reading College, RUSU
7	Establishing mechanisms to identify and target vulnerable groups most at risk from rogue landlord activity, to ensure support is focused on those in most need.	RBC, health partners, Community Care - Adults and Children's Teams, Citizens Advice, Reading Welfare Rights, tenants, landlords associations, lettings and managing agents, University of Reading, Reading College, RUSU, RNN
8	Launching a new campaign and materials to raise awareness about the advice available to landlords and tenants.	RBC, Citizens Advice, Reading Welfare Rights, tenants, landlords associations, lettings and managing agents, University of Reading, Reading College, RUSU
9	Promote best practice through the promotion of the PRS code of practice (RICS) and the Tenants Code of Practice (DCLG).	RBC, Landlords Associations, RUSU
10	Develop and promote a 'rent with confidence' scheme which will be used to differentiate landlord sub sectors.	RBC, Citizens advice, Reading Welfare Rights, tenants, landlords associations, lettings and managing agents, University of Reading, Reading College, RUSU
11	Collaborate in the delivery of further training, seeking to improve the skills and knowledge of all landlords, lettings and managing agents in Reading.	RBC, Citizens advice, Reading Welfare Rights, tenants, landlords associations, lettings and managing agents, University of Reading, Reading College, RUSU

Private Rented Sector *Housing Charter*



Narrowing the Gap

Providing homes for those
 most in need



www.reading.gov.uk



This Charter sets out the Councils ambition to work in partnership to bring about effective changes in Reading's private rented housing.

The Charter is about setting out key actions that the Council will lead on to help support tenants, landlords, letting and managing agents to deliver a safe, healthy and thriving private rented sector. It promotes tenants choice and rights, landlords taking responsibility for their properties standards and delivering effective and robust action where they fail to do so.

The private rented sector is a growing sector, both locally and nationally and is the tenure of choice for some, but of last resort of others. The sector has some of the poorest standards which can impact adversely on health and the quality of life for Reading's residents.

The Charter is in response to an extensive study of the private rented sector market which has resulted in the development of an action plan. It is clear that the Council cannot act alone in improving the private rented sector and although the action plan is matched with resource, it requires everyone involved in the sector to make a contribution to ensure its success.

Shared ambitions

- Everyone is entitled to a good quality home.
- That the private rented sector helps to meet the housing needs of Reading's residents.
- That tenants and landlords both take responsibility for the homes that they let out and live in.
- To increase the number of landlords supplying good quality private rented homes.
- To raise awareness of what a good quality home is and encourage landlords and agents to provide this.
- To tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency in private rented housing.
- To work with tenants, landlords and agents to increase understanding of what is a reasonable and proportionate response to a dispute.
- To act against criminal landlords to protect tenants.
- To work with tenants, landlords and agents to avoid creating a crisis in tenants' lives.
- To bring to an end unfair practices which contribute to a negative image of the private rented sector.

Shared actions

To bring to an end unfair practices which contribute to a negative image of the private rented sector.		
To work with tenants, landlords and agents to increase understanding of what is a reasonable and proportionate response to a dispute.		
To work with tenants, landlords and agents to avoid creating a crisis in tenants' lives.		
1	To review and provide support to Landlords, Lettings and Managing agents to ensure that tenants are protected from unfair practices.	RBC, Landlords associations, lettings and managing agents, University of Reading, Reading College, RUSU, RWR, CAB
2	To work with enforcement staff to increase knowledge in the sector and advise on fraudulent activity such as the issuing of 'fake certificates'.	RBC, Gas Safe, approved electrical contractors, landlords, letting agents
3	To ensure that all Lettings and Managing Agents operating within the Borough are members of a redress scheme.	RBC, approved redress schemes
4	Reviewing and developing internal systems to deal with allegations of harassment and illegal eviction, including as necessary, prosecution of landlords or their agents.	RBC
To tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency in private rented housing		
5	To review the private rented sectors current position with Energy Performance Certificate compliance. The sector needs to move to a position where they meet minimum energy efficiency standards and this will impact on tenants health and work towards reducing the impacts of fuel poverty.	RBC, Landlords, lettings and managing agents.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	16 NOVEMBER 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	11
TITLE:	HOUSING REGISTER - RE-REGISTRATION EXERCISE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR RICHARD DAVIES	PORTFOLIO:	HOUSING
SERVICE:	HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS	WARDS:	ALL
LEAD OFFICER:	BRYONY HALL	TEL:	0118 9372631
JOB TITLE:	HOUSING NEEDS MANAGER	E-MAIL:	bryony.hall@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. The Council has conducted a wholesale re-registration for applicants on the Housing Register in preparation for the introduction of a new housing allocations IT system. This reports sets out the results of the re-registration exercise.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 That the Committee note the results of the Housing Re-Registration exercise.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Whilst Reading Borough Council Housing Service completes partial re-registrations of applicants on the Housing Register, a wholesale re-registration has not been done for some time. In order to ensure a transfer of data that is as accurate as possible to a new IT system, the service took the opportunity to carry out a full re-registration exercise.

3.2 The process has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of households on the Council's Housing Register, with 88% of those not re-registering being in the 'No Priority' category, followed by Band E (low priority).

3.3 Officers attempted to contact all of those in bands A-C (who had failed to re-register) by telephone to speak to applicants in person to ensure that they understood the process, and to encourage those in need to register. A wide range of internal and external services were also contacted to advise them of the process so that they could encourage applicants to respond and assist

those that are vulnerable. Support was also available to applicants with filling out forms from a number of sources.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 There were a total of 5,207 households on the Housing Register as at the end of September 2016 and 2,878 of those remain in housing need. 1,213 of these are in Bands A-D and 385 of these are homeless applicants. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the Housing Register by priority band.

Table 1: Housing Register as at 30th September 2016

Bedroom Need	1	2	3	4	5	6+	Total	%
Bands								
A	12	5	6	1	2	0	26	0.50%
B	146	46	10	2	2	0	206	3.96%
C	122	214	98	23	12	3	472	9.06%
D	226	158	88	32	4	1	509	9.78%
E	436	678	423	96	27	5	1665	31.98%
No priority	1391	688	211	35	4	0	2329	44.73%
Total	2,333	1,789	836	189	51	9	5207	
%	44.81%	34.36%	16.06%	3.63%	0.98%	0.17%		100%

4.2 Despite the drop in numbers on the Housing Register, there remains a shortage of affordable housing in Reading - unfortunately evidenced by continued significant use of B&B in spite of strenuous efforts by the Council to increase the supply of affordable housing in the town through a variety of means. This includes continuing to promote our innovative Rent Guarantee Scheme; proactively seeking to prevent homelessness and supporting those impacted by welfare reforms; and working positively with housing associations, landlords and agents in the town. Work is also underway to build new permanent Council homes, new temporary accommodation and to develop a new Council owned housing company 'Homes for Reading'.

4.3 Table 2 shows the change in registered applicants by band following the re-registration exercise. An analysis of the reduction in numbers registered by priority banding as a result of the re-registration exercise shows that the bulk of the reduction (4,601 or 91%) comes from the lowest band E and the 'no priority' category.

Table 2: Change in registered applicants by band

Band	Total Nov 2015	Total Sept 2016	Change	% change for each band
A	29	26	-3	10%
B	354	206	-148	42%
C	576	472	-104	18%
D	713	509	-204	29%
E	2,997	1,665	-1,332	44%
No priority	5,598	2,329	-3,269	58%
	10,267	5,207	5,060	-

4.4 Officers undertook further analysis to better understand why a significant number of applicants had not re-registered.

4.5 The reduction in higher priority bands is likely to represent tenants who have resolved their own housing situation through carrying out mutual exchanges and under occupiers (Band B) who no longer wish to move. The low return rate from those with little or no priority is likely to be as a result of applicants having not obtained social housing over a number of years and repeated media publicity on housing both locally and nationally confirming that there is very limited social housing available (and limited likelihood of being accommodated through this route therefore).

4.6 Whilst a re-registration can always be expected to significantly reduce numbers on a Housing Register, with further welfare reforms on the horizon and depletion in the stock of social housing it is inevitable that the numbers of households on the Housing Register will continue to rise in relation to those in housing need.

4.7 Following the implementation of the new IT system the Housing Service plans to now carry out a full re-registration of the Housing Register on an annual basis in order to ensure that applications are kept up to date with accurate details.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 Completing a re-registration exercise ensures that the Council has up to date information on those households in housing need. This contributes to the service priority in the Council's Corporate Plan 2015-18:

- Providing homes for those in most need.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None. National law and a local council's allocations policy set out who can apply for a council home. Not everyone qualifies. Reading Borough Council's Allocation Scheme sets out the rules about who can apply for social housing within Reading Borough and how the Council manages and allocates social housing via Homechoice at Reading.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None directly from this report.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	16 NOVEMBER 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	12
TITLE:	HOMELESSNESS: UPDATE ON DEMAND PRESSURES AND ACTIONS TO MITIGATE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR RICHARD DAVIES	PORTFOLIO:	HOUSING
SERVICE:	HOUSING NEEDS	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	SARAH GEE BRYONY HALL	TEL:	0118 9372973 0118 9373413
JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS; HOUSING NEEDS MANAGER	E-MAIL:	Sarah.Gee@reading.gov.uk Bryony.Hall@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 As detailed in the report 'Homeless Strategy and Reducing the Use of B&B Accommodation' to HNL in November 2015 the pressure on homelessness services in Reading has increased sharply in the last 4 years. This report sets out the pressures facing the local housing authority and approaches to helping those with housing needs.
- 1.2 Whilst the Homelessness Strategy details a range of measures to tackle housing concerns in Reading, it is recognised that the Local Authority needs to remain flexible in its approach to responding to the combined impact of economic, housing and other pressures that are considerably increasing demands on homelessness services.
- 1.3 This report provides an update of the work carried out thus far to manage the homelessness crisis and proposes future activity to help prevent and address arising need.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Committee note the progress to date to reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation and increase access to affordable accommodation and further action planned.

3. POLICY CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Whilst Reading's economic success has been attractive to employers, it brings with it the challenges of a competitive housing market and Reading is facing significant

housing pressure across all tenures, with house prices amongst the highest outside of London.

- 3.2 As previously reported to HNL in November 2015 demand for affordable housing in Reading remains high and continues to outstrip supply.
- 3.3 Since 2010 homelessness in Reading has increased by over 700%, peaking in 2014/15 at 339 cases accepted as homeless. 2015/16 saw a levelling out of accepted homelessness cases, with 309 cases, however, this general increase has led to the highest numbers in temporary accommodation since 2004. To date in-year numbers are above 15/16 levels of acceptances.
- 3.4 Factors impacting on homelessness in Reading have been detailed in previous reports and include a limited pipeline of new build affordable housing, reducing social housing stock through Right to Buy (RTB) sales, high land prices, and a reducing supply of affordable private rented sector housing at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels (Housing Benefit will only be paid up to this amount). The Council's planned programme of new Council housing has reduced as a direct result of Government mandated rent reductions in social housing for four successive years from 2016, with circa 200 fewer homes being developed over the coming 5 years. Access to the private rented sector for benefit-dependent households is being impacted to a greater and greater degree by the freeze in the Local Housing Allowance payable and the further reduction in the benefit cap.
- 3.5 Further threats likely to impact on supply and demand include further restrictions on the use of RTB '1-1' receipts to fund new/replacement homes; the anticipated introduction of a levy on stock-retaining Councils to pay for Housing Association Right to Buy discounts (effectively forcing the sale of void 'higher value' homes; uncertainty in respect of the future funding for supported housing; and potential extensions of local authorities duties to homeless households.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Approach

- 4.1.2 In order to manage the pressure of increasing homelessness the Council has taken a number of steps to manage the use of Bed and Breakfast and to meet the needs of homeless households, including the following:

Reading Borough Council's Homeless Strategy

- 4.1.3 RBC homelessness strategy was published in June 2016 and an implementation plan has been developed to ensure delivery. The main strategic priorities within the Homelessness Strategy are:

- *Priority One - Increase the use and accessibility of the private rented sector:*
- *Priority Two - Prevent homelessness by supporting people to access housing and to sustain their accommodation:*
- *Priority Three - Increase the information and advice available to enable people to make informed decisions about their housing situation*

- 4.1.4 A number of actions have already been completed against these priorities some of which are described within this report.

Prevention of Homelessness

- 4.1.5 The Council's Housing Advice Team takes an active approach to preventing homelessness. Wherever possible the service will support and enable a household to remain in their home and, where needed, to gain the skills to effectively sustain their tenancy in the future. The Authority has reconfigured the way that front line services are delivered to provide a triage service to maximise opportunities to identify risks and prevent homelessness at the earliest possible stage.
- 4.1.6 The Housing Needs Service has commissioned a single provider, Launchpad, to provide housing related support to vulnerable individuals and families who may require assistance in maintaining a tenancy. Both the Council and other funded agencies offer money management advice and pre-tenancy training on tenants' rights and responsibilities.
- 4.1.7 Housing Needs have been running homeless prevention training sessions to teams across the Council to raise awareness of housing issues and increase the opportunities for preventing homelessness. Anecdotally these sessions have proved to be effective and have enabled an increase in effective early intervention.

Increased supply of Temporary Accommodation

- 4.1.8 The Council undertook to increase the supply of temporary accommodation by remodelling former hostel accommodation which had been unused for some time as they were not fit for purpose and were not required at the time. 18 self-contained units were opened in March 2014 and a further 17 units in June/July 2015. This is in addition to an existing block of temporary accommodation providing 50 self-contained flats. In late 2015/early 2016 an additional 45 properties on Dee Park which have been vacated as part of the regeneration project were made fit and brought back into use as temporary accommodation prior to their demolition, due in phase 3 of the Dee Park regeneration.

Supporting Landlords

- 4.1.9 The Council is providing additional advice and support to private sector landlords so that we create and maintain excellent working relationships with private sector landlords in order to raise standards of practice and accommodation and maximise opportunities for preventing homelessness. The authority is active in tackling rogue landlords and driving up standards in the private rented sector.

Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS) Launch

- 4.1.10 The Rent Guarantee Scheme was soft-launched in July 2015 in order to offer greater incentive to landlords in letting their properties through RBC. The Deposit Guarantee Scheme (DGS) continues to run alongside it, and is largely used for properties located outside the Reading Borough boundaries.
- 4.1.11 The RGS has proved popular among landlords and, since its introduction, the vast majority of tenancy signups (86%) have been achieved via RGS rather than DGS.
- 4.1.12 In comparing the figures for previous years, for the most part the RGS has addressed the decline in the number of tenancy signups previously seen year on year. For the period July-June (used to compare calendar years from the date the RGS has been live) the scheme suffered a 30% reduction between 2012/13 and 2013-14 (284-200); a 15% reduction between 13/14 and 2014/15 (200-170); but

since the launch of the RGS the number of signups has almost held steady with a 5% decrease (161).

- 4.1.13 The number of new landlords offering properties to RGS or DGS has greatly increased since the launch of the new scheme. This figure represents landlords who have never let properties through either Scheme before, and does not include landlords who stopped using DGS but now use RGS, or landlords who have offered more of their portfolio due to the RGS offer. Analysis carried out in April 2016 showed that 52% of the 109 properties let through the RGS by that date were brand new to the scheme, having never been used on DGS before.
- 4.1.14 Prior to the RGS launch, DGS was experiencing loss of a number of long-standing landlords beginning to let properties elsewhere at rents higher than LHA. Since the RGS launch, many of those landlords have reconsidered their position and offered properties back through the new scheme. Anecdotally it is clear that without the RGS offer the team would be procuring far fewer properties now than they were a year ago. With each new property offered to the RGS, landlords are asked whether or not they would have let their property via the DGS offer. Since the RGS launch, 84% of the properties procured were only offered to the Scheme due to the enhanced offer of rent guarantee.
- 4.1.15 The RGS team invite all applicants to attend a workshop which offers information about the Schemes as well as providing basic money management tools and advice about how to go about sourcing private rented property. Tenant satisfaction regarding the advice provided at the Workshop remains high and whilst this is not mandatory the workshops are well attended.
- 4.1.16 Applicants are strongly encouraged to put the advice regarding finding their own property, which is then inspected and let via DGS or RGS, into practice. The tenant questionnaire indicates that the number of tenants who managed to find their own property has increased slightly, from 22% last year to 27% this year.
- 4.1.17 The percentage of RGS tenants saving towards their deposits stands at an average of 72%. Deposit savings, while important to offset deposit claims, are of lower priority than rent payment. RGS encourages regular deposit payments at very low values for tenants who are struggling financially. Where tenants are experiencing significant financial hardship or flux (such as moving in and out of employment or transitioning to Universal Credit), deposit payments are sometimes suspended in favour of rent contributions.
- 4.1.18 At year end, rent collection stood at 96%. The RGS and the Income Recovery Team closely monitor and support tenants who default on rent payments and have not had cause since RGS launch to request that an RGS landlord serves notice due to rent arrears.
- 4.1.19 At the end of August 2016 there were 302 households in a DGS/RGS property however - so the scheme makes a significant contribution in terms of enabling access to affordable housing in the town. However, notwithstanding the properties secured through the RGS the supply generated is insufficient (together with relets of social rent) to meet current demand.

Private Sector Offer to Homeless Households

- 4.1.20 From 2012 Local Authorities have been able to bring the homelessness duty to an end by a suitable offer of private rented accommodation without household consent. Local authorities were given discretion as to whether to use the new

legislation and Reading Borough Council agreed to implement this approach from 2016.

- 4.1.21 Where the 'private sector offer' is implemented Local Authorities must adhere to a Suitability of Accommodation Order which sets out a required standard and guidelines for use of private sector accommodation for this purpose. The Order requires Local Authorities to take into account several aspects when determining suitability of accommodation, including proximity to employment, education, support or caring responsibilities. In addition it lays out guidelines for the standard of the property, including physical condition, compliance with health and safety regulation and landlord behaviour. Specifically the Council must confirm that the property is affordable for a household; that it is accessible and of an adequate size; and must require landlords to follow a Landlord Code of Conduct.
- 4.1.22 Work to undertake implementation of this approach was carried out at the start of the year, which included updates for cross-cutting policy (Allocations Scheme); updates to IT systems; amending correspondence; and staff training. In March 2016 applicants who had already been accepted as homeless were written to and advised of this change in policy, giving 3 months notification before an offer would be made. Reading Borough Council accommodated the first households through private sector offer in July 2016.

Bed and Breakfast

- 4.1.23 Whilst bed and breakfast accommodation is considered to be unsuitable for households for long periods of time, unfortunately the Council remains reliant on this type of accommodation for emergency placements. The Housing department has been working to ensure that where B&B accommodation is utilised, it is of a decent standard whilst remaining value for money. The nightly cost of B&B fluctuates and is partly demand driven, however, through sourcing new providers of B&B accommodation the Housing Advice team has managed to reduce the average nightly cost of B&B accommodation by approximately 10% between quarter 4 in 14/15 and quarter 2 in 16/17.

Households Accommodated through the Housing Register

- 4.1.24 In order to try to relieve the pressure on emergency and temporary accommodation, the Housing department has prioritised a number of properties through the Housing Register for homeless households.

4.2 Future Plans and Options Proposed

Mobility Scheme

- 4.2.1 Whilst continuing with current approaches the Council needs to ensure it has the flexibility to offer a range of responses to meet the needs of individual families in housing need.
- 4.2.2 Many households may not be aware of opportunities to secure affordable housing in other areas. The Council is developing a package of support to help people to move out of area where they are interested in doing so.

New Build Council Homes

- 4.2.3 The Council is progressing a Local Authority New Build programme to deliver new, Council owned affordable housing. The main site being developed is at Conwy Close, the Planning application for which will be reviewed at the November Planning Committee.
- 4.2.4 A detailed design for this site has been developed in consultation with local residents, Ward members (including lead councillor for Housing) and officers. The design has progressed to include a range of accommodation to meet local need including a mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bed homes. The current proposal will see 57 new homes delivered and this is an increase of 17 units against the original proposals reported on the 18th November 2015 to HNL Committee.

New Temporary Accommodation

- 4.2.5 The Council is also developing the use of land at Lowfield Rd to provide 28 new 2 bed units of modular construction temporary accommodation for homeless households. The units will provide self-contained living accommodation with a bathroom, kitchen, living room and bedrooms.
- 4.2.6 Once the units are in place this will reduce the expenditure on the General Fund B&B budget and the units will provide warm, safe and fully equipped homes to meet urgent needs and reduce the number of families in bed and breakfast accommodation.
- 4.2.7 Planning permission has now been granted for the scheme and procurement is underway.
- 4.2.8 The Council is also reviewing further site opportunities on HRA land to provide temporary modular accommodation so more homes can be provided at lower cost.

Homes for Reading

- 4.2.9 The Council has established Homes for Reading Ltd, a housing company wholly owned by the local authority, in order to increase the supply of quality rented accommodation in Reading.
- 4.2.10 The company will be financed principally through Prudential Borrowing via the General Fund, to purchase existing and new properties in the open market. Initial financial modelling indicates that 70% of the properties would need to be let at full market rent levels to create some cross-subsidy to ensure there is no cost to the General Fund (that is, that the model 'breaks even'). 30% would be rented at LHA (Housing Benefit acceptable) levels and let to households at risk of homelessness, reducing the pressure on emergency and temporary accommodation. In time the company will also be able to develop new build housing, where viable.
- 4.2.11 The Council is looking to purchase the first properties later this financial year and intends to take ownership of up to 100 homes in the first year of operation.

Private Sector Landlords

- 4.2.12 The Housing Needs Service is currently undertaking research to better understand the current motivation and requirements of Landlords, to investigate and evaluate any changes in the private rental market, to consider the impact of these on homelessness and make recommendations on our responses in order to prevent

homelessness. This includes consideration of what incentives can be provided in order to make letting to homeless households more attractive.

- 4.2.13 Previous research of this nature carried out in 2014 led to the development of the Rent Guarantee Scheme.

Promotion of the RGS Offer

- 4.2.14 During the early part of 2016, the RGS was promoted via billboards, bus and radio advertising. Monitoring how new landlords become aware of the scheme has consistently shown that the majority are attracted by word of mouth: they hear about the benefits the scheme has to offer from landlords who already use DGS or RGS. With this in mind, 'recommend a friend' promotional activities are being explored including a pilot offer of a cash incentive for the most sought after property types. This will be carried out alongside increased use of social media, advertising in trade magazines and poster advertising in local businesses frequented by landlords. An exceptionally well attended landlord evening with a 'landlord surgery' format took place in October 2016 to further promote the benefits of the scheme.

- 4.2.15 The RGS Landlord Advisor is now in post and identifying and exploring opportunities to access 'new' private sector landlords through various contact points within the Council.

Making best use of Stock

- 4.2.16 The Housing Service is exploring options to more actively promote the Council's Under-Occupation Scheme to free up larger properties and ensure that older people are supported to downsize to more manageable and suitable properties where appropriate.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 This proposal will contribute to the service priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2015-18:

- Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable, and
- Providing homes for those in most need.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Not applicable for this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Housing Act 1996 sets out a Local Authority's responsibilities in respect of homeless households who approach the Local Authority for assistance. The legislation specifies that all Local Authorities have a duty to provide temporary accommodation to applicants who are homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need and not intentionally homeless.

- 7.2 The Suitability of Accommodation Order 2012 lays out the requirements for Local Authorities in making an offer of suitable accommodation.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Any approach adopted to manage homelessness is likely to impact on the General Fund costs that the Council incurs in meeting its statutory duty and should be developed to ensure the best use of Councils resources, in particular the management of costs associated with the use of bed and breakfast.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 Homeless Strategy 2015 - 2020 and Reducing the Use of Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	16 NOVEMBER 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	13
TITLE:	MEETING HOUSING NEED FOR HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY THE BENEFIT CAP		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR RICHARD DAVIES	PORTFOLIO:	HOUSING
SERVICE:	HOUSING NEEDS	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	BRYONY HALL	TEL:	0118 9373413
JOB TITLE:	HOUSING NEEDS MANAGER	E-MAIL:	Bryony.Hall@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In 2013 the Government introduced a cap to the amount of benefits paid to non-working households.
- 1.2 The Government subsequently announced a further cut in the overall benefits for non-working households in the 2015 Summer Budget, introduced by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. This is due to come into effect in Reading in November 2016.
- 1.3 This paper considers the impact of the further reduction of the cap on households in Reading and the options for responding to these changes and helping households affected.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That members note the impact of the further reduction of the benefit cap on the affordability of accommodation for Reading residents.
- 2.2 That members note the proposed approach and options for supporting households impacted by the benefit cap.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The benefit cap was announced by the coalition government in the 2010 Spending Review; it was introduced nationally in 2013 and rolled out in Reading in September of the same year. The cap placed a limit on the total benefits that families and working age people can receive to £26,000.

- 3.2 The cap applies to a range of benefits including child benefit, child tax credit, job seekers allowance and housing benefit. Where any members of the household are in receipt of working tax credits (working over 16 hours a week) or disability or sickness related benefit, the cap does not apply.
- 3.3 Due to the fact that housing benefit is included in the capped amount and is the only element to which the cap is applied, the cap has mainly had an impact in high rent areas, such as London and parts of the South East - so far Reading Borough Council has seen approximately 180 families since Sept 2013 that have had their benefits reduced, mainly affecting larger sized families living in the private sector, requiring 3 and 4 bedroom properties.
- 3.4 The announcement of the further reduction to the overall cap to household benefits in the Government's 2015 Summer Budget adds significant concern about the affordability of accommodation to households on low incomes in Reading. The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 capped benefits for families to £20,000 and £13,000 for single people, taking effect in Reading in autumn 2016, meaning a cap to weekly income for families of £384.62 regardless of family size.

Impact on households

- 3.5 This added reduction to benefits will significantly increase the number of non-working families who are affected by the cap. In Reading current estimates place the number at 515 households, approximately 140 of which are likely be RBC tenants; 100 tenants of Registered Providers; and 250 are living in the private sector.
- 3.6 One of the consequences of the further reduction to benefits will be that, for the first time, larger families living in social rented tenancies will now feel the impact of the cap, whilst a greater number of smaller families in the private rented sector will also become affected.
- 3.7 Table 1 demonstrates the effect on families living in 2 bed accommodation in receipt of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) in the private sector. The table shows the change in the overall level of benefit that families living in a two bedroom property will receive, based on different family compositions. This table shows that for an adult living in the private sector with 2 children there will be a shortfall of over £100 pounds on monthly income (£28.71 a week).

Table 1 : Impact of the cap on households living in 2 bedroom property at LHA (private sector). All figures are weekly.			
Family Composition	Current benefit* (£)	Cap Amount (£)	Shortfall (£)
1 Adult and 1 child	344.79*	384.62	None
1 Adult and 2 children	411.38*	384.62	28.71
2 adults and 1 child	386.09*	384.62	3.29
2 adults and 2 children	452.68	384.62	70.46

*Based on 2 bedroom LHA in Reading, receipt of JSA, Child Benefit and child tax credit relevant to household composition.

- 3.8 Table 3 depicts the same information for households living in 3 bedroom social housing, showing that the cap will now affect households living in 3 bedroom Council accommodation.

Family Composition	Current benefit*(£)	Cap Amount (£)	Shortfall (£)
1 Adult and 2 children	348.05	384.62	None
1 Adult and 3 children	414.63	384.62	29.52
2 adults and 2 children	389.35	384.62	4.11
2 adults and 3 children	455.93	384.62	71.27

*Based on HB paid at target rent for a 3 bedroom property Reading, receipt of JSA, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit relevant to household composition.

- 3.9 Families will find themselves having to make increasingly difficult decisions about their household expenditure and how to prioritise their finances. For example, a couple with 2 children living in a two bedroom property with rent at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) level will face a monthly reduction of £281.84 in their overall benefits.
- 3.10 The level of this reduction is likely to mean that households will be unable to pay both rent and basic living costs, potentially having to make decisions about meeting their children's most basic needs or falling into arrears and debt, leading to homelessness. Some households in the borough are already becoming reliant on food banks in making the decision to ensure their rent is paid.
- 3.11 When the affordability of accommodation is considered in the context that only 30% of the private sector market is available to those households in receipt of LHA (which is calculated at the 30th percentile of the market), it is evident that the situation becomes very difficult for households to resolve by finding alternative cheaper accommodation.
- 3.12 Rents in Reading are amongst some of the most expensive outside of London. Over time the unaffordability of accommodation will be further exacerbated by an increase in market rents due to the prosperity of the town, whilst LHA will remain static after a four year freeze in the uprating of LHA imposed by the government in 2015.
- 3.13 In the context of the rising cost of accommodation in Reading, the benefit limit will make the town unaffordable to many households reliant on housing benefit. The ability of low income families to find housing is further compounded as the pool of affordable and social accommodation in Reading becomes markedly smaller.
- 3.14 This decline in the numbers of properties affordable to those households in receipt of Local Housing Allowance is due to a combination of market forces and government changes. Contributory factors include the increased rents for many Register Provider properties due to the introduction of the 'affordable rent' product (allowing up to 80% of market rent to be charged); a reducing number of Council owned properties available due to Right to Buy (RTB) and low turnover of stock; and limited supply through new developments. The introduction of RTB for Housing Association tenants and the associated levy on 'high value' void Council homes, due to be introduced in 1st April 2017, will exacerbate this as the authority is likely to have to sell some properties to be able to pay the levy.

- 3.15 Many households attempting to resolve their housing situation may do this by moving into smaller accommodation subsequently becoming overcrowded. This creates unsuitable living conditions for families, especially those with a large number of children who are most financially affected by the cap.
- 3.16 Affected households are left with limited options and realistically can only afford accommodation costs by working more than 16 hours a week to avoid the cap; moving to a smaller home; or relocating to a cheaper area.

Impact on the Local Authority

- 3.17 Whilst having a major impact on individual families and wellbeing outcomes for children, this will additionally have a significant impact on local authority resources, including the costs associated with accommodating households in emergency/temporary accommodation if evictions increase as a result of arrears. Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) can top up a shortfall in rent but is a limited resource and it can only be seen as an interim measure whilst a more sustainable solution is found for a household.
- 3.18 Local Authorities, who have a duty to provide temporary accommodation to applicants who are homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need and not intentionally homeless, are faced with the challenge of finding affordable and suitable accommodation for households affected in an increasingly competitive market. This challenge will be double edged, as the Council will be required to meet the needs of an increase in the numbers of applicants presenting to the local authority for assistance in a climate where there are decreasing options for affordable accommodation to prevent their housing crisis from happening.
- 3.19 The Local Authority is already under considerable pressure and the use of B&B has increased over recent years. It is universally recognised that the use of temporary or emergency accommodation is unsettling and disruptive for homeless households and is unsuitable for long periods of time, however at the current time the local authority accommodates in excess of 300 households in temporary accommodation and B&B combined due to a lack of alternative affordable options.
- 3.20 There is also concern about the impact of the cap on existing Reading Borough Council tenants, of which approximately 140 are likely to be affected to varying degrees. This is likely to lead to an increase in arrears and reduced income to the Housing Revenue Account - impacting on the ability of the authority to invest in new build homes.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position:

- 4.1.1 The Council's Housing teams have undertaken a targeted approach to supporting households affected by the cap living in both social and private tenancies, in order to prevent homelessness. Households have been supported to: understand whether any exemptions applied to their circumstances (for example by claiming disability benefits); enter into more than 16 hours employment per week; or move to alternative cheaper accommodation.
- 4.1.2 Whilst in the main, households were prevented from becoming homeless, unfortunately there are a small number of households affected by the original cap who were unable to resolve their situation and in some circumstances have had to be provided with emergency accommodation by the Local Authority.

4.1.3 With current pressures on Council resources and concerted efforts already being made to contain increasing demand for emergency accommodation, the local authority needs to consider alternative options to help households move to long term, affordable and sustainable accommodation.

4.2 Options

4.2.1 Helping to meet the needs of homeless households and those who may be threatened with homelessness is becoming ever more challenging. If the Council does not do more to help households where all of these options have been exhausted then an increasing number of households are going to become homeless or end up accommodated in overcrowded conditions.

4.2.2 The local authority needs to be flexible in its approach to tackling homelessness and use all tools available to do so, offering a range of responses to meet the needs of individual families in financial crisis.

4.2.3 As described above in 2013 the Council took an active approach to managing the impact of the cap and contacted all households affected to ensure that the impact to support them to mitigate its impact and prevent homelessness wherever possible. The Council will be taking a similar approach to helping these households, whilst learning from and developing practice from the experience of the previous cap.

4.2.4 A case management approach will be taken to support affected households. Two Benefit Cap Coordinators and a Senior Welfare Reform Officer have been employed in the Housing department through funding from the DWP to ensure that the impact of the cap is assessed and that relevant appropriate support is accessed for these households. Households will have twice been contacted by the DWP by the end of September 2016 to advise that they are likely to be affected, which will be followed up by letter from RBC Housing Benefit department to confirm this once the cap has been applied. RBC Housing will be contacting all households from October to offer support and to advise of other appropriate support available.

4.2.5 The Housing department is working across all relevant Council teams to ensure a collaborative approach is taken by officers in Children's and Adult Services and that there is a joint understanding of the options available to households. Benefit Cap Coordinators will be co-located between Housing and the Job Centre Reading (JCP) to ensure that the most effective approach is taken.

Households will be contacted on an individual basis by the cap coordinators to work through the available options as follows:

Supporting households with exemptions from the cap and income maximisation

4.2.6 The Housing department works with capped households to ensure that they are able to maximise their current income and that all options have been explored for gaining exemptions to the cap, which might include eligibility for certain benefits not previously claimed.

4.2.7 The Debt Advice team has supported people to enable them to manage their finances and to meet their priority debts, whilst ensuring that the limited Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) budget is utilised in the most effective way to prevent homelessness, temporarily meeting the shortfall in Housing Benefit to allow households more time to resolve their situation. It is worth noting that this is additional pressure on the already burdened DHP budget, so payments will be conditional and short term, this is not a long term resolution for these households.

Supporting households into employment

- 4.2.8 Working with the DWP and JCP, the Council will work in a targeted way to help households move closer to the job market and back into employment. The co-location of the new coordinators will ensure that this support is being targeted to the households who most require the assistance.

Case Study - officer experience

Jane is a single mother of 5 whose benefit was capped in 2013. Jane was a joint tenant with her mother. Both were in debt and a joint appointment was booked with the Council's Debt Advice Team. There were some arrears which Jane was responsible for as well as a shortfall due to the benefit cap. Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) was put in place as a short term measure, debt advice was provided and information around childcare options provided to enable Jane to return to work.

I also discussed work options with Jane and a referral to Progress to Work was made and Jane subsequently found 16 hours work per week as a cleaner. There were no childcare implications as her mother lives with her and was happy to assist. This meant that Jane was no longer subject to the benefit cap and could pay her rent without extra help.'

- 4.2.9 A specialist officer employed by the DWP working within the Troubled Families Programme is supporting those families who are identified within that scheme. This resource will be utilised to ensure that those households most in need are receiving the support that is required.
- 4.2.10 Whilst this has been successful in many cases, based on the experiences of the 2013 cap there are households that have been affected who struggle to work more than 16 hours per week for a range of reasons, including childcare or caring responsibilities. The co-ordinators will be working with JCP to support households to find childcare, including helping households to utilise new childcare initiatives.

Supporting households to move to cheaper accommodation

- 4.2.11 Where there are no other options for a large family, Housing Advice will consider helping a household to move to smaller accommodation. However, this option is only used to deal with a crisis situation and is not appropriate in the long term - it cannot be a sustained approach for the Council as a solution for affected families, as it will create overcrowding which is not suitable and will become exacerbated as children get older.
- 4.2.12 Where households independently express an interest in moving out of the Reading area to somewhere more affordable, they are provided with advice to help consider this option.

Supporting mobility - securing homes out of area

- 4.2.13 The service is developing a comprehensive package of support to help people to move out of area on a voluntary basis. Many households may not be aware of opportunities to secure affordable housing in other areas. Families at risk of homelessness approaching the Council for assistance or those who may be in unsustainable unaffordable accommodation will be advised of the support available.
- 4.2.14 There are a number of Housing Associations and Councils in other areas of England that are often able to provide accommodation to households at very short notice.

Housing Advice has made a small number of successful moves for households who have asked for help to move to another area. This is likely to be Social Housing but where this is not possible it could be private sector.

Case Study - officer experience

'I have worked with a couple of cases where a move to a cheaper area has been successful for clients wishing to move. The process could not have been simpler, I made the initial phone call to the city Council and explained a bit about my role with the client and explained a little of their circumstances. Then they spoke to the client. This part took about twenty minutes and at the end of the phone call the client was invited to the area to view one of the properties with the possibility of signing up there and then if they were happy with the property offered. The client and I googled the property and it was a flat very near to the park and seemed to be a reasonably attractive block with green surrounding areas. We also checked out crime, employment and activities in the area and this was also positive. For one particular case the process was completed in about two weeks from the initial contact.'

4.2.15 Building on these successful moves a more comprehensive and consistent offer and information are being developed. The package of assistance will include:

- Help with financial and practical assistance to move to a new area - help with relocation costs
- Financial assistance to pay for deposits or rent in advance
- Financial assistance with costs of attending viewings for properties
- Support with sourcing accommodation and arranging viewings
- Information packages about other areas - employment, LHA rates, GP surgeries, schooling and children's activities.

4.2.16 Packages of support will be tailored to household needs to ensure that suitable, cheaper accommodation is sourced.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

This proposal will contribute to the service priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2015-18:

- Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable, and
- Providing homes for those in most need.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

None required at this stage. An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out in November 2015 on introduction of the Private Sector Offer (PSO), this will be reviewed to ensure that it remains relevant.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Housing Act 1996 sets out a Local Authority's responsibilities in respect of homeless households who approach the Local Authority for assistance. The legislation specifies that all Local Authorities have a duty to provide temporary accommodation to

applicants who are homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need and not intentionally homeless.

- 7.2 The Suitability of Accommodation Order 2012 lays out the requirements for Local Authorities in making an offer of suitable accommodation.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Three posts are being created to support a case management approach to supporting those impacted by the Benefit Cap: a Senior Welfare Reform Officer and 2 x Benefit Cap Co-ordinators. These are being funded by a successful Benefit Cap bid to DWP for £45,000 and a further £45,000 of 'New Burdens' funding from DWP to deal with welfare reform changes. This team will ensure a multi-agency approach in assisting those who are capped, working closely with the Housing Benefit Service, DWP and Job Centre Plus as well as with Childrens Services and more specifically with Troubled Families. All the posts are for a 12 month period and will sit in Tenant Services and will be co-located at DWP/Job Centre Plus for some of the week. All roles will be filled by November.
- 8.2 Currently a household in B&B accommodation costs the local authority approximately £13,000 per annum. Any approach adopted to manage homelessness is likely to impact on the General Fund costs that the Council incurs in meeting its statutory duty and should be developed to ensure the best use of Council resources, in particular the management of costs associated with the use of bed and breakfast.
- 8.3 It is proposed that packages of support to enable out of area moves should be developed to not exceed £2,000 per household as a general principle.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 'Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020 and 'Reducing the Use of Bed And Breakfast Accommodation' Report to HNL Committee of November 18th 2015.