

**HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
15 MARCH 2017**

Present: Councillor James (Chair);
Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Davies, Dennis, Kelly Edwards (for items 26 - 36), Gittings, Grashoff (for items 27 - 36), McDonald, McGonigle, O'Connell (for items 24 - 32 and 36), Steele, Terry, Tickner and Rose Williams.

24. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

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

25. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were submitted:

- Community Safety Partnership - 10 November 2016.

Resolved - That the Minutes be received.

26. 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	Zero Carbon Homes Policy

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

27. COMMUNITY ALCOHOL PARTNERSHIP (CAP) UPDATE

Tessa Brunsten, Community Alcohol Partnership Officer, gave a presentation on the work of the Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP).

Reading's CAP was piloted by Trading Standards in two areas which ran from 2011. CAP was an alcohol industry funded initiative receiving funding from both alcohol industry retailers and producers although individual CAP schemes might also receive funding from a range of other sources. In 2014 Public Health started to fund the role and supported Trading Standards to make it the first borough wide partnership of its kind. The vision of the CAP was to shape a society in which communities worked in partnership to ensure that children did not drink alcohol and where all young people learnt to develop responsible attitudes to drinking as they became adults. The mission of the CAP was to reduce alcohol harm in local communities with a primary focus on tackling underage drinking. This would be achieved via a partnership approach with a focus on education, enforcement and public perception.

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Tessa talked about the work the CAP, which included education, enforcement, public perception, communication, diversionary activities and evaluation. Part of the work with retailers had included Challenge 25 test purchasing all retailers in 2014 and there had been a 72% failure rate. When tested again in 2017 the failure rate had fallen to 17%. Tessa also talked about the work the CAP had done with schools, which included alcohol awareness sessions, and through diversionary activities, which had included football tournaments and create a comic sessions would be held in the school holidays.

Tessa reported that she had been the joint winner of the South East CAP Community Champion Award in 2016. The award had also been won by Tessa's predecessor Matthew Knight in 2015.

Resolved - That Tessa Brunsden be thanked for her presentation.

28. READING FESTIVAL 2016 DEBRIEF

James Crosbie, Regulatory Services Manager, gave a presentation on the 2016 Reading Festival.

The campsites had opened on Wednesday 24 August and by 7pm on Thursday 25 August 65,000 people were on the site.

James reported that 50 complaints had been received about the festival, which was an increase on 2015. 25 of the complaints related to noise (some from repeat complainants). There had been some anomalies in 2016 as some of the noise complaints had been received from 15 miles away in Oxfordshire so for 2017 the team would try to plan differently for low frequency noise. Complaints had also been received about river taxis, street trading on Thames promenade and boat moorings. All of these areas were being considered in the planning for the 2017 festival.

The weather had been hot during the 2016 festival and advice had been given from the public health team regarding the safety of those attending the festival and Festival Republic had implemented plans such as providing water for those in queues.

In 2016 egress at the site had changed as there had been more day attendees than in previous years, which meant more people had been leaving the site each evening. The new egress plan had included closing part of Richfield Avenue for about an hour each evening which had meant pedestrians could walk down road safely to get to pick up and drop off sites. It was recognised that more promotion of the Hills Meadow drop off/pick up site was needed.

James reported that something that had been particularly effective in 2016 had been a multi-agency team (an officer from Festival Republic, a police officer, a licensing and a trading standards officer) to deal with touting, pedalling and street trading. This team had given 35 verbal warnings and issued three fixed penalty notices. It had been noted that having street traders on both sides of Richfield Avenue had caused some issues and this would be reviewed for the 2017 festival. Off-site traders had been subject to test purchases over the festival weekend and two traders had failed.

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Increased air pollution particulates had been recorded during the 2016 festival. This was in some part due to the weather, which was still and dry so pollution was sitting locally especially after the traffic congestion. It was noted that work was needed to reduce bonfires on site which contributed to the air pollution.

Noel Painting, Festival Republic, attended the meeting.

Resolved - That James Crosbie be thanked for his presentation.

29. RE3 COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Anna Fowler, re3 Marketing and Communications Officer, gave a presentation on some of re3's current marketing and communications campaigns. Anna explained that re3 was a waste management partnership between Bracknell Forest, Reading and Wokingham Councils.

Re3 was trying to help residents waste less and recycle more through a variety of communication methods. There had been a recent poster campaign, officers had given visits, talks and workshops, press releases were issued as well as information given through social media. Residents asked the same questions in all three authority areas so re3 had produced myth buster information sheets which were available on the re3 website www.re3.org.uk.

Anna talked about a current campaign re3 was running about preventing food waste 'Love Food Hate Waste' and showed a film on some recent workshops that had been held.

Resolved - That Anna Fowler be thanked for her presentation.

30. WASTE MINIMISATION STRATEGY 2017 - YEAR 2 UPDATE

Further to Minute 19 of the previous meeting, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which provided an update on the progress achieved in the first two years of the Waste Minimisation Strategy 2015-2020 Action Plan. The Council had 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 sent 24.7% of its municipal waste to landfill with 75.3% being recycled, composted or sent for Energy from Waste. The current recycling rate for Reading was 32.6% compared to the national rate of 43.9%. The year one and two updated Action Plan was attached to the report at Appendix A. The revised Council strategy and appendices was attached to the report at Appendix B.

The report stated that the re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board had 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 set the 50% target for reuse and recycling to be reached by 2020. The Council and re3 strategies had been aligned to focus on the two fundamental aims to reduce the net cost of waste and to achieve the 50% re-use and recycling target by 2020.

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The report stated that the progress towards meeting the objectives set out in the action plan for the first two years of the waste minimisation strategy 2015-2020 was summarised in Appendix A.

Resolved -

- (1) That the progress to date of the Waste Minimisation Strategy Action Plan be noted;**
- (2) That the alignment of the re3 and RBC Waste Minimisation Strategies be noted and endorsed;**
- (3) That a half yearly update report be submitted to the Committee in November 2017 and the third annual progress report be submitted to the Committee in March 2018;**
- (4) That the Head of Transportation and Streetcare, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods, be granted delegated authority to make amendments to the action plan as required.**

31. PROGRAMME OF WORKS TO COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK 2017-18

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out the key elements for delivery of the Housing Property Service during the next year and highlighting the achievements over the past financial year. The Housing Property Service managed the day to day repairs, planned maintenance and void repair works to approximately 5,600 Council properties which were let throughout the Borough. Illustrations of programmes of work and the impact they had on the tenants and communities was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and the proposed work programme for 2017-18 was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The report stated that in addition to carrying out day to day repairs and a cyclical maintenance programme the Housing Property Services Team achieved the following in 2016-17:

- Completed the refurbishment of 2-54 Bamburgh Close as part of the Hexham Road Refurbishment Project of five blocks of flats and environs.
- Took on the responsibility for minor and major disabled adaptations work in the Borough (excluding major private sector works) after Aster Living's contract came to an end. Since June 2016, the team had delivered 33 major and 193 minor adaptations to the Council's Housing stock and 574 minor adaptations to private dwellings.
- Obtained planning permission to build 28 units of temporary accommodation at Lowfield Road.
- Awarded accreditation from Safecontractor for its commitment to achieving excellence in health and safety. Safecontractor was a leading third party accreditation scheme which recognised very high standards in health and safety management amongst UK contractors.

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The report stated that the budget for the works programme for 2017-18 was £15,146,000. Key elements for delivery included:

- Refurbishment of Kielder Court flats - the continuation of a flagship programme to greatly improve the four storey block properties at Hexham Road Estate. This affected 135 flats in total and each year work was carried out on a block of 27 flats. Following completion of works at Kielder Court, the remaining two of the five blocks would be refurbished over the following two years.
- Installation of gas central heating as a replacement for storage heating at the 8 storey blocks at Granville Road.
- Commencing work to replace the water mains at the Wensley Road high rise flats. The programme would take 3 years and will cost circa £1.8 million in total.

Work would continue with the kitchen and bathroom replacement programme with an extended colour range for kitchen doors and an enhanced specification for bathrooms which included over bath showers.

Resolved - That the programme of planned work for Council Housing Stock for 2017-18 set out in Appendix 2, be approved and that the Head of Housing and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the relevant Lead Councillor, be granted delegated authority to make minor amendments during the course of the year to the planned programme of works.

32. 'FIXING OUR BROKEN HOUSING MARKET' - HOUSING WHITE PAPER, FEBRUARY 2017

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Committee of the Housing White Paper, entitled 'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market', which was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in February 2017. The White Paper explained how the government intended to provide lasting reform that would get more homes build now and for years to come. It set out the support the Government would provide to enhance the capacity of local authorities and industry to build these new homes.

The report briefly summarised the content of the White Paper and considered some of the possible implications for housing development and specifically for the Council. The Housing White Paper covered a wide range of proposals. It detailed the initiatives and proposals under four main headings: Step 1 Planning for the right homes in the right places; Step 2 Building homes faster; Step 3 Diversifying the market; and Step 4 Helping people now. The content of the Executive Summary List of Proposals from the White Paper was attached to the report at Appendix 1. The main points of the White Paper as they related to the Council's Planning function were summarised and attached to the report at Appendix 2 and the Government's revised definition of affordable housing was attached to the report at Appendix 3.

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The report stated that the Government intended to consult on elements of the White Paper and on linked documents that had been published at the same time, such as a consultation document Build to Rent proposals. It was intended that the Council would submit a response to the consultation to cover both the questions posed and the wider implications of the paper.

Resolved - That the contents of the White Paper published by the DCLG in February 2017 and the implications for the Council be noted.

33. READING OLD CEMETERY GATE

The Managing Director submitted a report responding to a petition, which had been submitted to the Committee on 18 March 2015 (Minute 21 refers). The petition had requested the access gate on the Wokingham Road to the Reading Old Cemetery to be opened to allow local residents the opportunity to walk through the cemetery.

The report stated that officers had investigated a number of options if the gate were to be opened, all of which required a financial commitment given the state of the footpaths. Appended to the report was a plan of the cemetery showing two possible options to upgrade the footpaths within the Old Reading Cemetery to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and enable the Cemetery to be open for general public use. As a range of remedial work and investment would be needed to facilitate the opening of the rear gates to the Cemetery it was recommended that the gate should remain closed. The report also detailed other considerations that had been taken into account when recommending that the gate remain closed.

Resolved - That, having taken into consideration the petition to open the access gate on the Wokingham Road to Reading Old Cemetery to allow local residents the opportunity to walk through the cemetery, the request be declined and the access gate remain closed for the reasons specified in section 4 of the report.

34. DEMOUNTABLE POOL AT RIVERMEAD LEISURE COMPLEX

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking the Committee's endorsement of the actions taken to date regarding the demountable pool at Rivermead Leisure Complex and the intention to enter into a Development Agreement for Lease and a Lease with Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) to enable the installation and operation of a demountable swimming pool. The report also sought detailed scheme approval for the capital costs of constructing the demountable pool.

The report stated that at Policy Committee on 30 November 2015 (Minute 53 refers) the proposal to develop a demountable swimming pool at Rivermead was approved. GLL had procured a preferred contractor who had developed a costed design proposal and were looking to finalise the contract sum and enter into a contract shortly. Construction work aimed to start on site early May and complete by December ready for opening in January 2018. The total project value was circa £2.4m including all build costs and professional fees. This was a higher cost than the £1.8m estimated in the report to Policy Committee in November 2015 because unfavourable ground

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conditions had required a specific piling solution and as a consequence a more permanent building structure, which increased the requirements for BREEAM compliance. This increased the professional fees and build costs. The building housing the demountable pool would be a permanent structure and had an expected lifespan well beyond the current anticipate use. Subject to appropriate permissions it might subsequently be used for alternative activities should the Council wish and the building would therefore potentially have future value beyond the use as a swimming pool. It was proposed that the Council enter into a Development Agreement for Lease and a Lease with GLL to enable the installation and operation of a demountable swimming pool extension incorporating a permanent building structure with a view to enabling a planned closure of Central Pool in December 2017.

Resolved -

- (1) That the intention to enter into a Development Agreement for Lease and a Lease with Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) to enable the installation and operation of a demountable swimming pool at Rivermead be noted and endorsed;**
- (2) That scheme approval for the demountable pool of up to £2.4m of capital expenditure, as per the approved capital programme, be given.**

35. THE CULTURAL EDUCATION PARTNERHSIP

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that provided an update on progress in establishing a Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) for Reading in order to ensure access to high quality arts and cultural education for all child and young people, especially those young people who otherwise might not have access to such opportunities. Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was the CEP's Action Plan September 2016 - August 2019. This document included membership of the Partnership, terms of reference, information on Artsmark and Arts Award (accreditation schemes supported by ACE for the cultural activities of schools and individual young people respectively) and summary feedback from the initial consultation with young people that had taken place between May and July 2016. Attached to the report at Appendix 2 was detail on the Sound Around project referenced in section 4.2 of the report.

The report outlined the strategic context set by Arts Council England (ACE) and the role of its bridge organisation 'Artswork' in working with Reading to establish the CEP as a priority 'early adopter' in the south-east. It outlined the key stakeholders engaged with the CEP and the content of an initial Action Plan, as well as highlighting some emerging opportunities to deliver significant benefits to Reading's children and young people. The report sought the Committee's endorsement of actions taken to date to establish the CEP and the support of the Committee and its members in advocating for the work of the CEP and the importance of access to high quality cultural experiences for all our young people whatever their background or circumstances.

Resolved -

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- (1) That the progress made in establishing a Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) for Reading be noted and endorsed;**
- (2) That promoting access to high quality arts and cultural education for all children and young people as a means of improving outcomes, especially for those young people who otherwise might not have access to such opportunities be endorsed;**
- (3) That the commitment and support of a range of partner organisations involved in the CEP and the ongoing delivery of its associated Action Plan, noting the significant opportunities outlined in section 4.2 of the report, be welcomed.**

36. SOUTH STREET ARTS CENTRE

John Luther, Arts Co-ordinator, gave a presentation on South Street Arts Centre following the recent refurbishment and the current arts programme.

John talked about the participation and outreach work that took place at South Street. This included a successful youth theatre and South Street had a number of relationships with local groups and artists. John talked about some recent work that had taken place to produce their own work and would this year include a play about Gordon Greenidge, the Bajan cricketer who had attended school in Reading between the ages of 12 and 15.

John also talked about the diverse range of comedy, theatre and music that was on offer at the venue. Recent events that had taken place included the Walking: Holding project and the off-site project Sitelines. Fuel theatre had been working with South Street and one of their upcoming projects was An Evening with an Immigrant by Inua Ellams. John reported that South Street had recently registered interest with Arts Council England to be a national portfolio organisation, the outcome of which would be announced in June 2017.

Resolved - That John Luther be thanked for his presentation.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 8.40pm).