

POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 27 NOVEMBER 2017

Present: Councillor Lovelock (Chair)

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

48. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved -

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of item 49 below as it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

49. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE IN CONNECTION WITH WASTE DISPOSAL

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which explained that the re3 Board had approved investment of £166,000 in the re3 Material Recovery Facility at Smallmead to enable it to process additional materials alongside the plastic packaging currently processed. This change would increase the recycling rate for the councils and reduce the cost of waste disposal.

Resolved -

That an increase to the capital programme for capital expenditure of up to £166,000, financed and with payback arrangements as set out in the report, be approved.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3).

50. PROPERTY ACQUISITION STRATEGY - PROPERTY IN CENTRAL READING

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services tabled a report seeking authority to purchase an investment property in Central Reading. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 - location plan
- Appendix 2 - results of Property Acquisition Strategy initial assessment matrix
- Appendix 3 - Alternative Use valuation

Resolved -

- (1) That purchase of the property on the terms outlined in paragraph 4.2 of the report be approved;
- (2) That, in the event that terms were substantially changed or that due

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diligence resulted in the returns to the Council being materially affected, the Head of Paid Service be authorised to purchase the property in consultation with the s151 officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3).

51. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

52. QUESTIONS

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

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Roger Lightfoot	Demountable Pool timetable	Cllr Hacker
2.	Peter Burt	Use of open space at Palmer Park for proposed Swimming Pool	Cllr Page

Questions on the following matters were submitted by councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr White	Spend on Consultants and Agency Staff	Cllr Lovelock

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

53. POLICY CHANGES TO MEET HOUSING NEED

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out proposals to amend the Private Rented Sector Offer Policy and to introduce policies relating to the procurement and allocation of temporary accommodation for homeless households, to ensure consistency in the offer of accommodation to homeless households.

The report noted that the Council's Homelessness Strategy (Minute 7 of the meeting of the Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee on 5 July 2016 refers) included the implementation of a Private Rented Sector Offer (PRSO) allowing the authority more flexibility in the way it met its housing duty through a formal offer of suitable private rented accommodation. A year on from having successfully implemented the PRSO it was apparent that amendments to the policy were required to ensure that there was parity in the approach for all offers of suitable private rented

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accommodation, and to ensure that the local authority was best placed to meet housing need. The amended PRSO Policy was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report also sought approval to implement two policies setting out the Council's approach to the procurement and allocation of temporary accommodation in Reading. The proposed policies, which were attached to the report at Appendices 2 and 3, described and defined current priorities and process, and did not result in any change in practice.

Resolved -

- (1) That the amended Private Rented Sector Offer Policy, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;
- (2) That the Temporary Accommodation Allocations Policy, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report, be approved;
- (3) That the Temporary Accommodation Procurement Policy, as set out at Appendix 3, to the report be approved.

54. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS UPDATE

The Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer submitted a report reviewing the UK Parliamentary Election held on 8 June 2017, and giving an update on the annual electoral registration canvass which was currently underway, and which would produce the electoral register for 2018 on 1 December 2017.

Resolved -

That the report be noted and that all staff involved in the 2017 election be thanked for their work.

55. BUSINESS RATES BERKSHIRE PILOT & POOL

The Director of Finance submitted a report seeking endorsement of a joint Berkshire Pilot Bid for 100% Business Rates Pooling and approval for the Council being part of a Berkshire Business Rates Pool as part of the pilot. The report also sought authority to take decisions about whether to pool in other circumstances and agree the arrangements for the pool with the pool partners.

The report noted that the Department for Communities and Local Government had invited local authority bids for 2018/19 business rates pilots and had set out key requirements which were summarised in the report. A Berkshire bid had been developed with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and submitted to DCLG by the deadline of 27 October 2017. The report set out the outcomes if the bid was successful, and noted that a significant proportion of the potential gain should be used to generate local growth. The Berkshire bid had proposed that 70% be set aside for a strategic fund to be run by the LEP.

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The report noted that retrospective endorsement was being sought due to the tight timescale for developing and submitting the proposal, and that an announcement on the bids was expected no later than the time of the Local Government Finance Settlement in December 2017.

Resolved -

- (1) That the joint Berkshire Pilot Bid for 100% Business Rates Pooling be endorsed and that the Council be part of the linked Berkshire Business Rates Pool;
- (2) That the Director of Finance be authorised, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of Audit & Governance Committee, to take decisions about whether to pool business rates in other circumstances and to agree the arrangements for the pool with the pool partners,
- (3) That any decisions taken by the Director of Finance under the authority given in (2) above be reported to the next available Policy Committee.

56. BUDGET MONITORING

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the projected Council revenue budget outturn position for 2017/18 based on actual, committed and projected expenditure for the Council as at the end of September 2017. It also contained information on the capital programme, capital receipts and the Housing Revenue Account.

The report explained that it was projected that, for a variety of reasons, the revenue budget would be underspent by £0.3m as at the year end, without using the remaining contingency of £1.6m set aside to manage unexpected pressures and savings shortfalls. However there remained some serious concerns including the £8.4m total of negative variances, which included some projection of further pressures on care places through to the year-end, and the fact that many of the positive variances and mitigations were not ongoing, so would not provide relief for any of the negative variances that were ongoing into 2018/19 and beyond. Service directors had therefore identified immediate steps to reduce spending in 2017/18 and a number of these mitigating actions were outlined in the report.

Resolved -

- (1) That it be noted that, based on the position at the end of September 2017, budget monitoring forecast that the budget would be underspent by £0.3m, without using the remaining contingency of £1.6m;

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- (2) That it be noted that additional proposals had been identified in order to reduce the projected spend in 2017/18.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 7.48pm).