

To: Councillor Brock (Chair)  
Councillors Page and Skeats

Direct: ☎ 0118 9372303

23 March 2020

Your contact is: **Simon Hill - Committee Services (simon.hill@reading.gov.uk)**

## **POLICY COMMITTEE 24 MARCH 2020**

Further to the agenda for the meeting of the Policy Committee on Tuesday, 24 March 2020 please see attached urgent agenda items 2 and 3(b).

	<b><u>WARDS AFFECTED</u></b>	<b><u>Page No</u></b>
<b>2. COUNCIL RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC</b>  In accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair has agreed that this item of business can be considered as a matter of urgency, as it sets out the Council's immediate response to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic.	<b>BOROUGH WIDE</b>	<b>3 - 14</b>
<b>3. (a) Decision Book Procedure - Urgent Item</b>  In accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair has agreed that this item of business can be considered as a matter of urgency, on the grounds that it will increase the flexibility in the Council's decision-making processes by temporarily amending the Decision Book procedure in response to the current Covid-19 situation, and in anticipation that further restrictions on holding meetings could be imposed at any time.	<b>BOROUGH WIDE</b>	<b>15 - 20</b>

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## COUNCIL RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	24 MARCH 2020		
TITLE:	COUNCIL RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR JASON BROCK	PORTFOLIO:	LEADERSHIP
SERVICE:	ALL	WARDS:	ALL
LEAD OFFICER:	PETER SLOMAN	TEL:	01889 372067
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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the Council's immediate response to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic which is now facing the Borough, the Country and the World.
- 1.2 To guide the actions of the Council and its work in partnership with others at this critical time, the Council will for the remainder of the outbreak, and the subsequent recovery period, focus its efforts on several key priorities, which whilst aligned with the priorities in its Corporate Plan are necessarily different and more limited in nature.
- 1.3 To ensure that the Council's governance arrangements are agile and able to respond to what is a very dynamic situation the Urgency Procedures within the Council's Constitution have been invoked.

### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Policy Committee is asked:

- 2.1 To endorse the three point Strategic Framework and underlying principles set out in Appendix 2 in order to focus and guide the Council's response to the current Coronavirus Pandemic.
- 2.2 To note the Interim Governance arrangements as set out in Appendix 3 attached.

Appendix 1 - Local Resilience Forum Multi Agency Response Structure Diagram

Appendix 2 - Strategic Framework and Underlying Principles

Appendix 3 - Interim Governance Arrangements

### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2018-2021 (which was refreshed in Spring 2019) sets out the following six priorities:
  - Securing the economic success of Reading

- Improving access to decent housing to meet local needs
  - Protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children
  - Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe
  - Promoting health, education, culture & wellbeing
  - Ensuring the Council is fit for the future
- 3.2 Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the actions which will deliver the priorities are published on the [Council's website](#) and demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.
- 3.3 The Council also has significant duties to respond to emergencies under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. This is the most relevant legislation in relation to an emergency response to a Pandemic. This Act delivers a single framework for civil protection in the UK and establishes a clear set of roles and responsibilities for those involved in emergency preparation and response at the local level. The Act divides local responders into two categories, imposing a different set of duties on each.
- 3.4 Those in Category 1 are organisations at the core of the response to most emergencies (the emergency services, local authorities, NHS bodies etc.). Category 1 responders are subject to the full set of civil protection duties and are required to:
- assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning
  - put in place emergency plans
  - put in place business continuity management arrangements
  - put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency
  - share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination
  - co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency
  - provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management (local authorities only)
- 3.5 Category 2 organisations (the Health and Safety Executive, transport and utility companies) are 'co-operating bodies'. They are less likely to be involved in the heart of planning work but will be heavily involved in incidents that affect their own sector.
- 3.6 Category 1 and 2 organisations come together to form 'local resilience forums' (LRF) (based on police areas) which help co-ordination and co-operation between responders at the local level. Reading BC and the other Berkshire unitary authorities are part of the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum.
- 3.7 While the LRF and associated sub-groups focus on planning for incidents, there are other levels of control that convene to manage the response to an incident as it occurs. They are:
- Bronze - Operational level, at which the management of 'hands-on' work is undertaken at the incident site or impacted areas
  - Silver - Tactical level of management is introduced to provide overall management of the response
  - Gold - Strategic decision makers and groups at local level. They establish the framework within which operational and tactical managers work in responding to and recovering from emergencies.
- 3.8 On 19 March 2020, the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum declared the Coronavirus Pandemic to be a Major Incident, the Council has also declared a Major Incident.
- 3.4 A "Major Incident" is defined as:

An event or situation, with a range of serious consequences, which requires special arrangements to be implemented by one or more emergency responder agencies.

- 3.5 A Major Incident is beyond the scope of business-as-usual operations, and is likely to involve serious harm, damage, disruption or risk to human life or welfare, essential services, the environment or national security.
- 3.6 A Major Incident may involve a single-agency response, although it is more likely to require a multi-agency response, which may be in the form of multi-agency support to a lead responder.
- 3.7 The severity of consequences associated with a major incident are likely to constrain or complicate the ability of responders to resource and manage the incident, although a major incident is unlikely to affect all responders equally.
- 3.8 The Council was and is working closely with its partners across Berkshire and the LRF to respond to the threat of Coronavirus. A number of structures exist under the LRF which enable the multi-agency response. These are illustrated in Appendix 1. Attached.
- 3.6 It is now clear that the current Coronavirus Pandemic will:
  - (a) disrupt the lives of our residents and poses a significant risk of to the most vulnerable
  - (b) detrimentally damage the world, national and local economy
  - (c) disrupt the ordinary business of the Council and other public services for a significant time, and
  - (d) place significant demands on the Council's leadership role in the coming weeks and months.
- 3.7 Consequently, the Council must revise its priorities for the foreseeable future in order that it can respond to the challenges both currently being faced as well as those to come.

#### **4. THE PROPOSAL**

- 4.1 To enable the Council to fulfil its leadership role at this incredibly challenging time, and to guide its work with partners in providing the support that residents and businesses need, it is proposed that the Council's current Corporate Plan priorities are reframed to provide clarity of purpose and that a three point strategic framework is adopted based around the following three broad priorities:
  - (a) To support and protect vulnerable children and adults by ensuring the social care system continues to function effectively
  - (b) To support the people who are most vulnerable and isolated in our communities
  - (c) To support businesses and the local economy, and secure Reading's economic recovery
- 4.3 Appendix 2 attached, sets out the Strategic Framework which will deliver the three priorities together with the underlying principles of how we will work.
- 4.4 In order to meet the challenge of the Pandemic it is vital that the Council's decision making is more agile. The current way of doing business by bringing people together in rooms to discuss problems is not sustainable. The Government has issued clear guidance about social distancing and it is making amendments to legislation to enable virtual meetings to take place.

- 4.5 To deal with the Pandemic, the Council has instigated the Urgency Procedures in the Constitution. This allows for a smaller group of councillors to make decisions in Policy Committee on behalf of the other Committees. The first of these meetings has been established. A renewed schedule of meetings will be presented to Policy Committee. A summary of these new interim governance arrangements is shown at Appendix 3.

## **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 5.1 The proposal to reframe our priorities is in line with the Council's strategic aims.

- 5.2 The strategic aims are:

- To Develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley
- To establish Reading as a learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit
- To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all

- 5.3 None of these can be achieved unless the entire Borough comes together to address this emergency and emerges strongly on the other side. Although we have taken the step of closing some of our buildings to protect staff and service users, in line with government guidance on social-distancing, we are still meeting the needs of our customers.

- 5.4 We are working in partnership with key partners, the business community and our vibrant voluntary and community sector to mobilise to address both the immediate and longer-term needs of the Borough.

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). We will not lose sight of this imperative and if progress reports are not immediately evident during the heightened activity to respond to the virus, members should be assured that work will continue nonetheless.

## **7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 7.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way". We have already started to consult with the voluntary sector and businesses community on how we should respond to the emergency. We will be working over the coming weeks to make sure that residents voices help shape our work going forward. I cannot at this moment report what form that will take, but I will report back to councillors in due course.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 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 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 It is imperative, that in responding to this emergency we look to protect the most vulnerable and marginalised in our society. Our revised priorities facilitate this. We will continually review our progress to ensure that we do not leave behind any section of our community.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are significant financial implications in responding to this emergency both in terms of additional costs as well as reduced income levels and officers have put in place procedures to record and track both. Additionally, the refocusing of staff to deal with this emergency will inevitably mean some savings are delayed or not delivered as planned. The Council's monthly budget monitoring arrangements will be used to formally report on the financial position.

Officers are also working closely with our arms length companies to understand and help address the financial implications for them and to ensure they can continue to provide services where necessary and do not become insolvent because of this pandemic.

10.2 The Government has to date announced £1.6bn of funding for local government (£3.8m for Reading) to meet additional costs including: adult and children's social care, support for rough sleepers, support for those at higher risk and lost income. A further £3.2m (£21k for Reading) emergency funding for rough sleepers has also been announced. These funds are due to be received on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April. However, the Government have assured councils that they should respond to the emergency and record costs so that they can be reimbursed later and in that spirit the Council has 'committed' £100k to support the Voluntary and Community sector.

10.3 In addition to the above, the Government have announced widespread reliefs and grants for business rate payers. Guidance on the application of the reliefs was issued on the 20<sup>th</sup> March and software providers are in the process of making the necessary changes to facilitate processing. It is anticipated that the Council should be able to apply the reliefs and rebill Business Rate payers by the end of this week. In the interim a stop has been placed on those accounts which are paid by Direct Debit. Additionally, Staff are writing to eligible rate payers in order to process the grants payments which have been announced. The cost of the Business Rate Reliefs and grants will be reimbursed by a S31 grant.

10.4 The Government have yet to publish details of the £500m Hardship Fund it announced to support economically vulnerable households. It is understood that this is primarily focused on Council Tax reduction for those most in need. Officers will review the Council's Hardship Policy in line with the Guidance when it is published and refer it back to Policy Committee for approval. It should be noted that this assistance is in addition to existing discounts, the ability to spread payment over 12 rather than 10 months and the Council's local Council Tax reduction Scheme.

10.5 It is also worth noting that the Government have announced that Universal Credit and Tax Credits will increase by £20 per week for 12 months from the 6<sup>th</sup> April and the 7 day wait period for ESA has been removed.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Corporate Plan 2018- 2020  
Chancellor's Budget 2020  
Government Announcements & Guidance



## Covid 19 - Emergency Response Structure

Major Incident Declared 20 March 2020



### SINGLE AGENCY

- RBC Gold
- Corporate Management Team
- Reading Leadership Group
- RBC Silver
- Silver Sub Groups (Task & Finish)



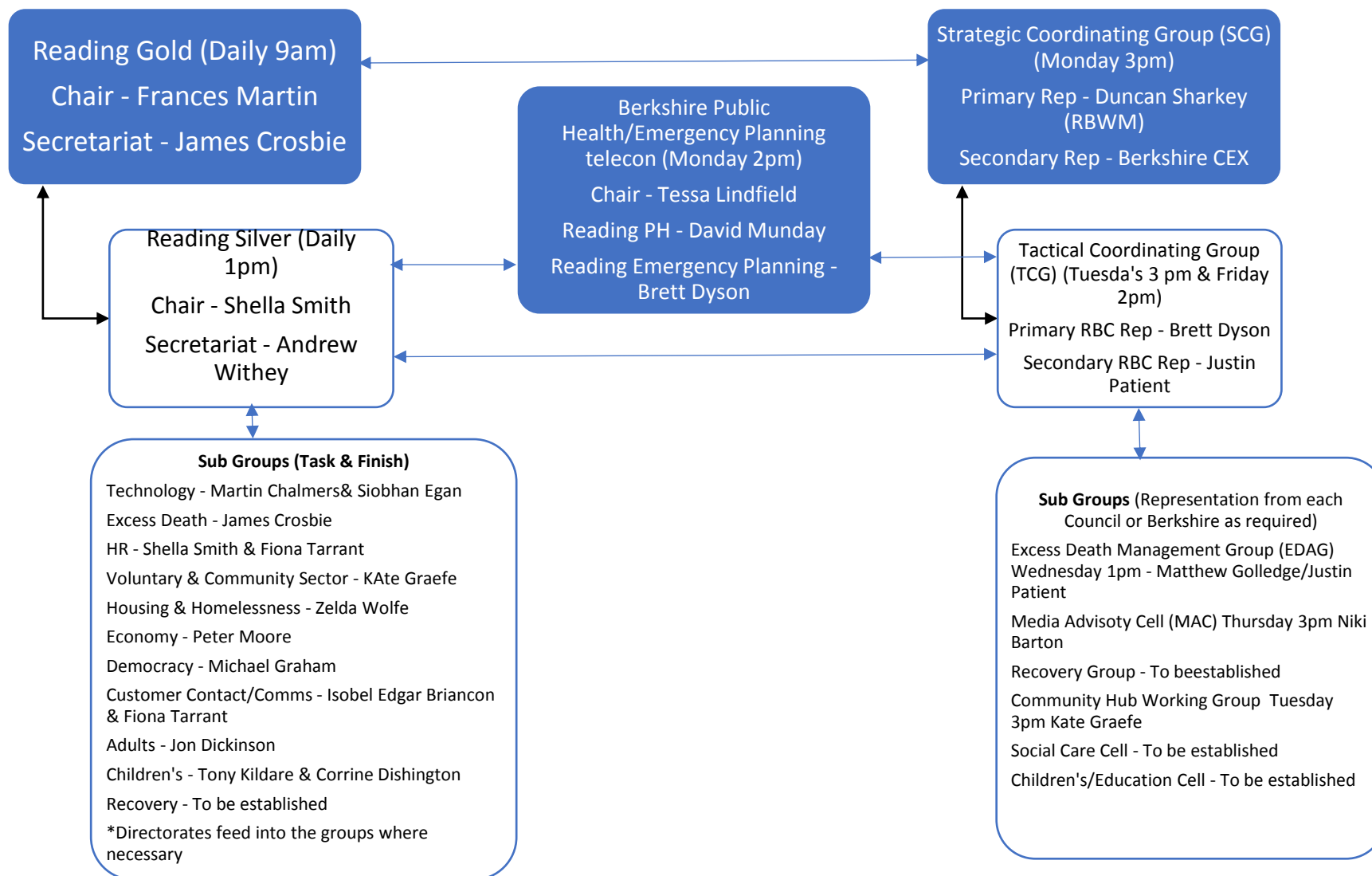
### BERKSHIRE

- Berkshire Public Health
- Emergency Planning



### MULTI AGENCY

- Strategic Coordinating Group
- Tactical Coordinating Group
- Tactical Sub Groups



# Covid-19 response: strategic framework

Reading Borough Council, 23 March 2020

The challenge of tackling the spread and impact of the Covid-19 virus is greater than anything we have seen in a generation. The situation has developed at phenomenal speed and we can be in no doubt that life will be very different over the coming months. Families, communities and businesses are trying to come to terms with the implications of social distancing, high levels of sickness, absence, and self-isolation. The impact is felt in many ways, such as less social contact, loneliness, reduced economic activity, concern for job security, and fear for loved ones. We know that people will become ill, some of them seriously, and that we should expect many more deaths before the pandemic is under control. And we anticipate an increase in safeguarding and vulnerability issues that will impact on the health and wellbeing of at-risk groups including elderly people, those who are homeless, those who use food banks, asylum seekers, those at risk of domestic abuse and those with existing multiple and complex needs.

At the Council we are clear what we need to do to play our part in leading the response in Reading, and we have the staff, the skills, the infrastructure, the partners and most importantly the will to do it.

Our response is underpinned by key principles that guide how we work:

- We will work with others, collaborating with partners across the voluntary, business and public sectors to deliver a coordinated response.
- We will prioritise the most critical services and redeploy people and resources from other areas as necessary.
- We will safeguard the resilience and wellbeing of our staff. We will be adaptable in how we work, enabling home working and flexible hours wherever possible, and ensure people do not lose out if needing to self-isolate or care for dependents.
- We will communicate regularly through a variety of channels to ensure that residents, communities, voluntary groups, businesses and partners feel informed and engaged.



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

**We have a three-point strategic framework:**

**1. Support and protect vulnerable children and adults by ensuring the social care system continues to function effectively.**

We will maintain effective social care services for adults and children by:

- Ensuring key services are fully operational including the Adult Social Care ‘front door’ service for people in need, and the Children’s Multi-disciplinary Referral access point.
- Ensuring social workers are available to undertake assessments and can access resources to keep people safe.

We will support others to deliver their services by:

- Providing equipment, advice and support to carers, residential and nursing homes and home care services where possible within our resources.
- Ensuring schools can provide support for the children of key workers, and for vulnerable groups.

**2. Support the people who are most vulnerable and isolated in our communities.**

We will deliver our statutory public health responsibilities by doing all we can within our resources and our ability, and that of our partners in the voluntary sector and the NHS, to protect the health and wellbeing of residents and communities in Reading.

We will focus our efforts on key vulnerable groups including elderly people, those who are homeless, those who use food banks, asylum seekers, those at risk of domestic abuse and those with existing multiple and complex needs by:

- Working closely with providers and voluntary organisations to deliver services, target vulnerable groups and maintain robust safeguarding.
- Amending our service delivery to promote social distancing, for example delivering services online, in smaller groups or using appropriate protective clothing.
- Supporting people in financial hardship with advice and funds where we can.

We will play a lead role in coordinating the voluntary and community sector response by:

- Establishing a One Reading Community Hub to coordinate and support the recruitment and registration of volunteers, connecting what people need with the help available.
- Ensuring that community and voluntary support efforts have robust governance and safeguarding mechanisms in place.

**3. Support businesses and the local economy, and secure Reading’s economic recovery**

We will support our local businesses and the local economy by:

- Establishing a One Reading Forum for anchor institutions to ensure employers get the support they need.
- Ensuring Business Rates and grants to businesses are distributed quickly and efficiently.
- Lobbying the Government for rapid implementation of Covid-19 budget decisions that support businesses, workers and the economy.

We will respond to the situation now, and plan for the future, working with partners to mitigate the effects of the crisis and plan for the long-term recovery of the town, its residents, communities, businesses and economy.

## Governance Model during Coronavirus Pandemic - March 2020

### Councillor decision meetings during the Pandemic:

Meeting	Revised Position
[Standing Order 7.7] Policy Committee	Scheduled more frequently (use when needed or cancel) meet with a quorum of three. Use for majority of member decisions. Webcast - no public attendance. Public to submit written questions. Use virtual meetings if emergency legislation allows.
Council, SEPT, HNL, H&WB, Personnel, Traffic Management Sub, ACE, A&G etc	Cancelled for the time being. Keep under review. Business to go to 7.7 Policy Committee.
Planning Applications Committee	Use Officer Decision making process where possible. Extend timescales where possible. Only meet if necessary - apply rules on social distancing. Use webcasting where allowable. Await legislation to utilise virtual meetings.
Licensing Applications Sub Committees	Only meet if necessary Revised protocol to be brought into use for virtual meetings.

### How decisions will be made during the Pandemic:

Situation	Decision making route
Urgent decision making - in extremis	Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader (and s151 and MO if possible).
Important decisions, pandemic related or business as usual - timebound	7.7 Policy Committee (emergency format). Items to Committee Services in the normal way.
Routine decisions - not timebound	Decision Book process - to be revised at 7.7 Policy Committee. Items to Committee Services in the normal way.

## 7.7 Policy Committee membership:

Councillors	Officers in support
Cllr Jason Brock	Peter Sloman, Chief Executive (via MS Teams)
Cllr Tony Page	Jackie Yates, S151 Officer (via MS Teams)
Cllr Jeanette Skeats	Michael Graham, Monitoring Officer

- Other officers in attendance as required (via MS Teams)
- Leader and Deputy Leader to brief Labour Group members
- Leader of the Council to collaborate with the Leader of the Main Opposition Group to brief all minority group leaders
- Additional MS Teams briefings by Leader to be instigated for wider membership of councillors

## Communication and Consultation Protocols for councillor decisions during the crisis:

	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed
Issue identified for decision	Officer	AD	Lead Cllr Leader CMT	Committees
Schedule in forward plans	Committees	CMT	Leader Lead Cllr	SLG
Draft report	Officer	AD	MO, s151, Head of Paid Service	CMT
Report finalised	Officer	AD	MO, s151, Head of Paid Service	CMT
Report approved for 7.7 Policy Cttee		Leader		SLG Cllrs
Decision		7.7 Policy Committee		Cllrs Web etc

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	24 MARCH 2020		
TITLE:	DECISION BOOK PROCEDURE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	JASON BROCK	PORTFOLIO:	LEADERSHIP
SERVICE:	COMMITTEE SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	MICHAEL POPHAM	TEL:	(0118) 9372153
JOB TITLE:	DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER	E-MAIL:	Michael.popham@reading.gov.uk

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair has agreed that this item of business can be considered as a matter of urgency, on the grounds that it will increase the flexibility in the Council's decision-making processes in response to the current Covid-19 situation, and in anticipation that further restrictions on holding meetings could be imposed at any time.
- 1.2 To seek to amend the Council's Decision Book process to enable decisions to be taken more flexibly during the current Covid-19 situation and potentially to allow decisions to continue to be taken and published in the event of further restrictions being introduced that could affect local authority meetings.
- 1.3 The amended version of the Decision Book process is set out in Appendix A.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the amended Decision Book process set out in Appendix A to the report be approved, including specific changes to disapply the current councillors' call-in arrangements within the 10-day period after its publication and replace it with the ability to seek a review of the decision retrospectively, and that the changes remain in force temporarily during the ongoing Covid-19 situation.
- 2.2 That the Head of Legal & Democratic Services be authorised to end the temporary changes to the Decision Book and to revert to the original Decision Book process, taking into account Government advice and restrictions on public gatherings.

### **3. POLICY CONTEXT**

- 3.1 There are three (main) ways the Council makes a decision - either through a resolution made through Council or a Committee, through an existing delegation that has been made to an officer, or through the Decision Book.
- 3.2 The Decision Book was introduced following the Local Government Act 2000 and the introduction of Executive arrangements in Reading in 2001. It is a mechanism for an Executive Director or statutory officer, in consultation with the relevant Lead Councillor, to enable a decision to be made. The Decision Book process was retained when the Committee system was reintroduced in May 2013.
- 3.3 Unlike a Committee report, the Decision Book report is written to set out the course of action that it is intended to be followed.

### **4. THE PROPOSAL**

#### **(a) Current Position:**

- 4.1 The Decision Book is a process enabling decisions to be taken under delegated power in consultation with the relevant Lead Councillor. A Decision Book report should follow the usual report template and analyse the issue, consider the policy framework options, and set out legal and financial implications, corporate priorities and so on.
- 4.2 The relevant Lead Councillor is consulted and can endorse the exercise of the delegation. When the exercise of delegation is endorsed the decision will be printed in the Decision Book with the accompanying report and circulated to Councillors, press and public via the website.
- 4.3. Within a ten-day period, three or more Councillors may request in writing to the Monitoring Officer that the decision be referred to the appropriate Committee or Council (as appropriate) for consideration. If the decision is so referred, it may not be implemented until the relevant Committee or Council have debated and resolved it.
- 4.4. If the decision is not referred to the relevant Committee or Council, it may be implemented at the end of the ten-day period. However, if in the opinion of the Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer a call-in request is likely to seriously damage the interests of the Council, the current Decision Book process allows such a request to be rejected.

#### **(b) Options Proposed**

- 4.5 It is recommended that in order to increase the flexibility of decision-making, the Decision Book process is amended to temporarily disapply the current councillors' 10 day call-in arrangements.
- 4.6 The Councillors' call-in would temporarily be replaced with the ability to seek a review of the decision retrospectively.



- 4.7 The purpose of making the Decision Book process more flexible is to make it easier for the Council to respond to urgent decisions, perhaps in the absence of the ability to hold a meeting. It is therefore envisaged that the facility would only be used to protect the Council and its residents' interests and therefore there is a presumption that the exemption to call-in would generally apply to Decision Book reports during the period affected by Covid-19.

**(c) Other Options Considered**

- 4.8 The Council could continue to operate the Decision Book as at present. However, in the interest of transparency and the potential need to take decisions urgently with the possible loss of the ability to refer decisions to a committee, it is recommended that the proposed alterations should be made to protect the Council's interests in the short term.

**5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 5.1 The report's recommendations support the Council's strategic objectives by providing more flexibility to continue to take decisions in relation to its priorities during the current Covid-19 situation.

**6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). The proposed amendments to the Decision Book process will increase the Council's flexibility to make decisions during the Covid-19 outbreak.

**7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 7.1 The proposals set out will enable the Council to continue to publicise decisions being taken during the current Covid-19 situation by publishing them in the Decision Book. It is recommended to retain opportunities for elected local councillors to seek a review of a published decision, albeit with the emphasis being on assessing the process. This will ensure there is no undue delay to decision-making likely to damage the interests of the Council.

**8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 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 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 In considering this report, you must consider whether the decision will or could have a differential impact on: racial groups; gender; people with disabilities; people of a particular sexual orientation; people due to their age; people due to their religious belief.

- 8.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken. This is because it is not considered that there will be an adverse impact arising from the proposals set out in the report on the groups listed in para.8.2 above.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The report is being considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The decision is required on the grounds that it will increase the flexibility in the Council's decision-making processes in response to the current Covid-19 situation. It also anticipates the possibility that further restrictions on holding meetings may be imposed at any time and therefore will provide a mechanism for continuing to take decisions and publicise them in the absence of a formal meeting.
- 9.2 This Policy Committee has been convened under Section 7.7 of the Council's Constitution, which allows it to take urgent decisions on all functions of the authority, including on behalf of other Committees, and full Council.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendations.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 None

## 42. Decision Book

- (1) Subject to the provisions of the constitution relating to the powers of the Council, the powers and duties of the Committees and Sub-Committees, Article 13.7, and the Scheme of Delegations approved by the Council on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1998, as amended from time to time, the Head of Paid Service, the Executive Directors, the Chief Financial Officer and the Monitoring Officer shall have power to take decisions on functions which have not been delegated to an officer, on behalf of the Council or the responsible Committees or Sub-Committee, subject to the following provisions:
  - (a) Before exercising any such delegation, the officer proposing to exercise the delegation shall consult with the relevant Lead Councillor(s) and shall prepare a full report on the matter including the precise decision which is to be taken and a list of background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 or any variation of that definition from time to time in force.
  - (b) The Head of Paid Service shall maintain a Decision Book in which all decisions made under this delegation shall be recorded together with copies of reports referred to in (a) above. The Decision Book shall be published on the Council's website; and circulated electronically to all Councillors on publication. Decisions will be actionable with immediate effect.
  - (c) Copies of the reports shall be available electronically to the press and the public on request in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 or any amendment of it and any Regulation made under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000.
  - (d) Members of the Council may reasonably request such electronic copies of the reports as they require.
  - (e) Not less than three Members of the Council may request the Head of Paid Service in writing to refer a decision for review to the responsible Committee or Sub-Committee within a period of ten days of the decision being included in the Decision Book.
  - (f) Where a review is requested in accordance with (e) above, the published decision will either 1) remain in force where already implemented until such time as the review is complete, or 2) where not implemented, be deferred pending the outcome of the review if the Head of Paid Service and/or Monitoring Officer are of the opinion that delay is not likely seriously to damage the interests of the Council; and on that basis any reviews are likely to be a retrospective assessment of how the decision was taken.
- (2) This delegation may not be used to take any decision which is inconsistent with the Council's Policy and Budget Framework as described in the constitution.

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