

To: Councillor Davies (Chair)
Councillors Emberson, Eden, Ennis, Gavin,
Grashoff, Hacker, Hoskin, James,
Manghnani, McDonald, McGonigle,
Rowland, Stanford-Beale and R Williams

Direct: ☎ 0118 937 2368
e-mail: amy.bryan@reading.gov.uk

5 March 2019

Your contact is: **Amy Bryan - Committee Services**

NOTICE OF MEETING - HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE - 13 MARCH 2019

A meeting of the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee will be held on Wednesday, 13 March 2019 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

	<u>WARDS</u> <u>AFFECTED</u>	<u>Page No</u>
1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST		
Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the items for consideration.		
2. MINUTES		5 - 12
3. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES		13 - 18
Community Safety Partnership - 20 September 2018		
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.		
5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS		

CIVIC OFFICES EMERGENCY EVACUATION: If an alarm sounds, leave by the nearest fire exit quickly and calmly and assemble on the corner of Bridge Street and Fobney Street. You will be advised when it is safe to re-enter the building.

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.

6. DECISION BOOK REFERENCES

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 subject of Decision Book reports.

7. PRESENTATION FROM READING BOROUGH COUNCIL TENANTS ON FIRE SAFETY REVIEW, BUILDING CLEANING AND SOCIAL HOUSING GREEN PAPER

8. AWARD OF GRANT FUNDING FROM WARM HOMES FUND **BOROUGH WIDE** **19 - 22**

This report informs the Committee of the successful bid for grant funding from the Warm Homes Fund and sets out the proposed programme of works.

9. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING UPDATE **BOROUGH WIDE** **23 - 30**

This report updates the Committee on the progress made in delivering the Private Rented Sector (PRS) Charter and action plan.

10. READING FESTIVAL 2018

To receive a presentation on the 2018 Reading Festival.

11. 'READING, PLACE OF CULTURE' (GREAT PLACE SCHEME) **BOROUGH WIDE** **31 - 38**

This report updates the Committee on progress in delivering year 1 of 'Reading, place of culture' funded through the 'Great Place Scheme'.

WEBCASTING NOTICE

Please note that this meeting may be filmed for live and/or subsequent broadcast via the Council's website. At the start of the meeting the Chair will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed. You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act. Data collected during a webcast will be retained in accordance with the Council's published policy.

Members of the public seated in the public gallery will not ordinarily be filmed by the automated camera system. However, please be aware that by moving forward of the pillar, or in the unlikely event of a technical malfunction or other unforeseen circumstances, your image may be captured. **Therefore, by entering the meeting room, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes.**

Members of the public who participate in the meeting will be able to speak at an on-camera or off-camera microphone, according to their preference.

Please speak to a member of staff if you have any queries or concerns.

This page is intentionally left blank

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 14 NOVEMBER 2018

Present: Councillor Davies (Chair);
Councillors Eden, Emberson, Ennis, Gavin, Grashoff, Hacker, Hoskin,
James, McDonald, McGonigle, Rowland, Stanford-Beale, and R
Williams.

Apologies: Councillors Manghnani.

8. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of 4 July 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

9. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were submitted:

- Community Safety Partnership - 26 April 2018.

Resolved - That the Minutes be received.

10. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Questions on the following matters were submitted:

<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
Charlotte Davey	Neighbourhood Concerns	Councillor James

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

11. FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2018/19

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that provided the Committee with an opportunity to review the Council's Food Service Plan 2018/19. The plan set out how the Council undertook the statutory duties to delivery safe food for Reading's residents. The report also set out progress against an action plan agreed with the Food Standards Agency following their audit.

The report stated that the Food Standards Agency (FSA) had carried out an audit of the Council's Food and Safety team in November 2017. As part of the audit, the Council was required to produce an action plan to address areas where improvements could be made. The action plan was an appendix to the Food Service Plan, both of which were appended to the report. The report stated that one of the recommendations published on the FSA's website arising from their report was that the Food Service Plan should be submitted to the Committee and published on the Council's website.

The Food Service Plan operated on an annual review. This was due to the significant in year variations associated with the churn of food businesses which meant that the

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
14 NOVEMBER 2018

risk based inspection program could not be forecast accurately more than a year in advance. Trends indicated that there was an increasing demand on the Food and Safety Team resulting from: consumer complaints; requests from businesses for advice; and increased food poisoning notifications. Despite this increasing demand and staff shortages in 2017/18 the team delivered 100% of Category A-E food hygiene inspections (916 inspections). The team had also been able to deliver an inspection rate of 89% of all unrated premises (177 inspections) and 100% of those premises failing outside the standard rating scheme (126 inspections).

Resolved -

- (1) That the content of the Food Service Plan and action plan following the FSA Audit be agreed;**
- (2) That the Food Service Plan be reviewed and agreed on an annual basis prior to the start of the subsequent financial year and published on the Council's website.**

12. FIRE SAFETY IN TALL BUILDINGS

Further to Minute 28 of the meeting held on 14 March 2018, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out the Council's response following the Grenfell Tower fire in Kensington on 14 June 2017. This included action taken in relation to the Authority's own housing stock, other corporate buildings and schools, as well as wider work in partnership with the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service in respect of privately owned high rise residential blocks within the Borough boundaries.

The report stated that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) and the six Berkshire councils had been signed, to enable a partnership approach to inspections and enforcement of all high rise residential buildings. As a result of the MOU, a building safety programme had been implemented and joint work commenced in March 2018 between RBFRS and the Council. This work involved joint fire safety inspections of 32 of the most high risk residential buildings over 18 metres. Inspections had been completed by 1 August 2018 and work to meet fire safety standards would be required as necessary. Three high rise residential buildings had been identified with ACM cladding which had failed the required fire safety standards. These buildings had had interim measures installed and were being monitored in accordance with the current Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) guidance. The Council and RBFRS were working with stakeholders of the buildings to support plans to remove, and in some cases replace, the cladding. There was regular communication and sharing of information between the Council and RBFRS, plus joint meetings with relevant stakeholders where required.

Resolved - That the action taken and planned in respect of fire safety in tall buildings, as detailed in the report, be noted.

**HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
14 NOVEMBER 2018**

13. 'READING, PLACE OF CULTURE' (GREAT PLACE SCHEME)

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report updating the Committee on the progress in delivering year 1 activities as part of 'Reading, place of culture' funded through the 'Great Place Scheme'. The Council learned in April 2017 that the bid had been successful (one of only 16 grants awarded across England and the only urban area to receive a grant in the South-east region). The amount of grant awarded had been £558,400 to deliver a range of programmes over three years linked to the objectives of the Great Place Scheme and complementing cultural activities and initiatives already underway in the Borough. The Council received formal 'permission to start' from the funders on the 12 December 2017 and the report summarised progress in delivering the programme against the 'approved purposes' agreed by the funders, these were:

- Strategic partnership building;
- Research and evaluation;
- Cultural outreach and creating a platform for cultural commissioning;
- Reading-on-Thames Festival;
- Economic Development and business engagement.

These strands of the programme were intertwined with many connections between different elements but the above provided a useful framework for tracking and evidencing activities and impacts. A narrative of the successful Great Place Bid was attached to the report at Appendix A and a summary presentation given to funders at a progress meeting in October 2018, which summarised significant progress made in year 1 of the programme, was attached to the report at Appendix B.

The report, in paragraph 4.1, provided an overview against key strands of the programme and highlighted, in particular, how the programme was beginning to address the needs of Reading's more vulnerable communities. The report also, in paragraph 4.2, set out the proposals to further develop the programme of work. The work over the next two years would be increasingly informed by evaluation feedback, strengthened partnership working and a better understanding of local needs and community aspirations.

Resolved - That the progress made to date on delivering 'Reading, Place of Culture' as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report be noted and the proposals to further develop the programme of work as set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report be endorsed.

14. WINTER PROVISION FOR ROUGH SLEEPERS

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report outlining the ongoing provisions and new interventions under the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Rough Sleeping Initiative for those sleeping rough in the Reading borough over the cold weather/winter period.

The report stated that Reading Borough Council implemented a humanitarian response under best practice guidance from Homeless Link during times of cold and severe weather nationally recognised as Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) provision. SWEP operated alongside newly commissioned Homelessness Support

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
14 NOVEMBER 2018

Services which operated all year round and new Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) interventions which had been commissioned following an award of £316,500 for 2018/19 from the MHCLG and a provisional award of £335,000 for 2019/20 under the same initiative.

The report stated that the Council had recommissioned its Homelessness Support Services from 1 September 2018 with a focus on innovative and emergency responses including: continuation of the rough sleeper outreach service; 10 all-year round emergency fold-out beds for those with or without a local connection for up to 14 days; 8 emergency and assessment bed spaces for up to 28 days; and continued funding of five Housing First placements which provided an unconditional offer of secure tenure and intensive support for complex rough sleepers for whom traditional interventions had been unsuccessful in enabling them to move from the streets. The report also detailed the services that FAITH Christian Group and St Mungo's Rough Sleeping Outreach Service provided.

The report stated that additional interventions to support rough sleepers this winter were as follows:

- A Rough Sleeping Interventions Co-ordinator to facilitate the initiative/interventions and develop a Rough Sleeping Strategy for the borough that would be closely linked to Reading's Homelessness Strategy;
- Additional posts within the Rough Sleeper Outreach Service team that would double the team's capacity and enable more flexible and assertive work patterns and a focus on reconnecting rough sleepers;
- 10 immediately available bed spaces, regardless of local connection, under a Housing Led model; these would be offered to people who were rough sleeping for up to six months (where required) whilst suitable housing options were explored and facilitated. Intensive support would be offered alongside these placements to enable throughput and consistency of availability;
- Extension of FAITH Christian Group's Bed for the Night emergency bed spaces provision;
- A funding pot dedicated to reconnecting rough sleepers to their area or country of origin including costs of travel for existing and new rough sleepers and being able to offer deposits and rent in advance for up to 10 individuals;
- Additional move-on worker roles, managed by Launchpad Reading, to work intensively with a small group of individuals who were finding their move-on options particularly limited or difficult to increase throughput across all Homelessness Support Services.

Resolved - That the winter provisions for those people sleeping rough in the Reading Borough be noted.

15. REDUCTION IN BED AND BREAKFAST USE

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out the measures the Housing Service had taken to bring about a reduction in the use of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) as emergency accommodation for homeless households.

The report stated that the number of households in emergency B&B accommodation in Reading stood at 136 on 31 March 2017 but had fallen to 29 by 1 April 2018. There

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
14 NOVEMBER 2018

had been 104 families in B&B in March 2017 mostly in shared accommodation but as at the end of October 2018 there were just 5 families in shared B& B accommodation.

The report stated that the Housing Service had developed a proactive approach to prevention and early intervention, crucially doing as much upstream prevention work as possible and taking a holistic approach to solving homelessness issues. This included linking households with services that may address other problems they faced and which made it more difficult for them to find accommodation.

As well as working across teams and agencies the service has utilised a number of prevention tools including:

- A restructure of the service to provide a triage function to capture cases at risk of homelessness at the earliest point. Putting in place two teams of officers - one focused on single homeless people and one focused on families with both teams developing relevant specialisms that match the profile of clients coming into the service;
- Negotiating with landlords to retain/not to evict tenants and rectifying areas of contention;
- Building positive relationships with private sector landlords encouraging them to rehouse homeless households;
- Continuing to successfully procure properties for the Council's well-regarded Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS);
- Attendance at viewings of properties with clients to support them and persuade landlords to agree a letting;
- Payment of rent deposits, rent in advance and top ups to secure accommodation where required;
- Utilising Homes for Reading Ltd (the Council's Housing Company) properties where rent levels were affordable for homeless households;
- Working with Homefinder to accommodate households out of borough where households were happy to move out of area;
- Working with B&B landlords to move away from nightly paid accommodation and converting units into private sector accommodation through the RGS;
- Working across relevant Council teams to ensure a collaborative and targeted approach was taken to support families affected by welfare reforms;
- Making best use of partner accommodation supply and ensuring move-on e.g. refuge, safe houses, commissioned homelessness services, voluntary sector accommodation;
- Supporting clients to access supported accommodation or support packages which enabled them to sustain their tenancies;
- Offering money advice and pre-tenancy information sessions to better equip clients to manage their tenancies effectively.

In addition the Council had a programme of building new affordable housing. A new development of 57 Council homes at Conwy Close (including a mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bed homes) was on site and the first units should be available to let by the end of 2018. 28 innovative new modular temporary accommodation units at Lowfield Rd had been developed and had already been let to homeless families. 14 small sites were being progressed to deliver a further 100 units with plans for phase 3 of the programme in development.

**HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
14 NOVEMBER 2018**

The report also set out two case studies, which demonstrated the range of work officers were carrying out to prevent homelessness and to reduce the use of B&B accommodation.

Resolved - That the reduction in the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation in line with the Council's Homelessness Strategy objectives be noted.

16. UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS UPDATE

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that outlined the action taken and planned to protect Reading Borough Council's land from unauthorised encampments. The report also set out the latest position in respect of the provision of transit or permanent pitches for travellers.

The report stated that the Council continued to review land that had or might be camped upon to identify how it could be protected. Between April 2017 and March 2018 the Council spent £104,000 on defending its most vulnerable sites. Managers from across Council services had carried out a review of land and agreed with the Lead Councillor for Neighbourhood Services a process for prioritising work. Defensive works were implemented at 13 locations across Reading by the end of March 2018. Since April 2018, protection works had been completed at a number of other Council owned sites that had been repeatedly encamped including Portman Road, Walnut Way, Pottery Road, Bran Close, Landsdowne Rd/Portman Gardens, Coronation Square and Burford Court. The report detailed the current status of the works.

The report stated that Reading had an above average number of unauthorised encampments when compared to other areas across the Thames Valley. A Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) in 2017 had identified accommodation needs for 10-17 permanent pitches and for a transit site to house 10 caravans for gypsies and travellers in Reading. In 2017/18 there had been 87 unauthorised encampments in Reading, most of which had been on Council land. Having a transit caravan site could meet this element of need and reduce the number of unauthorised encampments. However, identifying a site had been challenging. Further to this independent study, the Council had undertaken a thorough assessment of 80 possible sites across the borough. These had been considered against a range of planning policy criteria. One potential transit site had been identified on land at the junction of Cow Lane and Richfield Avenue but this option had been dropped following strong objections from residents and Reading Festival organisers and the proposal to locate a new school on the site. The Council had committed to undertake a further review of its land holdings and other opportunities in order to review potential sites and continued to raise the unmet need with adjoining Councils.

Resolved -

- (1) That the action taken to protect local authority land from unauthorised encampments be noted;**
- (2) That the ongoing programme of works to protect those areas of Council land at risk of unauthorised encampments with physical measures, or other such measures as appropriate, be approved.**

**HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
14 NOVEMBER 2018**

17. INSTALLATION OF FIRE SPRINKLER SYSTEMS TO COUNCIL HOUSING PROPERTIES

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking authority for the award of a contract for the installation of fire sprinkler systems to circa 280 Council properties in flatted blocks. The expected contract value will be approximately £700,000.

The report stated that despite the Council's high rise blocks differing in design to Grenfell Tower, the Council had appointed an external qualified Fire Engineer to carry out a review of the fire safety practice and systems. The company, Fireskills, had also been asked for a professional view on whether additional fire precautions were advised in any of the building types surveyed, to improve the fire safety standard in the context of recent incidents nationally and the learning from those.

Overall FireSkills noted that the Council's Housing Service has a 'forward facing and proactive fire safety strategy'. Whilst the Council was fully compliant with current legislation, FireSkills recommended that the Council could consider implementing a number of additional fire protection measures. This included the installation of sprinklers in some circumstances.

The value of expenditure was currently estimated on previous quotations obtained for similar sprinkler system works. The budget for the fire sprinkler systems was estimated at £700,000 and provision had been made in the Housing Revenue Account capital budgets to fund this work. Ongoing maintenance and service costs would have to be provided each year, the estimated budget allowance was £50,000 and provision has been made in the Housing Revenue Account Budget and Business Plan.

Resolved - That the Head of Housing and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, be delegated authority to award a contract for the installation of fire sprinkler systems in specified Council flatted blocks.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 8.03pm).

This page is intentionally left blank

Present:

Emma Burroughs (in the Chair)	Deputy Area Commander, Thames Valley Police
Anthony Brain	Community Safety Manager, Reading Borough Council (RBC)
Cath Marriott	Policy Development, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
Cllr Helen Manghnani (observer)	RBC
Elwyn Hopkin	Deputy Chair, Berkshire Bench
Nicola Bell	Manager, Willow Project
Paul Gresty	Strategic Lead for Partnerships and Prevention, RBC
Sally Andersen	Contract and Project Manager - Public Health, RBC
Simon Hill	Committee Services, RBC

Apologies:

Cllr Sophia James (Chair)	Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods & Communities, (RBC)
Cllr Liz Terry	Lead Councillor for Children, RBC
Cllr Jo Lovelock	Leader, RBC
Cllr Tony Page	Deputy Leader, RBC
Carol Kelly	Chair, Berkshire Bench
Kathryn Warner	Communities Manager, PACT
Melanie Smith	Head of Berkshire, National Probation Service
Sarah Gee	Head of Housing & Neighbourhoods
Vicky Rhodes	Strategic Lead for Early Help, RBC

1. MINUTES AND MATTER ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

Further to Minute 2 of the previous meeting, regarding consultation on the draft Drug & Alcohol Strategy, Sally Andersen reported that the Strategy had been submitted to the Council's Policy Committee and that approval was also being sought to recommission the drug and alcohol treatment service.

2. TROUBLED FAMILIES UPDATE

Paul Gresty submitted a report giving an update on the Reading Troubled Families Programme.

The report noted that the focus of the programme, overseen by central government, remained the achievement of outcomes for families through Payment by Results and service transformation and legacy planning. Reading had a target of 1170 families achieving significant and sustained progress against agreed outcomes by 31 March 2020, which was the date the programme was due to end. As of August 2018 Reading had made claims for 249 families achieving progress, and the report set out the performance required in 2018/19 and 2019/20 to achieve the target. Appendix A to the report set out a summary of Reading's current performance and projection for

the end of the programme. To help achieve the targets officers had been working with RVA and voluntary sector partners to ensure that the third round of the Innovations Fund had a clear focus on increasing the number of families identified, attached and outcomes achieved.

The report explained that an Early Help Service Transformation Maturity Model and toolkit was used as a 'route map' to achieve service transformation. The report summarised the current self-assessment which was due for completion at the end of September 2018, with an Action Plan to be completed by the end of December 2018. A Troubled Families Partnership Board met bi-monthly and had oversight of the Programme and Action Plan.

The report explained that the Early Intervention Prevention and Partnership Strategy had been refreshed in early 2018, and that it had recently been agreed to form a Reading Early Intervention Partnership to oversee the Strategy. Paul said that CSP partners were invited to get involved in the Partnership and agreed to circulate more information.

Nicola Bell noted that the Trouble Families Programme criteria suggested an overlap with families with exploited children, and suggested a meeting to discuss this further.

AGREED:

- (1) That the report be noted;
- (2) That Paul Gresty circulate information on the Early Intervention Partnership.

3. STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT EMERGING PRIORITIES

Anthony Brain submitted a report summarising performance against the priorities in the current Community Safety Plan, and setting out potential priorities that were emerging from the Strategic Assessment for inclusion in the next Community Safety Plan.

The report noted that the current Community Safety Plan had seen a change in focus away from 'traditional' crime types towards those reflecting more complex crimes based on assessing Threat, Harm and Risk. This reflected a move both in the Thames Valley and nationally towards identifying vulnerable individuals being or at risk of being exploited for criminal gain. New demands and changing circumstances, against a backdrop of reducing resources, meant that focusing on providing the best possible outcome for those most at risk of harm or causing harm was now embedded in community safety work and this was in line with both Thames Valley Police priorities and the Council's Corporate Priority of 'Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable'.

The report explained that the Strategic Assessment was still in an early stage of development but had, through assessment of Threat, Harm and Risk, identified a number of areas that were likely to be put forward as priorities:

- Violent Crime (Domestic Abuse)
- Adult Exploitation (sex-working, human trafficking and cuckooing)
- Class A Drugs
- Violent / ASB Crime (Young People)

The assessment had also identified other key areas of concern that were either creating increased demand for services or had an unknown risk to Reading:

- Unauthorised Encampments
- Acquisitive Crime levels
- Community Tension / BREXIT

It was intended that a draft Assessment be circulated in December, with the final draft then be signed off at the CSP meeting on 31 January 2019. A partner workshop would be held in early 2019 to identify the delivery groups needed for the new priorities, and following this the new three year Community Safety Plan would be produced.

At the meeting Anthony summarised the current trends regarding the emerging priorities and the reasons for their inclusion. Partners discussed some of the issues behind increases in the rate of different crimes and for not achieving successful outcomes.

Cath Marriott reported that the OPCC would like CSPs to have regard to the Police & Crime Plan in considering their own plans and priorities, and that there was an aspiration to have a more consistent approach across the region, possibly with the PCC providing standardised data to the individual CSPs for them to assess.

AGREED:

- (1) That the update be noted;
- (2) That the emerging priorities be endorsed for inclusion in the Strategic Assessment.

4. DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY UPDATE

A Brain presented a progress update submitted by S Gee on the development of a new Domestic Abuse Strategy. A number of workshops had taken place to consider a partnership response from the CSP to the Government's Domestic Abuse Consultation and discuss emerging issues for both the CSP's Strategic Assessment and the Domestic Abuse Strategy. National and local Domestic Abuse data had also been collated. The following priorities had been identified:

- Encouraging people to seek support earlier - improving information, education and prevention;
- Providing the right response first time - improving identification, encouraging disclosures and ensuring an appropriate immediate response;
- Having the right services available - improving support to move from victim to survivor or to change abusive behaviour;

- Understanding of the challenges in our town - improving data analysis and community engagement.

Further focus groups to refine priorities and assign leads for actions would be scheduled for October 2018, and a final draft of the Strategy was expected by January 2019.

AGREED: That partners submit any comments on the emerging priorities for the Domestic Abuse Strategy to Anthony Brain.

5. DELIVERY GROUP ACTION PLANS

The Delivery Groups submitted their current actions plans, which set out progress against actions/tasks under the agreed priorities for each group.

a) Vulnerable Communities

Anthony Brain reported that analysis was required of the low outcome rate for Hate Crime, which was currently 8.6%, compared to the Thames Valley average of 17.6%. He noted that there had been a successful response to the Oracle bomb scare, which had shown that commercial premises were generally well-prepared for such an incident. One issue that had emerged was how to make best use of the Town Safe radio system.

An update on Prevent would be given at the next meeting.

b) Modern Day Slavery and Adult Exploitation

Nicola Bell reported that from 1 September 2018 the Willow Project had been providing a service across the Thames Valley for individuals who were assessed as having been victims of exploitation or who were deemed to be at risk of exploitation. A Berkshire Anti-Slavery Partnership was being set up to share ideas and coordinate work. Nicola noted areas where more information needed to be shared including immigration checks by the Home Office and the use of Reception Centres across different local authority areas for victims of modern slavery.

c) Violent Crime

Emma Burroughs reported that there had been an increase in violent crime by young people. There were no notable issues with the town centre and night time economy.

d) Drug and Alcohol

The Drug & Alcohol Strategy For Young People And Adults 2018-22 Action Plan had been circulated with the agenda. The Plan set out actions being taken under the priorities of Prevention (reducing the amount of alcohol people drink to safer levels and reducing drug related harm), Treatment (Commissioning and delivering high quality drug and alcohol treatment systems) and Enforcement and Regulation (Tackling alcohol and drug related crime and anti-social behaviour). A recent press

release on helping Rough sleepers into drug and alcohol treatment through a new joint working partnership had also been circulated.

AGREED: That the Delivery Group Action Plans be received.

6. CRIME PERFORMANCE REPORT

Anthony Brain submitted the crime performance report as at the end of July 2018.

For all British Crime Survey crimes there had been a 4% year-on-year increase. For burglary there had been an 11% year-on-year increase, although the rate was currently falling rapidly and at a faster rate than the Most Similar Group of CSPs (MSG). There had been a 26% year-on-year increase in violent crime and trend prediction suggested that the rate was increasing at a faster rate than the MSG.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

8. OFFICE OF THE POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER UPDATE

Cath Marriott reported that the OPCC had submitted a bid to the Early Intervention Youth Fund on serious youth violence, and that a change had been proposed to the timing of OPCC spending plans, in order to give CSPs earlier notice of their grant funding.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

9. FUTURE ITEMS

The following items were noted for future meetings:

- Drug & Alcohol Action Plan
- Strategic Assessment sign-off
- Prevent update

An item on serious organised crime was also suggested.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETING

The remaining meetings for 2018/19 would take place on:

Thursday 15 November 2018

Thursday 31 January 2019

Thursday 25 April 2019

All meetings at 9.30am.

(The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and closed at 11.12 am)

This page is intentionally left blank

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	13 MARCH 2019		
TITLE:	AWARD OF GRANT FUNDING FROM WARM HOMES FUND		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR JOHN ENNIS	PORTFOLIO:	HOUSING
SERVICE:	HOUSING	WARDS:	ALL
LEAD OFFICER:	SARAH GEE	TEL:	0118 937 2973
JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS	E-MAIL:	sarah.gee@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Affordable Warmth Solutions (AWS) is a Community Interest Group set up in 2008 by the National Grid with the aim of addressing some of the issues caused by increasing energy prices and the growth of Fuel Poverty in the UK. Their aim is threefold: to help to reduce bills; make fuel poor households warmer; and improve the health of people suffering the most severe levels of fuel poverty.
- 1.2 AWS established a £150m Warm Homes Fund designed to support local authorities, registered social landlords and other organisations in reducing fuel poverty amongst some of the most deprived neighbourhoods. In February 2018 Reading Borough Council submitted a bid for £337,860 of grant funding to support new gas central heating installations in approximately 100 Council tenanted flats and 50 privately owned leasehold flats currently heated by older, less efficient and more expensive electric storage heaters.
- 1.3 In November 2018 AWS confirmed the award of the full amount of £337,860. The award was accepted by the Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Head of Finance and the Lead Councillor for Housing, Cllr John Ennis.
- 1.4 The Warm Homes Fund grant will be matched by £300,000 from other sources, including £40,000 grant funding already offered by Yes Energy Solutions and up to £180,000 from SGN (the gas network provider for South East England). The balance of funding will come from the 2019/20 Housing Revenue Account heating upgrade budget.
- 1.5 This report summarises the successful bid and proposed programme of works.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee note the award of £337,860 grant funding from the Warm Homes Fund to help tackle fuel poverty by connecting and installing new gas central heating systems in approximately 100 Council tenanted flats and 50 privately owned flats or houses across Reading.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Achieving high levels of energy efficiency in existing homes is increasingly important to safeguard residents against rising fuel prices and the risk of fuel poverty and also contributes to reducing carbon dioxide emissions and the associated impact on the environment. Further, if residents turn off their heating in an attempt to save money this can also contribute to problems associated with condensation and mould.
- 3.2 Reading Borough Council are committed to tackling fuel poverty and have a rolling programme of works to improve energy efficiency across our housing stock as well as providing residents with advice and support to help reduce their fuel bills whilst staying warm. The targeted programme has 3 main objectives:
- Upgrading inefficient heating facilities and connecting homes to the mains gas network
 - Ensuring that all properties are EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) Band D or above
 - Giving residents the tools and support they need to reduce their fuel bills.
- 3.3 The approach to an energy strategy for Reading's Council owned housing has been to secure the maximum energy saving or return for the investment made. In effect this means placing a strong emphasis on providing high levels of insulation and modern efficient heating systems within homes.
- 3.4 Electricity is more expensive than gas or oil, and is a relatively carbon intensive heating fuel. Whilst gas central heating will be more expensive to fit than many electric systems, it is cheaper to run. Since 2016 the Council has facilitated 124 gas connections in many blocks of flats and maisonettes which were previously supplied with older, more expensive and inefficient electric heating. There are now circa 700 Council homes remaining which have electric storage heating of our total circa 6,900 properties. The funded programme proposed will reduce this to circa 600.
- 3.4 To upgrade the remaining electric storage heating systems, circa 600, will cost in the region of £2,650,000. The majority of old storage heaters will be replaced with new gas central heating systems. Where the tenant's choice is not to have a gas heating system, modern storage heaters will be installed which approach the efficiency of a gas system. The replacement of these heating systems will be phased over a 3-5 year period with completion by 2024/25.

4. PROPOSED PROGRAMME

- 4.1 Affordable Warmth Solutions has awarded Reading Borough Council £337,860 of grant funding from the Warm Homes Fund. This will be matched by £300,000 from other sources as detailed below in section 9.
- 4.3 The funding is to be used towards the connection and installation of new efficient gas central heating systems with digital thermostatic controls in 100 Council tenanted flats and 50 privately owned leasehold flats - at no cost to either the tenant or home owner. These systems are easier to use, cheaper, and more flexible than the electric storage heaters they will replace, allowing residents to programme the systems to meet their needs rather than wait for heaters to charge and then release their heat at set times.
- 4.4 In line with the relevant delegated authority the award was accepted by the Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Head of Finance and the Lead Councillor for Housing, Cllr John Ennis. A copy of the Award Letter and recipient Agreement are attached as appendices to this report.

- 4.5 In determining the selection of properties that are included in the project, the Housing Service will seek to maximise the grant that each property attracts; will target those properties which are least energy efficient; and will target properties in areas of greatest deprivation. Specifically, the financial contribution from SGN is maximised where there is no live gas connection currently in place. The final schedule and basis of targeting properties will be agreed with the Head of Service and Lead Councillor.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 To develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley: as noted above the programme will improve the thermal efficiency of properties and will reduce fuel costs for tenants and leaseholders.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 Officers will make contact with tenants and leaseholders in targeted blocks to explain the scheme benefits. Visits to vulnerable householders will be arranged where necessary. Information about the programme and the criteria for identifying and prioritising properties will be fed back to tenants more widely through Housing News which is distributed to all tenants.

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 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.*
- 7.2 There is no requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment; however, the scheme proposed will positively benefit those on low incomes including vulnerable households. Criteria for selection of properties will be clear and transparent.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 In line with the relevant delegated authority the grant award was accepted by the Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Head of Finance and the Housing Lead Councillor, Cllr John Ennis, and the Council entered into the Recipient Agreement for the provision of funds from the Warm Homes Fund. A copy of the Award Letter and Recipient Agreement are attached as appendices to this report.
- 8.2 It will be necessary for the Council to comply with the funding terms in the Recipient Agreement.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 As set out in Section 4 above, Affordable Warmth Solutions has awarded Reading Borough Council £337,860 of grant funding from the Warm Homes Fund. This will be matched by up to £300,000 from other sources, including £40,000 grant funding

already offered by Yes Energy Solutions and between £120,000 and £180,000 from SGN. The level of SGN funding is dependent on residents meeting certain additional criteria.

- 9.2 The balance of funding for the Council tenanted flats, between £80,000 and £140,000, will be met from the 2019/20 heating upgrade budget of £200,000 in the Housing Revenue Account planned maintenance programme.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS & LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	13 MARCH 2019		
TITLE:	PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING UPDATE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	Councillor John Ennis	PORTFOLIO:	Housing
SERVICE:	Regulatory Services	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	Yasmin Ahmad	TEL:	0118 9372466
JOB TITLE:	Private Sector Housing Team Manager	E-MAIL:	yasmin.ahmad@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 and action plan.
- 1.2 The PRS Charter aims to build a common understanding of values, standards and requirements in the private rented sector. It further demonstrates the Council's and partners' commitment to improving the sector.
- 1.3 This update report will focus on the following key areas:
 - 1.3.1 Rogue Landlord Enforcement Grant awarded by The Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHCLG)
 - 1.3.2 Reading Rent with Confidence Scheme
 - 1.3.3 HMO Licensing
 - 1.3.4 Enforcement

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 Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee approved the PRS Charter in 2015 following a review of standards and conditions in the Private Rented Sector, which included as assessment of the need for further licensing of the sector.

3.2 The Private Rented Sector Charter was developed around ‘providing a home for those most in need’. 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 Rogue Landlord Enforcement Grant

4.2 The Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHCLG) invited bids in December 2018 to tackle Rogue Landlords. The Council was successful in its bid and awarded £100k with the announcement having been made in mid-January. The funding has to be spent by 31st March 2019, with a requirement to submit an impact report in Quarter 2 of 2019/2020

4.3 The basis of the bid was to deliver schemes which improve housing conditions and community cohesion in the Borough through increased enforcement, intelligence, inspections, education and a consumer scheme which will support market segmentation and assist in targeting of enforcement.

4.4 The funding awarded has been awarded for the following projects:

4.4.1 Stock Conditions Survey

This will provide key information on the trends and changes in the sector since the last survey was conducted in 2012 and allow the Council to target its compliance activity where most needed. The stock condition survey will also provide intelligence for other services, such as Housing Need, the Deposit Guarantee Scheme and Homes for Reading to enable them to better understand the market, assess risks and support residents into suitable housing. The intelligence from the stock condition survey will also assist services such as Sustainability in delivering on targets of improving energy efficiency in the PRS and the Fire Service in delivering its risk based inspection programme

4.4.2 HMO Licensing application system

Officers will be delivering an end to end licensing processing system with added automation which will reduce the administrative burden on applicants and the Council. The impact of this will be to free up more officer time to carry out inspections and prioritise enforcement.

4.4.3 Reading Rent with Confidence Scheme

To provide a new website to host a newly launched scheme, which will provide a one stop shop for good quality accommodation. The indicative annual cost of is £6,000 and the funding will allow the licence costs to be covered for an initial 2 years.

4.4.4 Raising Awareness

Over the last two years the Private Sector Housing Team has proactively worked with the University to provide advice and information to students which now takes the form of regular drop in sessions. The team has also worked with community groups and the CAB to raise awareness and provide training. Feedback from tenants and landlords has suggested interactive videos on key disrepair issues such as damp and mould, fire safety and security would be useful. Depending on the approach to ownership of the videos, indicative costs are £1,600 per annum for twelve videos. This will not only assist tenants and landlords, but reduce the number of service requests the team receive resulting in freeing up Officer time to deal with more complex issues and breaches of legislation. Currently the team received 1,500 service requests per annum, the estimated reduction resulting from the introduction of self-help videos would be 12%.

The Council has found fines levied by Magistrates to be low even where the impact on tenants is high. Providing training events to local Magistrates on housing issues will be of benefit, enabling them to understand the health impacts of poor housing on tenants. This should then be reflected in realistic fines in court and as a result, a greater level of compliance by landlords and agents.

4.4.5 Prevention Fund

The Council provides a Prevention Fund, to sustain tenancies. Some of the scenarios where this funding has been utilised is where tenants have found themselves in rent arrears as a result of the transition to Universal Credit or other changes in benefits and they are not coping. Funding is also used where there are utility arrears often in shared accommodation or flats in blocks. The response to arrears by landlords is often to serve notice to quit. Clearing the arrears and arranging for support from a money advisor has enabled tenancies to be sustained and some of the most vulnerable residents have avoided moving into poor quality housing, being subject to potentially criminal landlords or agents, getting into further debt or finding themselves homeless. This proactive approach has resulted in over 200 households being assisted over the last two years. The funding is recycled through structured and realistic repayment plans. As part of the grant funding, MHCLG have topped up the fund by £10,000.

4.6 Reading Rent with Confidence Scheme

4.6.1 The Reading Rent with Confidence Scheme (RRWC) was launched in October 2017 and is aimed at encouraging landlords and letting agents to meet criteria which would differentiate them in the rental market.

4.6.2 Initial interest and engagement with the scheme was strong but this did not translate into applications to join the scheme. Landlords and agents cited a number of factors including high fees existing and forthcoming regulatory obligations. Over the initial 12 months and despite promotion of the scheme, there were only 3 members. Following further stakeholder consultation, it was decided to move to a property based approval scheme. This change has

made the scheme more attractive to landlords and clearer on how having a rating for their properties will benefit them.

4.6.3 Fees were also reviewed and it was agreed that no fee should be paid by:

- HMO Licence Holders
- Properties under the Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS)
- Properties under the RBC Homelessness Prevention Fund

4.6.4 There is no fee for a first time property application to the RRWC Scheme. Any subsequent application by the same landlord for a different property is chargeable at the standard fee of £91.20.

4.6.5 Interest and applications, despite a soft launch have been good with currently 10 Gold properties and 2 Bronze properties on the scheme which can be viewed on the Council's website. There are further applications being processed and a number of landlords have indicated that they will be applying in the near future.

4.6.6 Having a dedicated website for the scheme, financed by the MHCLG grant will deliver a dedicated portal for landlords and tenants to find good quality accommodation.

4.7 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing

4.7.1 Mandatory Licensing of properties of three or more stories with five or more tenants was brought in by the Housing Act 2004. In 2012, the Council undertook a Private sector stock condition survey, which made predictions of the number of properties that fell within the scheme. This turned out to be an accurate assessment and 1000 houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) are currently licensed.

4.7.2 The extension of Mandatory Licensing came into force on 1st October 2018, with the key change being that the 3 storey rule has been removed. This means that any privately rented property that houses 5 or more people forming 2 or more households where there is some sharing of amenities will require a licence. Changes to legislation also introduced minimum room sizes. Based on the 2012 stock condition survey, officers estimated that 3000 properties would fall within the scheme.

4.7.3 Whilst the Government did not allow a grace period for landlords to submit their applications, the Council took the decision to allow landlords until the 31st January 2019 to submit their applications and supporting documents. Landlords or letting agents who have failed to submit an application by the deadline will be subject to enforcement action.

4.7.4 To date only 8% of the estimated number of properties (225) which should have submitted applications have been received, despite regular and targeted communications locally. Unfortunately, there has been little national press or communications from the Government to support local messages. Officers will be feeding this back to MHCLG.

4.7.5 The impacts of this low uptake include:

- a significant proportion of landlords in the private rented sector are operating unlawfully;
- tenants are living in properties that have not been inspected;
- properties may fall below standards and have no licence conditions requiring them to improve;

4.7.6 Since last summer the Private Sector Housing Team has been publicising the changes to HMO Licensing. This has included:

- Information events for landlords, letting and managing agents and Councillors which were well attended. Publicity for these events included press releases, information on social media, landlord newsletter and leaflets being hand delivered to local organisations to include places of worship.
- Presentations were delivered at the National Landlord Association Branch meeting and the Council's Landlord Information Evening.
- Updates have been published in the landlord Information newsletter.
- Regular Press Releases and information on Social Media has also assisted in getting the message out, as well as information on the Council's website.
- Cllr Ennis highlighted the changes and requirements for landlords to licence their HMOs if they met the criteria when interviewed by BBC radio Berkshire on the subject of licensing.

4.7.7 In assessing why applications have been so low, anecdotal information has come back suggesting that some landlords have reduced the number of tenants from 5 to 4 to avoid licensing, some have sold their properties, whilst some have been impacted by the changes to room sizes. This means that for example, the property was a 5 bedroom HMO but had an undersized room, it would be prohibited from use and therefore the property would only be a 4 bedroom HMO and fall outside the licensing definition. Notwithstanding this, the number of applications received falls well short of the required level. Discussion with colleagues from other local authorities indicates that they are also experiencing lower numbers of applications than expected.

4.8 Enforcement

4.8.1 In addition to Licensing Houses in Multiple Occupation, the Private Sector Housing Team deals with in excess of 1500 service requests a year, some of which require formal enforcement action to be taken. The Council believes enforcement action alone is unlikely to have much effect on improving standards, however, where landlords do not co-operate or comply with statutory notices and there are inadequate safeguards in place for occupier's, enforcement action will be taken.

4.8.2 Over the last year:

- 68 Statutory Notices have been served requiring landlords and agents to take remedial action. These notices will normally require works such as repairs or the installation of a fire alarm system, with reasonable timescales in place for the completion of the works. In certain circumstances, the risks are so urgent that the Council must take immediate steps to protect the health, safety and welfare of the tenants and can issue an Emergency Prohibition Notice. Two of these notices were issued. In other circumstances, the risk is still high, but the Council cannot demonstrate that it is proportionate to use its emergency powers. In these cases, a prohibition notice giving a set timescale may be

issued. Three of these notices were issued. 4 prosecutions were taken with total fines of £32,152 and 2 formal cautions were issued.

- 5 Civil Penalty Notices have been issued, 2 of which are Final Notices with fines totalling £1,429 and 3 Notices of intention.

4.8.3 Detailed below are some case studies highlighting recent prosecutions.

4.8.4 Prosecution 1

In **January 2018** the landlord of a student HMO in Reading pleaded guilty to offences under the Housing Act 2004 in failing to obtain a HMO licence and breaching the Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006, which included: missing smoke seals, intumescent strip and self-closers to fire doors; disconnected self-closers; and smoke detector not being maintained in good order. The landlord was ordered to pay fines and costs totalling £2,500.

4.8.5 Prosecution 2

In **May 2018** a managing agent of a four-storey HMO was ordered to pay fines and court costs totalling nearly £25,000. Both the company and the director of the company were charged with 31 offences under the Housing Act 2004, for failing to comply with the Licensing and Management of HMOs (Additional Provisions) Regulations 2007.

The main fire alarm system in the property was not working, and was not reinstated until three months after Council requests to do so. Other disrepair included obstructed hallways, inadequate fire doors, damage to the fabric of the building, fire extinguishers not being maintained in working order, damaged electrical fittings, damage to an external door and an overgrown yard.

4.8.6 Prosecution 3

In **October 2018**, the landlord of a Tilehurst flat was found guilty of failing to comply with an Improvement Notice under both section 11 and section 12 of the Housing Act 2004.

Disrepair included a window that would not close, two radiators not fixed to the wall, a defective light switch and lack of hot water to the kitchen sink. Magistrates issued a fine and costs totalling £2,991.

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 As part of the Council's plan to ensure the safety and quality of the private rented sector, over the next 12 months Officers propose the actions detailed below.

5.2 Officers are working to commission an updated Private Sector Stock Condition Survey, following the award of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) funding referred to above. The Stock Condition Survey takes the form of a computer modelled survey, which draws on Council, open source and commercially available data. The model looks across the whole

private sector stock. In addition to providing vital up to date information about the condition and risks in the private and rented sector, the data will allow Officers to pin point with more accuracy, where licensable properties are and therefore allow for more targeted intervention.

- 5.3 The Stock Conditions Survey will also be used to determine whether there is a business case for a discretionary licensing scheme within the Borough, which could cover all HMOs (i.e. all rented properties with 3 or more tenants sharing amenities). The initial results of this survey should be available in the first quarter of the 2019/20 financial year. Such a scheme would simplify licensing for landlords and tenants and ensure consistent regulation.
- 5.4 It is proposed that officers engage with lettings and managing agents to carry out an audit of the properties they let/manage. This may require a formal notice as part of the Housing Act 2004. Actions will need to be balanced against the joint work officers are conducting with agents around matter such as the Redress Scheme.
- 5.5 A list has been compiled using Council Tax data of student properties that may require a licence and has been cross checked with applications received. Where no application has been received, the landlords have been contacted.
- 5.6 It is proposed to carry out publicised 'action days' on targeted areas within the Borough. These will focus on areas where the stock condition survey has identified likely properties meeting the criteria.
- 5.7 Continue to publicise HMO Licensing requirements and enforcement action through press releases and social media, tenant and community groups. It is proposed to extend the communications plan developed last year and test with landlords, agents and tenants whether it has reached them.
- 5.8 It is proposed to continue with the work already in hand with the Reading Rent with Confidence Scheme and continue to work with the University of Reading, community groups and advice organisations
- 5.9 Continue with the zero tolerance approach and take prosecutions against landlords who fail to comply with Housing Legislation.

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. The net team budget for 2019/20 is £380,000, based on £397,000 of income, largely arising from HMO Licensing offsetting some of the service costs.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	13 MARCH 2019		
TITLE:	'READING, PLACE OF CULTURE' (GREAT PLACE SCHEME)		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	SARAH HACKER	PORTFOLIO:	CULTURE, HERITAGE AND RECREATION
SERVICE:	ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	GRANT THORNTON	TEL:	0118 937 2416
JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	E-MAIL:	grant.thornton@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress in delivering year 1 of 'Reading, place of culture' funded through the 'Great Place Scheme'. The Council learned in April 2017 that the bid it had submitted had been successful (one of only 16 grants awarded across England and the only urban area to receive a grant in the South-east region). The amount of grant awarded was £558,400 to deliver a range of programmes over three years linked to the objectives of the Great Place Scheme and complementing cultural activities and initiatives already underway in the Borough. The Council received formal 'permission to start' from the funders on the 12th December 2017 and this report summarises progress in delivering the programme over the first year and updates Committee on planned activities for year two. The report is succinct as there is a related presentation to Committee to bring the year's activities to life.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Committee notes the progress made in delivering 'Reading, Place of culture' over the first full year of implementation as set out in paragraph 4.1.
- 2.2 That Committee endorses the proposals to further develop the programme of work in the second year of delivery as set out in paragraph 4.2.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 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. The 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. 'Reading, Place of Culture' is strongly aligned with and directly contributes to achieving the strategic ambition of the Culture and Heritage Strategy.

- 3.2 A new 2050 Vision was launched on the 18th October 2017 following an extensive period of development and consultation by the three lead organisations: Reading UK, Reading University and Barton Willmore. The Council has endorsed this Vision and, in its role as community leader, to work alongside other agencies and organisations to realise the Vision's ambitions. A thriving and renowned cultural offer is a key component of this vision.
- 3.3 The Economic Development Plan led by Reading UK, "Growing Opportunity", has the 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.
- 3.4 The Great Place Scheme is a new joint funding initiative by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Arts Council England (ACE) and Historic England (HE). The aim of the Scheme is:

'To put arts, culture and heritage at the heart of the local vision for 12* places across England, making a step change in the contribution of culture in those areas and embedding them in the places' plans for the future. Four of these places will be rural. It will fund projects in areas where there is already a strong local partnership approach and a commitment to embed arts, culture and heritage as a core part of local plans, policies and strategies - cementing partnerships across the public, private and voluntary sectors'.

The stated ambition of this pilot programme is to support local areas to:

- Inspire a vision of how culture can change your place;
- Connect culture with new partners to help change places for the better;
- Incorporate a vision for culture into ambitions for your place;
- Build and share learning.

(* This is quoted from the original bidding guidance. At the end of the bidding process funding was sufficient to award grants to 16 places across England).

The Great Place Scheme provided a timely opportunity to build on significant development of cultural and heritage initiatives in the town including, for example, the Year of Culture 2016, the Abbey Revealed project and the emergence of three new National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs).

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position:

Following the formal 'permission to start' from the funders significant progress has been made across all strands of the programme in the first year overseen by a Steering Group of the three core delivery partners leading on particular aspects of the programme:

Reading Borough Council - cultural outreach and commissioning, overall evaluation, partnership development, the accountable body and programme management;

Reading UK - the Reading-on-Thames Festival, economic development and business engagement;

Reading University - participatory research with communities to inform the development of the programme, including cultural commissioning and the Festival, leading on the work with the 'Whitley Researchers' and 'Young Researchers', supporting evaluation.

Whilst it would be impossible to detail every aspect of delivery in this short report, or indeed the linked presentation, it is perhaps worth providing an overview against key strands of the programme and highlighting, in particular, how the programme is beginning to address the needs of Reading's more vulnerable communities.

Research and Evaluation

Set within the context of a national evaluation across all 16 Great Place Schemes, Reading has appointed evaluation consultants, developed a local framework and begun to embed this in all activities so that programme level evidence of impact can be identified. To supplement baseline data three student interns at the University have undertaken research on civic pride in Reading, carrying out over 260 face to face interviews. This work has also been augmented by a Festival survey of attendees.

The participatory research led by Reading University, initially in South Reading, working with the 'Whitley Researchers' and newly established 'Young Researchers' has included mapping health needs and cultural assets in South Reading and young people's well-being. Not only will this developing programme of work help create a 'cultural needs analysis', it also significantly supports the development as individuals of those involved and builds community networks. The funders are particularly interested in this area of work as a potential national exemplar.

Cultural Commissioning

Following extensive preparatory work, including widespread cross-sector engagement and workshops, three cultural commissions of £15k have been awarded and currently being delivered. These involved a rigorous outcomes focused procurement process fully compliant with public sector Procurement Regulations so that both commissioners and cultural organisations could better understand the process and potential value of cultural commissioning. The commissions were particularly focused on engaging those less likely to access cultural opportunities and where engagement could have a significant positive impact on their well-being. The three successful organisations were as follows:

Reading Rep. - the theatre company delivering a series of performing arts workshops, building to short performances to boost self-esteem, provide confidence building and life-skills. They are targeting work with more disadvantaged communities including older people in care homes, adults with mental health illness or learning disabilities and disadvantaged young people.

Parents and Children Together (PACT) - an organisation supporting troubled families, are delivering through their Alana House project which supports women with multiple and complex needs. They are using photography to give marginalised and vulnerable women a voice, using shared experience to raise self-esteem and communication skills. Outcomes are being rigorously evaluated.

The Museum of English Rural Life and Reading Museum (Museums Partnership) - working with older people to combat loneliness and isolation. The museums partnership will offer reminiscence activities including old photos, film and artefacts as well as gardening and dance to promote positive health and wellbeing.

In addition to these a creative employment pilot was also commissioned with Real Time Video's successful proposal to increase work experience opportunities within the creative industries for young people. The young people involved gained new skills, confidence and a chance to contribute practically to major creative projects in Reading, including the Reading-on-Thames Festival and the cultural commissioning programme.

All of the successful commissions are ongoing and are committed to thorough evaluation and the pilot year will help inform how the cultural commissioning programme develops over the three year period. In addition, a Community Steering Group and an Ageing-well Partnership have recently been established to inform the development of and to contribute directly to the future development of the cultural commissioning programme and associated decision-making in years two and three.

A 'Cultural Commissioning Symposium' was also held on the 29th November at Reading Town Hall to share national and local best practice. The event was designed to showcase how commissioners and cultural practitioners are working together to effect change and share how local research is shaping understanding of Reading's needs and priorities. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive.

Reading-on-Thames Festival

The 2018 Festival has built on the pilot in the previous year with a high calibre programme involving more artists and cultural organisations (including 40% of the programme by Reading based organisations), 19 new commissions, with most events sold out and positive feedback from those attending. Interestingly over a fifth of attendees came from outside Berkshire and 3% from overseas.

Significant effort was expended in advance of the Festival to engage with potential community partners and to develop an outreach programme working with festival artists and organisations. Over 600 free tickets were donated to the community groups that were engaged and tickets were heavily discounted (50%) for those on low incomes. Evaluation of the Festival is yet to be fully completed but there is evidence that these initiatives enabled more disadvantaged local residents to experience the Festival than would otherwise have been the case and that the experience for many was positive and impactful. The full evaluation of this year's Festival will enable these initiatives to be extended in future years.

Economic Development and Business Engagement

Led by Reading UK this area of work is inextricably linked with the Festival and the work of the economic development company to promote Reading to businesses and inward investors. Over £24,000 of cash investment in the Festival by the private sector was secured with a range of 'in-kind' contributions including the use of both major shopping centres (Oracle and Broad Street Mall) as venues. In parallel, Reading UK delivered the 2018 Culture & Heritage Awards with business sponsorship and strong private-sector attendance. There has also been a strong focus on culture & heritage in business facing publications such as the 'Reading Relocation Guide'.

4.2 Options Proposed

The plans for year two of the programme are already in-train and are seeking to build from the foundations of the 1st year whilst strengthening connections between the various components and further developing networks and collaboration. Across the programme the aim is to develop and deliver sustainable change and impact by the end of the three year period (accepting that this is a challenging outcome to achieve).

For example, the approach for cultural commissioning in year two has already been further developed so that there is a greater emphasis on co-commissioning and the Great Place Scheme grant funding already secured will be match funded by other resources to build towards sustainability. The commissions for year two will focus on mental health and well-being with match funding from Berkshire Community Foundation (BCF), elderly care and long term conditions, and short breaks provision for young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) with match funding from Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC). It is anticipated that these commissions will be awarded in May. In addition three smaller pilot programmes will be commissioned: one on ageing-well under the auspices of the newly established Ageing-well Partnership; one on young people and mental health (building from the year 1 research); and one for community led cultural commissioning focused on local needs in Whitley.

The ongoing work on research and evaluation will be continued and strengthened with additional resources from Reading University linked to community networks and developing stronger connections with the Festival and local commissioning as referred to above. The work will also tie in with a summer festival involving local partners Aspire 2, the Whitley Excellence Cluster and Whitley Community Development Association.

Similarly, long term sustainability and impact is the objective for the Reading-on-Thames Festival with the Director, Anna Doyle, re-appointed for year two and planning for 2019 is already well underway. Following learning in year one, the Reading-on-Thames Festival will take place slightly later in the year to enable better and more extensive engagement with communities and schools and be shortened to provide focused impact. The Festival will take place from the 26th - 29th September with a headline programme trailed in late April.

Business engagement will be further developed and potential significantly enhanced by both the 'Great West Way' initiative and the establishment of a new Business Improvement District focused on the Abbey Quarter. This engagement will include one to one business meetings as well as inward investment publications that build on place making with culture and heritage being a main driver for economic success. Cross-sectoral links will be further encouraged by a business led 'Funding Panel' event for local cultural organisations to learn best practice models when approaching businesses for support or investment.

4.3 Other Options Considered

The award of grant is clearly tied to the 'Approved Purposes' for which the funding has been awarded and whilst there is a degree of flexibility to enable adjustments over the 3 year delivery period the grant can only be utilised in accordance with these 'Approved Purposes'.

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.'

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 There are specific requirements and guidelines for publicity for Great Place Scheme Projects and in particular the funders are keen that the public know how they have contributed towards putting arts, culture and heritage at the heart of 16 places across the country by playing National Lottery games.
- 6.2 Community engagement and information is at the heart of plans for delivering Reading's Great Place Scheme proposals. In particular the research and commissioning strands of the programme and Festival delivery have involved, and continue to require, extensive community involvement and incorporate community led research models. Much of this engagement and involvement is focused on more vulnerable or deprived groups and communities. More broadly, information, marketing and engagement are central to audience development across much of the cultural sector, including the many community based culture and heritage delivery organisations.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 It is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant with regard to the content of this report.
- 7.2 A particular focus of the proposals is to enable widespread access to cultural opportunities and to address the needs of more vulnerable groups through a programme of participatory research, cultural commissioning and festival outreach. A full evaluation of Great Place Schemes has been commissioned nationally and is complemented by local evaluation and action research. Collectively these will enable an assessment in relation to the effectiveness of engagement activities and inform the development of practice as the three year programme progresses.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Council will be required to comply with the Great Place Scheme 'Standard Terms of Grant'. These mirror those of the HLF with which the Council is familiar through its management of other HLF funded projects. There are no additional conditions in respect of the project beyond these standard terms.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Great Place Scheme bidding guidelines stipulated that a minimum of 10% of direct project costs should be provided by cash contributions from delivery partners. The Council and Reading UK have each committed to provide £30,000 over the life of the programme to meet this requirement. For the Council this amount can be contained within existing budget allocations for Economic & Cultural Development Services.

9.2 It is anticipated that over the course of the Scheme's implementation additional match-funding will be generated through business sponsorship and commissioning activity.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 GREAT PLACE SCHEME: Reading-on-Thames - HLF grant award letter 13th April 2017.

GREAT PLACE SCHEME: 'READING-ON-THAMES' - Report to Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee 5th July 2017.

'READING, PLACE OF CULTURE' (GREAT PLACE SCHEME) - Report to Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee 14th November 2018.

This page is intentionally left blank