

## POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 10 JUNE 2019

**Present:** Councillor Brock (Chair);

Councillors Page (Vice-Chair), Duveen, Emberson, Ennis, Hoskin, James, Jones, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, Skeats, Stevens, Terry, Warman and White

### RESOLVED ITEMS

#### 2. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

**Resolved -**

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of item 3 below as it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

#### 3. COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval to adopt a Commercial Investment Strategy as a supplement to the previously approved Treasury Management Strategy.

The report noted that a Property Acquisitions Strategy had previously been agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 5 December 2016 (Minute 57 refers), and set out a summary of the development of and the principle changes in the draft Commercial Investment Strategy. The investment strategy formed part of the overall Treasury Strategy and was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

It was reported at the meeting that the net annual income shown for Four 10 TVP was a projected figure and that a higher return could reasonably be expected.

**Resolved -**

**That the adoption of the Commercial Investment Strategy, as attached to the report at Appendix 1, be approved.**

#### 4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 26 March, 8 April and 22 May 2019 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

#### 5. PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
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1.	Roger Lightfoot	Arthur Hill Swimming Pool	Cllr Brock
2.	Roger Lightfoot	Sport and Leisure Contract	Cllr Hoskin
3.	Peter Burt	FOI Requests	Cllr Brock
4.	Peter Burt	Sale of Arthur Hill Pool	Cllr Brock
5.	Sara Davies	Play Areas	Cllr Rowland
6.	Helen Palmer	RBH - Environmental Policy	Cllr Page

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr White	Sale of Arthur Hill Pool	Cllr Brock
2.	Cllr White	Labour's Road by the Thames	Cllr Page

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

### 6. MAIN MODIFICATIONS TO THE LOCAL PLAN

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out the main modifications to the Local Plan and Proposals Map suggested by the independent Planning Inspector, and seeking approval to publish those main modifications for public consultation.

The report noted that the Council was replacing its existing development plans (the Core Strategy, Reading Central Area Action Plan and Sites and Detailed Policies Document) with a new single Local Plan to set out how Reading would develop up to 2036. Three consultations had been undertaken on this Local Plan between 2016 and 2018. The Plan had been submitted to the Secretary of State on 29 March 2018, which marked the beginning of a public examination held by an independent Planning Inspector, including public hearings in September and October 2018.

The report explained that the Inspector had identified a number of main modifications that were needed to make sure that the plan was sound and legally compliant. The modifications were included within the 'Main Modifications to the Local Plan and Proposals Map' document attached to the report at Appendix 1, and the more significant changes were summarised in the report. A Sustainability Appraisal, which assessed the environmental, social and economic effects of the modifications, was attached to the report at Appendix 2. A six-week public consultation on the two documents was proposed.

The report stated that, following the public consultation, representations would be passed to the Inspector, who would then produce a final report on the soundness and legal compliance of the Local Plan. If the plan was found sound and legally compliant, it could proceed to adoption.

Resolved -

- (1) That a formal request be made to the Inspector that she recommend 'main modifications' to the Local Plan;
- (2) That the Main Modifications to the Local Plan and Proposals Map (Appendix 1) be approved;
- (3) That community involvement on the Main Modifications to the Local Plan and Proposals Map (Appendix 1) and the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix 2) be authorised.

## 7. PROJECT FUNDING AWARD - THAMES VALLEY BERKSHIRE LIVE LABS

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Committee of a £4.75m grant award from the Department of Transport (DfT) through the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) for Thames Valley Berkshire Live Labs, a two-year technological trial to help futureproof roads and transport.

The report explained that the project objectives were to deploy data science and Internet of Things in Reading and across Berkshire to tackle issues impacting productivity and health including congestion, air quality, road surface quality and potholes, energy consumption and carbon emissions. The project aimed to harness the value of data to demonstrate how to make a measurable difference to the health of the region's population and the operational efficiency of the region's road network, whilst reducing CO2 emissions and improving the region's productivity. A mobilisation plan had been delivered to the ADEPT/DfT programme board on 10 May 2019. The project would be delivered through the main project partner O2, with the Council as grant holder and the client.

The report explained that the grant award had been accepted and half the funding had already been received, with the remaining funding expected later this year. There was no match funding requirement from the Council. The report sought approval to spend the grant in accordance with the project objectives and the grant conditions, and authorisation to enter into contracts as required to deliver the project objectives.

Resolved -

- (1) That scheme and spend approval be given for the Thames Valley Berkshire Live Labs project totalling £4.75m of grant funding to deliver the objectives of the two-year technological trial;
- (2) That the Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Assistant Director of Finance be authorised to enter into contracts as required to deliver the project objectives;

- (3) That further reports on progress of each project theme and the potential outcomes be reported to the relevant Committees.

## 8. COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the Commercial Investment Strategy. The full version of the Strategy had been considered and approved in closed session (Minute 3 above refers) and the purpose of this report was to make information available in the public domain. An edited version of the Strategy was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report gave information on the current investment portfolio of four properties purchased since 2016, and summarised the approach that would be taken under the new Strategy. It noted that the current position was to only invest in or near the Borough, but it was now proposed to make strategic investment acquisitions outside of the Borough and Greater Reading area to include the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP area, adjoining LEP areas and other locations where the investment would support the overall aims of the Strategy. It was also proposed that the Council consider approaching other Councils or local investment institutions with a view to sharing in future acquisitions, to spread risk and facilitate larger purchases which would otherwise be beyond the Council's available funding.

**Resolved -**

**That the report be noted.**

## 9. REVALUATION DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS RATES RELIEF SCHEME / RETAIL RELIEF AND DISCRETIONARY RELIEF 2019/20

The Director of Resources submitted a report providing the Committee with an update on Business Rates Reliefs awarded in 2017/18 and 2018/19 and details of the proposed Local Revaluation Discretionary Relief Scheme for 2019/20 (LRDRS). The report also set out information on the change to retail relief for businesses with rateable values below £51,000 and proposed that there be no change to the Council's Discretionary Relief Scheme for 2019/20. Attached to the report at Appendix A was the Discretionary Rate Relief Guidance and at Appendix B the Revaluation Relief and Retail Relief Guidance and Criteria.

The report explained that the rateable values of all non-domestic properties were normally reassessed every five years, but the 2015 revaluation had been deferred by two years and had come into force on 1 April 2017. Consequently the 2017 Revaluation had seen considerable increases in bills for some ratepayers and the Government had introduced a transitional scheme to help with the phasing in of both increases and reductions, and then in April 2017 three further measures to provide support to businesses: Supporting Small Businesses Relief, New Local Discretionary Relief Scheme and New Business Rate Relief Scheme for Pubs. The report summarised the application of the Supporting Small Businesses Relief and New Local Discretionary Relief Scheme to date and the proposed use in 2019/20. The report also explained that no changes were

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proposed to the existing Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme and set out the criteria under which relief would be considered.

The report noted that the Government had announced in the Budget on 29 October 2018 that it would provide a business rates Retail Discount scheme for occupied retail properties with a rateable value of less than £51,000 in each of the years 2019/20 and 2020/21, with local authorities being fully reimbursed for the local share of the discretionary relief. For Reading it was estimated that this relief would apply to circa 500 properties.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That the contents of the report and the changes to the Retail Relief scheme be noted;**
- (2) That the proposed Local Revaluation Discretionary Relief Scheme for 2019/20 be approved;**
- (3) That it be noted that no changes had been made to the Council's existing Discretionary Relief Scheme for 2019/20.**

### **10. OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report asking the Committee to make appointments or nominations to outside bodies for the Municipal Year 2019/20, or longer where required. A schedule of outside body appointments showing the Group Leaders' recommendations was tabled at the meeting.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That the following appointments be made (until June 2020 unless stated):**

<b>Outside Body</b>	<b>Representative(s)</b>
Age UK Berkshire - Board observer	Councillor Gul Khan
Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE)	Councillor Paul Gittings Councillor Sophia James
AWE Aldermaston - Local Liaison Committee	Councillor Helen Manghnani Councillor Ayo Sokale
Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust - Governor	Councillor Ruth McEwan (until June 2022)
Berkshire Pension Fund Panel	Councillor Jo Lovelock

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<b>Berkshire Maestros</b>	Councillor Paul Gittings
<b>Caversham Consolidated Charities</b>	Councillor Adele Barnett-Ward
<b>Caversham Park Village Association</b>	Councillor Clare Grashoff
<b>Citizens' Advice Bureau Trustee Board</b>	Councillor Helen Manghnani Councillor Liz Terry Councillor Micky Leng
<b>Conservation Area Advisory Committee</b>	Councillor David Stevens Councillor Richard Davies
<b>Hexham Community Association Management Committee</b>	Councillor David Absolom
<b>Kenavon Drive Management Company</b>	Councillor Tony Page
<b>Kennet and Avon Canal Trust</b>	Councillor Paul Gittings
<b>Kennet Day Nursery Association</b>	Councillor Ruth McEwan
<b>Launchpad Reading</b>	Councillor Rachel Eden
<b>Local Government Information Unit Management Committee</b>	Councillor Rachel Eden Councillor Emmett McKenna (sub)
<b>Mapledurham Playing Fields Management Committee</b>	Councillor Paul Carnell (until June 2022) Councillor Jeanette Skeats (until June 2022) (Councillor Isobel Ballsdon appointed 2017 - 2020)
<b>Pakistani Community Association</b>	Councillor Tony Jones
<b>Queen Victoria Institute</b>	Mo McSevney (until June 2023) (Councillor Karen Rowland appointed 2018-2022)
<b>Readibus Board of Directors</b>	Councillor Mohammed Ayub Councillor Gul Khan Councillor Ruth McEwan Councillor Rose Williams Councillor Jane Stanford-Beale
<b>Reading College Business Advisory Board</b>	Councillor Ashley Pearce

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<b>Reading Community Welfare Rights Unit Management Committee</b>	Deferred
<b>Reading Deaf Centre</b>	Councillor Gul Khan
<b>Reading In Bloom Committee</b>	Councillor Karen Rowland
<b>Reading Voluntary Action</b>	Councillor Adele Barnett-Ward
<b>Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust - Governor</b>	Councillor Ruth McEwan
<b>South East Employers</b>	Councillor Jason Brock Councillor Tony Page Councillor Ellie Emberson (sub)
<b>St Laurence Relief in Need Trust</b>	Trish Thomas Councillor Rose Williams
<b>Standing Committee On Archives</b>	Councillor Sarah Hacker
<b>University of Reading Court</b>	The Mayor

- (2) That the appointments be made on an “or nominee” basis where the organisation in question is willing to accept this arrangement.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm and closed at 8.14 pm)