

## POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 26 SEPTEMBER 2019

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

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

**Apologies:** Councillors James and Stevens

### RESOLVED ITEMS

#### 27. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### 28. PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS

Peter Burt presented a petition on Arthur Hill Pool. Councillor Brock responded to the petition.

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

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Roger Lightfoot	Leisure Procurement	Cllr Hoskin
2.	Roger Lightfoot	Viability of Pool in Palmer Park	Cllr Hoskin
3.	Peter Burt	Arthur Hill Pool	Cllr Hoskin
4.	Peter Burt	Outsourcing of Leisure Services	Cllr Hoskin
5.	Moira Gomes	Nursery Funding	Cllr Pearce
6.	Ann Dally	Council Website	Cllr Emberson
7.	Ann Dally	Online Payments	Cllr Emberson
8.	Ann Dally	Debt and Mental Health	Cllr Hoskin
9.	Michael Sage	Citizens Assembly	Cllr Brock
10.	Michael Sage	Reading 2050 Partnership	Cllr Brock
11.	Stuart Kinton	Climate Emergency	Cllr Page

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Councillor White	Heathrow Expansion	Cllr Page
2.	Councillor White	Former Central Club building	Cllr Brock
3.	Councillor White	Fossil Fuel divestment	Cllr Brock

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

## 29. THAMES VALLEY POLICE

Anthony Stansfeld, Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC), and John Campbell, Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police (TVP), attended the meeting to give presentations and answer questions from members of the Committee. Superintendent Bhupinder Rai also attended to answer questions on local issues.

The presentation by the PCC covered an overview of policing in the Thames Valley, progress against the Strategic Priorities for 2017-21, funding awarded by the PCC, the Victims First service, call response performance and a summary of crime performance in 2018-19 with comparisons to historic trends. The PCC also gave a statement on the future of Reading Police Station.

The presentation by the Chief Constable covered priority outcomes for 2019/20, call volumes to 101 and 999 and average time to answer calls, assaults on officers, key crime areas and local issues in Reading, local partnerships and crime prevention initiatives and current challenges faced by TVP.

The Committee asked questions on subjects including attendance at Neighbourhood Action Groups, neighbourhood policing resources in South Reading, the possibility of local authority enforcement of speeding offences, police readiness for Halloween and recruitment and retention of police officers and PCSOs.

At the invitation of the Chair, a local resident Vanessa Brockway addressed the meeting on the increasing problem of drug-related crime and ASB in the Zinzan Street area.

**Resolved -**

**That the Police & Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable be thanked for their presentations.**

## 30. ARTHUR HILL POOL

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing an update on the former Arthur Hill Swimming Pool and setting out a recommendation that the property be appropriated by the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and developed to provide key worker housing for rent. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix A: Site plan
- Appendix B: Appraised development option

The report noted that the Committee had agreed to dispose of Arthur Hill Pool at its meeting on 16 July 2018 (Minute 16 refers). Following a longer than anticipated period of due diligence, and the submission of a reduced unconditional offer by the preferred bidder, it had not been possible to complete the disposal. External specialist companies had been commissioned to provide updated condition reports at the Arthur Hill site with a

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focus on the locally listed frontage; the exercise had confirmed negligible levels of chloride and sulphate levels in the concrete, mortar and soil samples tested, providing a positive position on the site.

The report explained that, following the discontinuance of the disposal process, the options considered had been to re-market the site for disposal in accordance with the Asset of Community Value process, or for the HRA to appropriate the site for the development of social housing for rent. The report summarised the two options and recommended appropriation into the HRA to develop and deliver housing for rent, with a focus on key worker accommodation. This provided the greatest certainty in developing and delivering a cost-effective, sustainable and socially useful scheme for Reading in the shortest possible time, and the location of the site near to key employment sites offered an opportunity to develop housing for key workers. Another disposal process was considered to be uncertain and would be likely to incur further time, cost and delay in bringing the site back into active use.

Attached to the report at Appendix B was a design appraisal for the development of housing on the site. The proposal retained the locally listed frontage with demolition of the remaining building, to accommodate 15 units. It would take approximately two years to complete the development taking into account the design requirements, level of community engagement involved in the planning process and allowing for any potential unforeseen issues in the construction phase.

At the invitation of the Chair, Peter Burt addressed the Committee on this item. Mr Burt had presented a petition to the meeting requesting that the Council include the possibility of reopening Arthur Hill for leisure, sporting, and community activities in its options review, and consult the public on the future of the site. The petition had received over 1500 signatures and was due to be debated at the next available full Council meeting.

### **Resolved -**

- (1) That the current position on the Arthur Hill site, including the updated condition reports, be noted;**
- (2) That the appropriation of the site into the Housing Revenue Account to enable the Council to develop and deliver housing as key worker accommodation to rent be approved;**
- (3) That the option to charge an Affordable Rent (80% Market Rent) level for the key worker accommodation developed on the site be approved;**
- (4) That the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Finance, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Lead Councillor for Housing, be authorised to allocate up to £5m (including contingency) of Housing Revenue Account spend to deliver circa 15 new Council homes**

at the Arthur Hill site, with spend approval being subject to the proposed development gaining planning permission;

- (5) That the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Finance, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Lead Councillor for Housing, be authorised to procure a multi-disciplinary team to carry out all necessary work towards site development, including detailed designs, securing planning permission and assisting in the procurement of a main contractor for the development;
- (6) That the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Finance, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Lead Councillor for Housing, be authorised to appoint a main contractor.

### 31. HOUSEHOLD WASTE - THE WAY FORWARD

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out a proposed way forward for the Household Waste service, to achieve the strategy of increasing recycling and reducing the cost of waste. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 Matrix Summary of Five Options
- Appendix 2 re3 Background
- Appendix 3 Resources and Waste Strategy 2018
- Appendix 4 Current Provision
- Appendix 5 Savings and Income background
- Appendix 6 Governance Structure

The report outlined the context of industry changes, in particular government strategy changes, which required significant change in the Council's approach to household waste. Appendix 1 to the report set out business cases for five options that had been considered and rated. The highest rated option was to implement a new food waste collection service, alongside fortnightly residual collections from smaller 140 litre bins.

The report explained that the proposed option was estimated to achieve an 11.5% increase in the recycling rate, from the current rate of 32% to 43.5%, and £107k annual savings. Further detailed modelling was required to refine the expected final position and commencement of the new service could be planned for as early as October 2020.

The report proposed that a Member Task and Finish cross party working group be set up and it was agreed at the meeting that membership be based on a proportionality of: 6 Labour; 3 Conservative; 1 Green; 1 Liberal Democrat. The first meeting of the Group had been scheduled for 15 October 2019.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That a combined new waste service be introduced of alternate weekly collections with 140l residual bins and weekly food waste collection;
- (2) That a Member Task and Finish cross party working group be set up, on a proportionality of: 6 Labour; 3 Conservative; 1 Green; 1 Liberal Democrat, to ensure appropriate engagement throughout the process and to enable clear oversight and input to the pilot phases and roll out programme;
- (3) That Group Leaders make their nominations for membership of the Household Waste Working Group prior to the first meeting of the group on 15 October 2019;
- (4) That regular updates be provided on progress against the action plan, including to HNL Committee in November 2019.

## 32. CHESTNUT WALK IMPROVEMENTS

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval for improvement works to Chestnut Walk, consisting of removal of the existing Horse Chestnut trees and planting of a new avenue of Sweet Chestnut trees, new pedestrian lighting, installation of a new CCTV camera connected to the town centre network and resurfacing of the footpath in tarmac.

The report noted that Chestnut Walk was planted with an avenue of over mature horse chestnut trees. An inspection in 2016 had revealed significant defects in a high proportion of the trees, including canker and fungal brackets; two trees had been felled and several others pruned. In 2017 another tree had failed and had been removed. In summer 2018, prior to the re-opening of the Abbey Ruins, further deterioration had been noted, and after an inspection in winter 2018 four further trees had been felled. The remaining trees would continue to deteriorate and therefore a planned wholesale replacement was recommended to ensure this important pedestrian thoroughfare remained safe and attractive for public use.

The report recommended that the Horse Chestnuts be replaced with fourteen Sweet Chestnut trees, alongside a wider scheme to install lighting and a CCTV camera, and re-tarmac the surface. This access route to the town centre would become more important as new housing developments were built on the former Homebase and other sites in the area. The report set out a timeline for the project, which aimed to be complete before 3 April 2020.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That the forecast capital expenditure of £120k out of the total project cost of £160k to be spent in the current year (2019/20) be approved;
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services and the Assistant Director for Environment & Commercial Services be authorised

to procure and implement the works within the funding limits set out in the report;

- (3) That it be noted that advice from the Local Planning Authority was that the scheme would not require planning approval, but as the area was within the Schedule Monument of Reading Abbey Ruins it would require Schedule Monument Consent (SMC) from Historic England;
- (4) That the Assistant Director for Environment & Commercial Services be authorised to progress and submit the SMC application to seek approval from Historic England to carry out below ground works within the Schedule Monument;
- (5) That it be noted that tree removals works would be scheduled to take place in early February 2020 to implement the scheme.

### **33. BRIDGE MAINTENANCE (WORKS) TERM CONTRACT 2020-2024**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Committee of the ongoing procurement process for the Bridge Maintenance (Works) Term Contract 2020-2024 and seeking authority to enter into a contract with the successful tenderer after the tendering process in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

The report noted that the Council was responsible for the maintenance of over 260 bridges and structures on the public highway. A term consultant was employed who carried out a programme of routine inspections of all the bridges and structures and produced an annual programme of maintenance work. The programme of maintenance was carried out by a single contractor and had been run under a term contract that had been tendered for in 2005. This contract now required re-tendering, and it was proposed to tender for a new term contract commencing in 2020 for an initial term of 48 months, with the option to extend by a further 36 months subject to performance.

**Resolved -**

**That the Director for Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Assistant Director of Finance, be authorised to enter into a contract with the successful tenderer for the Bridge Maintenance (Works) Term Contract 2020-2024 with a possible three-year extension.**

### **34. BUILDINGS COMPLIANCE AND CONDITION PROGRAMME**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on a proposed package of compliance and condition works following compliance audits and surveys carried out across the Council's corporate buildings. The report sought approval to release designated capital spend of £4.5m to carry out a programme of works over the

next three years. A list of the projects included in the Corporate Condition/Compliance Programme 2019/22 was attached to the report.

The report set out the allocation of the £4.5m budget against Condition Works and Health & Safety and Compliance work over three years. It noted that the provisional package of works currently exceeded the available annual budget, and explained that the programme would be developed and refined over coming months and managed to ensure that expenditure was controlled within budget. The programme and its budget were monitored on a monthly basis to ensure high priority works were implemented, the timing of other works was reviewed based on budget availability and that adequate contingencies were retained for unforeseen works. Any works not carried out in 2019/20 would be included in the programme for 2020/21.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That the release of designated Capital Programme funding of £4.5m to deliver a three year programme of compliance, condition and priority health and safety works to corporate buildings be approved;**
- (2) That the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services be authorised to enter into contracts as required to deliver the proposed works within the approved budget and procurement processes.**

### **35. HYPEROPTIC FULL FIBRE INSTALLATION TO COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK**

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking approval for a business case to enter into a non-exclusive Wayleave Agreement between the Council and Hyperoptic (a specialist Fibre Optic installer to high rise dwellings) to install Fibre To The Premise (FTTP) initially to the Council's own high rise housing stock (subject to survey), but with the potential for further expansion to cover up to 75% of the geographic area of the Borough subject to further Hyperoptic investment and surveys. The report also sought approval to sign a Portfolio Wayleave Agreement negotiated between the Council and Hyperoptic.

The report explained that the Council had financed improvements for Basic Broadband Delivery through the Superfast Berkshire Broadband Project, working with BT Openreach, which was expected to conclude by the end of 2019. However, the next major improvement was to full fibre, with Reading currently around the national average with only 6% of residents and businesses having access to the higher speeds offered by full FTTP installations.

The report set out a proposed agreement with Hyperoptic to install FTTP to the Council's high-rise housing stock, with no obligation for tenants to take up any services. The non-exclusive deal allowed the Council to still move forward with its own FTTP proposal should it be able to find funding, or to allow other suppliers to compete for business. The installation work would be fully funded by Hyperoptic without further Council funding required. Hyperoptic would also provide at their cost full-fibre and standard

indoor Wi-Fi to up to three community centres of the Council's choice, subject to surveys and deployment.

From analysis of localities of the Council's social housing, Hyperoptic had calculated this would give a base infrastructure that could be built upon to potentially reach up to 75% of the Council's geographical area enabling full fibre services to be accessible to further residents and businesses, subject to further investment and surveys by Hyperoptic.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That the business case for the Council to enter into a Wayleave Agreement with Hyperoptic to install "Fibre To The Premise" digital infrastructure capability to the Council's own high-rise housing stock (recognising the potential for further expansion subject to Hyperoptic investment and surveys) be approved;**
- (2) That the Council sign a Wayleave Agreement with Hyperoptic on a non-exclusive basis to install "Fibre To The Premise" to the Council's own high-rise housing stock.**

### **36. QUARTER 1 2019-20 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT**

The Director of Resources submitted a report setting out the projected revenue and capital outturn positions for 2019/20 for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Accounts as at the end of June 2019 (Quarter 1), as well as performance for the first quarter against the measures of success published in the Council's Corporate Plan. The following appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 - Financial Monitoring for Quarter 1
- Appendix 2 - Performance Monitoring for Quarter 1

The report explained that the forecast outturn showed a projected underspend on General Fund Budgets as at the end of period 3 (June 2019) of £2.154m, with weighted risks of £1.990m; if all the weighted risks and opportunities materialised then the projected underspend would decrease to £0.164m. The Housing Revenue Account was forecasting a breakeven position at the end of June 2019.

The report set out key budget variances in the Capital Programme, which included the expectation that originally budgeted expenditure on Homes for Reading would not be incurred, following the agreement of a revised business model which envisaged no further acquisitions, and an underspend on the acquisition of commercial investment property. The forecast outturn on the Capital Programme as at 30 June 2019 was a projected underspend of £106.4m for the General Fund and a projected underspend of £3.3m for the Housing Revenue Account.

The full suite of thirty nine Corporate Plan measures were set out in Appendix 2 attached to the report, with a summary of progress against the targets. As at the end of June 2019, 16 measures were Green, 11 measures were Amber and 10 measures were Red.



Resolved -

That the Policy Committee note:

- a) the forecast General Fund revenue outturn position as at the end of June 2019 of a net underspend of £2.154m with weighted risks of £1.990m;
- b) the forecast outturn position on the Housing Revenue Account as at the end of June 2019 projected to be on budget;
- c) the forecast outturn on the Capital Programme as at 30 June 2019 of a projected underspend of £106.4m for the General Fund and a projected underspend of £3.3m for the Housing Revenue Account;
- d) the performance achieved against the Corporate Plan success measures, as set out in the report and Appendix 2.

### **37. READING'S ARMED FORCES COVENANT AND ACTION PLAN - MONITORING REPORT**

The Chief Executive submitted a report giving an annual update on the Armed Forces Covenant and progress against the associated action plan, which was attached to the report at Appendix A.

Resolved -

That the progress against the actions set out in the Armed Forces Covenant action plan be noted.

### **38. WARD BOUNDARY REVIEW WORKING GROUP**

Further to Minute 20 of the meeting held on 15 July 2019, the Returning Officer submitted a report on an electoral review of the Council being undertaken by The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) in its 2019-20 programme.

The report noted that the Council's submission to the LGBCE on Council Size, as agreed by the Committee on 15 July 2019, was for a Council of 48 Councillors, representing 16 wards of comparable size with three Councillors per ward. The LGBCE were now running a consultation until 4 November 2019 inviting proposals for warding patterns, and it was recommended that an advisory cross-party Ward Boundary Review Working Group be established to assist the development of the Council's response to the consultation.

The report set out proposed terms of reference for the Group and invited the political groups to nominate members based on the following proportionality: 6 Labour; 3 Conservative; 1 Liberal Democrat; and 1 Green.

Resolved -

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- (1) That a Ward Boundary Review Working Group be established with Terms of Reference as follows:

To consider the Local Government Boundary Commission Review of Reading's Ward Boundaries 2019-20 and make observations and recommendations to the Council or Policy Committee on warding patterns for approval and submission to the Commission during the public consultation periods.

- (2) That the Group Leaders submit their nominations for membership of the Working Group to the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services;
- (3) That Councillor Brock be appointed as the Chair and Councillor Page be appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Working Group;
- (4) That the first meeting of the Working Group be held on Wednesday 2 October 2019 at 7.00pm.

### 39. READING TRANSPORT LIMITED - APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking the Committee, acting as shareholder of Reading Transport Limited (RTL), to approve the appointment of the company's new Finance Director to the RTL Board.

The report explained that, following a recent recruitment exercise, Laurence Jenkins had taken up the post of RTL Finance Director on 2 September 2019. His appointment to the RTL Board required formal approval from the shareholder.

**Resolved -**

**That the appointment of Laurence Jenkins as a Director of Reading Transport Ltd be approved.**

### 40. HOMES FOR READING - APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR

Further to Minute 78 of the meeting of Policy Committee held on 26 March 2019, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services submitted a report asking the Committee, acting as shareholder of Homes for Reading (HfR), to agree the appointment of the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services to the HfR Board.

The report noted that the Committee, acting as HfR shareholder, had agreed changes on 26 March 2019 including refinancing of the company and a direction not to acquire any further properties. The company had moved to a revised 'own and manage' business strategy. With the transition to new arrangements and staff departures there had been a number of changes to the HfR Board. The HfR Managing Director had left the company, and would not be replaced under the new arrangements, and the two previous RBC officer directors had also left the Council. It was therefore proposed that the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services be appointed as the sole officer Director,

acting as a point of contact between the Board and the services provided to HfR by the Council, which sat mainly within her Directorate.

**Resolved -**

**That Frances Martin (Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services) be appointed as a Director of Homes for Reading.**

**41. BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN CONTRACTS UPDATE**

Further to Minute 89 of the meeting held on 8 April 2019, the Director of Resources submitted a report seeking approval from the Committee, in its capacity as sole member for Brighter Futures for Children Limited (BFfC/ “The Company”), for the key performance indicators (KPIs) and management information (MI) metrics for the Service Delivery Contract. The report also sought authority to make any non-material changes to the Support Service Level Agreements which formed part of the Support Services Agreement between the Council and BFfC.

The report noted that at its meeting on 8 April 2019, the Committee had authorised the Managing Director of Brighter Futures for Children and the Council’s Chief Executive, in consultation with the Lead Councillors for Children and Education to finalise the revised contract KPIs and MI metrics. The 22 agreed measures were set out in the report for the Committee’s endorsement. The Service Delivery contract would be formally changed to reflect the agreed KPIs and MI metrics, and they would continue to be monitored as part of the performance framework within the contract. The Council and the Company would review and where relevant revise the indicators periodically, and present any amendments to Policy Committee as required.

The report explained that in discussing the measures consideration had been given to the categorisation of measures around education where the company could influence performance but not directly control it (for example educational outcomes measures). Although it would not be appropriate for under-performance on such measures to be capable of leading to company default under the contract’s performance mechanism, the Council wished to remain assured that the Company were seeking to positively influence such measures as part of their holistic approach to all children’s services.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That the final BFfC Contract KPIs and performance metrics for the 2019/20 financial year proposed jointly by the Council and the Company be endorsed;**
- (2) That the Director of Resources be authorised to agree any non-material operational amendments to Support Services Service Level Agreements, which form part of the Support Services Agreement between the Council and BFfC.**

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(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.51 pm)