

## COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 25 JUNE 2019

**Present:** Councillor Woodward (Mayor);

Councillors D Edwards, Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Davies, Eden, Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Grashoff, Hacker, Hoskin, James, Jones, Khan, Lovelock, Maskell, McEwan, McGonigle, McKenna, O'Connell, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, R Singh, Skeats, Stevens, Terry, Warman, White, J Williams, R Williams, Carnell, Duveen, Sokale, Challenger, Leng and Whitham

**Apologies:** Councillors Debs Absolom, David Absolom, Manghnani, DP Singh and Stanford-Beale

### 14. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

### 15. PETITIONS

Paul Goddard presented a petition in the following terms:

#### “Opposition to the Environment Agency’s Flood Defence Proposals

We oppose the Environment Agency’s (EA) flood defence proposals for Caversham. There has been no reported property damage attributed to the River Thames flooding but the EA are proposing measures that will drastically affect the environment!

The proposed walls 4 to 5 kms in length will have no planting within 4 metres of them and this threatens all the hedges and trees at the north of Christchurch Meadow and anywhere else the wall is to be constructed.

The proposed Conveyance Channel will destroy the “Sandy” play park and as a culvert it will be a significant safety hazard close to a children’s play area. It will also need the removal of most of the mature trees both sides of Reading Bridge as well as the removal of the iconic Poplar trees on George Street. The loss of ANY TREES supposedly has a detrimental effect in regard of pollution and should be avoided.

The proposals appear to be at odds with what is expected of the EA. You would think that they would want to protect the environment not destroy it.

Experts say that we can expect a net loss of water because of Global Warning and that water storage should be our main goal.

Finally, it is probable that the funding shortfall will be sought from Reading and Berkshire Councils and we urge that you oppose these EA proposals.”

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**RESPONSE** by Councillor Page (Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport):

I thank Mr Goddard for his petition and note the concerns expressed about the Environment Agency's proposals for flood defences in Caversham.

The Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee includes consideration of matters concerning 'Flood Prevention' within its terms of reference and I am therefore going to refer this matter for consideration to the next meeting of the Committee on 9 July 2019 with a short covering report from officers.

I would invite Mr Goddard to attend that meeting and address the Committee in accordance with Procedure Rule 36B, which describes public participation at the Council's standing committees.

### 16. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Tony Warrell	Housing Shortages	Cllr Ennis
2.	Philip Allen	Climate Crisis	Cllr Page
3.	Jennifer Leach	Reading Festival	Cllr James
4.	Jennifer Leach	Caversham Flood Alleviation Scheme	Cllr Page
5.	Eloise Jones	Climate Change	Cllr Page
6.	Michael Sage	Reading Climate Change Strategy 3	Cllr Page
7.	Sigrid Teer	Air Quality in Caversham	Cllr Page

As there was insufficient time, pursuant to Standing Order 9(6), written replies to Questions 5-7 above would be provided in accordance with Standing Order 11(3).

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

### 17. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Cllr Duveen	Final Annual Accounts 2016-17	Cllr Brock
2.	Cllr Josh Williams	KPMG Refund	Cllr Brock
3.	Cllr James	Recycling	Cllr James
4.	Cllr McGonigle	Engine Idling	Cllr Page
5.	Cllr Whitham	Electric Vehicle Charging from Lampposts	Cllr Page
6.	Cllr Josh Williams	Sustainable Transport Solutions	Cllr Page
7.	Cllr R Singh	Car Parking	Cllr Page

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

**18. COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2019/20 - 2022/23**

Further to Minutes 54 and 9 of the Council's meetings held on 26 March and 22 May 2019 respectively, the Director of Resources submitted a report recommending that the Council considered the findings of the Independent Remuneration Panel to amend the adopted scheme of Councillors' Allowances for the financial year 2019/20.

The report stated that the Independent Remuneration Panel had met to consider a scheme of allowances for councillors and to make recommendations to Council. The report stated that the Panel had conducted a full review of Councillors' Allowances and its report and recommendations were attached to the report for consideration. As part of the review, all councillors had been invited to submit their comments in writing via a questionnaire and twenty three responses had been received. The Panel had also interviewed the Leader of the Council and the leaders of the Conservative and Green groups as well as the Lead Councillor for Children. This enabled the Panel to gather information on councillors' roles on council business, views on the current scheme, comparisons with other authorities, the cost of the scheme to the Council, and comments on what activities and roles warranted a special responsibility allowance.

The Panel concluded that Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) in Reading had fallen far behind those paid to councillors in the other Berkshire unitary authorities and its comparable group 'statistical neighbours'. The Panel did not believe that Reading's councillors should be valued less than their counterparts in other parts of the county and therefore recommended increases in SRAs to bring the rate broadly up to the Berkshire average.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor Page and CARRIED:

**Resolved -**

That, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, the Councillors' Allowances scheme adopted from 1 April 2019, be amended, in accordance with the provision set out in Regulation 10(3), as follows:

- (1) That, for 2019-20, the total sum for the payment of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances to councillors be set at £550,000;
- (2) That, within this total sum, the provision for the payment of Basic Allowance to all councillors remain at £378,125; and the Basic Allowance paid to individual councillors remain the same at £8,220 a year;
- (3) That the Special Responsibility Allowances payments be amended to the amounts set out, as follows:
  - (a) the amount paid to the Leader to be £18,500;
  - (b) the amount paid to the Deputy Leader to be £11,300;

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- (c) the amount paid to SRA Tier 1 to be £9,500;
- (d) the amount paid to SRA Tier 2 to be £6,076;
- (e) the amount paid to SRA Tier 3 to be £3,039;
- (f) the amount paid to SRA Tier 4 to be £1,074.

No councillor shall receive more than one Special Responsibility Allowance;

- (4) That the existing categorisation of tiers should be amended along with the introduction of a fourth tier, as follows:
- Tier 1 to be paid to the Lead Councillors;
  - Tier 2 to be paid to the Leader of the main opposition group and the Chairs of Licensing Applications Committee and Planning Applications Committee;
  - Tier 3 to be paid to the Chairs of Committees (except the Chair of the Appeals Committee), and Group Leaders of the other political groups;
  - Tier 4 to be paid to councillors carrying out such other activities in relation to the discharge of the authority's functions as require the commitment of equivalent time and effort as for other categories of activity which would qualify for Special Responsibility Allowance under Paragraph 5(1)(i) of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003;
- (5) That the following persons shall be regarded as, or equivalent to, "other Councillors carrying out other activities in relation to the discharge of the authority's functions as require the commitment of equivalent time and effort as for other categories of activity which would qualify for Special Responsibility Allowance" at Tier 4 (and subject to no Councillor receiving more than one Special Responsibility Allowance):
- Vice-Chairs of Committees;
  - Independent Person appointed in accordance with Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 to carry out the functions specified in that Act in relation to the Members' Code of Conduct and Local Standards Committee
- (6) That the 2019-20 arrangements for the payment of Dependant Carers' Allowance be raised by a cost of living increase of 2.8%, paid in line with the real living wage, as follows:
- (a) Up to £9 per hour for childcare for up to 15 hours a week
  - (b) Up to £9 per hour towards the cost of a care attendant for an elderly or disabled relative (including a disabled child) for up to 15 hours a week

The person providing the care may not be a close relative defined as spouse, partner (opposite or same sex cohabitantes), parents, children, brothers, sisters, grandparents and grandchildren. The paid care attendant must sign a receipt to show that they have cared for the dependent during the hours claimed for;

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- (7) That, subject to (9) below, the level of subsistence allowances, with the exception of overnight subsistence, remain the same as officers receive. The allowances are currently:
- Subsistence
  - o Breakfast allowance £8.26
  - o Lunch allowance £11.41
  - o Tea allowance £4.52
  - o Evening meal allowance £14.13
  - o Overnight subsistence £82.21 a day outside London  
£93.77 a day in London or at LGA Annual Conferences
- (8) That the level of travel allowances be set as the same as officers receive, as follows:
- Travel by councillor's own motor vehicle - 45 pence per mile
  - Travel by councillor's own bicycle - 37 pence per mile
  - Travel by councillor's own motorcycle - 40.9 pence per mile
  - Bus travel - cost of the ordinary fare, cheap fare or portion of any weekly ticket;
- (9) That the subsistence limits referred to in (7) above be exceeded in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer, e.g. to enable a Councillor and an officer attending a conference to stay at the same accommodation, subject to there being sufficient budget provision;
- (10) That provision for Co-optees' Allowances are payable solely to non-councillor members of the Standards Committee attending meetings of the Committee or any Sub-Committee set up by the Committee as part of its process of assessing, investigating and hearing complaints about Councillors; the allowances to be paid at the daily rate equivalent of the Councillors' Basic Allowance; the Monitoring Officer to be authorised to settle the rate to be paid on each occasion;
- (11) That the salary sacrifice schemes available to Council staff also be made available to Councillors;
- (12) That the amended members' allowances scheme for 2019/20 to 2022/23 set out in (1) to (11) above be implemented from 1 October 2019;
- (13) That the basic allowance and the Special Responsibility Allowances set out above be increased at the beginning of each new financial year in accordance with the Local Government Pay Settlement for the period of the scheme (ie the subsequent three years to 1 April 2022);
- (14) That, in respect of the Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendation:

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- (a) to offer Councillors parking permits for any parking zones in the ward for which they had been elected be deferred to enable consideration of the proposal with reference to the Council's sustainable travel policies;
  - (b) to include the Vice-Chairs of Licensing Applications Committee and Planning Applications Committee in Tier 3 of the Councillors' Allowances Scheme be not accepted and instead these Vice-Chairs be awarded a SRA at Tier 4, which would be consistent with the other Vice-Chairs of Committees;
  - (c) to appoint a second Vice-Chair of the Licensing Applications Committee in view of the exceptional frequency and length of meetings would not be accepted.
- (15) That the Council's appreciation be recorded to the members of the Remuneration Panel for their thorough review of the Councillors' Allowances Scheme and for their carefully considered recommendations.

### 19. SHAPING READING'S FUTURE: OUR CORPORATE PLAN 2018-21 ANNUAL REFRESH

The Chief Executive, submitted a report on the latest refreshed version of the Council's Corporate Plan, entitled 'Shaping Readings Future: Our Corporate Plan 2018-21', which had originally been agreed by the Council on 26 June 2018 (Minute 20 refers). The updated Corporate Plan was appended to the report and set out:

- The Council's vision and priorities which provide the context for service delivery;
- How the Council works together with partners and our contribution to Shaping Readings Future; and
- How we will measure the difference that we make.

Following consideration by Councillors, in January and March 2019, feedback from portfolio holders and officers had been incorporated into the final draft Plan. The Council's success measures had also been updated to include 2018/19 results along with revised targets where results had shown variation from the estimate. The progress against the measures of success would be reported to Councillors regularly with a quarterly performance report being published four times per year.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor Page and CARRIED:

#### Resolved -

That the refreshed Corporate Plan, Shaping Reading's Future: Our Corporate Plan 2018-21, be approved, as outlined at Appendix 1 to the report.

### 20. DRAFT CAPITAL STRATEGY

The Director of Resources submitted a report to seek approval for the Capital Strategy in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy' (CIPFA)

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revised Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities 2017. The draft Capital Strategy 2019 was appended to report for consideration. The Capital Strategy provided a high level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity would contribute to the provision of services; along with an overview of how associated risk was managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.

The draft Strategy was informed by the Council's priorities and was complementary to other key strategy documents notably the Corporate Plan (see Minute 19 above), Medium Term Financial Plan, Treasury Management Strategy, Asset Management Strategy and Property Investment Strategy.

The Capital Strategy set out revised terms of reference and attendee lists for historic officer working groups, including the Strategic Asset Management Board (SAMB), in order to give the Board a wider and more strategic focus. The Board would direct and be supported by a number of project groups, including Land and Property. The Strategy included a prioritisation matrix at Appendix B, which described the scoring guidance for new capital schemes. The proposed Action Plan attached at Appendix F to the Strategy identified four areas where work was required for the Council to become fully compliant with the CIPFA code requirements, as follows:

- Developing knowledge of the existing asset base;
- Identifying what assets were needed in the future;
- Developing and implementing new systems and processes, which enable the transition to become fully compliant with the code requirements;
- Reviewing current capacity within the organisation.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor Page and CARRIED:

### **Resolved -**

- (1) That the Capital Strategy, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;
- (2) That the proposed Action Plan, which was attached to the Capital Strategy at Appendix F, together with the associated financial implications be noted.

## **21. TACKLING SINGLE USE PLASTICS**

Pursuant to Notice, the following motion was moved by Councillor Eden and seconded by Councillor Davies and CARRIED:

### **Resolved -**

This Council notes:

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- Worldwide, roughly 300 million tons of plastic is manufactured each year and half of it is disposable and ends up in our rivers and in the sea.
- In England, re-usable plastic products including an estimated 4.7bn plastic straws, 316m plastic stirrers and 1.8bn plastic-stemmed cotton buds are used each year.
- The oceans are expected to contain one tonne of plastic for every three tonnes of fish by 2025, and by 2050, more plastics than fish by weight according to the Ellen McArthur Foundation.
- Plastics in the environment can release toxic chemical as they decompose which pose a danger to marine life and, through the food chain, ultimately humans.
- The Government has announced a plan to control sale of a small number of single-use plastic products from April 2020 but not all avoidable single-use plastics. Environmental groups including the Marine Conservation Society and the Campaign to Protect Rural England have called for the government to do more.
- Some single-use plastic products are essential for providing care and support or to enable groups such as older people, people with disabilities and autistic people to live their daily lives.

This Council welcomes:

- Our waste management partnership RE3's introduction last year of recycling plastic trays, pots and tubs in addition to plastic bottles.
- The announcement that Reading Festival will be free of single-use plastics by 2021.
- Community initiatives like Refill Reading which aims to reduce the number of disposable coffee cups going to landfill by encouraging people in our town to use reusable cups in cafes.

This Council resolves to:

- Ensure that, wherever possible, single use plastic is eliminated from use within the Council as soon as this can be achieved.
- Wherever possible, phase out the purchase and procurement of single-use plastic products through services commissioned by the Council as soon as it is practicable.
- Bring reports to future meetings of the appropriate committees that describes the Council's plans to eliminate single-use plastic from the organisation, including a timetable for doing so.
- To actively work with Reading's businesses, community groups and residents to share advice, ideas and best practice to help them transition from single-use plastic products to sustainable alternatives.
- Work with schools to support the aspiration of Reading's young people to eliminate plastic waste from our environment.
- Seek to work with neighbouring authorities through RE3 and other links to tackle single use plastic use across the wider Berkshire area.



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(The meeting closed at 9.01 pm)