



**Reading**  
Borough Council  

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Working better with you

# **Summons and Agenda 20 October 2020**

**Chief Executive  
Reading Borough Council  
Civic Offices, Bridge Street,  
Reading, RG1 2LU**



Peter Sloman  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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To: All Members of the Council

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12 October 2020

Your contact is: Michael Popham - Democratic Services Manager

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Reading Borough Council to be held as **Online Meeting via Microsoft Teams**, on **Tuesday, 20 October 2020 at 6.30 pm**, when it is proposed to transact the business specified in the Agenda enclosed herewith.

Yours faithfully



CHIEF EXECUTIVE



## A G E N D A

1. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

To receive Mayor's Announcements.

2. **APPOINTMENT OF THE MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR**

To confirm the appointment of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive any declarations of interest.

4. **MINUTES**

11 - 20

To approve the Minutes of the proceedings of the previous Council Meeting held on 25 February 2020.

5. **PETITIONS**

To receive petitions in accordance with Standing Order 8.

6. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Questions in accordance with Standing Order 9.

7. **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

Questions in accordance with Standing Order 10.

**Reports and Recommendations from Committees**

8. **ONLINE MEETING PROTOCOLS**

21 - 28

Report by Executive Director of Resources

**Motions**

9. **TACKLING EMPLOYMENT INEQUALITY**

Councillor Challenger to move:

This Council notes that:

- Just 52 out of the 1099 most powerful roles in the country are held by People of Colour, or 4.7% of the total number compared to the 13% proportion of the UK population (Colour of Power report 2020).
- There are 56 Unitary Authorities in the UK, currently only two Chief Executives identify as BAME.

- 3.3% of local government staff are Black in the South East compared to over 10% of the population.
- Progression remains important to BAME employees across the UK, with 70% saying that career progression is important to them, compared to only 42% of White British employees. However, over half of BAME employees (52%), believe that they will have to leave their current organisation to progress in their career, in contrast with 38% of White British employees who believe this.
- The evidence clearly shows that the workforces and institutions of the UK and our region are not reflective of their stakeholders.
- Many of the recommendations in the Lammy Review (2017), the Dame Angiolini Report (2017), the Windrush Lessons Learned Review (2018), the McGregor-Smith Review (2017), and the Macpherson report (1999) have not been implemented by Government.
- Reading Borough Council commits to being an anti-racist organisation - one that does not just tackle inequality, but actively fights racism in the Borough.
- Work is already being undertaken at the Council to identify the gaps and long-term solutions to fix the inequalities in our community and workforce, focusing on the understanding of the causes and consequences of inequality

This Council resolves to:

- Ask officers to bring forward plans to improve the diversity of the Council's senior leadership by instigating inclusive leadership training and seek to achieve the 'excellent' rating in future Local Government Equality Framework peer challenges.
- Develop an apprenticeship scheme that commits to increasing the number of black employees across the Council in a range of roles.
- Work with partners to improve diversity across the public sector.
- Request that the Corporate Management Team to identify a Lead Officer at Executive Director level to champion equalities work across the borough.
- Publish Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting on an annual basis and lobby Government to make such reporting mandatory for all organisations.
- Improve transparency in our recruitment, retention and progression data of Black/BME colleagues and develop an Action Plan.

- Become a signatory to Business In The Community's Race at Work Charter.
- Engage with any future Government commissions on racism in the UK and lobby the Government to implement outstanding recommendations in existing reviews.

## 10. HOMES AT THE HEART

Councillor Ennis to move:

This Council notes:

- The £12.2bn investment in affordable housing announced by the government
- Investment in social housing enables economic growth and building homes creates jobs and skills development
- Investment in social housing enables housing affordability and supply for those otherwise shut out of the market
- Investment in social housing enables prosperous communities
- Investing in greater energy efficiency in social housing stock improves residents' health and finances, boosts the economy and the job market whilst also tackling climate change
- Tackling climate change is a priority for Reading Borough Council and other social housing providers, but we cannot achieve it alone - we need to work in partnership with the government, local agencies, residents, lenders, suppliers, and many others
- Reading Borough Council has a great track record in delivering energy efficient homes through the retrofitting of council stock and has a clear commitment to Passivhaus principles for new developments
- The planning white paper 'Planning for the future' and other national planning changes

This Council believes that:

- The government should invest in social housing and supports the Local Government Association's call for more powers to be made available for councils to deliver social housing
- The government should support the social housing sector to play a leading role in cutting carbon emissions
- The government must deliver on its manifesto commitment to set up a £3.8bn Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

- The government must quickly produce a policy roadmap to set out the standards and measures that housing associations and others will need to work towards to achieve the net-zero ambition
- The controversial planning white paper is unwelcome, and its implementation would severely curtail the powers of local planning authorities to control development and ensure quality, leading to poor-quality housing and fewer affordable homes being built

Consequently, this Council resolves to:

- Support the Housing Federation's Homes at the Heart campaign
- Write, via the Chief Executive, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to express our support for the Homes at Heart campaign
- Continue to lobby, both independently and in partnership with other bodies and local authorities, against the implementation of the planning white paper
- Commit to continue investment in decarbonisation of social housing stock locally.

## 11. HYDROTHERAPY SERVICES

Councillor Hoskin to move:

This Council notes that:

- NHS Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group [CCG], who commission and plan the vast majority of health services in Reading, are running a 12-week public consultation on future NHS provision of hydrotherapy in Reading, ending 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020
- The NHS is experiencing severe financial pressures. Despite recent increases in funding, the present situation follows a decade of the tightest squeeze on spending in the Health Service's history. Berkshire West CCG's 2019/20 Financial Plan detailed a funding gap of £20.7 million, and this was before the extra pressures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Berkshire West CCG tells us it is consulting on the future provision of hydrotherapy now because the current Covid-19 pandemic and related controls mean the pool is currently closed



and that ‘the ongoing challenges and potentially open-ended nature of the pandemic’ has prompted them to examine future options for the service.

- The Royal Berkshire Hospital’s website declares that hydrotherapy can help with the relief of pain and muscle spasm, increasing range of movement and improving both the strength and control of muscles as well as helping encourage weightbearing, especially where land-based exercise is very difficult.
- The strong support for continued provision of NHS hydrotherapy in Reading by a range of charities and support groups, including Berkshire Disabled People Against Cuts, Arthritis Matters, Parkinson’s UK, Reading Families’ Forum, Reading Fibromyalgia Support Group, the MS Society and the Berkshire MS Therapy Centre.
- This Council, at its meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2017, passed, in response to a previous consultation, a resolution objecting to the closure of hydrotherapy services in Reading.

This Council recognises that the judgement of many clinicians and patients that there is a therapeutic benefit and is shown to improve mobility, strengthen muscles, increase circulation and help movement in some painful joints.

This Council believes that:

- It is premature to make decisions about the permanent provision of services like hydrotherapy based on the Covid-19 pandemic. It is too soon to understand whether the virus will have a long-term impact on the need of people to socially distance and maintain Covid-19 infection control policies.
- There is a strong probability that the human and financial costs caused by the detrimental impacts on people’s health and wellbeing from the closure of this therapy service will far outweigh any short-term savings.

Consequently, this Council resolves:

- To ask the Chief Executive to write to Berkshire West CCG conveying the outcome of this motion and relaying the Council’s support for the continuation and, when safe, increased access to NHS hydrotherapy services in Reading.
- To request that the Director of Adult Care and Health Services responds to the formal consultation and survey expressing the Council’s desire that this service continues.

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

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

**Apologies:** Councillor Hacker.

### 39. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

### 40. PETITION

Carol Goddard presented a petition in the following terms:

It is with great regret that I understand you are not replacing the Bowls Hall when the new Leisure Centre is to be built.

I am currently a bowler at Rivermead Bowling Club and would like the facility to either be provided at the new Leisure Centre or at a new building close to the current one.

I will be unable to play at Whiteknights and I do not want to drive to a Club up to 30 minutes drive away from my home.

Please reconsider your current plans and provide a new facility for Rivermead Bowling Club.

**RESPONSE** by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

Thank you very much for taking the time to bring your petition to the Council tonight.

We do understand your disappointment that a dedicated bowls hall could not, in the end, be provided within the final plans for the new leisure centre at Rivermead. Whilst we would love to have been able to provide a new bowls hall the process to select a partner was driven by a need to secure affordability for the council tax payer. These budget constraints meant we were unable to include these facilities in the specification for the leisure contract as a minimum requirement.

As part of the process to develop the specification, the Council used Sport England modelling to review the demand and supply for indoor sports facilities, including bowls. Particular attention was paid to likely future demand including changes in population and changing trends in participation in physical activity.

This was used to produce the minimum requirements for facilities and services. The modelling indicated greater capacity than demand for indoor bowls, reflecting the membership numbers observed.

Reading is unusually fortunate to be served by two indoor bowls halls, three miles apart. Whiteknights bowls club with seven rinks has 850 to 900 members, and Rivermead with 250 to 300 members, uses the six rinks provided.

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Whilst the consideration of what facilities exist within Greater Reading was part of the considerations in terms of prioritisation, the club's aspirations and business plan was provided to the bidders to help them draw up their proposals.

Whilst the new facility at Rivermead will not include an indoor bowls centre, the aim is to create an inclusive swimming and fitness environment, including a 25m 8-lane competition pool and a 6-court sports hall.

In addition, the GLL have been tasked with increasing the number of people from priority groups participating in physical exercise. To achieve this GLL have opted to make significant improvement to facilities and provide a number of targeted activities within their programme.

For older people, this includes expanding the 60+ clubs across all leisure centres in Reading, providing more walking sports, and developing new activities with Age UK and the University of the 3rd Age.

There are plans to link to health programmes such as social prescribing, exercise referral, falls prevention, cardiac and cancer rehabilitation activities. There will also be community outreach programmes targeting priority groups delivering monthly sessions in community settings such as parks and community centres.

That said, I understand that your specific concern, and passion, is about indoor bowls. I have committed myself to working closely with Rivermead Bowls Club to explore fully all options and proposals to support both it and members over the next couple of years. A senior council officer and I have already enjoyed a productive meeting with the club and the next is in the diary. Furthermore we will increasingly include GLL in these discussions. It is also important to remember that the present bowls hall, along with the rest of Rivermead, will remain open until, at least, late summer 2022, and therefore provide a home for the winter 20/21 and 21/22 seasons.

### 41. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 9

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Helen Palmer	RBH Environmental Policy	Cllr Page
2.	Alice Mpofu-Coles	School Exclusions	Cllr Pearce
3.	Richard Stainthorp	Recycling Rates	Cllr James
4.	Richard Stainthorp	Food Waste Recycling	Cllr James
5.	Richard Stainthorp	School Capacity	Cllr Pearce
6.	Stuart Kinton	Climate Emergency	Cllr Brock
7.	Michael Sage	Climate Emergency - Lobbying & Cooperation	Cllr Brock
8.	Andrew Hornsby-Smith	Carbon Neutral by 2030	Cllr Page
9.	Andrew Hornsby-	Chestnut Walk	Cllr Rowland

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	Smith		
10.	Amjad Tarar	Improving Recycling Rates	Cllr James
11.	Amjad Tarar	Major Developments in Reading	Cllr Page
12.		WITHDRAWN	
13.	Stuart Kinton	Carbon Neutral by 2030	Cllr Page
14.	Roger Lightfoot	Leisure Facilities Contract	Cllr Hoskin
15.	Peter Burt	Free Swimming	Cllr Hoskin
16.	Peter Burt	Sports and Leisure Forum	Cllr Hoskin
17.	Roger Lightfoot	New Swimming Pools	Cllr Hoskin
18.	John Booth	Climate Emergency - Local Investment	Cllr Page

As there was insufficient time, pursuant to Standing Order 9(6), a written reply to Questions 8-11 and 13-18 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).

**42. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER NO 10**

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Cllr Duveen	Accounts for 2017/18 & 2018/19	Cllr Brock
2.	Cllr Duveen	Equal Pay Settlements	Cllr Brock
3.	Cllr O'Connell	Traveller Incursions	Cllr Page
4.	Cllr Manghnani	Travellers	Cllr Page
5.	Cllr Manghnani	Indoor Bowling at Rivermead	Cllr Hoskin
6.	Cllr White	Is Rough Sleeping on the Increase?	Cllr Ennis
7.	Cllr J Williams	Ensuring Value for Public Money	Cllr Brock
8.	Cllr McGonigle	Single use Plastics Update	Cllr Brock
9.	Cllr White	Green Road Tennis Courts	Cllr Hoskin

As there was insufficient time, pursuant to Standing Order 10(4), a written reply to Questions 8-9 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).

**43. CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER'S REPORT ON THE ROBUSTNESS OF THE COUNCIL'S 2020/21 BUDGET**

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report fulfilling the requirement on her under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 as the Council's Chief Finance Officer to report on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations of the budget and the adequacy of the proposed level of financial reserves. The Council had a duty to have regard to the advice set out in the report when considering setting its 2020/21 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy for the subsequent two financial years. The Statement of Reserves and Balances, which provided a summary of estimated reserve movements from 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2023, were attached to the report for information.

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

**Resolved -**

That the Chief Finance Officer's report on the robustness of the Council's 2019/20 budget and indicative budgets for the subsequent two financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22 be noted and the opinion contained therein be taken into account in making the decisions set out in Minutes 44-47 below.

**44. 2020/21 BUDGET & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY TO 2023**

Further to Minutes 59 and 72 of the Policy Committee meetings held on 16 December 2019 and 17 February 2020 respectively, the Executive Director of Resources submitted a report on the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the three years 2020/21 - 2022/23. The report provided an update on the results of the budget consultation exercise as well as changes arising from the publication of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement [LGFS] and other changes that had arisen since the report to Policy Committee in December.

The proposed Medium Term Financial Strategy was informed by and supported the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities including its commitment to address the climate change emergency; and sought to ensure that the Council was "fit for the future", with sound finances that would allow the Council's future funding challenges and spending pressures to be met in as sustainable a way as possible. The underpinning rationale of the Medium Term Financial Strategy was to deliver a balanced and affordable budget that ensured the Council's finances were sustainable over the medium term and that in the longer term the Council's finances were not reliant on the unsustainable use of one-off reserves or funding and that general and earmarked reserves were maintained and bolstered to meet future funding challenges and risk. The Strategy was informed by the Council's Vision: "to ensure that Reading realises its potential - and that everyone who lives and works in Reading can share in the benefits of its success", as well as its Corporate Plan priorities. The Budget assumptions were set out in the report as follows:

- a) Council Tax increases of 3.99% (including a one off 2.0% social care precept) in 2020/21 and 1.99% in both 2021/22 and 2022/23;
- b) £32.9m of efficiencies and increased income across the period;
- c) A contingency provision over the three years (£3.5m 2020/21; £4.9m 2021/22; and £5.2m 2022/23) to mitigate possible slippage or non-achievement of higher risk savings and/or income targets over the period;

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- d) General Fund capital investment of £365m over the period 2020/21 to 2022/23 of which £200m would be for invest to save purposes;
- e) £4.5m of transformation funding (over the period 2020/21 to 2021/22) to support delivery of efficiency savings assumed within the MTFS.

The report had the following documents appended: Summary of General Fund Budget 2020-21 to 2022-23; General Fund Revenue Budget by Service 2020-21 to 2022-23; Detailed General Fund Budgets 2020-21 to 2022-23; Housing Revenue Account Budget 2020-21 to 2022-23; General Fund and HRA Capital Programme 2020-21 to 2022-23; Flexible Capital Receipts Strategy; Fees and Charges; Equality Impact Assessment; Dedicated Schools Grant; and details of the Budget Consultation exercise.

A motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor Page and CARRIED as set out in the resolution below.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor White and seconded by Councillor Whitham and LOST:

'In the recommendation relating to 2020/21 Budget & Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2023 (Agenda item 8), insert "subject to an additional recommendation (i) below" after the words "...endorse the Draft 2020/21 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets, Draft Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendices 1-9, and..."

Add a new Recommendation (i) as follows:

"(i) This Council notes:

- Reading Council has declared a climate emergency.
- 39% of Reading's carbon emissions comes from housing.
- 4,000 houses per year need to be insulated.
- 7,290 of our Reading households live in fuel poverty (where they don't have enough money to heat their home) and in some parts of the town it is as high as 30% of residents (UK average is 10.9%).
- Most Council homes have had basic energy efficiency measures installed but many private rented and owner-occupied properties haven't.
- There is no government scheme of the appropriate size to insulate the number of homes needed.
- However, some government funding is available. Local Authority Flex (LA Flex), is a part of the UK Government's third phase of ECO (Energy Company Obligation) money to tackle fuel poverty.
- Neighbouring Bracknell Forest Council has a Local Authority Flex scheme. They work with local insulation companies and have insulated 1,126 private rented and owner-occupied properties under this scheme since November 2018. Bracknell also offer top up grants to pay for further insulation and energy efficiency measures.

This Council resolves to:

- Set up a Local Authority Flex scheme to use central government money to insulate qualifying Reading homes in the private rented and owner-occupied sectors as soon as possible.
- Earmark £1 million of the 19/20 General Fund revenue underspend to set up a grants fund to pay for top up housing energy efficiency measures to houses

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which qualify under the Local Authority Flex scheme. This money will also pay for an 18 month fixed term post to finalise and administer the scheme.

- The grants fund will be used for home energy efficiency measures that will help homes reach an Energy Performance Certificate level C. Priority for the grants fund will be given to helping those in fuel poverty."

Make all consequential amendments to the revenue and capital budgets arising from the above amendment.'

A recorded vote having been demanded, the voting was as follows:

For the motion: 6 Councillors Duveen, McGonigle, O'Connell, White, Whitham and J Williams.

Against the motion: 39

Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Carnell, Challenger, Davies, Eden, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Grashoff, Hoskin, James, Jones, Khan, Leng, Lovelock, Maskell, Manghnani, McKenna, McEwan, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, Rynn, D Singh, R Singh, Skeats, Sokale, Stanford-Beale, Stevens, Terry, R Williams and Woodward.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Duveen and seconded by Councillor O'Connell and LOST:

'In the recommendation relating to 2020/21 Budget & Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2023 (Agenda item 8), insert "subject to an additional recommendation (i) below" after the words "...endorse the Draft 2020/21 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets, Draft Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendices 1-9, and..."

Add a new Recommendation (i) as follows:

"(i) This Council notes from the Chief Financial Officer's Report that the current year 2019/20 will end with a projected underspend of £3.2m.

In view of this we propose that the Council add the following projects to the Recommended Actions, using money from the underspend in 2019-20.

In relation to paragraph 13.3 of the report, amend the following bullet points:

- £500,000 for electric vehicle charging points (across 2 years from 2020-21);
- £200,000 for tree planting including a new bowser and towing vehicle in 2020-21 and further annual funds of £100,000 for 2021/22 and 2022/23; and

add the following additional bullet point:

- £50,000 for a second camera van"

Make any consequential amendments to the revenue and capital budgets arising from the above amendment.'

A recorded vote having been demanded, the voting was as follows:

For the motion: 6 Councillors Duveen, McGonigle, O'Connell, White, Whitham and J Williams.



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### Against the motion: 39

Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Carnell, Challenger, Davies, Eden, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Grashoff, Hoskin, James, Jones, Khan, Leng, Lovelock, Maskell, Manghnani, McKenna, McEwan, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, Rynn, D Singh, R Singh, Skeats, Sokale, Stanford-Beale, Stevens, Terry, R Williams and Woodward.

### **Resolved -**

That, taking due regard of the results of the budget consultation exercise (as outlined in Section 3 and set out in more detail in Appendix 10 of the report), endorse the Draft 2020/21 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets, Draft Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendices 1-9, and agree the following:

- (a) the Council's General Fund Budget Requirement of £150.1m for 2020/21 and an increase in the Band D Council Tax for the Council of 3.99% (1.99% general increase and 2.00% additional adult social care precept) or £64.93 per annum representing a Band D Council Tax of £1,692.16 per annum as set out in paragraph 8.2 of the report;
- (b) the proposed efficiency savings of £6.3m together with additional income of £5.3m in 2020/21 required to achieve a balanced budget for that year as set out in Appendix 2 to the report;
- (c) the overall savings proposed within the MTFs of £32.9m (of which changes to income, fees and charges is £13.5m) and three-year growth changes to service budgets of £26.6m as set out in Appendix 3;
- (d) the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2020/21 of £40.9m as set out in Appendix 4 and an average increase of 3.3% in social dwelling rents from April 2020 giving a revised weekly average social rent of £102.57;
- (e) the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes as set out in Appendices 5a and 5b;
- (f) the Strategy for the use of flexible capital receipts to deliver future transformation and ongoing savings as set out in Appendix 6;
- (g) the changes to Fees and Charges set out in Appendix 7 of the report;
- (h) the allocation of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) as set out in Appendix 9.

A recorded vote having been demanded, the voting was as follows:

### For the motion: 29

Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Ayub, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Challenger, Davies, Eden, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Hoskin, James, Jones, Khan, Leng, Lovelock, Maskell, McKenna, McEwan, Page, Pearce, Rowland, D Singh, Sokale, Terry, R Williams and Woodward.

### Against the motion: 16

Councillors Ballsdon, Carnell, Duveen, Grashoff, Manghnani, McGonigle, O'Connell, Robinson, Rynn, R Singh, Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Stevens, White, Whitham and J Williams.

**45. DRAFT CAPITAL STRATEGY**

Further to Minute 73 of the Policy Committee held on 17 February 2020, the Executive Director of Resources submitted a report on the Capital Strategy, which was attached as an Appendix, and provided an overview of where and how the Council intended to deploy its capital resources to support the delivery of the strategic aims set out in the Corporate Plan. The Capital Strategy should be read in conjunction with other strategic documents such as the Council's Asset Management Plan, Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) and the Commercial Investment Strategy. The Council had an ambitious Capital Programme, a key aspect of which was the commitment to invest in the acquisition of commercial property in Reading and neighbouring Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas to support its strategic objectives. The extent of the Council's investment in commercial properties and the criteria for investment were set out in section 5 of the Strategy. The Council had limited capital resources and had therefore developed a prioritisation matrix to determine how resources would be used and capital bids were assessed using this tool to highlight risks and opportunities.

The Capital Strategy had regard to prevailing Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Guidance and the Prudential Code. Compliance with government guidance was considered on a case by case basis and where permissible may be ignored if not in line with the Council's Corporate Plan. The Council had decided not to have full regard to CIPFA guidance or the Prudential Code as it related to commercial property investment and lending to housing associations. The proposed Action Plan at Appendix D of the Strategy identified four areas where work was required for the Council to become fully compliant with the CIPFA code requirements. These were:

- Developing our knowledge of the existing asset base;
- Identifying what assets we need 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 updated Action Plan that formed Appendix D of the Capital Strategy be noted, together with the associated financial implications.

**46. COUNCIL TAX SETTING**

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking approval of the calculations for determining the Council Tax requirement for the year 2020/21, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The report also sought approval to set the Council Tax amounts for each property valuation band in the Borough including precepts from the Thames Valley Police and Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service.

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

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Resolved -

- (1) That the following amounts that have been calculated for the year 2020/21 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 be agreed:
  - (i) £425,131,532 being the estimated aggregate expenditure of the Council in accordance with section 31A (2) of the Act;
  - (ii) £329,116,681 being the estimated aggregate income of the Council for the items set out in section 31A (3) of the Act;
  - (iii) £96,014,851 being the amount by which the aggregate at (i) above exceeds the aggregate at (ii) above, calculated in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as the Council's Council Tax Requirement for the year (Item R);
  - (iv) £1,692.16 being the amount at (iii) above (Item R) divided by the Council's tax base 56,741 (Item T) calculated in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year, representing an increase of 3.99% in the Council's own tax;
- (2) That the net tax base of 56,741 Band D equivalent properties (being the gross tax base adjusted for an assumed collection rate) used for setting the budget requirement for 2020/21 that was agreed by Council on 28 January 2020 be noted; and
  - (i) that the Band D charge for Reading Borough Council be £1,692.16 as shown in section 4.4 of the report; and
  - (ii) that, including the Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service and Thames Valley Police precepts, Council Tax by property valuation band be as set out in section 4.8 of the report.

### **47. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT (2020/21); MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY (2020/21); ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY (2020/21)**

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report seeking approval for a Treasury Management Strategy, which had to be in place before the start of each financial year, in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017 and the CIPFA Prudential Code. The Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS), was attached to the report at Appendix A, setting out the parameters for the Council's planned Treasury activity during 2020/21, which the Council's Treasury Team would manage on a day-to-day basis. The TMSS reflected the Council's Capital Programme 2020/21 to 2022/23 with non-treasury investments being registered in the Council's Capital Strategy, which was presented separately to the TMSS (see Minute 45 above). The report also had appended the Treasury Management Policy 2020/21; Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) 2020/21; and the Annual Investment Strategy.

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

## COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 25 FEBRUARY 2020

### Resolved -

- (1) That the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved;
- (2) That the Treasury Management Policy for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved;
- (3) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved;
- (4) That the Annual Investment Strategy for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved;
- (5) That the Prudential and Treasury Management indicators as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved.

### 48. RBC ACTION SINCE DECLARATION OF A CLIMATE EMERGENCY - AND FUTURE PLANS

Further to Minute 74 of the Policy Committee held on 17 February 2020, the Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on action taken on climate change since the declaration of a climate emergency at Council on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers), and to summarise future plans in this area, with a particular focus on financial commitments in the context of the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2023. The report illustrated that over the two first full financial years since the declaration of a climate emergency, 2019/20 and 2020/21, the Council had committed around £34 million to capital projects which would contribute directly to reducing emissions, in both its own operations and the wider community. The report also showed how the Council had made additional revenue commitments to develop and accelerate its response to the declaration. Additionally, the Council would ensure that all policy and spending decisions across the full range of its activities took account of their impact on emissions wherever possible, and that all staff were engaged in the process of working towards the goal of a net zero carbon Reading by 2030. A new Climate Action Programme Board had been established in January 2020 to help achieve this and to ensure good governance in this area in line with best practice advice. The report had appended a summary of the Council's action since declaring a Climate Emergency and the plans to continue this work.

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

### Resolved -

That the progress to date and the future plans as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report to take forward the Council's commitment to achieving a net zero carbon Reading by 2030 be endorsed.

(The meeting closed at 9.25pm).

# Agenda Item 8

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

TO:	COUNCIL		
DATE:	20 OCTOBER 2020		
TITLE:	ONLINE MEETING PROTOCOLS		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR BROCK	PORTFOLIO:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
SERVICE:	LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	MICHAEL GRAHAM	TEL:	0118 937 3470
JOB TITLE:	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES	E-MAIL:	michael.graham@reading.gov.uk

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

- 1.1 This report sets out further arrangements to be made in accordance with Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 [The Act] and 'The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020' [The Regulations] to enable additional Council meetings to take place online during the current Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.2 The Act and Regulations have made provision for local authorities to allow meetings to occur without the participants being in the same place. Local authority meetings can take place under the Regulations with members in more than one place, including at electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.
- 1.3 The protocols to allow the Adult Social Care, Children & Education Committee; Housing, Neighbourhood & Leisure Committee; Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee and the Personnel Committee to continue to meet under the new arrangements are attached at **Appendix A**.
- 1.4 Section 78(3) of the Act states that the Regulations may make provision only in relation to local authority meetings required to be held, or held, before 7 May 2021. The Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services or Policy Committee will also be able to end or make amendments to the arrangements prior to 7 May 2021. The Regulations can be viewed through the following link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/392/regulation/5/made>

## 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the protocols for meetings of the Adult Social Care, Children & Education Committee; Housing, Neighbourhood & Leisure Committee; Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee and the Personnel Committee, drafted in accordance with the provisions of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020', and attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved.
- 2.2 That the provisions agreed in 2.1 above be applied only to those Committee meetings required to be held, or held, before 7 May 2021 and the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to end or make amendments to the arrangements prior to 7 May 2021.
- 2.3 That, during these arrangements, the attendance of members at the Committees be as follows:
- (a) Adult Social Care, Children & Education Committee (10)  
Councillors (Labour 6; Conservative 2; Greens 1; and Liberal Democrats 1)
- (b) Housing, Neighbourhood & Leisure Committee (10)  
Councillors (Labour 6; Conservative 2; Greens 1; and Liberal Democrats 1)
- (c) Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee (10)  
Councillors (Labour 6; Conservative 2; Greens 1; and Liberal Democrats 1)
- (d) Personnel Committee (5)  
Councillors (Labour 4; Conservative 1) or nominees
- 2.4 That the quorum for the Committees set out in 2.3 above be set at three members.

Appendix A - Protocols for meetings of the Adult Social Care, Children & Education Committee; Housing, Neighbourhood & Leisure Committee; Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee and the Personnel Committee.

## 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Government has passed legislation to enable local authorities to hold meetings online and the proposals set out in the report describe the Council's practical steps to enable this to happen and thereby continue to take decisions in an open and transparent manner during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## 4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The report sets out arrangements to hold online meetings of the Adult Social Care, Children & Education Committee; Housing, Neighbourhood & Leisure Committee; Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee and the Personnel Committee

as permitted by the Regulations that came into force on 6 April 2020. The protocols for these meetings are attached in Appendix A.

- 4.2 The Council is also asked to: retain the membership of the Adult Social Care, Children & Education Committee; Housing, Neighbourhood & Leisure Committee; Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee and the Personnel Committee; and agree the quorum thresholds for the new online meetings. It is also recommended that provision should be made to allow substitutes where a member of the Committee cannot attend the online meeting.
- 4.3 In order to provide consistency to the meeting arrangements all the online meetings will manage voting; declarations of interest and exempt and confidential business in the following way:

**(a) Voting**

Votes at online meetings will be taken by the Chair asking each individual Councillor to declare whether they are for, against or abstaining orally in order to achieve clarity to the decision-making process.

**(b) Declaring Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Members with a disclosable pecuniary interest must declare the existence of the interest and leave the meeting. This will be achieved by the member pausing or exiting the online meeting temporarily for the duration of the item of business in which they have an interest. Once the item of business has been dealt with, the Chair or Committee Administrator will invite the member to return to the meeting.

**(c) Exempt and Confidential Business**

Where a Committee passes a resolution to exclude the press and public from an item or items of business to consider exempt or confidential information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), this (Part 2) business will be conducted in a separate private online meeting. Before any councillor can take part in discussing exempt and/or confidential business they must confirm to the Chair that they are in a location where no person not entitled to be party to that information can hear or participate in the discussion/ decision in respect of the restricted business.

- 4.4 In order to retain flexibility in the online meeting arrangements, it should be noted that the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services has been given delegated authority to amend the arrangements to enable a prompt response to any changes in circumstances and implement improvements as a result of learning from holding online meetings.

**5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 5.1 The Council's Corporate Plan Priorities are.

1. Securing the economic success of Reading and provision of job opportunities
2. Ensuring access to decent housing to meet local needs
3. To protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable adults and children
4. Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe
5. Ensuring that there are good education, leisure and cultural opportunities for people in Reading
6. Ensuring the Council is fit for the future

5.2 The ability to hold online meetings of Committees will ensure continuity at this difficult time and support the Council's focus on its Corporate Plan and the reframed three broad priorities. The governance of the Council and the contribution it makes to the delivery of effective decisions and its business management is a key component for the delivery of the Council's strategic aims. Difficult decisions will need to be taken on an ongoing basis over the period of the Covid-19 emergency and holding meetings online supports the democratic oversight and scrutiny of the Council's work and decision-making processes.

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

6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). There are no specific environmental and climate implications to report in relation to the recommendations set out in this report.

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

7.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way". This report encourages continuity of decision-making for the forthcoming year and enables councillors to fulfil their Committee roles at this challenging time.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 There is no need to undertake an EIA in relation to the recommendations set out in this report.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The Coronavirus Act 2020 received Royal Assent on 25 March 2020 and contained provision for the Secretary of State to make Regulations in relation to the arrangements for holding local authority meetings (Section 78), during the current pandemic.

9.2 The subsequent Regulations came into effect on 6 April 2020 and enable local authorities to hold online meetings.

9.3 Regulation 5(1) states that a meeting of a local authority is not limited to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place and any reference to a "place" where a meeting is held, or to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.



- 9.4 Regulation 5(5) states that the provision applies notwithstanding any prohibition or other restriction contained in the standing orders of the local authority and Regulation 5(6) allows a local authority to make other standing orders and other rules relating to the arrangements for and attendance at online meetings of the authority.
- 9.5 The online Committees will continue to be convened in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) where those arrangements remain unaffected by the new Regulations.
- 9.6 Sections 15-17 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 deal with the duty to allocate seats to political groups in accordance with the proportionality of the groups' representation on the Council. Section 17 allows an exemption to the proportionality requirement where no member of the Council dissents to disapplying the rule.
- 9.7 One important role of councillors is to ensure that there is adequate scrutiny of the Council's decisions. Whilst the reduction of the number of Committees arguably reduces the opportunity for the scrutiny of Council functions, greater transparency has been introduced around the Decision Book process to allow councillors to request items be reviewed.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no financial implications as a result of adopting these arrangements for holding online meetings. However, if there are costs that are incurred from the practical application of the arrangements, these costs will be reported as necessary.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 None

**Protocol for Online meetings of Adult Social Care, Children & Education Committee; Housing, Neighbourhood & Leisure Committee; Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee and the Personnel Committee**

**Introduction**

During the period where it is difficult for meetings to be held in person, Adult Social Care, Children & Education Committee; Housing, Neighbourhood & Leisure Committee; Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee and the Personnel Committee are to be reconvened as online meetings to carry out their important functions as described in Part 2 of the Council's Constitution.

**Membership**

It is proposed to retain the Committees' existing memberships in accordance with the Group appointments, which were agreed by Policy Committee on 27 May 2020. However, each online meeting of the three Standing Committees will normally be expected to consist of 10 of these members in order to make the meeting more manageable and will be based on the following proportionality: Labour 6; Conservatives 2; Greens 1; and Liberal Democrats 1. The Personnel Committee will continue to have five members. The nominated members of each Group to attend the online meetings are:

**Adult Social Care, Children & Education Committee (15)**

Labour (10)	Cllrs David Absolom, Challenger, Hoskin, Jones, Khan, McEwan, McKenna, Pearce, Sokale and Terry
Conservative (3)	Cllrs Ballsdon, Grashoff and Robinson
Green (1)	Cllr White
Lib Dem (1)	Cllr O'Connell

**Housing, Neighbourhood & Leisure Committee (16)**

Labour (10)	Cllrs Barnett-Ward, Davies, Ennis, Hacker, Hoskin, James, Leng, Lovelock, Rowland and R Williams
Conservative (4)	Cllrs Carnell, Grashoff, Manghnani and R Singh
Green (1)	Cllr McGonigle
Lib Dem (1)	Cllr O'Connell

**Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee (14)**

Labour (9)	Cllrs Debs Absolom, Ayub, Challenger, Eden, Emberson, Gittings, Maskell, Page and R Williams
Conservative (3)	Cllrs Carnell, Robinson and Stanford-Beale
Green (1)	Cllr McGonigle
Lib Dem (1)	Cllr Duveen

**Personnel Committee (5)**

Labour (4)	Cllrs Brock, Emberson, Lovelock and Page (or nominees)
Conservative (1)	Cllr Skeats (or nominee)

## **Quorum**

The quorum for these online meetings will be three members.

## **Attendance**

In order to make the online meetings more manageable the number of participants has been reviewed to keep officer attendance to a minimum and Committee members normally to no more than ten, while retaining representation from all political groups where possible.

The Leader of each political group is responsible for ensuring that the most relevant members attend the meeting.

- **Substitute members**

- (a) Where a nominated member cannot attend, the relevant Group Leader will be able to select another member of the full Committee to attend.
- (b) Where a Group has only one member of the Committee appointed in the current year (2020/21) and that member is unable to attend an online meeting, the relevant Group Leader will be entitled to nominate a substitute member from the Group.

## **Public Participation**

Members of the public will be able to follow the meeting 'live' in order to meet the legal requirement for meetings to be held 'in public'. Information will be published with the agenda on how to do this on the Council's website. They will also be permitted to participate in online meetings, usually via telephone, in accordance with the existing provisions within the Council's standing orders.

## **Councillor participation**

Councillors can participate in the Committee meetings eg by asking questions and speaking on agenda items in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules.

## **Voting**

In the event a vote is required at an online meeting, the Chair will ask each individual Councillor to declare whether they are for, against or abstaining orally. This will be done in order to achieve clarity to the decision-making process, as councillors will not all be visible during the voting process.

## **Declaring Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Councillors with a disclosable pecuniary interest must declare the existence of the interest and leave the meeting. This will be achieved by the member pausing or exiting the online meeting temporarily for the duration of the item of business in which they have the interest. Once the item of business has been dealt with, the Chair or Committee Administrator will invite the member to return to the meeting.

## **Exempt and Confidential Business**

Where a Committee passes a resolution to exclude the press and public from an item or items of business to consider exempt or confidential information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), this (Part 2) business will be conducted in a separate private online meeting. Before any councillor can take part in discussing exempt and/or confidential business they must confirm to the Chair that they are in a location where no person not entitled to be party to that information can hear or participate in the discussion/ decision in respect of the restricted business.

## **Management of meeting**

The success of the online meetings will depend on the ability of the participants to interact with each other via the system and the ability of the Chair to manage the meeting despite the unfamiliar setting.

The Chair will decide a practical protocol for management of the debate and decision-making - e.g. calling of speakers, self-introduction before speaking. Changes to this protocol can be implemented from time to time by the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services, in consultation with the Committee Chairs and Leader of the Council.