

# HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 10 MARCH 2021

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

Councillors Barnett-Ward, Carnell, Ennis, Grashoff, Hacker, Hoskin, James, Leng, Lovelock (Vice-Chair), McGonigle, O'Connell, Rowland, R Singh and R Williams

## 11. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2020

The Minutes of the meeting of 15 December 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

## 12. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meeting were submitted:

Community Safety Partnership - 12 November 2020.

**Resolved - That the Minutes be received.**

## 13. PETITIONS

No petitions had been submitted.

## 14. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

No questions had been submitted.

## 15. HOUSING UPDATE AND PROGRAMME OF WORKS TO COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK 2021/22

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which highlighted key achievements of the Housing Service over the over the past financial year and set out the work programme for the Council's housing stock for the next financial year. The following documents were appended to the report:

Appendix 1: Wards where programmes of work had been carried out in 20/21;

Appendix 2: Wards that were included in the programme for 21/22.

The report stated that over the past year, the achievements of the Service had included:

- Everyone In - the provision of accommodation and food for people rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping during the first lockdown;

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- The provision of additional accommodation for people who had previously been sleeping rough, plus a successful bid to MHCLG for £2.279m for the provision of 24-hour support to assist with rebuilding the lives of these vulnerable individuals;
- Maintaining the position where no homeless families were placed in shared Bed and Breakfast accommodation;
- Continued support and debt advice to tenants;
- Development and adoption of the Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategies which set out the Council's vision and priorities for the next five years;
- Works to provide additional accommodation via both conversions and new build;
- Start on site for the community centre as part of the Dee Park Regeneration;
- Refurbishment of properties including replacement of heating, water, windows and replacement and installation of fire alarm and sprinkler systems.

The report also updated the Committee on the results of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey which had been carried out during April and May 2020, which found that although satisfaction levels were still generally high, there had been a reduction some areas.

The report explained that Housing Property Services had a responsibility to ensure that the housing stock was well maintained in accordance with the Decent Homes Standard and that Council homes were safe and healthy places to live, including the improvement of the thermal efficiency of its stock in line with the Council's Climate Change ambitions ensuring homes could be heated efficiently and cost effectively, thus reducing their carbon footprint and reducing fuel poverty. The service also worked to improve the wider environment on housing estates to meet the needs and aspirations of both the Council and the tenants. Tables 1 and 2 attached to the report set out details of the works to be carried out and the associated costs.

### Resolved -

- (1) That the key achievements of the Housing Service in the past financial year and the planned programme of works to Council stock for 2021/22 be noted;
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Housing & Communities in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing be authorised to tender for and enter into all necessary contracts for individual schemes within the 21/22 work programme as set out in Tables 1 and 2 of the report, subject to sufficient funding being available in the approved Budget to meet the cost of the schemes.

## 16. ALLOCATIONS SCHEME CONSULTATION

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which set out the intention to review Reading Borough Council's Allocation Scheme, the proposed changes and the timetable for delivery and requested authorisation to consult

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on the proposals and details. The consultation summary and questions were attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that it was proposed that a public consultation be carried out on key policy decisions that supported the delivery of the themes of the Housing Strategy, within the following areas:

- **Sustainable Communities:** There were several mechanisms that were proposed to support this including improved tenant mobility, an improved offer for Key Workers and tenant behaviour sanctions;
- **Clear and Fair Allocations Scheme:** The proposals included a reduction in the number of bands for simplicity and a separate register for adapted homes.

The report also set out the proposed timetable for the consultation which would run from 15 March 2021 to 10 May 2021. It was proposed that a report on the consultation results and draft Allocations Scheme would then be submitted for approval during July or August 2021.

**Resolved -**

**That a public consultation, which took views of residents, customers and partners, to inform a review of the Reading Borough Council's Housing Allocations Scheme be approved.**

### **17. ROUGH SLEEPING UPDATE REPORT**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which provided a summary of responses and outcomes since the introduction of the Government's 'Everyone In' approach with regards to supporting those rough sleeping, or at risk of rough sleeping during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council's Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan for Reading was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that 264 individuals had been placed into emergency accommodation under 'Everyone In' between March - August 2020. Those placed had either been rough sleeping (verified bedded down) or had been assessed by homelessness teams as being at risk of rough sleeping. The report gave an update on progress that had been made in finding permanent accommodation for those individuals, and for others who had been identified as homeless from September 2020 onwards.

The report also explained that future plans focused on the delivery of accommodation and interventions including:

- Provision of additional accommodation in two locations, one of which would be female-only and would provide accommodation and support to women with multiple or complex needs. Both accommodation projects would have 24-hour intensive support provision to help the residents to rebuild their lives;

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- Provision of targeted substance misuse support from 2021 - 2023 via a dedicated team within Reading's drug and alcohol support service (CGL) to target those sleeping rough/at risk of sleeping rough with substance dependence;

### **Resolved:**

**That the actions taken during the Covid-19 pandemic for those found sleeping rough or at risk of rough sleeping in the Borough and the current plans to sustain the reduction in rough sleeping moving forward be noted.**

### **18. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which sought approval of the updated Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, which had not been refreshed since 2014. The draft Policy was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the Policy introduced a new procedure that the Anti-Social Behaviour Team would follow that had been designed to make the team's case management procedure more efficient and only tackle those cases in which genuine, significant and/or persistent anti-social behaviour (ASB) was occurring. The policy also set out the types of issues that were associated with clash of lifestyles and not considered to be ASB. The report also explained that the Policy did not include dealing with environmental ASB and noise nuisance outside of RBC Housing jurisdiction.

The new policy set out how the Anti-Social Behaviour Team would deal with ASB in Reading by:

- Taking effective action to deal with severe and/or persistent anti-social behaviour;
- Encouraging residents to report anti-social behaviour by promoting a victim focussed service;
- Setting realistic expectations in relation to what types of ASB the Team could deal with and the actions available to the Team;
- Providing support and advice to victims of anti-social behaviour;
- Ensuring a partnership approach was taken to tackle anti-social behaviour.

### **Resolved:**

**That the updated Anti-Social Behaviour Policy be approved.**

### **19. READING'S CULTURE AND HERITAGE STRATEGY UPDATE AND PRIORITIES FOR 2021-22**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that gave an update on the achievements of Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030, outlined the council's Culture Service response to the covid19 pandemic and set

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out the key areas of priority for 2021-22. The report noted in particular that the Culture Service had gained national recognition, having featured in the Local Government Association's case studies for good council practice in response to Covid-19.

The report explained that the cultural teams had changed the way they provided services through a variety of digital platforms offering much needed fun, educational, health and wellbeing content and advice remotely to the heart of the community. Reading Culture Live had been created to provide a platform for local cultural organisations to have a digital venue whilst everything was closed. This had proved very successful and officers were looking at how it could be further developed and used in the future. The report also gave an update on the services provided by Reading Museum, Libraries, the Hexagon, 21 South Street and Berkshire Records Office as well as the recently created Heritage Action Zones.

The report further explained that, due to the profound impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the cultural sector, officers proposed that a single-year plan of priorities be put forward based around the following key priorities:

**Strategic Priority One:** Enhance identity - being Reading/Made in Reading;  
**Strategic Priority Two:** Increase Opportunities through working together;  
**Strategic Priority Three:** Celebrate.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the achievements of Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030 delivered to date and the council's Culture Service response to Covid-19 be noted;
- (2) That the key areas of priority 2021-22 be agreed.

### 20. READING PLACE OF CULTURE YEAR 3 EVALUATION

Further to Minute 23 of the meeting held on 11 March 2020, the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which updated the Committee on the achievements from the third and final year of the Reading, Place of Culture project including the profound and ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the project and set out some indicative legacy plans.

The report explained that the project had continued to deliver against the three strands of activity and presented a summary of achievements that included:

- Age UK Berkshire and The Museum of English Rural Life had delivered a storytelling and reminiscence project for older people at risk of loneliness and social isolation to improve wellbeing.
- Alana House, Rahab and Reading Rep had delivered theatre for women at risk to enhance communication and conflict resolution skills.

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- Sport In Mind and Junction Dance had worked to use dance in the treatment, management and prevention of mental illness.
- Rosetta Life dance, music and spoken word project for long term conditions such as living with the effects of stroke, dementia or Parkinson's.
- Reading Rep, Jelly and other partners had delivered theatre for young people with SEND to develop confidence and independence, develop skills and decrease social isolation.
- Mustard Tree, Real Time and Cranbury College had delivered a creative employment project based around film for young people with SEND to build confidence and key skills.
- The Research programme, led by the University of Reading was an active research partnership between Whitley Community Development Association and local residents.
- Reading Culture Live (RCL) had been developed and delivered within eight weeks of the first national lockdown and had been designed to be a sister site to What's On Reading.
- The Reading Festivals' Group was a partnership organisation, representing 17 Reading based festivals, which aimed to create synergies in terms of best practice, sustainability, funding and support networks.
- The Culture and Business Engagement Strand, led by Reading UK, had commissioned a report to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on Reading's cultural sector.

The report also set out at paragraph 5 the draft legacy plan from Reading, Place of Culture which would be discussed and agreed with funders and subject to further consultation with partners and the wider ACH sector. The aim of the legacy plan was to continue to champion the role of culture in delivering against health and wellbeing, equality, diversity and inclusion outcomes and engage marginalised or hard-to-reach communities in arts, culture and/or heritage programmes. The main areas included:

- The Cultural Commissioning Programme
- The Research Programme
- Supporting the Sector Post-Covid 19
- Partnership

### Resolved:

- (1) That the achievements of the Reading, Place of Culture project delivered to date be noted;
- (2) That the legacy plans as set out in paragraph 5 of the report be agreed.

(The meeting closed at 7.55 pm)