

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

Direct: ☎ 0118 937 2368  
e-mail:  
julie.quarmby@reading.gov.uk

2 March 2021

Your contact is: **Julie Quarmby - Committee Services**

## **NOTICE OF MEETING - HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 10 MARCH 2021**

A meeting of the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee will be held on Wednesday, 10 March 2021 at 6.30 pm via Microsoft Teams. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

	<b><u>WARDS</u></b>	<b><u>Page No</u></b>
	<b><u>AFFECTED</u></b>	
<b>1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>		
Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the items for consideration.		
<b>2. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2020</b>		<b>5 - 14</b>
<b>3. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES</b>		<b>15 - 18</b>
Minutes of the Community Safety Partnership - 12 November 2020.		
<b>4. PETITIONS</b>		
Petitions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been received by Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.		

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**5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS**

Questions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been submitted in writing and received by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.

**6. DECISION BOOK REFERENCES**

To consider any requests received by the Monitoring Officer pursuant to Standing Order 42, for consideration of matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been subject of Decision Book reports.

**7. HOUSING UPDATE AND PROGRAMME OF WORKS TO COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK 2021/22** **BOROUGH WIDE** **19 - 40**

This report highlights key achievements of the Housing Service over the over the past financial year and sets out the work programme for the Council's housing stock for the next financial year

**8. ALLOCATIONS SCHEME CONSULTATION** **BOROUGH WIDE** **41 - 50**

This report lays out the intention to review Reading Borough Council's Allocation Scheme, the proposed changes, requests authorisation to consult on the proposals and details the timetable for delivery.

**9. ROUGH SLEEPING UPDATE REPORT** **BOROUGH WIDE** **51 - 64**

This report provides a summary of responses and outcomes since 'Everyone In' with regards to supporting those rough sleeping, or at risk of rough sleeping during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**10. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY** **BOROUGH WIDE** **65 - 86**

This report seeks approval of the updated Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

**11. READING'S CULTURE AND HERITAGE STRATEGY UPDATE AND PRIORITIES FOR 2021-22** **BOROUGH WIDE** **87 - 94**

This report updates the Committee on the achievements of Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030, outlines the Council's Culture Service response to the covid19 pandemic and outlines the key areas of priority for 2021-22.

**12. READING PLACE OF CULTURE YEAR 3 EVALUATION** **BOROUGH WIDE** **95 - 102**

This report is to update the Committee on the achievements from the third and final year of the Reading, Place of Culture project. It outlines the impact of covid19 on the project and sets out some indicative legacy plans.

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## HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 15 DECEMBER 2020

**Present:** Councillor Davies (Chair);  
Councillors Barnett-Ward, Ennis, Hoskin, Lovelock, McGonigle,  
Rowland and R Singh.

**Apologies:** Councillor O'Connell

### 1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of 11 March 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

### 2. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meeting were submitted:

Community Safety Partnership - 17 September 2020.

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

### 3. PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER NO 36

Gary Stocking-Williams presented a petition in the following terms:

#### Trade Waste Bins On Amity Road

Since the trade waste bins (belonging to up to 4 London Road shops) appeared on Amity Road they have been a magnet for fly tipping. They often look disgusting with black bags on the road and pavement. In the recent past there were no bins on the road or pavement and there was far less fly tipping. Please work with the businesses to get the trade waste bins back onto private land.

**RESPONSE** by Councillor Barnett-Ward (Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods):

Thank you for your question and for the petition.

The Council takes every report it receives about littering and fly-tipping seriously and is committed to reducing the instance of environmental crime and taking robust enforcement action against those who blight local communities in this way. This is clearly demonstrated by the creation of the Recycling and Enforcement Team who, despite Covid restrictions, have issued over 350 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN's) for dumped waste and secured 17 successful prosecutions since its formation in November 2019.

Officers from the team monitor the area around the Amity Road trade waste bins on a regular basis and 7 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN's ) have been issued to those who we found to be responsible. Officers have also been in regular contact with the businesses to remind them of their legal duty of care to manage their waste responsibly, to ensure that they are aware that all waste must be contained within the bins, and that any waste that is found around the bins will be investigated as fly tipping. To try and deter fly tippers 'No Flytipping' signs which display the maximum penalty for such offences

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have been put up and further information signs are currently being designed which will re-enforce the message.

The location and layout of the properties and the space available limits the options for storing these trade waste bins, which have been in situ for several years. There are many factors that have been considered regarding siting the bins elsewhere, including:

- Many shops are food premises, so a sack collection would not be appropriate for these businesses;
- Some businesses do not have rear access, which means they do not have any land to place the bins on;
- The current use of private land to the rear of the shops including the alleyway and the condition of the surfaces, and their suitability for collection crews to move heavy 1100l bins over safely;
- Collections from flats and residential properties;
- Proximity of businesses to the Highway on London Road.

Officers will carry out further work to try to identify alternative siting options, which will need to be practical for businesses as well as the local community. We hope to complete the further assessment and contact the lead petitioner by the end of January with our valuation.

#### **4. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS**

Questions on the following matters were submitted:

<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
Tommy Johnson	Scours Lane Allotments	Cllr Rowland
Councillor McGonigle	Bird Feeding, Kennetside	Cllr Rowland

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

#### **5. READING ANNIVERSARY PLANS**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report advising the Committee on the plans to mark 2021, a year of culturally significant anniversaries in Reading. 2021 would mark the 900th anniversary of the founding of Reading Abbey as well as the 250th anniversary of the Thames Conservancy, 150 years of Reading Football Club, 75 years of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, 70 years of Museum of English Rural Life, 50 years of Reading Festival and 30 years of the Rising Sun Arts Centre. The Council and these organisations had been working together to develop a programme of activity during 2021 to celebrate these special milestones.

The report explained that the proposed programme had a strong digital presence, with the expectation of some live events. Whilst a purely digital offer could be delivered, this would limit the reach and opportunity for celebrating these special anniversaries.

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Instead it was proposed to plan for a blend of both digital and live, with digital being the fall-back position in the event that Covid19 restrictions prevented live events.

One of the highlight events would be the celebration of the 900th anniversary of the founding of Reading Abbey, planned for Saturday 19 June 2021, in Forbury Gardens, Abbey Ruins and along the Kennet in the town centre. Water Fest would take place the same day and would showcase the significance of the Kennet and Avon Canal in Reading. All plans for Saturday 19 June would also need to be sensitive to any commemorative events to mark the anniversary of the attack in Forbury gardens taking place on the Sunday and would be foremost in the minds of everyone in the shaping of this day.

The report also explained that Museums Partnership Reading (MPR) were planning an exhibition, provisionally titled '1971' that would display historic photography of the first Reading Festival, alongside material from both Reading Museum and the Museum of English Rural Life exploring life in 1971. The Museum of English Rural Life, with support from the Arts Council Cultural Recovery Fund, was planning to mark its 70th year through 51 Voices, a digital project that would draw on its Festival of Britain and other collections from 1951. In May 2021m Berkshire Record Office planned to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Thames Conservancy with an online exhibition of its archive, which was of national importance.

In addition, the Hexagon's resident orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra were planning both digital and live performances throughout the year to mark their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Reading Football Club were planning various activities and events, including a dedicated microsite, to mark their 150<sup>th</sup> season.

**Resolved -**

**That the plans set out to celebrate the various anniversaries being celebrated in 2021 be noted.**

**6. HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE PROGRAMME 2020 - 2024 UPDATE REPORT**

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report updating the Committee on the High Street Heritage Action Zones (HSHAZ) scheme, a regeneration initiative led by Historic England, working with local councils and the community to create economic growth and improve the appearance and quality of life in historic high streets. Reading had secured HSHAZ status for three conservation areas in the centre of the town and would receive up to £806,500 from Historic England, with match funding of £808,500. The Council had entered into a contract with Historic England to run the programme from 1 April 2020.

The report added that the HSHAZ programme was focused on three Conservation Areas (Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road, St Mary's Butts/Castle Street, Market Place/London Street) and had the following objectives:

- To enhance the understanding of Reading's heritage by revealing its hidden histories and to give the community a sense of pride and ownership in their town.

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- To improve the physical condition and viability of the high streets within the three conservation areas by identifying those properties most at risk and engaging with property owners to help them to restore the buildings, to show them how to maintain the buildings and to share best practice.
- To develop a comprehensive strategy to improve the public realm across the HSHAZ to provide a better experience and sense of place for those living, working in or visiting the town centre.
- To support local businesses, the economy and local community and cultural initiatives by creating a positive sense of place through contributing to the heritage of their high street.

The programme aimed to deliver across three strands: physical interventions, community engagement and a cultural programme.

The report also set out the next steps for the next six months which included reviewing and refining the conservation plans and to submitting them for consultation, engaging with key internal and external partners, and commenting on planning applications submitted within the HSHAZ areas. Other important milestones included producing a community engagement plan and delivering the activities of the cultural pilot project from October 2020 to the end of February 2021, including an evaluation report.

**Resolved -**

**That the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) Programme update, aims and objectives, the plans to deliver the HSHAZ programme over the next four years and key milestones over the next six months be noted.**

## **7. ALLOTMENTS CONSULTATION REPORT AND NEXT STEPS**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which gave an update on a recent consultation with allotment holders within Reading, set out next steps and proposals for the future management of allotment sites.

The report explained that the Council was undertaking a review of the current allotment management and charging model in order to achieve an agreed budget saving to support the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). However, the Council was conscious that significant rent increases might impact badly on some tenants who relied on the food that they grew on their plots and for whose physical and mental wellbeing allotments gardening was important, and had therefore been considering ways to reduce costs without further significant increases to those managing an allotment.

The report explained that over the past few years, the Council had been approached by allotments tenants looking for more say in the management of sites, faster turn-around times in letting vacant plots, and different ways of delivering a range of allotments services. A consultation with all tenants had been undertaken between 17 August 2020 and 17 September 2020 to gauge tenants' interest in and ability to form site associations that could take on aspects of self-management, specifically including site management, some grounds maintenance and waste management. A total of 452 responses or contacts had been received.

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Section 6 of the report set out proposals for the next steps which included:

- Starting work with representatives on the seven sites that were interested in self-management focusing identifying untended plots, resolving whether these were available for re-letting, and issuing offers. Site representatives to notify the Council about which plots required notification to plot holders about overgrown plots and meet prospective new tenants to show them the plot and hand out keys once a contract has been exchanged. The Council to retain administrative and invoicing functions. Learning outcomes from these seven sites would be recorded and used to inform the revised Allotments Plan reported below.
- Groups like Food4Families and horticultural societies to be engaged to support tenant groups that wished to take on management and/or maintenance tasks.
- The Council to start immediately on a programme of clearances of unkempt plots as well as other winter works, with these seven sites as a priority. Additionally, the Council would make bids for funding, if available, to make good site infrastructure on those sites working towards self-management, including fence replacement and road repairs.
- Regular reports on occupancy ratios and re-letting turnover to be published on a new allotments page on the website, demonstrating the improvements that were possible with very limited tenant involvement.
- Information about self-management schemes and other issues of interest to allotment holders would also be published on the website.
- The Council to apply electronic payments and communication for all hired services to allotment rental payments from January 2021, making allowances for those tenants unable to make electronic payments.
- Fees, charges and concessions to be reviewed and a new structure agreed for implementation in January 2022.
- The Council to draft a revised Allotments Plan during 2021-22, setting out the longer-term objectives for the service, then circulate it for wider consultation with tenants and elected Members. The Council would also seek additional personnel for engagement with allotment tenants during the period during when the Allotments Plan was being drawn up and consulted on.
- The Allotments Plan would be presented to a future meeting of the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee to allow time to notify tenants of any material changes to be applied when leases were renewed in January 2022.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the report and the findings of the consultation of tenants be noted;**
- (2) That the next steps as shown in Section 6 of the report be noted;**
- (3) That an updated Allotments Plan be created, be subject to public consultation and be reported for approval to a future meeting of the Committee;**

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- (4) That an annual Allotment Plan progress report be submitted to the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee at its Autumn meeting in 2021.

**8. REWILDING AND THE WILDFLOWER PLAN. INCREASING BIODIVERSITY ON HIGHWAY VERGES**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which gave further details of the operational changes involved in the re-wilding project, updated members on the results of the experiment and the recommended next steps contained in the draft Wildflower Plan. The following documents were appended to the report:

Appendix 1 - Site re-wilding information signs used during the experiment;  
Appendix 2 - The Wildflower Plan.

The report explained that the rewilding project, which sat within the framework of the Council's new Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), began in March 2020. The project involved testing what different verges in different parts of Reading looked like over the course of the flowering and seed-setting seasons, how residents responded to changes in the mowing regime, how to carry out practical maintenance issues and whether there were ecological improvements coincident with changes to mowing patterns.

The results of the site-by-site assessment of Phase 1 were set out in detail in the Wildflower Plan and showed that the scheme had also been a success in terms of the maintenance regime.

The report also explained that the review had led to the creation of the Wildflower Plan, which captured the results of the rewilding experiment and made recommendations for achieving the expansion and improvement of the rewilded areas in the Borough, as summarised below:

- Rewilding of larger verges to continue.
- The maintenance regime to be changed from an annual cut-and-collect on some rewilded sites to a three-times-a-season cut-and-collect in order to assess the effect on biodiversity and the vigour of both flowers and grass.
- Some sites to be sown with locally sourced wildflowers and cut only at the end of the season to allow establishment.
- Marginal rewilding (changing the mowing regime around parks boundaries and margins) be trialled at twelve locations in parks, adding around 2ha (5%) to the current area of conservation grassland. These would be assessed on the basis of biological performance, appearance and difficulty of management at the end of the season.
- The Council to continue the public information and consultation started in 2020.
- The Council to work with business partners to create enhanced-flowering, wild-looking commercial centre schemes that would raise the profile of the rewilding initiatives and contribute to refocusing perceptions of Reading as a 'green/wild city'.

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**Resolved:**

- (1) That the report and the progress of the Rewilding experimental project in 2020 be noted;**
- (2) That the recommendations of the Wildflower Plan be endorsed;**
- (3) That the Wildflower Plan be subject to public consultation and its adoption be sought at a subsequent Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee meeting;**
- (4) That an annual rewilding progress report be submitted to Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee at its Autumn meeting.**

**9. FOOD WASTE AND 140L BIN PROJECT - EARLY ADOPTERS AND PROJECT UPDATE**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the progress of the kerbside food waste collections in the five early adopter areas and on the main Phase 1 roll-out planned for 1 February 2021. The following documents were attached to the report:

Appendix 1 - Project overview including the early adopter areas.

Appendix 2 - Data collected before and since the early adopter roll-out including the number of customer contacts and complaints received.

The report explained that the original roll-out timetable had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and set out the revised timetable:

- Early adopter areas service (3,300) properties began on 5 October 2020.
- Phase 1 service to 59,000 properties due to begin on 1 February 2021. Phase 2 service to 14,000 high level flats due to begin later in 2021 once Phase 1 had been successfully implemented.

The report added that a total of 3300 early adopter properties had received the new service from 5 October 2020. The early adopters project was critical to the success of the full roll out and the areas had been chosen because they were operationally challenging, including various property types as well as a control area. In general, the roll-out to the early adopters had been a success with the tonnage of food waste far exceeding the predicted weight of 1kg/household/week. There had also been a number of learning outcomes which would be taken forward into the main roll out. There had been concerns over the smaller general waste bins, and officers stressed that where residents had a higher volume of general waste (eg disposable nappies or larger households), they could contact the Council who would work with them to carry out a bin audit and identify a solution where appropriate.

The report also explained that work for the main roll-out in February 2021 was on schedule. The new recycling, waste and food rounds were currently being finalised and the collection calendars for 2021/22 produced for distribution during week commencing 7 December 2020. The project was supported by a communications plan which included the following elements:

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- Printed information leaflets for all property types on delivery of the new bins.
- Articles in the residents' newsletter in November.
- Printed waste collection calendars posted with information to every property.
- Updated livery for food waste collection and waste vehicles.
- Digital screen content and use of bus interior screens.
- Short 'how to' films on web and social media.
- Direct resident e mails and social media promotion.
- Use of apps such as Nextdoor.
- Council buildings and notice boards.
- Communication activity will increase ahead of the main roll-out launch in February.

**Resolved:**

**That the progress made on the food waste project and the timetable for the full roll out of the service in 2021 be noted.**

**10. FIRE SAFETY IN TALL BUILDINGS**

Further to Minute 16 of the meeting held on 6 November 2019, the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which provided an update on the Council's response following the Grenfell Tower fire in Kensington on 14 June 2017. This included action taken in relation to the Authority's own housing stock, other corporate buildings and schools, as well as wider work in partnership with the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) in respect of privately-owned high rise residential blocks within the Borough boundaries.

The report also set out the current position with regard to the work being undertaken to meet the requirements set out in the action plan in the Council's Housing stock, corporate buildings and schools. This included retro-fitting sprinkler systems, installing and upgrading fire alarms, fire risk assessments, ensuring fire safety was at the heart of the process for all Local Authority new-builds and bringing forward plans for the removal and replacement of cladding on Coley high rise to 2021/22.

The report updated the Committee on the progress that had been made on the four high-rise buildings:

- **St. Lawrence House** (social housing accommodation). Work to remove and replace the ACM cladding had been completed at the end of 2019.
- **Queen's Court** (student accommodation). Work to remove and replace the ACM cladding had been completed in March 2020.
- **Hanover House** (private residential accommodation). Interim measures were in place in accordance with the current MHCLG guidance and were monitored regularly. Planning permission had been agreed in October 2020 and a Building Regulations application had been made for removal and replacement of the cladding.
- **Crossway Point** (social housing accommodation). Work to remove and replace the ACM cladding had been delayed due to COVID-19 and remediation work was due to be finished in December 2020.

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The report also detailed the actions that Council and its partners were planning to undertake going forward:

- The Council would continue to undertake steps to obtain external wall details of all applicable buildings in response to the request from MHCLG in order to submit the required data by the extended deadline.
- The Council would keep up to date with the latest Government guidance and take action where appropriate.
- Regular communication and sharing of information between the Council and RBFRS, plus joint meetings with relevant stakeholders where required.

**Resolved: That the action taken and planned in respect of fire safety in tall buildings, as detailed in the report, be noted.**

(The meeting opened at 6.35pm and closed at 8.10pm).

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# Agenda Item 3

## COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP - 12 NOVEMBER 2020

### Present:

Nick John	Thames Valley Police (Chair)
Cllr Jason Brock	Leader, RBC
Cllr Tony Page	Deputy Leader, RBC
Cllr Adele Barnett-Ward (Chair)	Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods and Communities
Cllr Raj Singh	Observer, RBC
Anthony Brain	Community Safety Manager, RBC
Kelly Reed	Thames Valley Police, Victim Reduction Unit
Zelda Wolfe	Assistant Director of Housing & Communities, RBC
Catherine Marriott	Office of the PCC
Jo Middlemass	Anti-Social Behaviour Team Manager, RBC
Vicky Rhodes	Strategic Lead for Early Help, Brighter Futures for Children
Joanne Anderson	Reading Borough Council
Jeanie Herbert	PACT
Nicola Bell	Manager, Willow Project
Lou Everatt	Thames Valley CRC
Julie Quarmby	Committee Services, RBC

### Apologies:

Seona Douglas	Executive Director of Social Care and Health, RBC
David Munday	Consultant in Public Health, RBC
Dave Turton	Thames Valley Police
Kathryn Warner	PACT
Natausha VanVliet	PACT
Melanie Smith	Probation Service
Giles Allchurch	Brighter Futures for Children
Deborah Glassbrook	Director of Children's Services Brighter Futures for Children
Ash Smith	Thames Valley Police
Chris Juden	Reading Magistrates
Donna Gray	Safeguarding Children, Brighter Futures for Children
Sally Anderson	Senior Wellbeing Commissioning Manager for Drugs & Alcohol, RBC
Jen Grant	Thames Valley CRC

### 1. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

Further to Minute 2, Anthony Brain reported that the Hospital Navigators project had been added to the Action Plan. Kelly Reed added that the first meeting with staff at the Royal Berkshire Hospital had gone well. The Reading model would include social workers from Adult Services and Brighter Futures for Children. Further communications would be sent out later in the year and it was anticipated that regular update reports would be submitted to the Group.

Further to Minute 5, Anthony Brain reported that an update report on Prevent would be submitted to the meeting on 4 February 2021.

## 2. OXFORD ROAD UPDATE

Nick John, Thames Valley Police, gave an update on the work that was being carried out to address crime and disorder along the Oxford Road. Thames Valley Police had planned to issue a survey to residents but had decided to delay the launch whilst a multi-agency approach was put in place. He suggested that the best approach would be to form task and finish group for the thematic leads, which would feed into the Community Safety Partnership via an overarching strategic group. The Group discussed the update and the following points were raised:

- It would be important to identify stakeholders and ensure strong engagement using clear communication plans;
- Partner agencies had already carried out significant amounts of work in this area, and this could be shared to avoid duplication where possible;
- The latest survey by the Oxford Road Safer Neighbourhood Forum had been carried out during November 2019;
- Agencies would need to be clear about what could be delivered, to reduce unrealistic expectations within the community.

### AGREED:

- (1) That the update be noted;
- (2) Nick John to circulate the briefing note prepared by Thames Valley Police to Group members for comments by 27 November 2020;
- (3) Kelly Reed to circulate the questions set out in the Thames Valley police Survey to the group;
- (4) A further report to be submitted to the next meeting on 4 February 2021.

## 3. PRIORITY SUB-GROUP ACTION PLANS

Anthony Brain, Community Safety Manager, RBC, reported that the Chairs group for the three strands had met with partner agencies and agreed plans for the next two quarters. These would have an emphasis on Prepare and Prevent, as Thames Valley police had carried out much of the Pursue element during lockdown. The actions included:

- Ten training events on the current position regarding Modern Slavery to be held before the end of March 2021 to include the wider partnership, voluntary sector and businesses.
- Two first responder events to be organised before the end of March 2021 to raise awareness of the roles played by Reading Borough Council and Thames Valley Police.
- A group had been set up to train staff to identify commonalities in people vulnerable to violent crime, Class A drugs and modern slavery.
- Production of communications on violent crime that gave communities a clear message whilst not increasing fear of crime, but which also did not make violent crime seem appealing to young people.
- A Drugs Related Deaths group would be set up by the end of November 2020, and a further report would be submitted in April 2021.

Anthony Brain explained that partnership working was improving intelligence across all three areas. Thames Valley Police had considerable data on violent crime and were looking at how this could be effectively reported and used to allocate resources. Vicky Rhodes reported that Kirsten Carr, from the Early Years Team, BFfC, would like to attend a future meeting of the Group to formalise the route by which the Young Persons Serious Violence Plan fed into the Community Safety Partnership.

**AGREED:** That the report be noted.

#### **4. CRIME PERFORMANCE**

Anthony Brain submitted the crime performance report as at the end of September 2020. He reported that there had continued to be an increase in crime although Reading was still about average in the Most Similar Group of Community Safety Partnerships.

For all British Crime Survey crimes there had been a 12% decrease compared to the same period last year, with Reading's performance remaining average for the Most Similar Group of CSPs (MSG). Burglary remained average within the MSG. There had been a decrease in violent crime during September 2020, which was probably due to work by Thames Valley Police over the summer, but it was not clear if this would be sustainable going forward. The Group noted that it would be helpful if there was some explanatory commentary with the crime figures.

Anthony also reported that the recent initiatives to tackle cycles crime in reading had been successful, and that there had been a number of arrests made. The number of cycle thefts had fallen since the end of August 2020, but remained high compared to the MSG. Councillor page reported that the Council was still waiting to hear if it had been successful in a bid for Government funding that could be used to improve cycle security and increase cycling within the Brough. Suggested initiatives included using vacant shops within the town centre to store and repair bikes.

**AGREED:**

- (1) That the position be noted.
- (2) Anthony Brain to circulate the full figures for cycle crime to the Group and add them to the crime figures for future meetings.

#### **5. OPCC UPDATE**

Catherine Marriot, OPCC, reported that there would be a meeting of Community Safety Managers on Thursday 19 November 2020.

Catherine also reported that she was about to start a strategic level review of the Community Safety Partnerships and that she would be inviting two or three representatives from each CSP to informal meetings. She added that Reading would be one of the later CSPs to be reviewed.

**AGREED:** That the position be noted.

#### **6. OTHER BUSINESS**

Anthony Brain reported that this would be his last meeting of the Community Safety Partnership. The Group thanked him for his hard work and dedication and wished him all the best for the future.

**AGREED:** That the position be noted.

#### **DATES OF FUTURE MEETING**

Future meetings for 2020/21 would take place on:  
Thursday 4 February 2021;  
Thursday 22 April 2021.

All meetings start at 9.30am, venue to be confirmed.

(The meeting commenced at 9.35 am and closed at 10.40 am)

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

<b>TO:</b>	<b>HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS &amp; LEISURE COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>10 MARCH 2021</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>HOUSING UPDATE AND PROGRAMME OF WORKS TO COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK 2021/2022</b>		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	<b>CLLR JOHN ENNIS</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	<b>HOUSING</b>
<b>SERVICE:</b>	<b>HOUSING</b>	<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>ZELDA WOLFLE</b>	<b>TEL:</b>	<b>0118 937 2285</b>
<b>JOB TITLE:</b>	<b>ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF HOUSING &amp; COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>E-MAIL:</b>	<b>Zelda.wolfle@reading.gov.uk</b>

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

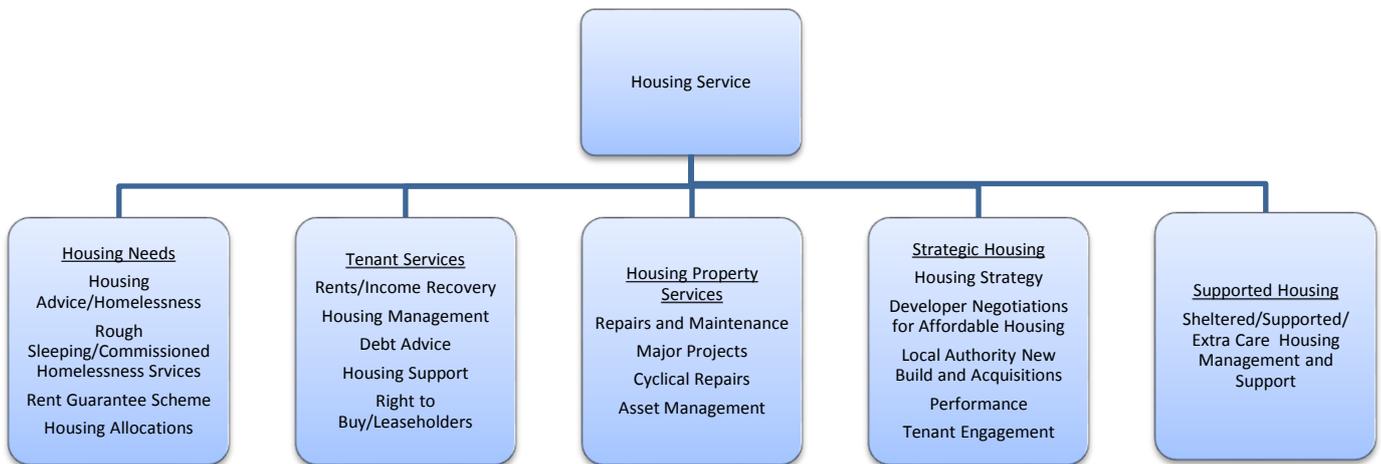
- 1.1 The Council' Housing Strategy was adopted by Policy Committee in September this year. The vision for the strategy is "For all our residents to have the opportunity to live in a good quality sustainable home they can afford within a thriving neighbourhood." Key to this is the supply of accommodation, the quality of accommodation and neighbourhoods and support to residents.
- 1.2 This report highlights key achievements of the Housing Service over the over the past financial year in line with this vision and sets out the work programme for the Council's housing stock for the next financial year.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

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

### 3. HOUSING SERVICE RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The Housing Service comprises of Housing Needs, Tenant Services, Housing Property Services, Strategic Housing and Supported Housing. The service works closely with the Anti-Social Behaviour Team to deal with issues arising within Council estate neighbourhoods and with the Property Development Team to deliver the Council’s local authority new build programme.



3.2 The last year has been challenging for the Housing Service as it has for services across the Council. Despite this, the teams have adapted their working processes and continued to maintain services for residents to ensure that the most vulnerable are taken care of.

### 4. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2020/21

4.1 Throughout the course of the pandemic staff across the service took on different roles to assist our residents, from delivery drivers to provide meals for those who had been sleeping on the streets, manning phones to contact 3000 of our most vulnerable tenants to check on their welfare, working in the One Reading Hub or working alongside the police and providing support to residents in the wake of the tragic Forbury Gardens attack .

4.2 In addition there have been key achievements across the service despite the challenges of the pandemic and the difficulties arising with lockdowns, shielding, furloughing of contractor’s operatives and restricted access to occupied dwellings.

4.3 Key Achievements 2020/21 include:

- Everyone In - the provision of accommodation and food for 264 people who were found rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping during the first lockdown. The service acted at speed to find properties to provide safe and appropriate shelter for some of the most vulnerable people in our town.
- The provision of a new 10 bed women’s project and the progression of the development of 40 modular homes (due to complete April/May) for people who had previously been sleeping rough. Coupled with this was the successful bid to MHCLG for 2.279 million for

the provision of 24-hour support to assist with rebuilding the lives of these vulnerable individuals.

- No homeless children had to spend Christmas in shared Bed and Breakfast as we maintained the position where no homeless families were placed in shared Bed and Breakfast accommodation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year running.
- Continued support and debt advice to our tenants ensured that we maintained rent collection levels of over 97.5 % despite the increasing financial pressure on our residents as a result of the pandemic.
- Development and adoption of the Council’s Housing and Homelessness Strategies which set out our vision and priorities for the next 5 years. These include our commitment and plan of action in tackling the housing crisis, responding to climate change and building on our strong partnership approach to dealing with the continued issues of rough sleeping.
- Start on site for phase 2 and 3 of the local authority new build programme that will deliver 124 homes over the next 2 years. These include:

Scheme Name	Ward	Number of Homes	Completion Year
George Street	Battle	4	2021
Norcot Community Centre	Kentwood	18	2021
Arthur Hill	Park	15	2022
North Street	Abbey	41	2022
Wensley Road	Minster	46	2022

- Start on site for the long-awaited community centre as part of the Dee Park Regeneration. The community centre will provide a Childrens Centre, midwifery services, a pre-school facility and community activities.
- Conversion of 6 unused spaces within blocks of council flats to create 6 new homes.
- Refurbishment of the fifth and final block of flats as part of the Hexham Road project providing improved fire safety measures, new exteriors, and new kitchens and bathrooms.
- More than 300 gas central heating systems have been updated with energy efficient condensing boilers and controls, helping to tackle fuel poverty and improving the thermal comfort of homes. Moving forward we will be investing in more carbon neutral heating systems in line with our climate change ambitions.
- Replacement of the water distribution system and the installation of a new fire alarm system and sprinkler system at the flats on the Wensley Road estate. This will significantly reduce the incidents of leaks within the flats and further enhance fire safety provisions.
- Replacement of windows to Wates flats in Southcote, Tilehurst and Caversham, improving the thermal comfort of 223 homes.
- The installation of a sprinkler system to Wates flats (despite delays due to Covid) anticipated to complete this financial year, 2020/21.

## 5. TENANT SATISFACTION

- 5.1 A tenant satisfaction survey was carried out in April and May this year which showed mixed results. The survey was carried out independently and the full results are shown below. Overall satisfaction remained about the same slightly increased from 80% to 81%, staff being pleasant and polite rose from 90% to 95% and 80% of tenants are passive or promoters of the service (i.e. not detractors).
- 5.2 This aside however there are falls in satisfaction in relation to repairs and maintenance, quality of homes, satisfaction with neighbourhoods and in making views known. The survey took place during the first lockdown when services were scaled back, and this may have influenced the results. Further analysis of the results shows that the fall in satisfaction is more noticeable in households under the age of 35. Further work is being done to understand this including the commissioning of a number of independent digital focus groups with tenants. In addition, the service is exploring opportunities to adapt in terms of modernising its communication methods and improving the housing stock and the built environments of the estates. New improved specifications for voids, kitchens and bathrooms are being introduced for the 21/22 programme of works.
- 5.3 Satisfaction with the way anti-social behaviour is dealt with has traditionally been low and has fallen again this year. The picture in this area is complex, previous focus groups and tenant scrutiny reviews have surfaced the fact that there is a disconnect between how tenants think the service should respond to anti-social behaviour and what is required legally to evict perpetrators. This is further complicated by criminal issues that are the responsibility of the police as opposed to the service.
- 5.4 Anti-social behaviour is a blight on our communities and has a significant effect on the lives of those that are affected, it is a priority for the service working in partnership with the police to improve outcomes for those who are impacted. Further resources will be invested in this area in the coming year to tackle the issues. In addition, there are two linked reports on the agenda; the Allocations Scheme Consultation and the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy which seek to address some of the issues.

### 5.5 Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2020

Key Findings (NOTE- not all changes shown below are statistically significant but are shown for completeness)	2018	2020	Change ('18 to '20)
Overall satisfaction has increased slightly 2016	80%	81%	→
Satisfaction with the quality of homes has reduced	83%	77%	↓
RBC Housing Service provides a home that is safe and secure	NA	86%	
Satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live has decreased	85%	73%	↓
Satisfaction with rent as value for money has decreased slightly	84%	82%	→

Satisfaction with service charges as value for money has decreased	70%	<b>65%</b>	↓
Satisfaction with repairs and maintenance has decreased	81%	<b>74%</b>	↓
Satisfaction listening and acting on views is about the same	71%	<b>69%</b>	→
Satisfaction with the opportunity to make views known has decreased	81%	<b>64%</b>	↓
Keeping informed - satisfaction has decreased slightly	86%	<b>82%</b>	↓
A slight decrease in satisfaction that RBC Housing Services treats tenants fairly	84%	<b>81%</b>	↓
RBC Housing Service is easy to deal with	NA	<b>75%</b>	
An increase in satisfaction with staff being pleasant and polite	90%	<b>95%</b>	↑
The majority of respondents would be promoters or passive - slightly higher than in 2018	78%	<b>80%</b>	↑
A reduction in those that were satisfied with the way ASB is dealt with (those aware of ASB only)	31%	<b>23%</b>	↓
Majority were satisfied with the way in which enquiries are dealt with generally	84%	<b>83%</b>	→
Satisfaction with transfers and exchanges has increased (those who have transferred or exchanged only)	66%	<b>68%</b>	↑
View that RBC Housing Services has stayed the same or improved has increased slightly	86%	<b>87%</b>	→

## 6.0 PROGRAMME OF WORKS 2021/22

- 6.1 Reading Borough Council's Housing Property Services manages the day to day repairs, planned maintenance, cyclical repairs and void works to approximately 5,785 Council homes.
- 6.2 Housing Property Services has a responsibility to ensure that the housing stock is well maintained in accordance with the Decent Homes Standard and that Council homes are safe and healthy places to live.
- 6.3 In addition the service continues to pursue a programme to improve the thermal efficiency of its stock in line with the Council's Climate Change ambitions ensuring homes can be heated efficiently and cost effectively, thus reducing their carbon footprint and reducing fuel poverty.

- 6.4 Beyond bricks and mortar the service also works to improve the wider environment on housing estates to meet the needs and aspirations of both the Council and the tenants.
- 6.5 Repairs and maintenance of the stock are delivered predominantly by an in-house workforce. Some works are sub-contracted using measured term contracts to allow for fluctuations in volumes, specialist work or where it is more cost effective to do so. Appendix 1 provides details of the wards where programmes of work were done in 20/21. Appendix 2 shows the wards that are included in the programme for 21/22.
- 6.6 Table 1 below summarises the budgets associated with the different elements of the programme along with details of the various schemes identified.
- 6.7 Table 2 below summarises the General Fund proposed work to Temporary Accommodation and garages for 21/22.

## **7. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 7.1 The breadth of work of the Housing Service contributes to the following service priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan:
- Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable; and
  - Providing homes for those in most need.
- 7.2 New heating systems, insulation, new windows and doors contribute to the sustainability of the housing stock, helping to develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley and promoting equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all.

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 On the 26th of February 2019 the Council declared a Climate Emergency and resolved to act to accelerate a carbon neutral Reading to 2030. Reading Climate Change Partnership's Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 and the new RBC corporate Carbon Plan 2020-25 were adopted in November 2020.
- 8.2 The programme of works to Council homes looks to improve the energy efficiency and the insulation of properties wherever possible:
- Improving window replacements from double to triple glazing.
  - Investigating and trialling of low carbon and alternative heating systems, the results of which will help to shape the approach to retrofitting homes to reduce carbon emissions
- 8.3 The average SAP rating, measure of energy efficiency, of the Council's housing stock is currently 74.14 placing Reading in the top quartile when compared to our peer group.
- 8.4 With a successful application to the Green Homes Grant Fund the service will be installing air source heat pumps to a number of properties in Granville Road and installing external wall insulation and new windows to properties in Norcot.
- 8.5 The service is working on a net zero carbon plan with the intention of retrofitting homes to meet our climate change ambitions. Retro-fitting Reading's housing stock to align with the 'net zero by 2030' ambition will be a huge challenge requiring resources beyond what is available to us locally. We therefore continue to lobby Government to make a sustained financial commitment of sufficient scale to support us in addressing this challenge.

- 8.6 Our local authority new build programmes play a key role in achieving net zero carbon. In addition, the scheme at Wensley Road will be built to Passivhaus principles. The application of the fabric first approach of Passivhaus reduces greenhouse gas emissions and will deliver significant long-term energy savings to the tenants. The low running costs and higher quality building mean that costs are significantly reduced over the life of the building for the occupiers.
- 8.7 Studies undertaken by the Passivhaus House Trust indicate that buildings can achieve up to a 75% reduction in space heating requirements and costs, compared to standard UK new build.
- 8.8 The use of sustainable material will play an important role in the design. This, combined with the high quality of building physics achieved through insulation, thermal bridge-free design and airtightness ensures that the sustainable benefits of Passivhaus principles will last.

## **9. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 9.1 The Housing Service has an engagement approach that enables consultation with tenants on a range of issues and through a range of means including, surveys, focus groups, a tenant scrutiny panel and formal consultation, the results of which drive service improvement. Tenant involvement and feedback has driven changes to specifications on kitchens, bathrooms and flooring for next year.
- 9.2 Consultation events were run in relation to the design and layout of new homes on the Wensley Road estate. Phase 2 works have also been consulted on.
- 9.3 With all repairs and maintenance, we look to provide an efficient value for money service and recognise this can only be achieved by engaging with tenants, this is crucial when it comes to getting it right first time. Wherever possible tenants are given choices in the use of materials and colours.
- 9.4 When upgrading kitchens there is a design process, the customer is involved to ensure the layout and space allows for white goods. Within the range of kitchen units, worktops and tiles the tenant is offered choice of colour.
- 9.5 When upgrading our Crosswall properties we will consult with residents regarding the elevational treatment of the structure.
- 9.6 On our larger refurbishment schemes tenants are invited to evaluate the tender submissions.

## **10. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 10.1 There is no requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment for the purposes of this report

## **11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The 2006 Decent Homes Standard is a government-set standard for council housing. The standard describes a Decent Home as one that is fit to live in, in a reasonable state of repair, having reasonably modern facilities and services, and being insulated to a reasonable standard and weatherproof. The standard was updated in 2006 to include the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

- 11.2 In addition, work outlined in this report is covered by the following legislation:
- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985
  - Housing Act 2004
  - Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994
  - Defective Premises Act 1972
  - Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act 2002
  - Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
  - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
  - Building Regulations Act 1984
  - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Sections 2, 3 and 4
  - Equality Act 2010
  - HCA - The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012
- 11.3 Within this legal framework, programmes are aimed at ensuring the quality of accommodation, maintaining the 2006 Decent Homes Standard (or standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built if higher than the Decent Homes Standard) and providing a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service that meets applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes.
- 11.4 Works contracts worth £4,733,252 (Works Threshold) or more must be advertised in the UK's e-notification service Find a Tender and then tendered or be procured via a framework agreement which itself has already been advertised in OJEU or Find a Tender (as applicable) and undergone a tender process. The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended) does not require a Find a Tender advertised tendering process in the case of below Works Threshold contracts. Such contracts must be awarded in line with the Council's Standing Orders.

## 12. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The budget for the works programme 2021-22 is £16,978,000 and is funded through the Housing Revenue Account. The budget is set as part of the Council's annual budget setting programme and was agreed by full Council in February 2021. In revenue there are budgets of £2,413,000 for responsive repairs and £3,049,000 for planned maintenance. In capital there is £9,212,000 for major repairs, £500,000 for facilities for the disabled, £1,033,000 for Phase 2 of Wensley Road Improvements, and £771,000 (net of a £60,000 grant) for green homes.
- 12.2 The £258,000 of general fund commitments proposed in this paper will be met from the 2021/22 revenue budget which provides for a spend of £90,000 on garages, and £168,000 on responsive repairs and minor voids works in the temporary accommodation budget.
- 12.3 A number of other projects are already committed/in progress that may need to use the underspend from 2020-21 to be carried forward to cover the cost. We will seek delegated authority from the Lead Councillor for Housing in association with the Assistant Director for Housing & Communities should the need arise.
- 12.4 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) deals with council housing finance. The main income is housing rent, and all expenditure related to council housing is charged to this account. The Housing Revenue Account is 'ring-fenced' (separate) from other Council activity (this is accounted for through the 'General Fund' account).
- 12.5 The Council regularly updates and revises assumptions in a 30-year business plan for the HRA. This includes a comprehensive 30-year programme for replacing major components of homes (roofs, windows/doors, kitchens, bathrooms etc.) and maintaining them to Decent Homes standards.

12.6 These financial implications were reviewed by Mark Jones, Strategic Business Partner, on 4/2/21.

**13. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None applicable.

Table 1

**WORKS TO COUNCIL STOCK 2021-2022**  
**(Programmes of work funded from the HRA)**

£'000

1	Responsive Repairs	2,337
2	Estate Maintenance	100
3	Voids (Minor Works)	890
<b>Planned Programmes</b>		
4	Gas Servicing and domestic legionella checks	300
5	Essential Cyclical	325
6	Pensioner Decorations	180
7	Common Areas	160
8	Electrical Checks	70
9	External Repairs and Decorations	1,100
<b>Major Capital Works</b>		
10	Voids (Major Works)	823
11	Special adaptations	500
12	Structural work	450
13	Rewiring	150
14	Windows and Doors	900
15	Central Heating and Boilers	1,000
16	Kitchens & Bathrooms	2,000
17	Door Entry Systems	160
18	Asbestos/Legionella	400
19	Decent Neighbourhoods Works	200
20	Norcot Improvements	771
21	Crosswall Blocks	880
22	Wensley Road Improvements, External Fabric/Windows and Roof	1033
23	Lifts	517
24	Major Repairs	460
25	Communal Flooring	100
26	Feasibility	1,172
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>16,978</b>

**RESPONSIVE REPAIRS**

**1. Responsive Repairs £2,337,000**

The Repairs service is responsive and a customer driven service. Spend in recent years has been consistently £2.3M. In our 30-year plan we are investing heavily in planned programmes and replacement components.

In 2017/18 new and integrated computer information gave us strong analytical tools to better understand repair costs.

Repairs are delivered predominantly by an in-house workforce. Factors that influence service costs include:

- Standardisation of parts. We benefit from the legacy of earlier generations who standardised components from the 1940’s onwards and have continued this process
- Control of high cost jobs and the development of new programmes of work to redirect investment to planned work
- A range of competitively priced and recently tendered planned programmes
- Batched gutter cleaning works to reduce use of scaffolding costs
- New types of scaffold and harnessing
- Improved Health and safety provision fuelled by legislation change and by an enhanced risk awareness following the Grenfell fire.
- Repairs analysis and understanding costs broken down by trade job type, material and property type
- Improved specification and more building items to maintain (such as more showers or more alarms and heat recovery ventilation)
- Feedback from surveys driving improvements
- Extended guarantees on boilers.

Benchmarking our costs against other social providers (with similar size and stock), repair costs have kept comparatively low, allowing us to focus on planned works and improvements. Investing sensibly in planned and replacement programmes over many years enables us to continue to keep costs low.

**2. Estate Maintenance £100,000**

A housing management-controlled budget to attend to day-to-day estate management issues and repair needs on our estates. This is typically used to improve parking, manage trees, provide dog bins, manage landscaping and paths that do not form part of the Highway.

**3. Voids (Minor and Major Works) £1,713,000**

The cost between tenancies to repair homes to an approved standard and then re-let these homes is met from this budget. This budget has remained steady at £1.25m for a number of years. In November 2019 we undertook a pilot, increasing the scope of works on all voids in the month. Where required we included decoration and the provision of floor coverings, the additional works varied between dwellings, some required no extra works. Although difficult to calculate the additional cost for a full year, we anticipate the additional funding required to achieve this improvement in our Voids Standard would be in the region of £463,000, the budget therefore has been increased to £1,713,000. Our aim is to keep a good balance between expenditure, re-let times and the re-let standards.

## PLANNED PROGRAMMES

### **4. Gas Servicing £300,000**

A landlord is legally required to make every reasonable effort to carry out gas checks every 12 months and at change of tenancy to all landlords owned gas appliances/ properties with gas meters. The number of gas services required each year increases with new builds added to the stock and more properties switching from electric to gas heating. We are normally 100% compliant with the gas safety regulations in our efforts to carry out this annual service.

### **5. Essential Cyclical Inspections £325,000**

This budget has increased by £30,000 and covers work in the following areas:

- Basic Lift maintenance and safety certification
- Warden Call system maintenance
- Fire alarms, Dry risers
- Fire extinguisher maintenance
- Checks and modest repairs to door entry systems
- Burglar alarms
- Communal lights maintenance
- Communal TV Aerials maintenance
- CCTV

### **6. Pensioner Decorations £180,000**

This is a three-year cyclical programme. The town is divided into three geographic areas, and the budget is usually around £110,000 each year. Given the works are for those tenants that are most vulnerable understandably the take up has been poor this year. So as not to disadvantage those vulnerable tenants that have been shielding the proposal for 2021/22 is to pick any outstanding addresses from the current financial year as well as the newly arising need.

This year, 2021/22, the areas of the town covered by this programme of works includes Caversham, Newtown, Woodley and part of the PFI managed stock. Work is carried out by outside contractors.

To be eligible, customers must be of pensionable age or receive a disability benefit and have no resource to an able-bodied person who can do the work for them. The service is only provided where the condition of the existing decoration is poor.

Tenants receive a pre-work visit to ensure eligibility and discuss choices in colour and finishes.

### **7. Common Areas £160,000**

A seven-year cyclical programme is set, whilst maintaining additional budget for highly trafficked or vandalised areas in exceptional cases. This year looks at Minster, Norcot, Katesgrove and Caversham wards in the main

## **8. Periodic Electrical Checks £70,000**

Historically, an electrical check was carried out every ten years or at a change of tenancy. Good practice, reviewed at national level, recommends checks should be made every 5 years. We have increased our expenditure to reflect this and we will achieve the transition from a 10-year cycle to every 5 years by 2022/23. All addresses have been identified. We use the data collected from the electrical checks to determine the rewiring programme and use the data to set programmes to upgrade and renew smoke detectors. The budget has been reduced from £110K to £70K to reflect costs in the new term contract.

## **9. External Repairs and Decoration £1,100,000**

Typically this includes a repair package, looking at the outside fabric of the homes and carrying out suitable improvements or repairs to:

- Roofs, Down pipes and gutters and vent pipes
- Brickwork
- Windows and doors
- Porches, Sheds
- Repairs to kitchens

An external Painting programme follows the repair works. Painting is subject to weather conditions and stops during the winter period.

Work is carried out on a rolling 7-year cycle.

### **MAJOR / CAPITAL REPAIRS**

#### **10. Major Voids**

See Item 3 above

#### **11. Special Adaptations £500,000**

The purpose of this budget is to provide adaptations to properties in order to improve living conditions for customers with disability needs. The majority of the budget is spent on adapting bathrooms.

Policies and specification changes we have adopted in relation to general council stock, offering showers above baths and standard showers, mean standard bathroom costs will increase, but such is demand, special adaptation costs are unlikely to reduce. We currently have 5,785 homes of which 693 have adapted level access showers, a surprisingly large number (521 of these are not in sheltered homes - approximately 10% of the housing stock) which shows how increasingly well adapted our stock has become. Whilst this points to high future maintenance costs it also suggests that there is a better match of adapted stock to meet customer need.

#### **12. Structural Works £450,000**

The purpose of this budget is to address the one-off structural issues arising through the year where works are required over and above that of responsive repairs; generally, these are isolated cases of failed DPC, underpinning of the structure and fire damaged properties. This year's budget has been increased to take into account the additional work necessary to completely refurbish a particular property and create an extra bedroom.

### **13. Rewires**

**£150,000**

Condition rather than age is setting the rewiring budget. The need for full rewires has decreased. The focus has switched to upgrading systems. Rewires tend to be partial, focusing on circuit board replacement and socket upgrades. Selection for these upgrades is on the recommendation of the electric's team (following electrical checks) rather than from general building surveys.

Electric checks are done either as planned checks or checks at change of tenancy. We are increasing our annual number of inspections, moving from every 10 years to every 5 years in line with good practice. Although the numbers of inspections will increase the resulting repairs should decrease as the period between inspections is reduced, going forward the budget should therefore remain at a similar level.

### **14. Window and Doors Replacements**

**(windows £800,000)**

**(doors £100,000)**

**Doors** -half of all carpentry repair costs relate to doors. 2021 continues an extensive door replacement programme, looking at 150 doors. Each door is individually surveyed. Investment has already shown a fall in carpentry repairs.

**Windows** - most windows were replaced from 1986 onwards, replacing comparatively few before 1991 but then the numbers increased. In 1992 we started replacing windows in houses rather than flats. Windows are a key element in the Decent Homes Standard with a lifecycle of 30 years; going forward this budget will increase to reflect the growing need for window renewal. Generally, our dwellings have double glazed units, this year and moving forward we are proposing to renew existing windows with triple glazed units to increase the energy efficiency of the properties thereby reducing carbon. Every effort will be made to ensure this work is undertaken on a just in time basis. Initially our programme will concentrate on the Stacked Windows Blocks, this also forms a part of our fire protection works.

### **15. Boilers and heating**

**£1,000,000**

High investment in past years has made a considerable saving in repair costs and improvement in energy efficiency. We have negotiated an extended parts and labour guarantees of 10 years on new boilers.

The replacement of boilers is fixed on a 15-year plan and full systems every 30 to 40 years.

The Council is committed to zero carbon with a target of 2030, in order to achieve this there is a need to look at alternative heating for our dwellings, we need to phase out our gas boilers over time and look to provide alternatives such as air/ground source heating. In some instances we will need to replace systems with an electrical heating system, Quantum heaters, although more expensive to provide initially there are no annual servicing costs.

### **16. Kitchens and Bathrooms**

**£2,000,000**

Kitchens and bathrooms will be replaced across all areas of the borough based strictly on the condition of existing facilities (and their age).

New kitchens take account of the size and range of tenant's 'white goods' and are individually designed to accommodate these (space permitting). The kitchen specification uses thicker carcasses, hinges that open doors 180 degrees, metal draw runners and are designed to last using a modern look that we hope will stay in vogue whilst offering good tenant choice. All taps for kitchens and bathrooms are lever taps, these permit easier use for tenants who suffer with hand mobility. Some improvements in the specification result in increased responsive repair cost. We aim to strike a responsible balance between modernisation and cost.

A revised specification this year includes the full decoration of all Kitchen and Bathroom upgrades.

Going forward the budget has been smoothed to reflect the required spend over a 30-year period and will remain at this level, this will ensure we meet the Decent Homes Standard.

**17. Door Entry Systems £160,000**

This budget is generally split between upgrades or replacement of older door entry systems and new installations where a door entry system would be advantageous. Addresses are not pre decided. The programme responds to systems that become inoperable and a repair to the system isn't an option.

**18. Asbestos and Legionella £400,000**

Asbestos surveys occur before many programmes of work can take place. We survey the whole property not just the area of the work and the intention is to have data for every property and not be reliant on cloned information.

This year's budget has been increased to allow the removal of asbestos insulation boards identified in our Laing Easiform properties in the Whitley area.

**19. Decent Neighbourhood Funding £200,000**

We are developing our knowledge for all blocks and communal areas through surveys. We will pick up on the stock needs of drying areas and paths, lighting and landscape and boundaries. Within communal area, we look at entry doors, door closers, matt wells, stairs and balustrades, finishes, stores security and refuse disposal.

Tenants choice funding has been amalgamated with this fund into one programme of work with the aim of improving the built environment of Council estates.

**20. Norcot improvement works £771,000**

Repairs resulting from ground movement have been identified at a number of properties, this has led to the identification of issues relating to floors dropping and the deflection of timber floor joists leading to first floor walls deforming. Externally the rendering is in need of replacement as are the windows. This year's work will be a package of measures to address the known issues and is a pilot for all properties in this location. This year's work will include the replacement of windows with triple glazed units and an improvement to the insulation of the building fabric.

**21. Crosswall Blocks £880,000**

The Crosswall construction consists of load bearing party walls and a lightweight infill construction to the front and rear elevations. Constructed in the late 1960's these properties are amongst the poorest of all our stock in terms of energy efficiency, in many cases the external walls are tile hung with no additional insulation. This year we propose to continue the modernisation of the external walls to our low rise Crosswall properties. Initially selecting two blocks, the works will consist of a reconstruction of the infill front and rear elevations that will incorporate replacement triple glazed windows. These properties will not only be insulated to a high standard the opportunity exists to refresh the tired appearance of the properties with new look low maintenance materials. In total we have in the region of 70 two and three storey Crosswall blocks. In the main the three-story blocks were insulated about 12 years ago, the windows of these blocks need replacement going forward, however, the two-story blocks are predominantly as built and will need significantly more work.

**22. Wensley Road Estate Flats, External Fabric/Windows and Roofing £1,033,000**

The proposals for the three blocks of flats at Wensley Road estate include a number of measures in line with the Councils zero carbon strategy, the major elements included within the scheme are the replacement of the external fabric and windows and a new waste management system. More efficient insulation and triple glazed windows will significantly improve the thermal efficiency of the dwellings. The works to the three blocks will be phased over two years with an estimated overall cost of £5,500,000 and are tied in with the wider improvements and development of new build homes on the estate.

**23. Lifts £517,000**

An extensive survey of lifts was made in 2017 to provide better long-term investment planning. A four-year programme of just over £1m has been identified. This year we focus on lift refurbishments of both Christchurch blocks, St Stephens Court and Weirside Court.

**24. Major Repairs £460,000**

Major repairs are batched together for increased efficiencies. Work includes a variety of projects such as replacing fencing, flooring, damp treatments etc.

**25. Communal Flooring £100,000**

£70,000 of the budget is earmarked to provide new flooring, replacing badly damaged flooring or concrete finished. This investment is a response to customer feedback from a tenant survey which highlighted the appearance of communal areas as an area of concern for customers.

**26. Feasibility £1,172,000**

£25,000 earmarked to design for remodelling/ development projects. £1,147,000 will be used to replace heating systems at Granville 8 story blocks as part of our trial of low carbon and alternative heating systems to gas, the results of this will help to shape Housing Zero Carbon strategy.

**£258,000 WORKS TO General Fund STOCK 2021-2022**  
**(Programmes of work funded from the General Fund)**

£'000

1	Garage Repairs	50
2	Garage Planned maintenance	40
3	Temporary Accommodation	168

## Appendix 2

**1. Responsive Garage Repairs **£50,000****

This budget is for the provision of day-to-day repairs to the 1060 garages.

**2. Planned Maintenance to Garages **£40,000****

Garage maintenance is done on a seven-year cycle of planned maintenance to reasonably maintained sites to ensure garages are kept up to standard

The business case for this budget is simple, to keep garage sites in a lettable condition to maintain the revenue stream whilst maintaining our asset and the appearance of estates. Over the last decade investment in garages has much improved the appearance of estates and removed areas of neglect

Numbers of garages have fallen in recent years as sites are redeveloped or land included in regeneration projects (such as at Dee Park). Where a site is designated for redevelopment in the next five years we do not carry out planned maintenance.

**3. Temporary Accommodation **£158,000****

A budget is used for the repair and maintenance of temporary accommodation properties. In recent years we have decreased the budget as repair costs have fallen following the refurbishment of Jimmy Green Court and 2 Wensley Road flats in recent years.

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## Appendix 1

**WORKS TO COUNCIL STOCK 2020-2021**  
**(Programmes of work funded from the HRA)**

	Work Items	Planned/Demand led
1	Responsive Repairs	Demand led
2	Estate Maintenance	Demand led
3	Voids (includes £400k Capital work)	Demand led
<b>Planned Programmes</b>		
4	Gas Servicing and domestic legionella checks	Planned
5	Essential Cyclical	Planned
6	Pensioner Decorations	Planned
7	Common Areas	Planned
8	Electrical Checks	Planned
9	External Repairs and Decorations	Planned
<b>Major Capital Works</b>		
10	Special adaptations	Demand led
11	Structural work	Demand led
12	Rewiring	Demand led
13	Windows and Doors	Planned/Demand led
14	Central Heating and Boilers	Planned
15	Fire Protection Works	Planned
16	Insulation	Planned
17	Kitchens & Bathrooms	Planned
18	Door Entry Systems	Demand led
19	Asbestos	Planned
20	Decent Neighbourhoods Works	Demand led
21	Hexham Road Estate Flats	Planned
22	Norcot Improvements	Planned
23	Ian Mikado Way Ceilings	Planned
24	Coley Water Main	Planned
25	Crosswall Blocks	Planned
26	Coronation Square Repointing and Brickwork repairs	Planned
27	Lifts	Planned
28	Major Repairs	Demand led
29	Communal Flooring	Demand led
30	Feasibility	Planned
31	Contingencies	N/A

<b>Ward(s)</b>
All Wards
Various
Various
All Wards
Various
Whitley
Minster, Norcot, Katesgrove and Church
Various
Whitley
Various
Various
Various
Southcote
Various
Abbey and Whitley
Various
Various
Various
Whitley
Various
Redlands
Kentwood
Caversham
Minster
Redlands
Southcote
Abbey, Southcote and Katesgrove
Various
Various
Southcote
N/A

## Appendix 2

**WORKS TO COUNCIL STOCK 2021-2022**  
**(Programmes of work funded from the HRA)**

	Work Items	Planned/Demand led
1	Responsive Repairs	Demand led
2	Estate Maintenance	Demand led
3	Voids (Minor Works)	Demand led
<b>Planned Programmes</b>		
4	Gas Servicing and domestic legionella checks	Planned
5	Essential Cyclical	Planned
6	Pensioner Decorations	Planned
7	Common Areas	Planned
8	Electrical Checks	Planned
9	External Repairs and Decorations	Planned
<b>Major Capital Works</b>		
10	Voids (Major Works)	Demand led
11	Special adaptations	Demand led
12	Structural work	Demand led
13	Rewiring	Demand led
14	Windows and Doors	Planned/Demand led
15	Central Heating and Boilers	Planned
16	Kitchens & Bathrooms	Planned
17	Door Entry Systems	Demand led
18	Asbestos	Planned
19	Decent Neighbourhoods Works	Demand led
20	Norcot Improvements	Planned
21	Crosswall Blocks	Planned
22	Wensley Road Estate, External Fabric/Windows and	Planned
23	Lifts	Planned
24	Major Repairs	Demand led
25	Communal Flooring	Demand led
26	Feasibility	Planned

Ward(s)
All Wards
Various
Various
All Wards
Various
Caversham, Park and Woodley
Minster, Norcot, Katesgrove and Caversham
Various
Tilehurst
Various
Various
Various
Various
Peppard, Minster, Southcote, Whitley and Redlands
Various
Various
Various
Whitley
Various
Kentwood
Redlands
Minster
Abbey and Katesgrove
Various
Various
Southcote

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

<b>TO:</b>	<b>HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>10th March 2021</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>ALLOCATIONS SCHEME CONSULTATION</b>		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	<b>CLLR JOHN ENNIS</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	<b>HOUSING</b>
<b>SERVICE:</b>	<b>HOUSING</b>	<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>BOROUGHWIDE</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>BRYONY HALL</b>	<b>TEL:</b>	<b>0118 937 2631</b>
<b>JOB TITLE:</b>	<b>HOUSING NEEDS MANAGER</b>	<b>E-MAIL:</b>	<a href="mailto:bryony.hall@reading.gov.uk">bryony.hall@reading.gov.uk</a>

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report lays out the intention to review Reading Borough Council’s Allocation Scheme, the proposed changes, requests authorisation to consult on the proposals and details the timetable for delivery.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 - Consultation summary and questions.

### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Housing, Neighbourhood and Leisure Committee approve a public consultation, which takes views of residents, customers and partners, to inform a review of the Reading Borough Council’s Housing Allocations Scheme.

### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 It is a long-standing legal requirement for Local Authorities to have a Housing Allocations Scheme setting out the rules used to determine who gets priority for social housing within their area of governance, in addition there is supporting guidance, which requires that the scheme must be kept under regular review.
- 3.2 There are certain legal requirements that the Council must follow in developing or reviewing an Allocations Scheme, set out by Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. Fundamentally Local Authorities are required to give priority to households who attract ‘reasonable preference’. The definition for ‘reasonable preference’ is set out in legislation, the categories include:

- homeless households
- overcrowded households
- those living in unsanitary housing conditions
- those who require a move based on medical or welfare grounds.

3.3 Beyond the legal requirement, it is important that Local Authorities keep their Allocations Scheme under regular review in order to ensure that it aligns with local and national strategic priorities whilst meeting the needs of residents and their communities. The last significant change to Reading's Allocations scheme was carried out in 2016, when the Scheme was revised to include changes brought about by the Localism Act, including the application of Qualification Criteria for certain groups, for example a 3-year residency requirement in reading for access to the Housing Register.

3.4 Local Authorities are encouraged to develop their Allocations Schemes to support broader public policy outcomes, such as:

- Encouraging greater social and economic mobility of social housing tenants
- Ensuring the most efficient use of the housing stock
- Responding to employment or skills needs specific to the area
- Creating more mixed communities and addressing the long-term sustainability of neighbourhoods
- Developing and maintaining balanced and stable communities
- Addressing specific issues at the neighbourhood level, such as anti-social behaviour and high-turnover through prioritising use of local lettings policies
- Countering misconceptions as to apparent unfairness of the allocation process
- Strengthening community cohesion, particularly in areas where tensions are known to be associated with the way housing is allocated

3.5 In October 2018, Member consultation workshops were held to discuss a new approach for an Allocations Scheme with a focus on building sustainable communities and reducing anti-social behaviour. In October 2020 Reading published its Housing Strategy for 2020-25, laying out the overall vision for accommodation in the town for the next 5 years and defining our overarching themes and underpinning priorities. The review of the Allocations scheme and the proposed consultation is fundamental to delivering on that vision:

*“For all our residents to have the opportunity to live in a good quality, sustainable home they can afford, within a thriving neighbourhood.”*

3.6 In carrying out a review of the Allocations Scheme, the Council aims to ensure that the scheme better contributes to the creation of sustainable communities, it demonstrates a more clear and transparent approach to letting accommodation in the town, and that it is up to date and in line with all new legislation (such as the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018).

#### 4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 It is proposed that a public consultation is carried out on key policy decisions that support the delivery of the themes of the Housing Strategy, within the following areas:

##### 4.2 Sustainable Communities

Reading Borough Council identifies the need to create balanced and sustainable communities in order to improve outcomes for residents and reduce antisocial behaviour on our estates, whilst supporting the most vulnerable in the community. There are several mechanisms that are proposed to support this, discussed in greater detail below:

- Improved Tenant Mobility
- Improved Offer for Key Workers
- Tenant Behaviour Sanctions
- Renewed Local Lettings Policies
- Pre-tenancy Workshops

4.3 ***Improved tenant mobility***

Improving tenant mobility can support local economies and tenant outcomes by improving tenants' physical access to work or specific services (for example hospitals or schools). Improved tenant mobility helps to make better use of stock (reducing under occupation), improves satisfaction and quality of life and give tenants a greater sense of fairness - giving tenants a sense of investment in their home and community.

4.4 It is proposed that all Reading Borough Council tenants are given a level of priority should they wish to move and access the Housing Register and that, as their landlord, the Council is supporting tenants to live in the most suitable home for their household. In addition, it is proposed to increase the priority further for severely overcrowded tenants.

4.5 ***Key workers***

It is proposed that Reading Borough Council reviews the current position for key workers to ensure that this group have access to affordable homes, whilst supporting the creation of more mixed communities as such addressing the long-term sustainability of neighbourhoods. Key workers are classed as essential workers where there may be skill shortages in the local area, such as social workers, teachers, health, and care workers, police and fire officers.

4.6 Consultation on this offer would include:

- Provision of an exception to the 3-year residency criteria required to join the Housing Register, helping the Council and its partners to respond to employment and skill deficits within the town and supporting the recruitment of key roles.
- Awarding greater priority for this group to a number of properties each year through the creation of a quota queue. Separate to the quota queue, fixed term tenancies will be offered for specific key worker housing schemes such as the development at Arthur Hill to ensure that the properties remain available for key workers in the longer term. At the end of the fixed term they will be assisted to move on into alternative accommodation such as shared ownership.

4.7 ***Tenant behaviour sanctions***

Reading Borough Council's Allocations Scheme currently prevents those who have been evicted due to antisocial behaviour from accessing the Housing Register for 3 years. Since the introduction of this sanction a number of individuals have been identified that have been previously evicted due to serious, threatening or violent behaviours which have not been addressed, who have now seen this sanction expire and are now able to re-join the register.

4.8 It is proposed that a review process is introduced that considers whether individual applicant behaviours are likely to make them unsuitable to be a tenant subsequent to serious antisocial behaviour, and that the length of time for which they should be sanctioned from accessing the Housing Register should be consulted upon with a proposal of a standard between 5-10 years.

4.9 **Clear and Fair Allocations Scheme**

It is important to have an Allocations Scheme which is transparent, easy to understand and makes best use of housing stock to meet needs. The current Allocations scheme operates a band system as opposed to a points scheme. The system that is used does not affect individual applicant entitlement to priority, rather it is a mechanism to understand how that priority compares to others. Reading operated a points system for many years, however when Choice Based lettings was introduced in 2008, the system moved to bands as it gives a more transparent view of priority for applicants. As such, the proposal is to remain with a simplified band system. In order to make best use of housing stock, a greater focus is required on matching adapted properties with the people who need them.

4.10 ***Reduce the number of bands for simplicity***

We are proposing to simplify the Allocations Scheme by reducing the number of bands that are used to prioritise people on the Housing Register.

4.11 ***Separate register for adapted homes***

It is proposed to separate the general needs Housing Register from those that require adapted homes to make the allocation of these properties simpler whilst making it easier and more straightforward for those who need adapted properties to access them. Strategically having a separate Adapted Housing Register will help to better identify what the need is for adapted properties in Reading and provide a more coherent data source for strategic decision making for future housing developments.

4.12 **Further activities not proposed for consultation:**

4.13 ***Local Lettings Policies***

It is good practice for local authorities to develop and review Local Lettings Policies which define the type of lettings to be made at the neighbourhood level (for specific areas or housing developments) in order to allow them to address issues and create more sustainable communities. This could range from preventing allocations to people with a history of anti-social behaviour or giving priority to new homes to local people. Where required, the intention of Local Lettings Policies is to focus lettings in any given area on the presenting issues within that neighbourhood.

4.14 Reading Borough Council intends to carry out a full review of its current Local Lettings Policies to determine whether they are meeting the needs of the community, residents and prospective tenants. This review may result in the removal of out of date policies or the implementation of new ones and will support the ambition to strengthen community cohesion and create more balanced communities on an ongoing basis.

4.15 ***Pre-tenancy workshops***

Pre tenancy training, or counselling, is an effective tool that supports tenants to be better able to cope with the demands of managing a tenancy. This can be especially important for younger people, those from disadvantaged or chaotic backgrounds or those who have never held a tenancy before. This can vary from a simple explanation of the requirements of the tenancy agreement, to something more in depth, that

covers managing finances, managing responsibilities of the home (reporting repairs etc), engaging in the community, how to be a good neighbour and the implications of antisocial behaviour. It is proposed that all prospective tenants are provided with this prior to signing a tenancy.

**4.16 Legal updates**

A small number of technical updates are required that will not be consulted upon. These are changes that need to be carried out to formally update the Allocations scheme to ensure that policies are aligned as a result of recent changes to legislation, for example changes brought about by the Homeless Reduction Act 2018.

**4.17 Next Steps**

It is proposed that an 8-week external consultation is carried out with the public and key statutory and voluntary partners, including Registered Providers with the intention that a new scheme is published in Summer 2021.

Timeframe for delivery:

<b>Time period:</b>	<b>Action:</b>
10 <sup>th</sup> March	HNL Committee to sign off consultation documents and approve exercise.
15 <sup>th</sup> March - 10 <sup>th</sup> May	8-week consultation exercise completed.
May - July	New scheme drafted.
July / August 2021	Consultation outcome and draft Allocations Scheme to HNL or Policy Committee.

**5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

5.1 This proposal will contribute to the service priorities set out in the Council’s Corporate Plan as follows:

- Ensuring access to decent housing to meet local needs
- To protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable adults and children

5.2 The proposed decision contributes to the Council’s strategic aims as follows:

- To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all

**6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no environmental or climate change implications for the purposes of carrying out the consultation.

**7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 7.1 Any significant change to Local Authority Allocation Schemes is accompanied by a requirement to consult. The Code of Guidance issued by the government **recommends** that the consultation process involves the broad community but only **requires** the Local Authority to consult with Registered Housing Providers.

Public consultation will be carried out over an 8-week period using a range of communication methods, including social media.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to this paper. There is no public concern about potentially discriminatory practices or impact and there is no reason to believe that some groups may be affected differently from others by the authorisation to carry out the consultation.
- 8.2 An EIA will be required for the consultation methodology once it is developed and the delivery of the new scheme.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1.1 Local Authorities must administer the allocation of social housing in line with Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government published new guidance for local Authorities in 2020, in 'Allocation of Accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England'. Any consultation will be in line with the Allocations Code of Guidance. Failure to follow statutory provision may lead to legal challenge and could result in judicial review or referral to the Local Government Ombudsman.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Any costs of carrying out the consultation arising will be met from existing budgets.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 None

## Changes to Allocations Scheme - Consultation

### Overview

All Local Authorities are legally required to have an Allocations Scheme which sets out how we prioritise applicants for social housing, and how social housing is allocated via our Choice Based Lettings system known as Homechoice at Reading. You can see Reading Borough Council's current scheme at <https://www.reading.gov.uk/housing/find-a-home/homechoice/>

At Reading Borough Council, we are reviewing our housing Allocations Scheme. Our aims are to make the scheme fairer and easier to understand for the customers who use it, and to ensure we are creating thriving and well-balanced communities where residents want to live.

We have defined these two themes as:

- Well-Balanced Sustainable Communities
- Clear and Fair Allocations Scheme

### Well Balanced Sustainable Communities

We want our communities to be places that people want to live for generations to come. We believe that a well-balanced and thriving community is created when residents are happy in the areas where they live, and that residents feel more invested in their community when they are in areas where they can access the services, and support, and opportunities that benefit them. We believe that well balanced communities with good opportunities for all residents have lower levels of anti-social behaviour.

There are 3 changes that we believe we can make to create well balanced, thriving communities. We are asking you how effective you think these changes will be. These changes are:

- Award some priority to existing tenants who wish to move to give them an opportunity to move to communities they can invest in. Increase priority awarded to tenants who are severely overcrowded in our properties.
  - Currently priority is only awarded to tenants if there is a recognised need to move, as defined by the Allocations Scheme
  - We would like to give some priority to existing tenants, regardless of need, so that they have a better opportunity to move
  - We would also like to award more priority to households who are severely overcrowded
- Provide more opportunities for essential workers, such as social workers, teachers, nurses, health and care workers, police and fire officers (key workers) to access affordable housing.
  - Currently key workers need to have lived in the borough or worked here for 3 years before they can access Homechoice at Reading for affordable homes. Removing this criteria will support recruitment of essential workers in the borough.
  - We would like to introduce a "quota" of properties, a set amount of properties each year which are let to this group. We would also offer fixed-term tenancies for specifically identified key worker housing schemes thereby making the accommodation available for other key workers if a tenant's work situation changes. Key workers in these identified schemes will be assisted to take advantage of other initiatives such as shared ownership at the end of the fixed term.

- Take stronger actions against those who are evicted from our communities for anti-social behaviour
  - Currently those who are evicted as a result of anti-social behaviour cannot join Homechoice at Reading for 3 years from the date of their eviction, and in some situations, we have found that after 3 years some residents are still not suitable to become a tenant due to their ongoing behaviour.
  - We would like to firstly assess every individuals' behaviours, giving ourselves the option to increase the time to 5-10 years for those who continue to behaviour poorly.

### Clear and Fair Allocations Scheme

We know that social housing is a very important resource to our communities and that it is vital the allocation of that housing is fair, and that customers can easily understand the process. The current Allocations Scheme sets out how we prioritise households for social housing and how social housing is allocated. We have identified 2 changes that we believe would make the scheme all the more transparent:

- Reducing the number of priority bands
  - Currently we have 6 bands of priority, from Band A, being the most urgent need to move, to NPFH (No Priority for Housing), which is those who do not have any recognised need to move, as defined in the scheme.
  - We would like to reduce the number of bands to simplify this for applicants, but also staff.
- Separate register for those who require adaptations and for adapted homes
  - Currently those who require significant adaptations in their home, such as a through floor lift, wheelchair adaptations, etc, are currently registered on Homechoice at Reading along with all other applicants. Likewise, accommodation that is already adapted or would lend themselves to such significant adaptations are advertised along with all other properties. This can mean that people who require adaptations are unsure on what they should be placing bids for or are unclear if the property would be suitable to meet their needs. Assessments are carried out on every individual situation, which is both time consuming for Officers, but also frustrating for those who need to move.
  - We would like to put in place a separate register for those who require adaptations, but also for those properties that are already adapted or would lend themselves to significant adaptations to only be made available to those on this separate register.

### Why are we consulting

It is important for Reading Borough Council to deliver a fair and effective service for our residents and that your opinion on those changes are taken into account. It is also a legal requirement to consult with our residents, and partner agencies, on major changes to our Allocations Scheme.

### What happens next

The consultation will be open for responses for an 8-week period, closing on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Once the consultation closes, we will collate the responses together in a report which will be submitted to a Committee for approval, along with a draft of the new Allocations Scheme, taking into account the detail of the responses received.

## Consultation

### Well Balanced Sustainable Communities

Proposed Change	Do you agree with these changes?		
	Yes	No	Don't know
Award some priority to existing RBC tenants who wish to move regardless of need			
Award further priority to severely overcrowded tenants			
Remove the residency criteria for key workers			
Prioritise key workers by providing a "quota" of properties each year for this group			
Assess each individual's behaviour on a case by case basis instead of a set period for everyone			
Increase the sanction for those who have been previously evicted for anti-social behaviour to 5-10 years			
Please detail here any alternatives that you think would help us to achieve this aim			
Please provide any comments on these proposed changes			

### Clear and Fair Allocations Scheme

Proposed Change	Do you agree with these changes?		
	Yes	No	Don't know
Reduce the number of priority bands			
Put in place a separate register for those who require significant adaptations			
Make adapted or adaptable properties only available to those that need them			
Please detail here any alternatives that you think would help us to achieve this aim			
Please provide any comments on these proposed changes			

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## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

<b>TO:</b>	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
<b>DATE:</b>	10 MARCH 2021		
<b>TITLE:</b>	ROUGH SLEEPING UPDATE REPORT		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	CLLR JOHN ENNIS	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	HOUSING
<b>SERVICE:</b>	HOUSING	<b>WARDS:</b>	BOROUGHWIDE
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	Venera Hutcheson / Bryony Hall	<b>TEL:</b>	
<b>JOB TITLE:</b>	Homelessness Partnerships Manager / Housing Needs Manager	<b>E-MAIL:</b>	<a href="mailto:Venera.hutcheson@reading.gov.uk">Venera.hutcheson@reading.gov.uk</a> / <a href="mailto:Bryony.hall@reading.gov.uk">Bryony.hall@reading.gov.uk</a>

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

- 1.1 To provide a summary of responses and outcomes since 'Everyone In' with regards to supporting those rough sleeping, or at risk of rough sleeping during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 - Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan for Reading (submitted to and published by the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in November 2020.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Housing Neighbourhood and Leisure Committee note 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.

#### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 On 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020, Dame Casey announced the government's 'Everyone In' approach for anyone rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping. Luke Hall MP stated in his letter to all local authorities on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020<sup>1</sup> that: 'wherever possible, it is now imperative that rough sleepers and other vulnerable homeless are supported into appropriate accommodation by the end of the week.'
- 3.2 As instructed by both Dame Casey and Luke Hall MP, Council officers responded by making offers of emergency accommodation to anyone known to be rough sleeping

<sup>1</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/876466/Letter\\_from\\_Minister\\_Hall\\_to\\_Local\\_Authorities.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/876466/Letter_from_Minister_Hall_to_Local_Authorities.pdf)

and anyone considered to be at risk of rough sleeping in Reading. Immediately all shared accommodation spaces closed, including Reading's winter shelter and the Salvation Army's temporary emergency beds, and self-contained accommodation was sought for each person affected.

- 3.3 Between March and August 2020, the 'Everyone In' effort saw the Council's Housing Needs service respond in a significantly different way to the needs of those sleeping rough. This effort was unprecedented in being able to offer accommodation to anyone bedding down. The successful approach of the service in taking an early intervention approach towards preventing homelessness for families meant that there had been little reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation in recent years and as such they were able to utilise this accommodation for those found sleeping rough. In addition, contracts with a few local hotels were swiftly negotiated.
- 3.5 The 'Everyone In' response ended in Reading in August 2020. Between September and mid-December Reading's street outreach teams continued to work with those bedded down, referring them into the Homelessness Prevention Teams for health and homelessness assessment and into commissioned supported accommodation services.
- 3.6 In line with National lockdown, on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2021 the Government provided renewed advice and guidance for local authorities in respect of Covid 19 and people found rough sleeping. Whilst this guidance was not a second 'Everyone In' response, it required local authorities to ensure that everyone found rough sleeping is made an offer of safe and appropriate accommodation and that steps are taken to ensure that their health needs are assessed and that they are registered with a GP.
- 3.7 The Council's priority was, and still is, to make sure anyone rough sleeping is kept safe, that their health and wellbeing needs are being met and to ensure this group can socially distance effectively and self-isolate if they need to. This has been a holistic homelessness sector response during a health crisis. Although not always accepted, officers and commissioned services have continued to make frequent and continued offers to those bedding down and refusing an offer.

#### **4. CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 Under 'Everyone In' the response, commitment and flexibility from officers, commissioned services, the community sector and partners were extraordinary in meeting the needs of this vulnerable group. The effort ensured each person had an accommodation offer where officers liaised and negotiated with local hotel and B&B providers at a time when businesses were shutting their doors and options were starting to become limited.
- 4.2 The Council's response was more than accommodation - officers ensured that those placed received hot meals 7 days a week (supported by our Repairs and Maintenance team for delivery); that everyone had a mobile phone available to communicate and receive support (supported by phone and SIM donations from Tesco mobile); that toiletries usually used for Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) and the night shelter were re-purposed for this group and that scripts, prescriptions, clothing and laundry facilities were available for those in need. At that time, tenancy sustainment officers across several agencies were re-purposed to focus support upon people in emergency accommodation. Support was wrapped around each individual to make sure their housing, health and support needs were met during the uncertainty of the first pandemic lockdown.

- 4.3 In total, 264 unique individuals were placed into emergency accommodation under 'Everyone In' between March - August 2020<sup>2</sup>. Those placed were either rough sleeping (verified bedded down) or were assessed by homelessness teams as being at risk of rough sleeping.
- 4.4 Since this mobilisation began, 130 of these individuals have been facilitated to move on through a planned route, either through supported accommodation, private rented accommodation or reconnected safely with friends and family.
- 4.5 The success of moving people on from emergency placements has been due to significant and relentless efforts from officers across Housing, most specifically those in Housing Needs. Efforts have been targeted at securing suitable placements, tenancies and landlords, or making space in supported provisions, as well as supporting people who, sometimes have had relatively unknown needs and challenging behaviours, in sustaining their tenancy once moved on.
- 4.6 Of those accommodated through 'Everyone In' 52 individuals remain in the accommodation, with a further 10 in RBC temporary accommodation. A subsequent 35 individuals have been accommodated through Winter Provision.
- 4.7 The success of this work is demonstrated by the fact that over this period only 14 individuals were ultimately evicted after all options were exhausted for them, and of those, only one person was subsequently verified to be rough sleeping - they are now replaced under winter provision.
- 4.8 Reading's annual rough sleeping estimate, determined that approximately 19 individuals were sleeping rough in Reading on a typical night in November 2020. This figure will be published alongside all other national figures.
- 4.9 Further to 'Everyone In' in response to Government advice in January 2021, with regards to Covid 19 and people found rough sleeping, the Council is making an offer of safe and appropriate accommodation to anyone found bedded down. In Reading we are calling this 'Winter Provision' which will be available until the end of March 2021. The Homelessness Prevention Teams continue to assess health and homelessness need, referring to commissioned supported accommodation and outreach support services.
- 4.10 Throughout January there have been between 2-6 people found sleeping rough in Reading on any night. Apart from a small number, who are offered accommodation, these are known individuals who, either have accommodation available but are temporarily not using it or are refusing to engage with any offer of accommodation. Our outreach services continue to work with everyone found sleeping rough to encourage them to accept or use the offer of accommodation.
- 4.12 Reading's voluntary and community sector have continued to provide Covid-safe food take-out solutions for this group, and food parcels are distributed to the most vulnerable and those needing to shield or self-isolate when symptomatic or Covid positive.
- 4.13 On 30<sup>th</sup> December each local authority received a letter from Kelly Tolhurst (then Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing) asking for all Council's to review their offer for people sleeping rough given the new Covid-19 variant, clinical vulnerability and with regards to cold weather. A review of how those being placed into emergency accommodation were having their health needs assessed showed that Reading is undertaking, and has been since March 2020, the advised Triage-Test-Cohort-Care model for those with identified clinical vulnerabilities and for symptomatic/active

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<sup>2</sup> Revised figure of 260 following a review and revision of duplication

Covid cases. In March, self-contained Covid-Care options for provisions with communal facilities, where risk is highest, were introduced and have been sustained.

- 4.14 The NHS Housing Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT) has been working with people found sleeping rough since the beginning of the pandemic to assess their clinical needs, arrange registration with a GP and Covid testing/interim health monitoring whilst awaiting test results/symptomatic. The HOLT nurses and St Mungo's, our commissioned outreach service, continue to prioritise this as an action for all individuals although it can be challenging due to the chaotic nature of some clients.
- 4.14 The Housing Needs Service has worked with Public Health to collate client numbers and frontline staff numbers working with this cohort and they have been factored into local area action plans in line with JCVI advice on Covid vaccination prioritisation. All Homelessness Support Services frontline staff have received priority letters to receive a vaccination.
- 4.16 The Council already funds Homelessness Support Services at £1.25m per annum to provide circa 185 council commissioned supported accommodation (including Housing First) bed spaces and rough sleeping outreach/tenancy sustainment teams delivered by partners Salvation Army, Launchpad and St Mungo's.
- 4.17 **Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) - £647k per annum (MHCLG)** - has, since 2018/19, enabled Reading to double its outreach capacity, extend and provide consistent funding for a winter shelter between January and March (during non-Covid times) and to introduce 10 'housing led' spaces to engage those with multiple needs who rough sleep. Reading has an innovative tenancy sustainment team to support out of hours. Reading has guaranteed RSI funds until June 2021 where a grant renewal application will be submitted to MHCLG to propose these interventions are continued.
- 4.18 During Covid, Reading has applied for and been awarded several shorter and longer-term grants as follows:

Grant name	Intervention	Period	Amount
Next Steps Accommodation (Short-term) Programme (NSAP) MHCLG	A range of interventions to keep people accommodated under 'Everyone In' within emergency accommodation until March 2021 and/or supported in their current or new (move-on) placements.	2020/21	£761k total
Next Steps Accommodation (Long term) Programme (RSAP) MHCLG	For the delivery of accommodation with support for complex individuals to move on from 'Everyone In'. Specifically, 40 modular units at Great Knollys Street. 10 bed provision for women with Support needs.	2020-23	£2.279 total
Cold Weather Fund & Protect Programme (Winter Provision) MHCLG	Fund for emergency accommodation during the winter targeted at people known to rough sleep repeatedly or who have not engaged with any accommodation offer since	2020/21	£180k total

	March 2020.		
Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant – Public Health led	To provide targeted substance misuse support to people sleeping rough, extending existing provision to assertively target people at risk of sleeping rough.	2021-23	£550k per annum

## 5. FUTURE PROVISION & PLANS

- 5.1 Future plans focus on the delivery of accommodation and interventions provided for by the successful applications to the MHCLG Next Steps funding. Most significantly the delivery of two exciting accommodation projects for those who have been sleeping rough.
- Female only provision - the development of 10 bed unit to provide accommodation and support to women with multiple or complex needs, the first occupants are moving into the property over the course of January.
  - Self-contained move on accommodation - the development of a unique project of 40 modular constructed homes at the Cattle Market to provide accommodation and support for those who have been sleeping rough. The construction of these units is due to be complete in the Spring.
- 5.2 Both accommodation projects will have 24-hour intensive support provision to help the residents to rebuild their lives, the Housing service has commissioned St Mungos to work in partnership to deliver the projects and to provide the support.
- 5.3 Reading Public Health teams have successfully bid for Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment grant funds to the amount of £550k per annum from 2021 - 2023 to provide targeted substance misuse support. This will create a dedicated team within Reading's drug and alcohol support service (CGL) to assertively target those sleeping rough/at risk of sleeping rough with substance dependence.
- 5.6 The five priorities laid out in Readings Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024 remain relevant in light of the Covid pandemic and subsequent associated activity.
- (1) **Early intervention and prevention** - to prevent those who are vulnerable to sleeping rough from moving towards entrenched and harmful behaviours and lifestyles by intervening as early as possible.
  - (2) **Recovery and community integration** - to ensure that recovery underpins tenancy sustainment as part of a holistic approach to homelessness prevention
  - (3) **Rapid intervention** - to intervene rapidly when prevention has been ineffective, and homelessness is unavoidable
  - (4) **United support and enforcement action in Reading** - to approach rough sleeping in a way that supports individuals, but that also protects Reading's resident and business community from the effects of any associated anti-social behaviours
  - (5) **Provision of information and alternative ways to give** - to provide steer to our local communities in how they respond to people who are sleeping rough by providing sufficient and accessible information, support and guidance around how we collectively and individually support vulnerable people

5.7 The Council is keen not to lose the momentum, excellent partnerships and flexibility that have typified the response to rough sleeping throughout the pandemic. In November 2020 the Council submitted its Rough Sleeping Delivery plan for publication to the MHCLG, which provides an update on the overall plan to eliminate rough sleeping by 2027. Appendix 1.

## **6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

6.1 The Council's response to rough sleeping during the pandemic aligns with:

- Corporate Plan priorities to protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable adults and children and to ensure access to decent housing to meet local needs
- the Council's strategic aims to promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all and contributing to the community safety and health agenda

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

6.1 This report/response to rough sleeping and the decision making involved does not have an impact upon the Council's ability to respond to the Climate Emergency and achieve a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.

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

7.1 The views and experience of Ward Councillors have been sought in the development of the Women specific provision and the Modular units. This information has been used by the Council and St Mungos to develop service practice that ensures least impact on the wider community.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to this report/response to rough sleeping.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no legal implications relating directly to this information report.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The budget pressure for the 20-21 financial year, after taking into account grants, is projected to be £0.760m due to increased demand on bed and breakfast, including hotel beds, as a result of the need to accommodate homeless individuals during the Covid-19 pandemic.

10.2 The total Covid 19 pressure for 20-21 would have been £1.997m but for the funding received of £0.687m and Housing Benefit received for clients of £0.55m.

10.3 These financial implications were reviewed by Mark Jones, Strategic Business Partner, on 8/2/21.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 None

## APPENDIX 1 - Published Local Authority Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan

Local authority:	Reading Borough Council
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What is your local area target for reducing rough sleeping during this year, and subsequent years?

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024 stated its objective to reduce rough sleeping by half, to 15 individuals or fewer, by 2022 and to eliminate it entirely by 2027 in line with central government targets.

The pandemic has created significant uncertainty including the impact upon the socio-economic circumstances of many households that will inevitably have wider and longer-term effects upon levels of homelessness and rough sleeping. Reading has received short-term and long-term funds from Government to alleviate rough sleeping in the borough and with these funds, our strategic aim to halve numbers by 2022 and eliminate by 2027 remains.

Do you have a published Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy? If so, please provide a link

**Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024**  
[https://images.reading.gov.uk/2019/11/Rough\\_Sleeping\\_Strategy\\_2019\\_-\\_2024\\_FINAL.pdf](https://images.reading.gov.uk/2019/11/Rough_Sleeping_Strategy_2019_-_2024_FINAL.pdf)

**Homelessness Strategy 2020 – 2025**

<https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s13837/APPENDIX%20B%20Homelessness%20Strategy%202020-2025.pdf>

Total NSAP Funding Allocated (short-term immediate move on)	£761,241
Total RSI Funding Allocated	£647,099
Total Cold Weather Funding Allocated	£90,000
Total RSAP Funding Allocated (long-term capital and/or revenue for homes)	£2,297,010
<b>Total Rough Sleeping Funding Allocated 2020/21</b>	<b>£3,795,350</b>

### Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

#### Key Objectives

#### **End rough sleeping**

What is the overall plan for ending rough sleeping in your local authority?

Reading has a Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024 which is underpinned by five priorities:

- (1) Early intervention and prevention** - to prevent those who are vulnerable to sleeping rough from moving towards entrenched and harmful behaviours and lifestyles by intervening as early as possible.
- (2) Recovery and community integration** - to ensure that recovery underpins tenancy sustainment as part of a holistic approach to homelessness prevention
- (3) Rapid intervention** - to intervene rapidly when prevention has been ineffective, and homelessness is unavoidable
- (4) United support and enforcement action in Reading** - to approach rough sleeping in a way that supports individuals, but that also protects Reading's resident and business community from the effects of any associated anti-social behaviours
- (5) Provision of information and alternative ways to give** - to provide steer to our local communities in how they respond to people who are sleeping rough by providing sufficient and accessible information, support and guidance around how we collectively and individually support vulnerable people

### **Ongoing commissioned services**

Since 2018, Reading has spent and will continue to spend, £1.25m per annum on homelessness support services including:

- A rough sleeping outreach service
- 24/7 high need (hostel/hub) accommodation, including 18 emergency and assessment beds
- 100+ houses of multiple occupancy with support
- Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) for up to 20 individuals
- Floating support for cross-sector tenancy sustainment
- Housing First
- Street Support Reading information platform (<https://streetsupport.net/reading/>)

### **Rough Sleeping Initiative**

MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding has, since 2018/19, enabled Reading to double its outreach capacity, extend and provide consistent funding for a winter shelter between January and March and to introduce 10 'housing led' spaces to engage those with multiple needs who rough sleep. Reading has two innovative tenancy sustainment teams to support out of hours and within the private rented sector. With ongoing RSI funds, Reading will continue with these provisions.

### **NSAP Short-term Programme**

Reading's 2019 – 2024 strategic commitment has been given a welcome kick-start by the 'Everyone In' emergency response to the pandemic between March – August 2020. 261 unique individuals who were rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping were placed. NSAP short-term programme funds have enabled Reading to keep people accommodated within emergency accommodation until March 2021 and/or supported in their current or new (move-on) placements.

The NSAP short-term funds have provided an opportunity to work with people rough sleeping who do not have recourse to public funds to obtain EU Settled Status, reconnect internationally where desired and obtain immigration and legal advice.

### **RSAP Longer-term Programme**

This revenue stream funding aims to break the cycle of homelessness for those long-term and repeatedly rough sleeping in Reading. These funds will provide support to 50 new units for people with multiple needs, including substance misuse, mental health and offending histories.

### **New to the streets**

Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020 – 2025 outlines the borough's commitment to early intervention. New Homelessness Reduction Act legislation provides

opportunity and resource to focus upon the prevention of homelessness for single people and Reading has a team dedicated to this. Partnership working, the Duty to Refer, support and in-reach to prisons and hospitals all reduce the risk of someone becoming new to the streets. Since 'Everyone In' Reading has good intelligence on who is bedded down and some of the reasons people have been a risk of rough sleeping historically and intends to use this to inform early upstream interventions wherever possible. Reading strives towards a No Second Night Out response to rough sleeping when someone is found bedded down, supported by a strong rough sleeping outreach team and emergency bed spaces at Reading's 24/7 hub (when shared spaces can be made safely available again).

### **Wider rough sleeping issues in Reading**

Reading's wider rough sleeping issues include:

- Migration from other local authority areas - where Reading is an attractive 'hub' in Berkshire. It offers significant community and charitable responses to meeting basic needs for those rough sleeping/vulnerably housed
- Entrenched complex and multiple needs – people may need several opportunities for change and some people do not or have never engaged with an offer of accommodation to support them off the streets
- Sustaining systemic change and flexible responses for meeting the needs of those rough sleeping across sectors and services

### **Entrenched Rough Sleeping Cohort (Target Priority Group/Target Thousand Group)**

How do you plan to move your long-term and repeat rough sleepers into sustainable accommodation with support?

Reading intends to capitalise upon the 'Everyone In' effort and move-on successes. Existing RSI and local authority funded services and new NSAP short-term and winter provision funding will be targeted at keeping people off the streets and sustaining their existing accommodation.

For those with high needs still occupying emergency and temporary accommodation offered during 'Everyone In', Reading's health and homelessness outreach support teams will continue to provide a wrap-around service whilst the local authority moves swiftly to implement RSAP long-term programme plans for an additional 50 units for those with multiple and high needs.

### **Shorter-term/Interim Accommodation & Immediate Support Plan**

How do you plan to move people currently in Emergency Accommodation into longer term provision to prevent a return to rough sleeping?

Reading is using NSAP short-term programme funds to move people on from emergency and temporary accommodation by:

- Enabling access to private rented sector units with tenancies/licences negotiated for as long as possible – this includes funds for rent in advance and deposits
- Providing tenancy sustainment support whilst in emergency/temporary accommodation and through into private rented sector and settled accommodation to ensure transition and resettlement support
- Maximising options for those without recourse to exercise their Treaty rights via access to employment and to obtain EUSS to remain in the UK and obtain access to income/housing benefits and longer-term accommodation options

### **Longer-term Move-on Accommodation Plan**

How do you plan to deliver and design longer term accommodation and support options to

## tackle rough sleeping?

Reading recognises that individuals, couples and individuals/couples who own dogs who have multiple and complex needs, including substance misuse (significantly Class A drug use), mental ill-health and offending histories, are a significant need that can be met through RSAP longer-term programme revenue funds until 2024.

Reading will deliver 40 new modular units by March 2021 for those who are long-term and repeatedly rough sleeping with access to intensive 24/7 support and 10 new female specific units by December 2020. The local authority is investing approx. £2m borrowing to meet the capital costs of building the modular units. These are aimed to be longer-term supportive homes for this group.

There are several reasons that people with complex and high needs find it difficult to sustain accommodation including:

- Large, mixed gender hostel type environments which can be too chaotic for some, especially complex females and/or those with high risk/recent offending histories
- People who are vulnerable to exploitation and are unable to manage their own front door and vulnerable to county lines/cuckooing who can be targeted in some supportive or unsupported settings
- Negative associations/feelings towards prior support/client relationships which can cause a barrier in accessing existing supported accommodation provisions

By providing a female specific environment, Reading can begin to support and change lives for females who:

- Are significantly vulnerable to the cycle of trauma/abuse from childhood/adulthood – domestic abuse, sexual abuse and inappropriate sexual relationships
- Experience complexities that disproportionately affect female clients including: children taken into care; mental, physical, sexual health needs, substance misuse and sex working
- Struggle to manage their own front door where complex relationships can put independent accommodation in jeopardy
- Experience additional emotional/wellbeing complications regarding relationships with children and the stigma and shame of female homelessness e.g. feelings of failure as a mother/woman/contributor to society

In developing new provisions, there is the opportunity to change the way, and environment from which, support is delivered. Reading plans to design and deliver a place where people want to live and that they have a say in developing a community that they feel proud of.

## Winter Planning

What are the current winter plans for your local authority?

All winter plans/provisions will link people to primary healthcare advice and services, utilising our Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT). Once someone has been made an offer over winter, Reading aims to prevent people returning to the streets.

### Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

SWEP in Reading is an agreement between partners to ensure that anyone bedded down in the borough has an accommodation offer when temperatures drop to zero degrees or lower for three consecutive nights. This is a humanitarian response to save lives. Usually this would be a within a shared/communal space, but for 2020/21 this offer must be Covid secure and therefore will be offered within self-contained hotel/B&B accommodation to ensure that people can socially distance and self-isolate when required. This has been funded by the MHCLG NSAP short-term programme.

### Cold Weather Fund allocation

Reading has been allocated £90,000 to provide an offer to people bedded down over the winter period. This will primarily be targeted at people who returned to the streets from their 'Everyone In' offer – some of whom will have multiple and complex needs. It will also target those new to the streets, those released from custody or hospital and those known to rough sleep repeatedly or who have not engaged with any accommodation offer since March 2020.

A substitution for the usual winter shelter will be put into place, in collaboration with FAITH Christian Group. Self-contained hotel/B&B accommodation will be provided between December 2020 – March 2021 for up to 15 individuals/couples. FAITH Christian Group will provide hot meals and targeted support for this group to ensure they maximise their opportunity to access longer-term accommodation over the three-month period.

To promote Covid safe environments and behaviours, Reading has no plans to implement a shared space winter shelter in 2020/21.

### Additional need/demand over winter

With notable flow to the streets (new people found bedded down) and a number of no fixed address prison releases and hospital discharges in Reading, having a Covid-secure offer for each individual that may be found bedded down over winter will be a challenge. It is anticipated that existing and winter provisions can accommodate known individuals at this moment in time, but the uncertainty of new demand (outlined) creates a real risk of a gap in provision and not having an offer for all.

## Protecting and improving the health of people sleeping rough

The health-led response for people experiencing rough sleeping during the COVID-19 pandemic has seen unprecedented levels of new and multi-disciplinary working between health care, local government (public health, social care and housing), and homelessness service providers, including the voluntary and community sector. We want to ensure that this continues and that the health and care needs of your population are central in your plans for additional provision.

As part of your delivery plans you will want to consider the need for alternatives to hospital care for people with health and care needs who are rough sleeping, especially those who are considered clinically vulnerable.

Please describe how will you use this funding to ensure the health and care needs of people experiencing rough sleeping (including physical and mental ill-health, drug and alcohol needs) are understood and met?

Reading is privileged to have a dedicated Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT) to work with those who are rough sleeping and vulnerably housed who do not engage with primary

healthcare services easily. During the early part of the pandemic, they were key to understanding, monitoring and meeting the needs of people vulnerable to serious illness from Covid-19. Their input and guidance will continue to inform housing, care and support decisions. They provide patient in-reach to hospital and emergency accommodation settings for both physical and mental health needs and support with testing and recovery for symptomatic and positive Covid cases.

Reading's Outbreak Plan is accompanied by a robust Homelessness Outbreak Planning Tool which provides both practical advice to officers and escalation routes where there is risk of outbreak for each homelessness setting/location - including hostels/supported accommodation, emergency accommodation (hotels and B&Bs) and HMOs where those previously rough sleeping/at risk of rough sleeping have moved on to. The planning tool includes Covid-Care routes for each setting including: an isolated annex at Reading's main hostel, a self-contained 24/7 accessible unit within Reading's temporary accommodation and provision with local emergency accommodation providers if required. Reading intends to work on a funded project for 2020/21 and 2021/22 with the Better Care Fund regarding early identification of those who do not have accommodation when admitted to hospital and to enable safe discharge from hospital for those who would otherwise be discharged to the streets.

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## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SERVICES

<b>TO:</b>	<b>HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2021</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY</b>		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	<b>CLLR ADELE BARNETT-WARD</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	<b>NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITIES</b>
<b>SERVICE:</b>	<b>HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES</b>	<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>BORROUGH WIDE</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>JO MIDDLEMASS</b>	<b>TEL:</b>	<b>0118 937 3177</b>
<b>JOB TITLE:</b>	<b>COMMUNITY AND ENABLEMENT MANAGER</b>	<b>E-MAIL:</b>	<a href="mailto:joanne.middlemass@reading.gov.uk">joanne.middlemass@reading.gov.uk</a>

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

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of the updated Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, which has not been refreshed since 2014. The updated policy reflects the change in demands of the Anti-Social Behaviour Team, which include adult exploitation, particularly associated with county drug lines.
- 1.2 The Policy introduces a new procedure that the Anti-Social Behaviour Team will follow. It is 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) is occurring. The policy also sets out the types of issues that are associated with clash of lifestyles and not considered to be ASB. This policy does not include dealing with environmental ASB and noise nuisance outside of RBC Housing jurisdiction.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee notes and approves the updated Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The primary objective of the Anti-Social Behaviour Team is to reduce severe, and/or persistent anti-social behaviour perpetrated by local authority tenants and private rented/owner occupiers, as well as dealing with area based anti-social behaviour, for example, street drinking and motorbike nuisance.
- 3.2 The ASB Policy has historically been a Reading Borough Council Housing focussed ASB policy. The proposed policy widens its remit to and sets out an approach to how the Anti-Social Behaviour Team will provide a service to tackle ASB from a tenure neutral perspective and ensure that the service will focus on genuine serious and/or persistent cases of anti-social behaviour.
- 3.2 The content of the current policy has not been reviewed since the introduction of new ASB powers in 2014 and as such the new policy has been updated to take these into account and formalise the way the team has been working for some time.
- 3.3 In the last 5 years, the ASB Team has experienced an increase in demand, particularly relating to noise nuisance, drug related activity and the impact of adult exploitation, including ‘cuckooing’ of the homes of vulnerable people. The increase in adult exploitation has resulted in the team working collaboratively with Thames Valley Police to successfully apply for Closure Orders to provide respite to victims and local neighbourhoods whilst a longer-term plan can be put in place.
- 3.4 The table below sets out a snapshot of the increase in the number of new cases being reported to the ASB Team and the increase in the most reported types of ASB. The number and complexity of these cases continues to increase, and they are incredibly time consuming for officers to deal with. The number of new cases does not reflect the extensive work undertaken by the team to tackle the continuing issues of begging, street sex working and street drinking.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 (YTD)
Total new cases	230	207	261	310	338
Drugs related	51	57	67	98	97
Noise (RBC Housing cases only)	62	37	58	64	77
Closure Orders	1	6	5	19	25

- 3.3 The ASB Team has also responded to an increase in standard risk cases, predominantly associated with noise and lifestyle clashes. Many of these cases have not progressed in any action due to lack of evidence or reporting of incidence. Each case complainant is updated on their case at least once a

month, even for those cases that are dormant for a number of months. This has had an impact on the team's resources and dilutes the response to the more persistent and serious cases of ASB.

#### **4. THE PROPOSAL**

4.1 The new policy sets out how the Anti-Social Behaviour Team will 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 how the ASB Team can deal with anti-social behaviour and what types the team will deal with
- Providing support and advice to victims of anti-social behaviour
- Ensuring a partnership approach is taken to tackle anti-social behaviour.

4.2 Key changes to the policy includes:

- Resetting of client expectations and clarification on what constitutes anti-social behaviour
- Renewed focus on the most serious cases as opposed to one off incidents
- a new procedure which provides flexibility to officers to escalate actions to ensure that victims of anti-social behaviour are protected, and that the anti-social behaviour is resolved.

4.3 The new procedure will include a 4-week enquiry stage for standard risk cases to establish whether a case investigation will be triggered. Any enquiries that do not meet the threshold for a case investigation will be closed. This approach will allow officers to provide a more focussed service to victims and witnesses of ASB and give officers more confidence to set realistic expectations from the offset.

4.4 The Policy sets out behaviours the ASB Team will deal with; those actions that are not considered to be anti-social and emphasises that any decision to take legal action is for the Council to make. It states that officers will ensure that when making the decision to proceed with any legal action, it is appropriate, proportionate and reasonable. The updated policy now includes the requirement for officers to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty when considering taking legal action.

#### **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

5.1 The policy will contribute to the following Corporate Plan priorities:

- Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe
- To protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable adults and children.

5.2 The policy also supports the Community Safety Partnership's delivery groups' aims to deal with the following priorities:

- Exploitation - incorporating both Adult Exploitation and Modern Slavery
- Violent Crime and Serious Anti-Social Behaviour - incorporating increasing violence against the person, knife possession and high level anti-social behaviour that has a significant impact on communities.
- Class A drugs - incorporating drug visibility, drug dealing activity from within and outside Reading and drug related anti-social behaviour.

## **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 6.1 The ASB Team send out closed case surveys to victims and witnesses who have used the service. Feedback from the surveys support the continuing review of the ASB Team's service delivery.
- 6.2 The majority of the work with communities is focussed towards Reading Borough Council Housing tenants. Updates regarding ASB in local areas are provided to RBC Housing tenants in neighbourhood newsletters, including action taken to tackle ASB and reminders of what action the team can take.
- 6.3 A focus group was held with Reading Borough Council tenants in 2018 following results from the Tenant Satisfaction Survey and the findings from the focus group have helped shape the revised policy and procedure. Further focus groups are currently being held in response to the most recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey and the findings from these groups will be utilised to continue to improve the service.

## **7. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 The policy will ensure that the ASB Service is actively promoted and accessible to everyone within Reading. The aim is to make it easy for anyone to report incidents, providing a variety of ways to report.
- 7.2 Incidents of a hate crime related issue are responded to within 1 working day.
- 7.3 Tools including diary sheets are made available in a range of languages and witness support is tailor-made to the individuals.
- 7.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment is completed for each case referred to the Council's legal team for enforcement action.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Section 218A(2) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) requires that local housing authorities have in place:
- (a) A policy in relation to anti-social behaviour and
  - (b) Procedures for dealing with occurrences of such behaviour.

This statutory duty has been in place since 2004.

8.2 Section 218A (4) requires that the local housing authority must from time to time keep the policy and procedures under review and when it considers appropriate, publish a revised statement.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The ASB Team has a small special measures budget of £15000, which is ring-fenced for RBC Housing cases. This is utilised for witness support and costs associated with attending court, mediation, small remedial measures to reduce the impact of ASB, for example, fencing, soft door closures and use of The Noise App.

9.2 There will be no additional financial implications by implementing this revised policy.

These financial implications were reviewed by Mark Jones, Strategic Business Partner on 4/2/21.

## **10 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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# Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

DRAFT

## Contents:

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## 1. Introduction.

At Reading Borough Council, our approach to tackling anti-social behaviour is three pronged - prevention, intervention and enforcement. While often necessary, enforcement action is a last resort to be used only when other more constructive measures have been exhausted or to safeguard others in an emergency. We firmly believe that partnership work plays an important part in addressing the issues associated with anti-social behaviour and multi-agency working is engrained in the Anti-Social Behaviour Team's approach to tackling anti-social behaviour.

Reading Borough Council's Housing Service is committed to reducing anti-social behaviour in the borough. We know that by improving the environment in which our residents live we will create a brighter future for communities across Reading.

## 2. Aims.

This policy sets out Reading Borough Council's view of what ASB is, what our service standards are and what we want our services to achieve for victims and witnesses of Anti-Social Behaviour. In particular, the aims of this policy set out how the Anti-Social Behaviour Team will 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.
- Set realistic expectations in relation to how the ASB Team can deal with anti-social behaviour and what types of ASB the team will deal with.
- Provide support and advice to victims of anti-social behaviour.
- Ensure a partnership approach is taken to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour.

How we will deal with ASB on a day-to-day basis is set out in our ASB Procedure, which sets out a 6-stage process to deal with anti-social behaviour. This process is designed to be flexible, to enable officers to skip parts of it or do things in a different order to protect witnesses and solve the problem.

## 3. Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour at Reading Borough Council: An Overview

### Reading Borough Council's powers to deal with ASB.

Our Role as a Social Landlord

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 sets out powers that the council has to deal with ASB issues affecting the properties managed by Reading Borough Council. As a landlord, we have different duties and powers to those we have to deal with ASB in the wider community. The powers we can use and in which circumstances are set out in the ASB Procedure document.

### Our Role as a statutory member of Reading's Community Safety Partnership.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 provided that as a Local Authority we must work in partnership with the police and other agencies, such as Probation and Health Authorities, to reduce crime and disorder in Reading. This work is guided through Reading's Community Safety Partnership and its response to the strategic assessments carried out every 3 years.

#### **4. Definition of Anti-Social Behaviour.**

Anti-Social Behaviour can mean different things to different people and there is no one single definition of Anti-Social Behaviour.

When assessing if a case should be fully investigated, Reading's Community Safety Partnership definition of ASB will be applied, which is as follows:

*“Behaviour causing damage, disturbance, distress, harm or fear which has a **significant impact** on people's lifestyles, routines or their environment. **Persistence, intensity and the number of incidents involved are relevant factors. The behaviour need not be a breach of the criminal law.**”*

For the purpose of taking legal action in Reading Borough Council's Housing capacity, the following definition from the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 will apply:

*Conduct capable of causing housing related nuisance or annoyance to any person.*

#### **5. Delivering an ASB Service in Reading.**

This policy acknowledges that environmental ASB, including Statutory Nuisance, is tackled by other service areas within Reading Borough Council, who operate within their own policies and procedures. This policy focusses on the ASB Team's response to ASB.

- **The ASB Team.**

Within Reading Borough Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team, 4 Anti-Social Behaviour Officers are dedicated to dealing with anti-social behaviour, including those neighbourhoods in which there are council-owned properties.

The primary objective of the Anti-Social Behaviour Team is to reduce severe, and/or persistent anti-social behaviour perpetrated by local authority tenants and private rented/owner occupiers, as well as dealing with area based anti-social behaviour, for example, street drinking and motorbike nuisance.

- **Housing Association cases.**

Housing Associations are responsible for dealing with ASB involving their tenants. Cases which require a multi-agency response can be referred to a multi-agency problem solving meeting with a range of partner agencies to problem solve. The ASB Team will not case-manage these cases, but can provide guidance, if required.

#### **6. The ASB Team's Approach.**

The Anti-Social Behaviour Team will treat people fairly and equally and ensure that a proportionate and reasonable approach is taken to any action taken to resolve anti-social behaviour.

The team uses a variety of approaches to intervene as early as possible, resolving issues before they become major problems. Early intervention could include Warnings, Mediation, Acceptable

Behaviour Contracts (ABC's) and Good Neighbourhood Agreements (GNA's). An overview of these interventions can be found in the Anti-Social Behaviour Procedure.

The ASB Team will only become involved in those cases where evidence is provided to demonstrate that an issue is of a persistent and significant or serious nature. The ASB Team reserves the right not to investigate a case where there is evidence that the complainant is being unreasonable, vexatious or vindictive. In these circumstances, the complainant will be advised of this assessment and the reasons.

When deciding on what action to take, the ASB Team will ensure that any action, particularly when considering legal action, is both reasonable and proportionate, taking into account all the facts of the case. There will often be difficult decisions for the council to make and at times, this may mean that the action we take is not considered adequate by the victim/witness. However, officers will explain the reasons why decisions have been made in all circumstances. The team will take into consideration view of those involved in the case. It will however be the Council's decision regarding what action is or is not taken.

- **Categories of Anti-Social Behaviour.**

Whilst the term Anti-Social Behaviour covers a broad range of issues, The ASB Team focuses on the most serious types of anti-social behaviour. Reading Borough Council believes that everyone has a right to enjoy their homes and are entitled to go about their daily lives without having concerns that complaints will be made against them. It is important that individuals show tolerance and be respectful of differing lifestyles and circumstances.

Anti-Social Behaviour issues the ASB Team will investigate:

- Noise - only caused by Reading Borough Council Housing Tenants where the noise is frequently excessive in volume and duration or occurs at unreasonable hours.
- Threatening behaviour
- Drug related issues (which cause significant ASB)
- Problematic visitors (those of Reading Borough Council Housing Tenants only)
- Hate crime - racist, homophobic etc.
- Violence
- Verbal abuse
- Vehicle Nuisance (vehicles being driven/riden in an anti-social manner)
- Offensive communication (in cyber bullying)
- Exploitation /cuckooing/Mate Crime
- Criminal damage
- Street drinking
- Aggressive Begging

The following issues will be dealt with Tenant Services, if Reading Borough Council tenants are involved or they are taking place on Reading Borough Council housing estates.

- Parking
- Animal problems
- Untidy gardens/high hedges
- Condition of property (non-garden)
- Car repairs
- Flytipping
- Abandoned vehicles

- Alleyway (clearance of gating/overgrown)
- Trees (if on housing land)
- Street lights (if on housing land)
- Domestic violence issues
- Ball game nuisance

The following issues will **not** be investigated:

- Actions that are normal everyday activities or household noise, e.g. walking across laminate flooring, people talking, children crying, children playing, noise generated from domestic appliances at reasonable hours.
- Cooking smells
- Children playing in their homes or in the locality of their home or designated playing area.
- Ball game nuisance
- A one-off party
- Actions which amount to people being unpleasant to each other people or people staring with no other associated ASB but are not sufficiently serious considering the likely harm caused to justify our involvement
- complaints about other people having lifestyles that offend others, for example issues about differences in parenting, who people socialise with, how people dress
- Spreading rumours
- Parking disputes
- Boundary disputes
- Car repairs on non-RBC housing land.
- Low level neighbour disputes - Not all neighbour disputes should be dealt with as anti-social behaviour. Depending on the circumstances of a complaint, a complainant may be advised to contact their own legal advice in relation to their complaint.

Noise Nuisance within Reading Borough Council's housing stock is an issue that is regularly reported to the ASB Team. The team will make it clear to RBC Tenants that it is expected that whether they live in a house or a flat, they will hear some noise from their neighbours. This will vary depending on the type of property they reside in and how the noise travels between adjoining properties. However, residents are not expected to endure severe levels of noise nuisance, for example persistent loud music.

- **Hate Crime.**

Hate related incidents are those perceived by the victim as being motivated by prejudice based on a personal characteristic, including:

- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or beliefs
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Transgender identity

Incidents may be against a person or a property. A victim does not have to be a member of the group to which the hostility is targeted. All reports relating to a hate incident will be responded to by the ASB Team within one working day and the team will work in partnership with the police to resolve the issue.

- **Criminal Activity.**

Primarily, acts of criminality should be reported to the police and the ASB Team will advise anyone reporting criminal activity to report it to the police. However, the ASB Team will support Thames Valley Police to tackle criminal activity in our neighbourhoods and will take action to enforce Reading Borough Council Housing tenancies in cases where criminal activity is linked to our properties. In some cases, whereby criminal activity is occurring, it may be appropriate that we lead on some of the action required to deal manage ongoing issues of criminal behaviour, for example, obtaining Injunctions under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014.

## **7. ASB Case management.**

The ASB Procedure sets out in detail how anti-social behaviour can be reported, initial response times based on risk, how reports of ASB will be assessed and how reports may progress into a case investigation. Cases will only progress if they are of a persistent and significant nature. In low level situations, Complainants will be encouraged to try and resolve the situation themselves in the first instance. In most instances, perpetrators of ASB will be given the opportunity to improve their behaviour before the decision is made to take enforcement action. However, it is necessary to balance the needs of the individual against the needs of the community. If it is essential to act to protect the needs of the community, we make every effort to ensure that this is both swift and effective.

Enquiries and cases will be allocated to the ASB Officer who covers the area in which the ASB reported is occurring in. If an enquiry is progressed into a case investigation, the ASB Officer carrying out the enquiry will lead on the case investigation and any subsequent interventions and enforcement action to ensure an effective resolution to the case.

The ASB procedure will follow 6 stages, which are set out below. The procedure is designed to be flexible, so ASB Officers can skip parts of it or do things in a different order in order to protect witnesses and solve the problem, particularly as there may be occasions where an incident occurs that needs an urgent response and possibly legal action, for example violence or threats of violence.

### **Stage 1 - Initial Enquiry and Assessment.**

The initial enquiry is triggered upon the receipt of a new reported issue of ASB. It is designed to establish whether an initial investigation will be triggered and will provide the allocated ASB Officer information to make a judgement as to how severe the complaint and whether urgent enforcement action is required.

The Enquiry period lasts for a maximum of 4 weeks. At any point during the enquiry stage, the enquiry may be converted to a case, if the thresholds are met. If insufficient information is

provided to meet the threshold to proceed with a case investigation, the enquiry will be closed, and the complainant will be advised of this.

Contact will be made with complainants within the timescales set out above. If the ASB Officer is unable to contact the complainant after 3 attempts by telephone, a letter will be sent to encourage contact. If the complainant does not contact the ASB Team within 10 working days of the letter being sent, the assessment will be closed.

During this process, we expect that if we ask for diary sheets to be completed, that they are and returned to the allocated ASB Officer and in RBC Housing noise cases, if we ask for submissions via The Noise App, these are submitted.

- **Action Plan.**

At this stage the ASB Officer will set up an Action Plan, which will be used to record the chronology of incidents, actions set and taken by the officer and other agencies, including any multi agency meetings, referrals to agencies for support, requests for information and the risk assessments. Forthcoming actions will also be recorded, e.g., when contact is due, when a new risk assessment is due to be carried out.

### **Stage 2 - Case Investigation.**

If an enquiry converts into a case investigation, the ASB Officer will open a full case, open an action plan and begin the evidence collation process. The ASB Officer will ensure that the continue to engage with the victim/witnesses involved in the case to ensure that they continue to provide information to enable the officer to resolve the case effectively. It is important to note at this stage that a case may escalate at any time and more urgent action may be required.

When advising the victim/witness that the case is progressing to a full investigation, the ASB Officer will offer to meet with the victim, unless the victim states they do not wish to meet in person, either at their home or a suitable location. Regardless of whether the officer meets in person or liaises with the victim by telephone, the ASB Officer will follow an interview plan to obtain further information, set out clear expectations, establish if there are any support needs and reassure the victim/witness. This interview plan is set out in the ASB Procedure.

- **Evidence gathering.**

The ASB Officer will endeavour to gather evidence in a number of ways to support the case. This will include:

- Interviewing victims/witnesses & perpetrators
- Taking statements
- Liaising with Thames Valley Police regarding any reports which may have been made to them
- Sourcing any CCTV footage
- Noise Monitoring Equipment/The Noise App recordings.

This process will take place over a 2-month period before an initial case review is conducted. The victim/witness will be expected to continue reporting incidents through the agreed channel throughout the duration of the remainder of the case. In cases where this does not happen, the case may be closed due to lack of information.

### **Stage 3 - Initial Case Review.**

After 2 months of the case being opened, if the case has not progressed onto stage 4 or 5, the ASB Officer will carry out a case review to establish if the case should be closed or progressed further. This will depend on the evidence provided and if the ASB is considered to be persistent and severe.

The following actions may apply:

- **No further action - case closed (stage 6).**

There are several reasons why a decision is made to close the case at this stage, for example,

- No reported incidents received.
- There is insufficient evidence to identify a perpetrator
- Evidence provided is found to be unreliable
- The complainant does not support action

If the ASB Officer is considering closing the case, they will advise the victim/witness at the point of the 2-month monthly contact and set out why they are considering closing the case. Following the discussion, the ASB Officer will make a decision to close or monitor further and advise the victim/witness how long they will monitor for. This should be for no longer than 1 month. If there are still no opportunities to progress the case, the officer will discuss closing the case with the ASB Team Manager.

While all ASB reports that progress to a case investigation will be investigated fully, there may be cases where there is little action that we can take in response to a complaint. For example, if there are counter allegations and no supporting evidence from either party.

- **ASB is continuing.**

The ASB Officer will continue with Stage 4. Cases will continue to be reviewed on a monthly basis after this point. If there are no reported incidents for a 4-week period or the incidents have reduced significantly in persistence and severity so that they no longer meet the threshold, the ASB Officer will consider closing the case and will discuss this with the victim at the next monthly contact, setting out why they are closing the case.

#### **Stage 4 - Interventions.**

The ASB Team will use a range of interventions to try to put a stop to ASB and these will often be used in the first instance. As each case is different, we are committed to finding the most appropriate intervention for the relevant case. However, a few of the most commonly used interventions are outlined below for the purposes of reference:

- Verbal warnings/Words of advice
- Warning letters
- Mediation
- Acceptable Behaviour Contracts
- Good Neighbourhood Agreements

A full range of interventions available are set out in the ASB Procedure.

If these interventions do not curtail the ASB, the case will be considered for legal action. However, insufficient evidence can threaten the success of legal action and lead to an inefficient use of finite resources.

### **Stage 5 - Legal Remedies.**

The Anti-Social Behaviour Team acknowledges the significance of enforcement action in reducing anti-social behaviour. However, reasonableness and proportionality will be at the forefront of any legal action that is considered. The Anti-Social Behaviour Team will, if necessary, seek advice from the Council's legal team before taking the decision to proceed with legal action, to ensure that it is an appropriate, reasonable and proportionate step to take.

For all cases that persist and where alternative solutions have proved ineffective, legal action will be considered. In cases that require urgent action to safeguard individuals or the wider community, enforcement action will be taken as a matter of urgency.

The use of legal action will be decided by the council. In almost all but the most serious of ASB cases being considered for ASB related enforcement action, the case will first be referred to the ASB Multi-Agency Panel, a monthly consultation panel at which proposed ASB related enforcement is discussed for approval.

The types of enforcement that will be considered:

- Legal Warning letter / Letter Before Action
- Civil Injunctions with or without a Power of Arrest attached
- Closure Orders
- Community Protection Notices
- Criminal Behaviour Orders

For persistent area-based issues, a Public Space Protection Order may be considered.

In addition, the following will apply to Reading Borough Council Housing tenants:

- Demotion of Tenancy
- Notice of Seeking Possession (NOSP) or Notice of Proceedings of Possession in cases of Introductory Tenancies
- Possession Orders
- Notice of Seeking Possession on Absolute Grounds

External factors beyond the control of Reading Borough Council can impact the progression and speed of cases, for example the availability of court dates. Any delays will be communicated appropriately to the victims and witnesses.

### **Stage 6 - Case Closure.**

The accompanying Anti-Social Behaviour procedure is designed to ensure that cases are not open for longer than necessary. However, it is important to ensure cases are closed appropriately. Cases will only be closed with the approval of the ASB Team manager. Cases may be closed during any stage of the procedure due to one of a number of factors, including:

- Lack of co-operation from the victim/witness.
- Establishing the incident did not take place.
- Determining the issues reported are not considered by the ASB Team as anti-social behaviour.
- Not having enough evidence to prove the matter to the relevant standard of proof.
- The anti-social behaviour has stopped and risk of further ASB is low.

ASB Officers will ensure they communicate to the victim/witness when a case will be closed and the reasons why. The rationale for case closure will be recorded in the case action plan.

The full details of the following procedure are set out in the accompanying ASB Procedure document.

#### **8. Victim and Witness Support.**

The support for victims and witnesses of anti-social behaviour, provided by the ASB Team will vary, depending on the type of anti-social behaviour they are experiencing. The ASB Team will also make referrals to other support agencies, as and when required.

Once an enquiry has converted into a case, the following service offer will be in place for victims and witnesses:

- There will be one point of contact for the victim or witness throughout the process of resolving their complaint.
- Regular feedback regarding the progress of their case will be provided - officers will update victims and witnesses at least once a month.
- Full support will be provided, including providing an escort and pre-meet for any court hearing will be given.
- That the homes of victims will be assessed for additional support and safety measures.

#### **9. Vulnerable Perpetrators.**

We acknowledge that the vulnerabilities of some residents contribute to behaviour which is classed as anti-social to those around them. These vulnerabilities include but are not limited to, mental health issues, learning difficulties and substance misuse.

In cases where vulnerable perpetrators are involved, we will work closely with various support agencies with the aim of improving the behaviour of a tenant. If it is felt that the tenant in question cannot sustain a general needs tenancy, we will advocate relocating them to more suitable accommodation. The ASB Team regularly makes referrals to a range of support services, including the Floating Support Team, the Community Mental Health team, and treatment providers for substance misuse and will work alongside partner agencies to ensure appropriate support is provided. Understanding that a coordinated multi-agency approach is often needed, cases will be referred to the People Solution Group to facilitate joint working and ensure a co-ordinated multi agency approach.

#### **10. Reporting ASB to the ASB Team.**

Victims and witnesses can report via the following methods:

- Telephone (via Council's call centre) Tel 0118 937 3787
- Email - [asb.team@reading.gov.uk](mailto:asb.team@reading.gov.uk)
- In writing - ASB Team, Partnership Office, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Reading Police Station, Castle Street, Reading, RG1 7TH

Calls made to the call centre will be recorded on the council's CRM system and emailed to the ASB Team.

The ASB Team acknowledges that victims of anti-social behaviour may wish to report anonymously due to being frightened. However, we do encourage people from come forward in person where possible, to enable officers to gather all relevant information to conduct a thorough investigation.

#### **11. Service standards & service improvement.**

If a full case is opened, we will ensure the following:

- A named officer will oversee the initial enquiry and where appropriate, a case investigation.
- The ASB procedure is thoroughly explained to all victims and witnesses & realistic expectations are set.
- Witness support tailored to the needs of each individual.
- For the duration of the case, victims and witnesses will be kept updated at least once a month on the progress of their case.

In order to continuously improve our service, we ensure that all complainants are asked to provide feedback regarding their experience of the Anti-Social Behaviour Service via closed case questionnaires, which can be accessed online or in the post. The Anti-Social Behaviour Team also links in with the Tenant Participation Team and meet with community members to find ways of improving the service.

#### **12. Working in partnership.**

Reading Borough Council recognises the importance of partnership working, both with other agencies and residents and will ensure that partnership factored into the management of cases. It may be more appropriate for other agencies to take the lead in cases at times, however, the Anti-Social Behaviour Team will take the lead and appropriate action when necessary.

An important element throughout all stages of the Anti-Social Behaviour Team approach is working in partnership with both internal and external agencies. As stated above the team will work with support agencies and those with an enforcement role such as Thames Valley Police and Environmental Health and, if appropriate, will refer the case to a multi-agency problem solving group for further problem solving.

#### **13. Information Exchange and Confidentiality.**

- **Information Sharing.**

Reading Borough Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team is signed up to Reading Community Safety Partnership's Information Sharing Protocol. Officers are trained to have a solid awareness of these procedures to ensure legal and safe sharing of information. It may be necessary to share information as part of the Team's investigations: this process will be used to facilitate this sharing of information.

- **Handling data.**

The ASB Team ensures that all data handled by the team is:

- Collected for a specific and legitimate purpose and is not used for anything other than this stated purpose.
- Processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner.
- relevant and limited to the requirements for which the data is processed.
- accurate and kept up to date, with any identified inaccuracies amended or removed without delay.
- Stored for as long as required, in line with the ASB Team's Privacy Notice.
- Secured using appropriate solutions, which protect against unauthorised or unlawful processing.

The ASB Team's Data Processing Notice is available on Reading Borough Council's website: [Add web address](#)

- **Consent.**

The ASB Team will ask victims and witnesses for consent, in the format of a consent form, to take action; to ensure that they are in agreement with the action we are taking; and to refer to any support services. In cases where consent is not given to action being taken and where the ASB can be witnessed without the help of the victim or witness, the ASB Team will investigate this, but will ensure there no risk is posed to the victim.

The ASB Team will also ask consent in cases when the victim/witness wishes for another person to liaise with the team on their behalf.

#### **14. Community Right To Review (Community Trigger).**

The Community Right to Review is a means by which victims of persistent anti-social behaviour can request a review of their case. Once the Community Right to Review process has been requested the relevant agencies, which may include the local authority, police, health providers and/or social housing, will work together and decide whether any further action can be taken to resolve the issue.

The Community Right to Review cannot be used to make complaints against individuals who have worked on your case as it is not a complaints process.

A separate procedure for processing Community Right To Review requests sets out the roles and responsibilities of the ASB Team.

#### **15. Equality and Diversity.**

The Equality Act 2010 provides people with a protected characteristic protection from direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation. This policy is designed to be inclusive, regardless of protected characteristics and the service provided by the Anti-Social Behaviour Team is designed to meet a range of different needs of those who use our service and those whom action may be taken against.

When considering and taking legal action against anyone involved in anti-social behaviour or introducing a Public Space Protection Order, the Council will ensure that it complies with its Public Sector Equality Duty. The ASB officer dealing with the case will carry out an Equality Act Assessment to demonstrate, amongst other things, that any protected characteristic the perpetrator(s) may have, whether they have any support services in place and whether the proposed action is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim has been taken into

consideration by the council and to ensure that the legal action proposed is a proportionate, reasonable and appropriate response to the anti-social behaviour committed.

#### **16. Legal Framework.**

This policy has been informed by the legal and regulatory framework for tackling anti-social behaviour, including:

- Anti-Social Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1996
- Crime & Disorder Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Data Protection Act 2018

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## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

<b>TO:</b>	HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
<b>DATE:</b>	10 MARCH 2021		
<b>TITLE:</b>	READING'S CULTURE AND HERITAGE STRATEGY UPDATE AND PRIORITIES FOR 2021-22		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	CLLR KAREN ROWLAND	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	CULTURE HERITAGE AND RECREATION
<b>SERVICE:</b>	CULTURE	<b>WARDS:</b>	ALL
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	DONNA PENTELOW	<b>TEL:</b>	07921 941 075
<b>JOB TITLE:</b>	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR CULTURE	<b>E-MAIL:</b>	donna.pentelow@reading.gov.uk

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

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the committee on the achievements of Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030, outline the council's Culture Service response to the covid19 pandemic and to outline the key areas of priority for 2021-22 given the profound and ongoing impact of covid19 on the cultural sector.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION That the Committee:

- 2.1 note the achievements of Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030 delivered to date and the council's Culture Service response to covid19.
- 2.2 agree the key areas of priority 2021-22.

#### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030 is now in its fifth year of delivery. Produced by Reading's Cultural Partnership it is focused around three strategic objectives of Enhance Identity; Increase Opportunity; Celebrate. A summary of the achievements of the first 5 years of delivery are outlined below. Covid 19 has had a profound effect on the arts, cultural and heritage sector and therefore it is proposed some key areas of priority are identified to support the sector's response and recovery.

#### 4. ACHIEVEMENTS OF CULTURE AND HERITAGE STRATEGY 2015-2020

- Recognition and active support by businesses of cultural organisations celebrating our local cultural heritage and amplifying the heritage offering to attract people from outside of Reading. For example, The Oracle supported Burial of Henry I and Matilda reimagining; Rabble received support from local businesses for their reimagining of our history and heritage.
- Businesses have been providing free space to the arts for community meetings, launches, performance, events, and workspace. E.g. Roseate Reading WorkLife, White Building, Oracle, Broad Street Mall and many others.

- Arts, heritage and culture is embedded in the town's **economic regeneration** Reading 2050, High Street Heritage Action Zones, and Reading Powered by People.
- There has been increased collaboration with ReadingUK, bringing businesses and cultural organisations together, including the successful Twilight Trail, a festive light trail illuminating Forbury Gardens and the Abbey Ruins held in December 2020.
- The allocation for arts and culture features in the **Local Plan** for first time for planning and development.
- **Reading, Year of Culture 2016**, a year long programme of cultural and heritage events including the hugely successful Artangel art installation in Reading Prison.
- **WhatsOnReading.com** launched and consolidates all listings and cultural offer in one place, used by over 150 organisations.
- **Reading Culture Live** a new digital streaming platform showcasing Reading made cultural and creative content. Launched in 2020, as a response to covid19, it has delivered 278 online activities, reaching over 15,000 unique visitors across 80 countries, representing over 100 local arts organisations, festivals and venues. It has initiated 43 commissions for new digital first content.
- The award winning **Abbey Quarter and Reading Abbey Revealed project**, working with National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England, to conserve, reopen and animate the Abbey Ruins. This project won the *Best use of Heritage in Placemaking'* category at the Planning Awards 2020.
- **More festivals reaching more people** - new festivals started since 2016 include Down at the Abbey, Earth Living Festival, Blue Grass Festival, and Reading Climate Change Festival.
- **Cultural commissioning programme** and Reading Culture Live Commissions focus on health and wellbeing, reaching new and marginalized participants with both open access and targeted programmes.
- **Reading Cultural Education Partnership** launched in 2016 with the mission to allow every child and young person in Reading to aspire, achieve and participate in quality cultural activities. Since then 94% of Reading schools have engaged with a CEP partner, 17 schools have gained Artsmark accreditation, 1,355 Arts Award qualifications have been achieved and £200k+ in external investment has been gained for CEP partners through the partnership investment scheme.

## 5. CULTURE SERVICE DELIVERY DURING 2020-21

5.1 The start of 2020-21 was in the middle of the first national lockdown where all of the council's buildings were closed to the public. Although the doors were closed, the teams were adapting and pivoting the service offer to maintain a level of access to culture and heritage. The teams gained national recognition, having featured in the Local Government Association's case studies for good council practice in response to covid19.

5.2 Our cultural teams completely 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. These transformational approaches have received an overwhelming positive response giving people an opportunity to actively engage and enjoy themselves during these difficult and isolating times. Reading Culture Live, was created to provide a platform for local cultural organisations to have a digital venue whilst everything was closed, and became more successful than we imagined in reaching wider, even global audiences. We are now looking at how we develop and utilise this as a vehicle for the future, to expose Reading's cultural offerings to wider audiences.

### Reading Museum

5.3 Reading Museum created new digital content to increase and deepen community engagement. By May 2020 resources had been viewed or downloaded over 50,000 times, representing a 206% increase from before the lockdown. Social media engagement similarly increased by 258% from before the lockdown. There has been lots of user feedback and appreciation, especially for the VE Day hub, online Animal

exhibition, Windrush Day hub and the Archaeology Festival online events. By early September, there were over 3.2 million views on social media and 120,000 website visits since lockdown started.

- 5.4 Reading Museum's Windrush online exhibition, Enigma of Arrival: The Politics and Poetics of Caribbean Migration to Britain, a partnership with Barbados Museum and the University of the West Indies, was critically acclaimed, featuring in the Arts Council England's national round-up. Locally the project included Reading's Caribbean Associations Group, the Alliance for Community Cohesion and Racial Equality, AGE UK Berkshire, and Globe Church Community.
- 5.5 The Museum was able to reopen for booked visits within a Covid-safe environment from 5 September 2020. October half term was fully booked with popular take home craft packs. Black History Month was celebrated with the loan of a portrait of Paul Robeson from the National Portrait Gallery and a video tribute by Reading Community Gospel Choir featured on Reading Culture Live. At the same time the Museum's online shop was relaunched and in Q3 of 2020/21 saw a significant year-on-year sales increase.
- 5.6 The service continues to support schools creating new live virtual sessions that can be delivered by the learning team direct to the classroom. Since October, seven new sessions, ranging from Bayeux Tapestry to Victorian Childhood, have been created and by Christmas 2020 over 1,000 children had already enjoyed a virtual museum visit. A Friends of Reading Museum crowdfunding drive further enhanced the reach of this programme to local schools but also to some across the country.

#### **Libraries**

- 5.7 Reading Libraries have reopened Central, Caversham and Tilehurst libraries since all sites were initially closed in March 2020. The libraries operate an 'order and collect' service and provide free access to PCs via appointment in line with legislation and guidance. On average 400 people per week are accessing libraries in person across the network. The home service, supporting around 400 of the most vulnerable people in Reading, has been operating since July.
- 5.8 During lockdown Libraries developed means to allow instant digital access for the first time, meaning customers could quickly access online resources - this service has grown to around 5,500 uses per month across the year. Our digital offering includes story, rhyme and craft videos, along with local history, which have totalled around 30,000 views over the year. We worked with partners such as the British Library to provide a good digital offering.
- 5.9 Being able to access library resources, to support people's mental health and wellbeing, reducing isolation and supporting education and family literacy, at a time when all buildings were closed, was greatly appreciated by our customers. We are looking to restore more buildings and services as soon as we are able.

#### **Hexagon and South Street**

- 5.10 The Hexagon theatre, within ten days, was transformed into a community hub. It provided over 1,232 food deliveries and supported hundreds of Reading's most isolated and vulnerable families, offering support and signposting to organisations that could provide help. Over 20 theatre, events and leisure staff gave their time to assist the Council's response to the urgent needs of local residents.
- 5.11 The Hexagon reopened for socially distanced public performances in October including the welcome return of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's family show, Noisy Kids, which was sold out. However, the last public performance was on 17 December 2020,

due to national lockdown restrictions. South Street secured Arts Council England funding to create in collaboration with resident artists, an innovative show that attempted to address ‘the strange times we all find ourselves in - whilst we’re still experiencing them.’ ‘Behind Closed Doors’ was performed socially distanced in South Street and extremely well received by audiences.

#### **Berkshire Record Office**

- 5.12 The Berkshire Record Office has continued to provide a full remote enquiry service, including copies and research. The facilities reopened to visitors from August until the second lockdown, and again briefly in December. Over 3,000 research requests have been met despite the pandemic. The service retained its accredited status by The National Archives for another three years, placing the service within the top 6% of all archives services nationally.
- 5.13 The service has delivered online talks and podcasts in lieu of face-to-face public engagement. Similar to Reading Museum, the spring VE Day 75 exhibition was moved online and can be viewed at [www.throughtheireyesww2.com](http://www.throughtheireyesww2.com). The exhibition showed the Second World War through the personal experiences of Berkshire people. It included testimony from the Home Guard, ARP volunteers and evacuees.
- 5.14 The externally-funded project to catalogue over one thousand items in the Thames Conservancy archive will complete on time and within budget. This will be celebrated with an online exhibition in spring 2021, as part of the Reading 2021 anniversaries.

#### **High Street Heritage Action Zones**

- 5.15 The national HSHAZ scheme was formally launched by Historic England (HE) and DCMS on the 19th September 2020. The Reading scheme has a total budget of £1.6 million and focuses on the high streets within three Conservation Areas: Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road; St Mary’s Butts/Castle Street; and Market Place/London Street. The scheme focuses on physical interventions, community engagement and cultural enrichment. Reading was successful in achieving a further grant of £9,231 to run a pilot project on the Oxford Road conservation area to create art installations along the Oxford Road which celebrates the amazingly diverse lives and cultures that make up the unique heritage of the Oxford Road.

### **6. THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE ORGANISATIONS**

- 6.1 A report has been compiled by University of Reading, 2020, on behalf of Reading, Place of Culture to record how the arts sector has been impacted by the pandemic and to find out what support is most needed. 30 art, culture and heritage (ACH) organisations responded to a questionnaire sent to Reading’s arts organisations, producers and individual artists by Reading Place of Culture between 26th October 2020 and 7th November 2020.
- 6.2 The main impacts on the sector are:
- Live events and bringing people together is the sort of activity that is most challenging under social distancing rules.
  - There are reduced numbers of staff, volunteers and beneficiaries now compared to pre-pandemic.
  - Negative impact on employment and collaboration.
  - Continuance of activities relied heavily on organisations being able to adapt their offer to online/digitally. Some target social groups are harder to reach in this way, such as the young, marginalised communities and areas of deprivation.
- 6.3 Key concerns are:
- Difficulty engaging with people because of ongoing social distancing restrictions.

- Uncertainty - changing times making it difficult to plan.
- Difficulty engaging people because of changes in what people are willing to participate in.
- Funding

6.4 The main areas where support would be welcomed:

- Funding support.
- Shared marketing resource (publicity).
- Business Engagement resource (a person who engages with businesses on behalf of the cultural sector).
- Venues for meeting (rehearsals, performance).
- Opportunities to collaborate with other organisations.
- Admin support.
- Office space.

## 7. THE PROPOSAL

7.1 Covid19 has had a profound impact on the cultural sector. In response it is proposed to set out a single year plan of priorities in direct response to the pandemic to support the sector's recovery.

7.2 It is proposed that a one year delivery plan is developed to respond to the impact of covid19 on the sector based around the following key priorities.

### **Strategic Priority One: Enhance identity - being Reading/Made in Reading**

1. Develop legacy actions from Reading, Place of Culture project and produce delivery plan.

### **Strategic Priority Two: Increase Opportunities through working together.**

1. Work with strategic leaders of Reading's creative industries to identify how best to support and facilitate the recovery of Reading's creative industries post covid19.
2. Continue to innovate and transform services to provide access to culture despite ongoing impacts of covid19.
3. Deliver the High Street Heritage Action Zones project objectives.
4. Work in partnership to further the community and council ambitions for Reading Prison within the wider context of the Abbey Quarter and national and international arts, culture and heritage opportunities.
5. Agree and commence delivery of the new Cultural Education Partnership plan 2020-2024.
6. Continue to support and develop the Ageing Well Partnership.
7. Initiate a wide ranging conversation with communities and partners to shape a robust and sustainable the future three year delivery plan 2022-25 for the Reading's [Culture and Heritage Strategy](#).

### **Strategic Priority Three: Celebrate**

1. Deliver Reading 2021 Anniversary activities.
2. Agree a framework for the programming of events and engagement activities throughout 2021 in the borough's parks and open spaces.
3. Celebrate Reading's diverse arts, culture and heritage.

### 7.3 Other Options Considered

7.4 At the end of the Place of Culture funding period, the intention had been to bring forward a three year delivery plan. However, given the ongoing uncertainties relating to covid19 and the recovery of the sector this was felt to not be prudent. Instead a one year delivery plan, that sets out tangible yet aspirational goals to, is recommended provides focus on the response and recovery of the sector post covid19.

## **8. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

8.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2018-2021 (which was refreshed in Spring 2019) sets out six priorities, the delivery plan set out below would support the following priorities:

- Securing the economic success of Reading
- Promoting health, education, culture & wellbeing

8.2 Reading Powered By People 2020-22 economic recovery strategy was adopted by the Council in September 2020. Centred around three objectives Inclusive Reading; Smart Reading; and Destination Reading the role of culture features strongly in supporting Health and Well-being in the work place; reinventing vulnerable sectors hit hardest by covid19 and the town centre economy; and Reading, as an arts heritage and cultural destination.

## **9. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no environmental or climate implications as a result of this report.

## **10. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

10.1 The key priorities have been developed with informal engagement with the sector. Further engagement to shape the delivery of the priorities will take place with sector leaders and we will initiate a wide ranging conversation with communities and partners on shaping the future three year delivery plan 2022-25 for the Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy.

## **11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

11.1 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.

11.2 It is imperative, that in planning for the recovery we look to protect the most vulnerable and marginalised in our society. The achievements of the strategy to date and in particular the cultural commissions have sought to engage and work with vulnerable and marginalised groups. The arts, culture and heritage sector has a strong track record in delivering positive outcomes with targeted priority groups.

## **12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 No relevant legal issues have been identified by the report.

## **13. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Existing Council budgets will be deployed in partnership with external parties to achieve shared outcomes.

The financial implications were reviewed by Mark Jones, Strategic Business Partner, on 3/2/21.

**14. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 14.1 None

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## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

<b>TO:</b>	<b>HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>10 MARCH 2021</b>		
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>READING PLACE OF CULTURE YEAR 3 EVALUATION</b>		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	<b>CLLR KAREN ROWLAND</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	<b>CULTURE HERITAGE AND RECREATION</b>
<b>SERVICE:</b>	<b>CULTURE</b>	<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>DONNA PENTELOW</b>	<b>TEL:</b>	<b>07921 941 075</b>
<b>JOB TITLE:</b>	<b>ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR CULTURE</b>	<b>E-MAIL:</b>	<b>donna.pentelow@reading.gov.uk</b>

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

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the committee on the achievements from the third and final year of the Reading, Place of Culture project. It outlines the profound and ongoing impact of covid19 on the project and sets out some indicative legacy plans.
- 1.2 Reading, Place of Culture, was one of 16 Great Places Schemes funded by Arts Council England, Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Scheme. It is jointly led and delivered by Reading Borough Council, Reading UK CIC and Reading University. The scheme runs from 2018-2020. A grant of £558,400 was awarded to deliver three core strands of work over three years.
- 1.3 Reading, Place of Culture aims to make Reading a better place to live, work and visit, fostering a culture of collaboration across sectors, and where caring for and engaging people is achieved in partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors. The scheme supports Reading to enhance its cultural offer, drive economic growth, and improve the quality of life for people in Reading. Covid19 has had a profound impact on the project's ability to deliver against its original plans. However, with the support of funders, innovation and agility on behalf of partners and arts, culture and heritage organisations in Reading have delivered some exceptional outcomes for some of Reading's most marginalised communities.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

That the Committee:

- 2.1 notes the achievements of the Reading, Place of Culture project delivered to date
- 2.2 agrees the legacy plans as set out in paragraph 5 of the report.

#### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.2 The Council's Corporate Plan 2018-2021 (which was refreshed in Spring 2019) sets out six priorities, the Reading, Place of Culture project and proposed legacy plans support the following priorities:
- Securing the economic success of Reading
  - Promoting health, education, culture & wellbeing
- 3.3 A stronger arts, culture and heritage sector enhances quality of life and brings economic value to Reading. It impacts on place making and inward investment, and therefore, the future of Reading as a whole. One of the successes of Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy is that arts, heritage and culture is recognised as contributing to the town's economic regeneration and is embedded in plans such as Reading 2050 Vision particularly theme of 'a city of culture and diversity', High Street Heritage Action Zones, and Reading Powered by People.
- 3.4 It was evident in early 2020, the covid19 pandemic was having a profound effect on the arts, culture and heritage sector and the ability of organisations to deliver against the stated aims of the project. The team agreed with the funders to reshape the final year of delivery to take this into account. The funders agreed the revised plans and extended the project delivery timeline to the end of June 2021. The main changes were:
- Repurposing funding for Reading on Thames Festival to establishing and creating a Reading Festivals Group to support the sustainability and development of Reading's independent festivals; and to create a new digital content platform for organisations to publish their work, [Reading Culture Live](#).
  - Amending the delivery methods of some cultural commissions.

Reading, Place of Culture reports regularly to its three national funders via progress report updates and presentations in person; they have approved the current plans.

#### 4. STRANDS OF WORK AND DELIVERY IN 2020-21

- 4.1 Over the course of the project, Reading, Place of Culture has:
- Increased overall engagement by reaching new audiences and better understanding barriers for harder to reach audiences.
  - Established strong new strategic partnerships and continued to build on existing ones.
  - Continued to include community voices in cultural activity
  - Enhanced belonging and connectivity among Reading's communities using arts and culture as the vehicle to do this.
  - Strengthened the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector by providing opportunities for connection, skills development and support during the pandemic.
- 4.2 The project has continued to deliver against the three strands of activity and a summary of achievements is presented below.

#### **THE CULTURAL COMMISSIONING PROGRAMME, LED BY READING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

- 4.3 The purpose of the commissioning programme is to empower local organisations to develop cross-sector partnerships to engage marginalised or hard-to-reach communities in arts, culture and/or heritage programmes. Many of these commissions have had to make significant changes in their delivery plans as a result of covid19 restrictions. Organisations have worked extremely hard to continue to support their beneficiaries as much as possible, although this hasn't always been possible due to the nature of the project or client group.

Current commissions include:

- 4.4 Project: Age UK Berkshire and The Museum of English Rural Life delivering a storytelling and reminiscence project for older people at risk of loneliness and social isolation to improve wellbeing.**  
Age UK and The MERL moved all of their delivery online. They hosted Older People's Day online along with a coffee morning, they have also created Life Story Boxes for those who are at risk of social isolation. They have also delivered training to volunteers, who will be capturing the stories of these individuals. All face to face delivery has been paused until April 2021 as many of the community are shielding. Strong partnerships have been created with arts organisations including Realtime, Strike Up theatre and Annice Thomas.
- 4.5 Project: Alana House, Rahab and Reading Rep delivering theatre for women at risk to enhance communication and conflict resolution skills.**  
Delivery of this project online has not been possible, due the restrictions of being able to work online with vulnerable people. Discussions on how best to proceed and deliver this project are ongoing.
- 4.6 Project: Sport In Mind and Junction Dance are working with Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, schools and community settings to use dance in the treatment, management and prevention of mental illness.**  
This project has extended delivery to 31 March 2021. In September, they delivered mum and baby movement classes outdoors, which have since been paused in line with lockdown restrictions.
- 4.7 Project: Rosetta Life dance, music and spoken word project for long term conditions such as living with the effects of stroke, dementia or Parkinson's.**  
Rosetta Life moved their weekly sessions online and completed in December 2020. As a result of their project they have created a strong partnership with Royal Berkshire Hospital and Stroke Associate Reading, Rosetta Life will be continuing to work with them to support patients.
- 4.8 Project: Reading Rep, Jelly and other partners are delivering theatre for young people with SEND to develop confidence and independence, develop skills and decrease social isolation.**  
This has worked so well with their target group that they will continue to deliver their workshops in this way. 124 children and young people took part in a mixture of face to face and online youth theatre sessions. Additional funding was received by Reading Rep from Brighter Futures for Children to deliver holiday schools at the Avenue School. They employed Neuro diverse camp leaders to help run the sessions.
- 4.9 Project: Mustard Tree, Real Time and Cranbury College are delivering a creative employment project based around film for young people with SEND to build confidence and key skills. Groups will restart once lockdown rules have been relaxed.**

#### **THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME, LED BY UNIVERSITY OF READING**

- 4.10** The Research Programme is co-produced by the University of Reading and the Whitley Researchers, an active research partnership between Whitley Community Development Association and local residents. It aims to develop best practice for borough-wide engagement, geared towards the needs of Reading's diverse communities. In March 2020 the majority of Research/Evaluation budget was repurposed to fund the extension of the other strands as a result of Covid-19. The Whitley Researchers and University team continued to support the others strands of the project, focusing on the legacy of our participatory action research and partnership working with communities through projects.

Those projects and activities include:

- 4.11** On behalf of the Ageing Well Partnership a piece of research was commissioned to explore the delivery of arts culture heritage activities to older residents in Reading

and better understand the challenges faced by local organisations and service providers. This was carried out prior to the pandemic and particularly highlighted the challenges faced by Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee groups. The research has led to discussions about equality, diversity and inclusion, and identifying and delivering tangible actions will be a key part of the legacy plan.

- 4.12 Whitley Researchers had developed a variety of research projects that have evidenced the lived experiences of Covid-19, including a pilot research on Digital Inclusion in collaboration with RVA and RBC, to better understand the barriers facing local families/communities for accessing and engaging in online cultural offers. A research on the experiences of the lockdown with a focus on wellbeing, social isolation and home-schooling. The WRs wrote a story that reflects their journey through the RPoC programme.
- 4.13 The Whitley Researchers have continued to develop and are now working with a range of partners across different policy areas championing the role of participatory community-based research. One of the key legacy actions will be to explore a sustainable organisation model for the researchers.

#### **READING CULTURE LIVE, LED BY READING UK (RUK)**

- 4.14 Reading Culture Live (RCL) was developed and delivered within 8 weeks of the first national lockdown. RCL was designed to be a sister site to What's On Reading. RCL was conceived to support wellbeing outcomes for the community, the sustainability of the local cultural sector and to promote continued pride in Reading. It had two associated commissioning pots to fund online activity specifically linked to the NHS 5 Steps to wellbeing, delivered by local organisations. In the first round RCL funded 11 projects, in the second 6, a third round was supported by RUK to tie in with the Magical Reading offering, this funded 24 projects by local artists. (<https://www.readingculturelive.co.uk/genre/commission>)
- 4.15 In RCL's first 7 months it has:
- Hosted 100 local arts organisations, 278 activities and events, 60 of which were premieres
  - Funded 47 organisations from a combined pot of £31,000
  - Reached over 80 countries
  - Reached 15K unique visitors and had 51k pages views
- 4.16 RCL's survey found that over 90% of the audience felt that interacting with the 'virtual' venue had a positive effect on their wellbeing, '*A focus for my weeks in lockdown, as a single person.*' They also commented positively on the engagement of families, older people, British Sign Language Users and the police. While 100% of the participants said that the engagement with the platform and the art organisations had a positive effect on their wellbeing - '*The activity helped me to escape from the loneliness of lockdown.*' Artists who engaged with the platform said that they had developed new networks, relationships and reached new audiences. Through this evaluation we have learned that in order to have a high impact on the wellbeing of the audience and the participants, we must ensure that the participatory element is always present in the online offering.
- 4.17 RCL is working with South Street and Reading Arts, to launch their first joint online venture in February 2021. This will also be linked with an online theatre club discussion live via Facebook. Work is continuing to develop interfaces between the Reading Arts ticketing platform, the third party video host for RCL and What's On Reading to offer a seamless experience for the user and artist. This has the potential to diversify income streams and reach audiences who are further afield or have accessibility needs that cannot be accommodated in the venue.

#### **READING FESTIVALS' GROUP, LED BY READING UK**

- 4.18 The Reading Festivals' Group is a partnership organisation, representing 17 Reading based festivals. It aims to create synergies in terms of best practice, sustainability, funding and support networks. In February, they will be working with Artwork to create a 'terms of engagement' that will enable the group in the future, to apply for funding from grant awarding bodies to best serve their development as individual festivals.

#### **THE CULTURE AND BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT STRAND, LED BY READING UK**

- 4.19 This has been a difficult year for businesses in Reading and across the world. Covid-19 and the resulting strain on the business sector, made delivering findings from last year's report especially challenging. In order to ensure momentum was kept within this strand of work, a report was commissioned to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on Reading's cultural sector. The findings of which are in Appendix 1. The focus of this report was to understand what would best support the recovery of the sector. The intention was to then see if and how businesses could step in to help, thereby promoting further engagement within between businesses and the arts organisations. This work has helped the Council shape its key priorities for the coming year.
- 4.20 The main impacts on the sector are:
- Live events and bringing people together is the activity that is hardest to sustain under social distancing rules.
  - There are reduced numbers of staff, volunteers and beneficiaries now compared to pre pandemic.
  - Negative impact on employment and collaboration.
  - Continuation of activities relied heavily on organisations being able to adapt their offer to online/digitally. Some target social groups are harder to reach in this way, such as the young and the marginalised.

### **5. OPTIONS PROPOSED**

- 5.1 The following actions have been identified to form part of the draft legacy plan from Reading, Place of Culture to be discussed and agreed with funders and subject to further consultation with partners and the wider ACH sector.

#### **THE CULTURAL COMMISSIONING PROGRAMME**

- Continue to support cultural commissioning model encouraging children and young people to become key actors in shaping ACH programmes post Covid-19 via Cultural Education Partnership and other ACH platforms
- Continue to champion the role of culture in delivering against health and wellbeing, equality, diversity and inclusion outcomes

#### **THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

- Ageing Well research - identify and deliver tangible actions to address the challenges of equality, diversity and inclusion faced by communities in accessing culture and funding. ACH programmes can play a key role in bringing different voices and communities together if they are inclusive and participatory
- The Whitley Researchers model is being embraced as a tool for creative young people.
- The Whitley Researchers will be expanding their methodologies to other areas of Reading and cities in the UK through new grants to explore a sustainable organisation model for the researchers.

#### **SUPPORTING THE SECTOR POST COVID19**

- Reading Culture Live - Continue to develop the platform sustainably, building a targeted schedule of events, developing fewer larger commissions, offering

technical support for development locally and explore options to amalgamate into What's On Reading.

- Reading's Festivals Group - support the ongoing development of this group and explore model as a possibility for other artforms in the town, like performing arts.
- Cultural Sector Research - create a one year sector recovery strategy based on findings of the research.

## **PARTNERSHIP**

- Agree the ongoing role of the project steering group and partnership between UoR, Reading UK and the Council. The partners will continue to engage with and assist other ACH projects, sharing learnings, good practices and delivery model developed throughout the 3 years of the RPoC project, that includes:
- the new UoR 'Public Engagement with Community Research Fellow' will facilitate and expand the participatory action research (PAR) embedded within this strand; lead to several co-produced grant applications with ACH organisations, service providers and communities; enables research/evaluation support for local ACH organisations
- to assist Reading's cultural sector to better represent its BAME communities and important lessons learned, such as a need for more diverse and inclusive partnerships/funding strategies between grassroots ACH organisations and Reading's cultural sector/service providers
- the research participatory engagement model can assist the development of other major ACH projects such as the new High Street Heritage Action Zone (HS HAZ) community engagement pilot on the Oxford Road and the wider HS HAZ community engagement programme.
- to explore further sources of funding to continue the legacy of the project's strands, such as using the Cultural Recovery Fund for Heritage funding to support 2021 activities on Reading Culture Live (two videos to be made celebrating the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Abbey Ruins).

## **Other Options Considered**

- 5.2 As the funding for the project ceases in June 2021, closing the project workstreams and ceasing the activities has been considered. However, the project team in consultation with the funders has decided to repurpose the funding and to adapt the activities ensuring the main aims and objectives are maintained within covid-19 secured parameters.

## **6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 6.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2018-2021 (which was refreshed in Spring 2019) sets out six priorities, the delivery plan set out below would support the following priorities:
- Securing the economic success of Reading
  - Promoting health, education, culture & wellbeing

## **7 ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no environmental or climate implications as a result of this report.

## **8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 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 The achievements of the project and in particular the cultural commissions have sought to engage and work with vulnerable and marginalised groups. However, more action is needed to address the barriers and challenges marginalised groups face engaging with arts, heritage and culture.

## **9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 Reading Place of Culture prioritises and positively benefits a number of groups with protected status as well as vulnerable populations of Reading. The arts, culture and heritage sector has a strong track record in delivering positive outcomes with targeted priority groups. However, more action is needed to address the barriers and challenges marginalised groups face engaging with arts, heritage and culture.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Any funding granted to the Council for the purpose of support and recovery of the cultural sector of Reading, Place of Culture project, as described in this report, must be in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and in compliance with the Subsidy Control regime.
- 10.2 The Council is also required to sign and comply with the Terms of Grants of different funding agents (e.g. Great Place Scheme, Arts Council England, the Lottery Heritage Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund) from whom it receives the grant.

Legal implications provided by Anita Sakhare, Solicitor, on 03 February 2021

## **11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 A grant of £558,400 was awarded by Arts Council England, Historic England and the Heritage Lottery Fund to deliver four core strands of work over the three years. We claimed and received so far £383,042. We are in a process of submitting another claim for the period covering April 2020 to December 2020.
- 11.2 The Great Place Scheme bidding guidelines stipulated that a minimum of 10% of direct project costs should be provided by cash contributions from delivery partners. The Council and Reading UK have each committed to provide £50,000 over the life of the programme to meet this requirement. The council's contribution is contained within existing budget allocations for the Culture Service.
- 11.3 Matched funding worth £56,000 has been generated for the Cultural Commissioning Programme from Brighter Futures for Children, Berkshire Community Foundation and the University of Reading.

- 11.4 In the future we will consider how the indicative legacy plans may be funded via existing budgets or by securing external funding.
- 11.5 These financial implications were reviewed by Mark Jones, Strategic Business Partner on 5/2/21

**12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 12.1 None