

To: Councillor Brock (Chair)
Councillors Page, Ennis, Barnett-Ward,
Duveen, Emberson, Hoskin, McElroy,
McEwan, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland,
Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Stevens, Terry and
White

Direct: ☎ 0118 9372303

2 July 2021

Your contact is: **Simon Hill - Committee Services (simon.hill@reading.gov.uk)**

NOTICE OF MEETING - POLICY COMMITTEE 12 JULY 2021

A meeting of the Policy Committee will be held on Monday, 12 July 2021 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Reading, RG1 2LU (a small number of socially-distanced seats will be available for the press and public). The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

- | | | | |
|----|---|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. | CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS | | |
| 2. | DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST | | |
| 3. | MINUTES | | 5 - 16 |
| 4. | PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS | | |
| | To receive any petitions from the public and any questions from the public and Councillors. | | |
| 5. | DECISION BOOKS | | 17 - 18 |
| 6. | THE AVENUE SCHOOL EXPANSION | BOROUGH WIDE | 19 - 32 |
| | This report seeks scheme and spend approval for the capital investment required to convert The Avenue Centre building to school use, to provide additional SEND places. | | |
| 7. | ROUGH SLEEPER DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT GRANT | BOROUGH WIDE | 33 - 50 |
| | This report sets out information on a Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant received from Public Health England and a proposal to award the grant in two phases. | | |
| 8. | CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME ANNUAL UPDATE | BOROUGH WIDE | 51 - 66 |

CIVIC OFFICES EMERGENCY EVACUATION: If an alarm sounds, leave by the nearest fire exit quickly and calmly and assemble on the corner of Bridge Street and Fobney Street. You will be advised when it is safe to re-enter the building.

This report updates the Committee on the successes achieved in year 1 of the Council's Customer Experience Strategy, and the lessons learned and plans for year 2.

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|-----|---|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 9. | DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY | BOROUGH
WIDE | 67 - 152 |
| | This report sets out for approval the Council's draft Digital Transformation Strategy 'Connected Reading', together with a recommended work programme for year 1, known as the Digital Accelerator Programme. | | |
| 10. | DRAFT DESIGN GUIDE FOR SHOPFRONTS - SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT | BOROUGH
WIDE | 153 -
208 |
| | This report seeks the Committee's approval to undertake community involvement on a Draft Design Guide to Shopfronts Supplementary Planning Document, which gives user-friendly guidance on how planning applications for applications affecting shopfronts will be decided. | | |
| 11. | QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORT (2020/21) | BOROUGH
WIDE | 209 -
278 |
| | This report sets out the provisional revenue and capital outturn positions for the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account for 2020/21 and performance against the measures of success published in the Council's Corporate Plan. | | |
| 12. | CEMETERY ARCH, LONDON ROAD | PARK | 279 -
290 |
| | This report seeks approval for the proposal to dispose of Cemetery Arch on a 250-year Lease. | | |

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION IN CLOSED SESSION

13. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The following motion will be moved by the Chair:

"That, pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following items on the agenda, as it is likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of that Act"

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FOR CLOSED SESSION ITEMS

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 15. | CEMETERY ARCH, LONDON ROAD | PARK | 291 -
348 |
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ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMITTEE ACTING AS SOLE MEMBER OF BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN LIMITED

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 16. | BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN - RESERVED MATTERS | BOROUGH
WIDE | 349 -
360 |
|-----|---|-------------------------|----------------------|

WEBCASTING NOTICE

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Present: Councillor Brock (Chair);

Councillors Page (Vice-Chair), Barnett-Ward, Duveen, Emberson, Ennis, Hoskin, McElroy, McEwan, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Stevens, Terry and White

RESOLVED ITEMS

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Stanford-Beale declared a prejudicial interest in Item 10, on the basis that she was a Council-appointed Non-Executive Director of Reading Transport Limited.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 12 April and 26 May 2021 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair.

4. DECISION BOOKS

The Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services submitted a report listing the Decision Books that had been published since the report to the meeting of the Committee held on 12 April 2021.

Resolved -

That Decision Book Nos 628-632 be noted.

5. DEVELOPMENT OF THE MINSTER QUARTER

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval for a proposed approach to the development of the Minster Quarter, and specifically to proceed to prepare the site for sale by way of a Development Agreement as the preferred delivery vehicle, and to appoint a professional team to support this process. The report also set out details of funding opportunities including a bid to the Brownfield Land Release Fund which, if successful, would support the delivery of the Council's ambitions for the Minster Quarter. Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was a summary of the history of the Minster Quarter Site.

The report noted that the Minster Quarter represented one of Reading's major town centre development opportunities with the potential to deliver a number of the Council's aspirations for the town centre and wider borough. The pandemic had highlighted the need for a flexible, versatile town centre offer based on a mix of uses in an attractive public realm with generous access to public open space, and the renewal of the Minster Quarter offered the opportunity to deliver this based on a vision for high quality, high density, mixed use development which leveraged the historical associations of the area to enhance new residential, retail, commercial, cultural and environmental opportunities.

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The report explained that soft market testing had been carried out and a high-level appraisal undertaken in November 2020. This had concluded that the viability gap was 'manageable' and that the project should therefore proceed to the next stage. Following an Options Appraisal Report, and legal advice to establish the most appropriate route to delivery, it was recommended that the site be taken to market for sale incorporating a Development Agreement. This was due to a combination of factors but most notably to minimise the Council's risk in the process and limit the Council's investment in the project to the value of the land and cost of the tender process.

The report explained that in order to take the scheme forward it was recommended that a professional team be appointed to lead the sale of Minster Quarter by way of a development agreement. The team would provide a detailed delivery strategy with recommendations to take the site to market alongside viability assessments. The report sought approval to tender for the team and appoint commercial and legal advisers and authority for officers to allocate spending from approved regeneration capital budgets for preparation of the site for market, the procurement of professional services and other costs associated with the development. Progress would be reported to the Civic Board.

The report also set out details of an application to the Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF) fund, which would support some of the site demolition and servicing costs which were currently affecting the site's viability. The bid had been submitted under delegated authority by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council as permitted by the Council's constitution, due to the tight deadline for responses which had made it impractical to submit a report to the relevant Committee prior to submission of a bid.

The report noted that the Levelling Up Fund was a further central government funding initiative focussed on providing improved infrastructure and connectivity. Officers had previously considered making a bid to the Levelling Up Fund to support the acquisition and delivery of Reading Gaol prior to the Ministry of Justice rejecting the Council's bid in May 2021. A Levelling Up Fund bid to support the delivery of Minster Quarter would now be considered, and the report sought authority for the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, to submit bids for relevant funding streams including the Levelling Up Fund.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services be authorised to tender for a professional advisory team to take Minster Quarter to market for sale by way of a Development Agreement;**
- (2) That the submission of a bid to the Brownfield Land Release Fund, submitted by the deadline of 2 June 2021 under delegated authority by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council as permitted by the Council's constitution clause 9.3.1 (3) be noted;**

- (3) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, be authorised to submit bids for other relevant funding streams, including The Levelling Up Fund;
- (4) That the Chief Executive be authorised to spend up to £250,000 from approved regeneration capital budgets for preparation of the site for market, procurement of professional services and other costs associated with the development;
- (5) That the the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to appoint the commercial and legal advisors for the project;
- (6) That it be noted that progress would be reported to the Civic Board.

6. CEMETERY POLICY

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report presenting new draft Cemetery & Crematorium Regulations (the Regulations) for public consultation. The following documents were attached to the report:

Appendix 1 - Draft Cemetery & Crematorium Regulations 2021

Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 3 - Cemetery Plan and Grave Types

The report explained that under the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 (LACO) legislation, Local Authorities were required to prepare and adopt Regulations that set out the Council's policy and procedures for the operation of the cemetery. The last time the Regulations had been updated and adopted by the Council had been in 2011. The Regulations applied to Henley Road Cemetery, Reading Cemetery and Caversham Cemetery, and also to Reading Crematorium and Gardens of Remembrance based at Henley Road Cemetery.

The report stated that in October 2020, representations had been made to the Council that the Bereavement Service currently provided did not fully meet the needs of the Muslim community. In consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services and the Executive Director for Resources, temporary changes to the service had been made, with the opportunity offered for families to retrospectively upgrade to a traditional grave (these changes related to the 5th Muslim section of the cemetery in the area known as 'Park' only). The Council had also committed to review the current Regulations and consult on the revised proposals.

The report summarised the proposed changes to the regulations which were within the context of a national burial land shortage, and a predicted burial provision in Reading for a further eight years (Westfield five years, Mayfield three years) should the proposed changes be adopted. The proposals had been developed to ensure the changing needs of communities within Reading were met, where reasonable and practicable to do so, specifically considering faith burial needs, as well as ensuring operations were cost-

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effective and efficient. Approval was sought for a holding position until the regulations were in place, under which families would be offered a Lawn Grave only in the Westfield area of the cemetery.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Draft Cemetery & Crematorium Regulations as set out at Appendix 1 be approved for public consultation;**
- (2) That a further report be submitted to the Committee in September 2021 following the outcome of the consultation process;**
- (3) That the Council's holding position prior to agreement of the new Regulations be approved.**

7. ALLOCATION OF THE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY 15% LOCAL CONTRIBUTION

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the 15% of collected Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to be allocated to the local area in which development had taken place. An Equality Impact Assessment was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and a Summary of the outcome of consultation was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The report set out the results of consultation undertaken on the provisional allocation of 15% local CIL and future priorities agreed at Policy Committee on 15 February 2021 (Minute 97), which were summarised in Appendix 2. There had been a total of 171 responses and almost 70% of respondents had agreed with the proposed allocations overall. 18% of respondents had disagreed, whilst 11% did not know. A number of comments had been made on individual proposals for spend, and these were detailed in Appendix 2. The consultation had also asked respondents to rank priorities for future allocation. Play areas and public open spaces was the top ranked item, followed by climate change and renewable energy and the natural environment. Appendix 2 also set out ranked priorities for individual wards.

The report proposed a final allocation of £1.557m local CIL collected up to 31 March 2020 to various schemes across the Borough (see Resolution 2 below), with the balance of available 15% local CIL funding (£0.112m) to be carried over to be allocated in future years. Two changes to the previous allocation of 15% local CIL were also recommended. There was expected to be an underspend on Broad Street seating refurbishment, and a need for additional funds for the Dog Fountain project, and therefore a reallocation of £0.010m from one to the other was recommended. An allocation of £0.050m CIL to Whitley Wood community provision had originally been intended to be used towards the development of a new church centre and health centre on the St Paul's church hall site on Whitley Wood Lane, but it was likely that this development would not come forward for several years. It was therefore proposed to allocate the funding for improvements to the nearby Whitley Wood Community Centre.

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At the invitation of the Chair, Nick Jones addressed the Committee on a request for a pedestrian crossing near St Joseph's School on Upper Redlands Road. It was moved and agreed that the request be noted and included for consideration in the next round of locally CIL-funded schemes.

Resolved -

- (1) That the results of consultation undertaken on provisional allocations of 15% local CIL and priorities for future spend (Appendix 2) be noted;**
- (2) That the following allocations of 15% local CIL collected up until 31st March 2020 be agreed, with a total allocation of £1.557m:**

**£0.075m for Borough-wide graffiti removal project
£0.050m for town centre monuments and statues
£0.100m for war memorials and public art
£0.100m for Thames cycle path in Kings Meadow
£0.275m for the High Street Heritage Action Zone project
£0.075m for Shinfield Road Recreation Ground improvements
£0.095m for skate park at John Rabson Recreation Ground
£0.095m for Waterloo Meadows play area improvements
£0.100m for Arthur Newbery Park play area improvements
£0.095m for Oxford Road Recreation Ground play area improvements
£0.050m for pedestrian crossing on Norcot Road
£0.085m for Dover Street play area improvements
£0.002m for laptops for Coley Park Community Centre
£0.100m for Brook Street West improvements
£0.030m for Moriston Close play area improvements
£0.100m for Palmer Park play area improvements
£0.005m for Morpeth Close road marking
£0.050m for pedestrian crossing on Addington Road
£0.050m for pedestrian crossing on Church End Lane
£0.010m for lining alteration on The Meadway
£0.015m for landscaping improvements at South Whitley Park**

- (3) That the relevant Assistant Directors be authorised to complete necessary procurement processes to deliver the programme of work;**
- (4) That spend approval be delegated to the relevant Assistant Directors in accordance with the funds approved at (2) above and that any variation to the allocations above be delegated to the relevant officers in consultation with the Lead Councillors for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport and Corporate and Consumer Services and the Director of Finance;**
- (5) That £0.010m of the 15% local CIL allocated to Broad Street seating refurbishment by Policy Committee in November 2018 and amended by**

Decision Book in August 2020 be allocated instead to the Dog Fountain, St Laurence's Churchyard;

- (6) That £0.050m allocated by Policy Committee in November 2018 to additional community facilities as part of, or near to, improved health care provision in Whitley Wood be used for Whitley Wood Community Centre;
- (7) That the request for a pedestrian crossing on Upper Redlands Road, in the vicinity of St Joseph's, be noted and that it be included for consideration in the next round of locally CIL-funded schemes.

8. SPECIALIST VEHICLE MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on progress with the renewal of the specialist vehicles maintenance contract and seeking approval to award a new contract in June 2021 to avoid service disruption. An options appraisal was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the existing specialist vehicle contract with Geesinknorba expired at the end of August 2021 and that the provider did not wish to enact the option for an extension. In order to operate the 82 specialist vehicles including refuse collection, street sweepers and the mobile library, an Operator's Licence was required by law, and failure to have a maintenance contract in place was a breach of the licence undertaking. It was therefore recommended to award the maintenance contract to Dennis Eagle via the YPO framework.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Committee approve the award of the Specialist Vehicle Maintenance contract to Dennis Eagle via the YPO framework for a period of three years with an option to extend for up to twenty-four more months;
- (2) That further investigations be carried out into future options including a full business evaluation of bringing the maintenance service in house and a separate evaluation of the future of the Bennet Road Depot capacity issues.

9. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services submitted a report asking the Policy Committee to make appointments or nominations to outside bodies for the Municipal Year 2021/22, or longer where required. A schedule of outside body appointments showing the Group Leaders' recommendations was circulated prior to the meeting.

Resolved:

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- (1) That appointments or nominations to the listed outside bodies be made as follows:

Title	Representative
Age UK Berkshire - Board observer	Councillor Gul Khan
Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE)	Councillor Paul Gittings
Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE)	Councillor Sophia James
AWE Aldermaston - Local Liaison Committee	Councillor Micky Leng
AWE Aldermaston - Local Liaison Committee	Councillor Helen Manghni
Berkshire Local Transport Body - Deputy	Councillor Debs Absolom
Berkshire Local Transport Body	Councillor Tony Page
Berkshire Maestros	Councillor Paul Gittings
Berkshire Pension Fund Panel	Councillor Jason Brock
Bus Lane Adjudication Service Joint Committee / Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London Adjudication Joint Committee - Deputy	Councillor Debs Absolom
Bus Lane Adjudication Service Joint Committee / Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London Adjudication Joint Committee	Councillor Tony Page
Caversham Park Village Association	Councillor Clarence Mitchell
Citizens' Advice Bureau Trustee Board	Councillor Helen Manghni
Citizens' Advice Bureau Trustee Board	Councillor Liz Terry
Citizens' Advice Bureau Trustee Board	Councillor Micky Leng
Community Alcohol Partnerships CIC	Trading Standards and Coroners Manager
Conservation Area Advisory Committee	Councillor David Stevens
Conservation Area Advisory Committee	Councillor Richard Davies
Earley Charity	Councillor Liz Terry
Earley Charity	David Sutton
Flexible Home Improvements Ltd	Assistant Director of Planning, Transport & Regulatory Services
Hexham Community Association Management Committee	Councillor David Absolom
Homes for Reading Limited	Councillor Jenny Rynn
Homes for Reading Limited	Councillor Jo Lovelock
Homes for Reading Limited	Councillor Liam Challenger
Homes for Reading Limited	Councillor Sarah Hacker
Homes for Reading Limited	Frances Martin
Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise	Councillor Jason Brock
Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise	Councillor Tony Page
Kenavon Drive Management Company	Councillor Tony Page
Kennet and Avon Canal Trust	Councillor Paul Gittings
Kennet Day Nursery Association	Councillor Ruth McEwan
Launchpad Reading	Councillor Rachel Eden
Local Enterprise Partnership	Councillor Jason Brock
Local Government Association (Conference)	Councillor Jason Brock
Local Government Association (Conference)	Councillor Tony Page
Local Government Association (Conference)	Councillor Jeanette Skeats
Local Government Association (General Assembly)	Councillor Tony Page

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Local Government Information Unit Management Committee - Deputy	Councillor Alice Mpofu-Coles
Local Government Information Unit Management Committee	Councillor Rachel Eden
Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forum	Councillor Karen Rowland
Pakistani Community Association	Councillor Chris Maskell
Queen Victoria Institute	Bet Tickner
Queen Victoria Institute	Councillor Rose Williams
Readibus Board of Directors	Councillor Gul Khan
Readibus Board of Directors	Councillor Jane Stanford-Beale
Readibus Board of Directors	Councillor Mohammed Ayub
Readibus Board of Directors	Councillor Rose Williams
Readibus Board of Directors	Councillor Ruth McEwan
Reading Climate Change Partnership	Ben Burfoot
Reading Climate Change Partnership	Councillor Tony Page
Reading College Business Advisory Board	Councillor Ashley Pearce
Reading Deaf Centre	Councillor Gul Khan
Reading Dispensary Trust	Councillor Rose Williams
Reading In Bloom Committee	Councillor Karen Rowland
Reading Sports Aid Fund	Councillor David Stevens
Reading Sports Aid Fund	Councillor Graeme Hoskin
Reading Sports Aid Fund	Councillor Paul Gittings
Reading UK Community Interest Company Board	Councillor Jason Brock
Reading UK Community Interest Company Board	Frances Martin
Reading Voluntary Action	Councillor Adele Barnett-Ward
Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust - Governor	Councillor Jason Brock
South East Employers - Substitute	Councillor Ruth McEwan
South East Employers	Councillor Jason Brock
South East Employers	Councillor Tony Page
South East England Councils	Councillor Jason Brock
South East England Councils - Substitute	Councillor Tony Page
South East Reserve Forces and Cadets' Association	Councillor Graeme Hoskin
South East Strategic Leaders	Councillor Jason Brock
South East Strategic Leaders - Substitute	Councillor Tony Page
St Laurence Relief in Need Trust	Councillor Rose Williams
St Laurence Relief in Need Trust	Trish Thomas
Standing Committee On Archives	Councillor Sarah Hacker
Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel	Councillor Adele Barnett-Ward
Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel - Substitute	Councillor Liz Terry
Trading Standards South-East Ltd	Trading Standards and Coroners Manager
Trading Standards South-East Ltd	Assistant Director of Planning, Transport & Regulatory Services
University of Reading Court	Councillor David Stevens

- (2) That the appointments or nominations be made on an “or nominee” basis where the organisation in question was willing to accept this arrangement.

10. READING TRANSPORT LIMITED SHAREHOLDER REPORT

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 14 JUNE 2021

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report to the Committee, acting as shareholder of Reading Transport Limited (RTL), setting out the proposed actions and next steps arising from an independent review of RTL's governance arrangements. Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was a Draft job description and proposed timeline for the recruitment of new Non-executive Directors.

The report explained that, in light of RTL's trading position and the significant financial impact of Covid 19 on all passenger transport operators, it had been agreed that the Council should commission an independent review into the governance and operating arrangements of the Company with a view to improving its financial viability. Systra, a leading engineering and consulting firm specialising in public transport had been commissioned in September 2020 to undertake the review and the report set out the key findings and recommendations made by Systra relating to the governance of RTL. A further report on their review of RTL's operating arrangements would be considered in closed session (see Minute 14 below).

The report summarised the findings and recommendations of the review covering a Framework for Future Board Appointments, Skills Audit, Board Composition and Size, Financial Scrutiny and Reporting, and Audit & Remunerations Committees. It was recommended that the Council exercised its right under the Company's Articles of Association to serve notice on RTL's current Non-Executive Directors effective from 1 January 2022 and begin a formal recruitment process for new Non-Executive Directors. It was also recommended that the Council as Shareholder review RTL's Articles of Association and amend them to limit the number or terms a Non-Executive Director could serve to two (eight years in total).

At the meeting an additional resolution was moved and agreed regarding the composition of the new Board of Non-Executive Directors and the eligibility of current Non-Executive Directors to re-apply for membership of the Board, as set out in (7)-(9) below.

Resolved -

- (1) That Systra's recommendations in respect of their Part 1 report commissioned by the Council be noted;**
- (2) That the recruitment of a new board of Non-executive Directors to take effect from 1 January 2022 be agreed;**
- (3) That the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services formally write to RTL's current Non-Executive Directors serving them with notice and advising them of the recruitment process, once finalised, should they wish to apply;**
- (4) That the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services prepare a revised set of Articles of Association in line with the recommendations in Systra's Part 1 report for consideration at a future meeting of the Policy Committee;**

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- (5) That the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services prepare a draft Shareholder Agreement to give effect to the operational recommendations in Systra's Part 1 report for consideration at a future meeting of the Policy Committee;
- (6) That Shareholder representatives sit on the interview panel;
- (7) That the current number of eight Non-Executive Board members be maintained;
- (8) That the composition of the new Non-Executive Board members include (a) an employee-nominated representative, (b) two reserved places for elected members, and (c) up to a further five Non-Executive Directors with an industry-related specialism;
- (9) That all current Non-Executive Board members be eligible to re-apply for membership of the Board.

(Councillor Stanford-Beale declared a prejudicial interest in the above item, on the grounds that she was a Council-appointed Non-Executive Director of RTL. She left the meeting and took no part in the debate or discussion.)

11. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved -

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of items 12-14 below as it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FOR CLOSED SESSION ITEMS

Councillor Stanford-Beale declared a prejudicial interest in Item 14 on the grounds that she was a Council-appointed Non-Executive Director of Reading Transport Limited.

13. 2-4 DARWIN CLOSE - DISPOSAL

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report advising the Committee of the offers received for the freehold disposal of 2-4 Darwin Close pending the completion of the Office Rationalisation Project Phase 2C works at 19 Bennet Road and seeking approval to dispose of the property. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 - location plan of 2-4 Darwin
- Appendix 2 - table of offers extracted from a Section 123 report received from Haslams Surveyors LLP (Haslams)
- Appendix 3 - Haslams' Section 123 report dated 13 May 2021

Resolved -

- (1) That 2-4 Darwin Close be sold to the successful bidder on the terms set out in paragraph 4.2.1 of the report;
- (2) That, in the event that the offer price was subsequently reduced or the purchaser did not perform to an acceptable timescale the Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services be authorised, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services and the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services, to:
 - a) agree a revised offer price which secured best consideration;
 - b) reengage with other bidders as appropriate or remarket the property for disposal at best consideration.

(Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3.)

14. READING TRANSPORT LIMITED SHAREHOLDER REPORT

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report to the Committee, acting as shareholder of Reading Transport Limited (RTL), setting out the conclusions and recommendations arising from an independent report on RTL's operating arrangements. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 - Proposed KPI Reporting
- Appendix 2 - Reading Transport Limited's 2021/22 Budget
- Appendix 3 - Route Changes Assumed within RTL's 2021/22 Budget

The report explained that, in light of RTL's recent trading history and the significant financial impact of Covid 19 on all passenger transport operators, it had been agreed that the Council should commission an independent review into the governance (see Minute xx above) and operating arrangements of the Company with a view to improving its financial viability. Systra, a leading engineering and consulting firm specialising in public transport had been commissioned in September 2020 to undertake the review, and the report summarised their key findings and recommendations relating to operating arrangements. It was recommended that the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services draw up a Shareholder Agreement to set out the operational reporting requirements recommended by Systra for consideration at a subsequent meeting of the Committee.

At the invitation of the Chair Robert Williams, CEO of RTL, attended the meeting and addressed the Committee on this item.

Resolved -

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 14 JUNE 2021

- (1) That Systra's conclusions and recommendations in respect of their review of operating arrangements commissioned by the Council be noted;**
- (2) That RTL's financial position as at 6th April 2020 and budget assumptions for 2021/2022 be noted;**
- (3) That the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services prepare a draft Shareholder Agreement to give effect to the operational recommendations in Systra's report for consideration at a future Policy Committee.**

(Councillor Stanford-Beale declared a prejudicial interest in the above item, on the grounds that she was a Council-appointed Non-Executive Director of RTL. She left the meeting and took no part in the debate or decision.)

(Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3.)

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.06 pm)

REPORT BY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	12 JULY 2021		
TITLE:	DECISION BOOKS		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR BROCK	PORTFOLIO:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
SERVICE:	LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	MICHAEL GRAHAM	TEL:	0118 937 3470
JOB TITLE:	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES	E-MAIL:	michael.graham@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Decision Book process was amended on 25 March 2020 to disapply the previous councillors’ call-in arrangements within the 10-day period after its publication and replace it with the ability to seek a review of the decision retrospectively, and to keep the changes in force temporarily during the ongoing Covid-19 situation.
- 1.2 To complement the amended process the list of Decision Books published will be reported to Policy Committee as a standing item on the agenda.
- 1.3 The following Decision Book reports have been published since the previous report to Policy Committee:

Title	Date
634 - Covid Local Support Grant - Phase 4 Proposal	17/06/2021
633 - Additional Restrictions Grant Fund	07/06/2021
633 - Local Restrictions Grant Scheme (Open) Fund	07/06/2021
633 - Test and Trace Discretionary Isolation Support Payment Scheme	07/06/2021

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Decision Book Reports be noted.

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READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	12 JULY 2021		
TITLE:	THE AVENUE SCHOOL EXPANSION		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAGE COUNCILLOR PEARCE COUNCILLOR BROCK	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT EDUCATION LEADER OF THE COUNCIL BOROUGHWIDE
SERVICE:	PROPERTY & ASSET MANAGEMENT	WARDS:	
LEAD OFFICER:	CHARAN DHILLON LINDA CHURCH	TEL:	07817 085309 01189 373860
JOB TITLE:	AD PROPERTY & ASSET MANAGEMENT EDUCATION ASSETS MANAGER	E-MAIL:	Charan.dhillon@reading.gov.uk Linda.church@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This paper seeks scheme and spend approval for the capital investment required to convert The Avenue Centre (TAC) building. There is £5 million from DfE (Department for Education) Grant in the approved capital programme for this work to The Avenue. The cost of the refurbishment will come from the overall DfE Basic Need Grant, which has been allocated within the Capital Programme which was approved at full Council in February 2021.
- 1.2 **Appendices:** Appendix A - Equality Impact Survey, Appendix B to D - Pupil Planning data.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

That Policy Committee:

- 2.1. Authorises the release and spend of the £5 million budget for this project as identified in the Council's approved Capital Programme February 2021.
- 2.2 Delegates authority to the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Lead Councillors for Education and Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, the Director of Finance and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to:
- 2.2.1 Tender and enter into contracts for the refurbishment and new building works to TAC.

- 2.2.2 Agree and enter appropriate agreements with current occupiers of TAC and partnership organisations to facilitate the exit of current occupiers from the building and relocation of these parties within the Council's property portfolio.
- 2.2.3 Agree and enter into the academy lease with The Avenue School Special Needs Academy Trust in respect of the newly refurbished TAC; and
- 2.2.4 The Assistant Director of Legal Services should be authorised to enter into the necessary legal agreements.
- 2.3 Note the progress and issues connected with the vacation of the building to enable it to be converted and transferred to achieve the revenue savings target.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 A local authority (LA) has a legal duty under section 13a of the Education Act, 1996, as amended by section 5 of the School Standards and Framework Act, 1998, to: "ensure that their functions relating to the provision of education to which this section applies are (so far as they are capable of being so exercised) exercised by the authority with a view to promoting high standards." In addition, the SEND Code of Practice 2015 underpins a LA's duties under part 3 of the Children's and Families 2014 Act.

3.2 The LA has specific duties relating to children with special educational needs (SEND). These include:

- securing SEND provision for pupils with SEND;
- promoting integration of pupils with SEND;
- making provision for children and young people with Education and Health Care (EHC) plans;
- enabling pupils to be educated in accordance with parents' wishes; and
- ensuring that education and training functions are exercised with a view to promoting high standards.

3.3 There is pressure on RBC's revenue budgets and in the November 2020 budget setting exercise, The Avenue Centre (TAC) was identified as an opportunity to reduce property running costs. The savings proposal was accepted and included in the MTFP. This saving involves discontinuing RBC/BFfC's use of this building as an office, so that it no longer incurs the associated property running costs. This paper provides an update on the delivery of this saving.

3.4 There is a second major benefit that is being targeted from this project. Once the building has been vacated, it is proposed to convert it to school use, to provide additional SEND places. Once the conversion is complete, the site will transfer to the school (The Avenue School Special Needs Academy Trust), who would then be liable for all of the property running costs.

3.5 In order to deliver this revenue saving and deliver additional SEND school placements, staff and tenants who previously used this office building (prior to COVID - the building has been closed during the pandemic) will need to be relocated. This will require moving staff located there to other RBC locations, including increased working from home where appropriate.

- 3.6 The numbers of required Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) places in Reading is continuing to rise. The Avenue School has reached its full capacity of 175 students despite having expanded in 2017 by 25 places, with the addition of a double modular classroom and again in 2019 by refurbishing the Avenue Centre Training Suite to accommodate another 30 pupils. Other maintained SEND schools, both within the borough and out of borough, are also at full capacity.
- 3.7 Pupil forecasting data indicates that in 2021, overall there is sufficient capacity to meet demand for Reading pupils if we continue to use the 'greater Reading' schools. In 2022 with the addition of 60 places at the Avenue academy School, as proposed by this report, and 75 places at our co-commissioned Oak Tree School, there is sufficient capacity for the projected level of pupils requiring specialist provision to attend a 'Reading' School.
- 3.8 In reality though some of the capacity in the Reading schools is taken up by pupils from other LAs. From 2023 there will still be a reliance on using schools within the greater Reading area. However, this should not be considered unreasonable as travel time and suitability of schools and costs are comparable to schools within Reading
- 3.9 **Appendix A** details the Equalities Impact Scope Assessment (EISA) which has been carried out for the project. The conclusion of the EISA is that a full Equality Impact assessment is not required.
- 3.10 In October 2020, officers identified an opportunity for the Council to reduce its property running costs by moving staff located at the TAC to other locations including increased working from home where appropriate.
- 3.11 Staff, who prior to the pandemic, were based at TAC are being consulted and relocated.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position:

- 4.1.1 The number of pupils with EHC Plans has increased significantly over the last three years, increasing from 1282 in Jan 2019, to 1364 in Jan 2020 and 1436 in Jan 2021
- 4.1.2 The DfE grant (contained within the Dedicated Schools Grant) for High Needs block (HNB) funding is over spent mirroring the national picture. The funding is overseen by the Schools Forum. At the January 2021 meeting it was reported that the funding for the HNB will be just under £2m and currently the deficit is estimated to be £2.1m. A significant contribution towards this cost is from the number of high cost specialist placements for those pupils.
- 4.1.3 Approximately 50% of those pupils with special educational needs are currently educated out of Borough. Many attend either LA maintained or Academy run provisions which represent good value in adjacent authorities, and it is not intended to alter the arrangement.
- 4.1.4 It is suggested that BFfC will need to increase liaison where possible, with Reading's neighbouring LAs to monitor the future availability of those places. It is likely that if the number of SEND places for Reading pupils is increasing that this issue will be mirrored in the authorities whose schools we rely on in the 'greater Reading' area and may therefore lead to pressure on the places Reading has traditionally relied on.

- 4.1.5 At present there are approximately 60 students who have EHC Plans which identify The Avenue School but are not able to be awarded places. BFFC have reported there are a further 60 pupils attending out of Borough SEND provision currently.
- 4.1.6 The original planning permission for the school development on the site dates from 2006 when application 06/00253/REG3 was granted permission for the redevelopment of school playing field to erect a mixed used educational centre to include special needs school, community uses and ancillary educational staff offices and conference facilities for the Reading Education Centre, incorporating new access road, parking and highway works with associated landscaping and re-provision of public open space. Then in 2011 application 11/01262/REG3 proposed internal refurbishment works including changes to the first-floor layout.

4.2 Option Proposed:

- 4.2.1 It is proposed that the whole of TAC building is transferred to The Avenue School Special Needs Academy Trust and refurbished, to cater for a further 60 SEND pupils, enabling the school to increase their capacity from 175 to 235 pupils.
- 4.2.2 The creation of 60 additional spaces at The Avenue School and the 75 places at the Oak Tree School in Wokingham could provide a potential saving from the High Needs block by reducing the number of more expensive placements at independent or non-maintained schools and related transportation costs. **Appendix B** indicates a potential saving of £1.5m from 2022 to 2026. This assumes that the pupils at the independent and non-maintained schools continue in situ until the end of their education and that no more pupils are allocated to those provisions from 2022 onwards, when the capacity in Reading schools is increased. It should be noted that savings of this scale have materialised since our introduction of the extra 55 places at the Avenue Centre in past years. Since 2017 - there has only been a reduction from 68 pupils to 60 pupils in the Independent and non-maintained schools (**see Appendix C**).
- 4.2.3 Measures or actions should be encouraged to be put in place to strengthen the placement of pupils either within Reading Special Schools or those included in the 'greater Reading' area which are LA maintained or Academy Schools. Some pupils may always need to attend different specialist provision due to their individual needs, but greater efforts need to be made to reduce these instances. This would help to ensure this project demonstrates value for money.
- 4.2.4 Advice has been sought on whether planning permission would be needed for the proposed increase in use of the building for educational purposes. The mixed-use nature of the property was recognised in the original description when planning permission was granted in 2006, with the office used and described as being ancillary to the main educational and community uses. If it can be confirmed that the current community use of the building after school times will continue and that some of the floorspace will still be required for ancillary office use, then the proposed reconfiguration of the use of the building would still fit within the description of development as approved. It is also relevant to note that when planning permission was granted for the 2011 internal refurbishment works, the officer report confirmed that there were no concerns raised by the proposal then to change existing office space used by education staff into classrooms and other associated uses. If formal confirmation is needed that the proposed use under this option would be a lawful planning use of the property, then an application can be submitted for a Lawful Development Certificate.

- 4.2.5 This proposal has been agreed by Brighter Futures for children - Director of Education.
- 4.2.6 In order to achieve vacant possession of the site, a number of occupants will require assistance in moving out of the premises and in some instances being relocated within the Council's property portfolio. Officers will need authority to proceed with facilitating the transition by agreeing and entering appropriate agreements with current occupiers of TAC and partnership organisations.

4.3 Other Options Considered

4.3.1 'Do Nothing' approach.

BFFC will continue to follow their existing plans for providing SEN places in Sept 2021 and onwards. Paragraph 3.7 demonstrates that there are sufficient places within the 'greater Reading area', however data is not available to demonstrate if the types of provision available adequately meet the pupils needs.

If it were not possible to expand The Avenue School, then pupils would need to be placed with other State Funded Special Schools, or Independent Non-maintained schools, often outside the borough. Average cost per pupil place at LA or maintained schools can be up to £19k per place, and at Independnet or Non-maintained schools up to £50k. A further allowance of £10k transport costs per out of borough placement is then added.

- 4.3.2 Explore alternative sites. The Avenue School is the only Academy School and Holy Brook is the only maintained special school in Reading. A further bid to the DFE could be submitted for a new SEND school, however there is an urgent need for places and The Avenue School is already set up and successfully operating with an 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating. There is also a shortage of sites available within Reading suitable for development for a SEND school.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The purpose of this section is to ensure that proposals contained in reports are in line with the overall direction of the Council by meeting at least one of the Corporate Plan priorities:

By providing further SEND school places within the Borough, we would be helping to protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable adults and children and helping to ensure that there are good education opportunities for the people of Reading.

- 5.2 The project will contribute to the Council's strategic aims:

- Healthy environment - by providing further school places within the borough, we would be reducing the length of taxi/minibus journeys to out of borough schools, therefore reducing the associated carbon emissions. It is also likely that we would be able to reduce the number of mini buses being used, as it would be to one destination rather than several.
- Thriving communities - by creating further SEND school places, we are providing local opportunities to educate the pupils within Reading. The expansion of the school would also allow pupils to stay on into post 16 education and vocational training, helping them to find a role post school.
- Inclusive economy- the Council has a legal obligation to provide school places for all students, including those with SEND. By providing further places at The

Avenue School, we are creating the opportunity for pupils to receive their school place within the borough, enabling them to make local friendships and reducing their daily journeys to school.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 As a SEND Academy, it is the responsibility of the school to go out to consultation on the increase in school capacity. As part of their application, they are required to submit a business case to the Department for Education detailing the consultation process they have undertaken, which should invite the local authority, feeder schools, other SEND schools in the area and local parents to comment. BFFC may need to support the School in this consultation process.
- 6.2 Consultation will also be undertaken with parents, staff and neighbours through the planning process.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 The project was assessed against the EIA template and it was determined that the project would positively affect SEND children within the borough, by increasing their access to local education facilities. Any children between 2-19 with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education Healthcare plan would benefit and would not be discriminated against by age, religion, gender or sexual orientation. A full EIA was therefore not thought to be necessary.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Under the Children and Families Act 2014, the Council has a statutory duty to identify and assess the special education needs (SEN) of children and young people who they are responsible for and to secure the 'best possible outcomes' for them.
- 8.2 The Council has a statutory duty to provide education that meets the SEN, where such need is identified in that child or young person's EHC Plan.
- 8.3 Wherever possible, it is proposed that schemes are procured through HCC (Hampshire County Council), using their Framework Agreements in accordance with contract procedure rule 9 (3). These Framework Agreements have been through the EU regulated tendering process to appoint the Framework Contractors. This means that individual projects using the Frameworks are carried out by Framework Contractors and they do not have to be advertised in the UK's e-notification service - Find a Tender, which replaces the Official Journal of the European Union. Works contracts with the framework contractors in respect of each of the individual school projects will be entered into.
- 8.4 It is proposed that the design work and contract administration is undertaken by Hampshire County Council, working in accordance with the Reading & Hampshire Property Partnership.

- 8.5 The TAC must be vacated, and any current licences for occupation or occupational tenancies held by external organisations, terminated, before the building can be transferred to the Avenue School Special Needs Academy Trust under a standard 125-year academy lease, once the building works are completed.
- 8.6 Heads of terms for the grant of an academy lease and a development agreement for lease (if necessary) should be agreed and signed by all parties as soon as possible.
- 8.7 If the premises include school playing fields then an application for consent to dispose of a playing field under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 must be made to the Secretary of State for Education for permission to develop the building once any formal local consultation has been concluded.
- 8.8 RBC Joint Legal Team have been consulted in the production of this report and will work collaboratively with RBC and BfFC to deliver this.
- 8.9 The Assistant Director of Legal Services should be authorised to enter into the necessary legal agreements.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 General Fund Revenue - There will be ongoing revenue savings to Reading Borough Council as a result of reduced expenditure on utilities, cleaning and maintenance. Recharges currently made to the Avenue school for the use of the building will cease. The net savings are estimated at £136,600 per annum and the following table shows the annual profile of those savings. Note - all figures in these tables are cumulative.

General Fund	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 Onwards
	£	£	£
Running costs	-162,000	216,600	255,600
Expenditure	-162,000	216,600	255,600
Fees and charges	119,000	119,000	119,000
Total Income	119,000	119,000	119,000
Net Cost (+) / saving (-)	-43,000	-97,600	-136,600

9.2 Dedicated Schools Grant Revenue - Placement costs for pupils with special educational needs are charged to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. There is a current projected overspend against the High Needs Block and the proposals contained in this report, alongside another project in Wokingham, are part of the deficit recovery plan. It is estimated that these savings could potentially reach £1.493m by 2027/28, as shown in the following table:

Year	Potential Saving £
2023/24	116,083
2024/25	344,250
2025/26	854,000
2026/27	1,347,583

2027/28	1,493,000
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These figures are based on the data in Appendix B converted into financial years and are purely indicative at this stage. The impact of the Avenue and Wokingham projects cannot be separated but the proposals in this paper are expected to make a very substantial contribution to these savings.

The council will not have nomination rights to the new places created at the centre so while there is confidence that this project will have a beneficial impact, the council cannot be certain about the level of SEN placement savings that will be achieved in practice.

It is also anticipated that the proposals contained in this report will result in savings against transport costs for SEN pupils, but these cannot be estimated at this stage.

Costs to move staff currently at the Avenue Centre to alternative accommodation are not known and do not form part of this proposal.

There are no capital financing charges for works associated with the expansion of the School as the capital expenditure would be fully funded by the DFE education grant.

It is estimated that the costs associated with moving existing RBC staff into new accommodation will be in the region of £15k and the funding for this is already included in the General Fund capital programme.

9.3 Capital - the estimated profile of capital expenditure is as follows:

Year	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m
Expenditure	1.620	3.380
Basic Need Grant	(1.620)	(3.380)
Net Expenditure	0.000	0.000

9.4 Value for Money

The opportunity to reduce RBC building and maintenance costs as well as refurbish as exiting building rather than provide a new build for SEND places, offers significant value for money. This coupled with potential reduced transport costs per pupil and lower 'top up' fees for places at independent and non-maintained Schools may present further value for money

9.4.1 To attempt to improve value for money, reports should be produced on how admissions and forecast demand are being coordinated between the new facilities at the Avenue school and the Oak tree School in Wokingham to ensure the high needs block savings are achieved.

9.5 Tribunals

9.5.1 Most of the tribunals that occur for special schools are because there are insufficient available spaces. BfFC seek to resolve as many of these as possible through mediation. For every child placed over numbers at The Avenue, BfFC pay up to an additional 10k base funding per year to the school, in addition to the top up figures.

If a tribunal concluded that it would be detrimental to the education of others to place a child at The Avenue and that mainstream provision was unsuitable, or if, in the absence of a placement offer at The Avenue, parents stated a preference for an independent or non-maintained school and won a tribunal for that, or if BFFC found themselves having no choice but to decide to make a costly placement, then the typical costs are:

- Day placement at non-maintained/independent school in travelling distance such as Tadley Court or Priors Court = minimum approx. £75k per year depending on need plus transport costs. If there is no capacity at The Avenue and these local day placements are used then BFFC may be forced, by tribunal or otherwise, to place residentially at costs of between approx. £150k-300k per year.

9.6.1 Risk Assessment of key financial risks

- 9.6.2 The project will be a refurbishment project of an existing building. Internal surveys of the building have been carried out and the building has been found to be heavily serviced, with underfloor heating pipework throughout the flooring and particularly thick walls. Both elements have made the proposed works more challenging and could pose issues as the works commence.
- 9.6.3 Works will be taking place on a live building. Further complications programming the works will be experienced due to the nature of the building users and the need to keep noisy, disturbing works to out of school hours. This may incur additional charges and time, should contractors need to operate at weekends or later into the evening to complete works when the children are not on site.
- 9.6.4 The on-going COVID-19 pandemic may impact on workforce practices, subcontractor availability and potential supply issues.
- 9.6.5 Savings risk - Places at the Avenue School cannot be reserved for Reading Children and therefore this project may not result in the predicted savings to Reading's High Needs Block costs.

10 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The internal refurbishment of the building will not present much opportunity for improving the environment as the building is relatively new, however all building works will adhere to the latest Building Regulations which cover environmental measures.
- 10.2 It is proposed to retain the existing Solar panels on the roof of the building. The option to increase the number of panels and improve lighting may be investigated through Salix Funding.
- 10.3 There will be a net reduction in travel to the building as the building occupancy will be lower as a School than when it was an RBC Staff facility.
- 10.4 This report has been agreed with the Council's Climate strategy team

11.0 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 Although the data indicates there will be sufficient SEND places available for Reading pupils with EHCP plans to attend specialist provision if required through to 2026 within the 'greater Reading' area, there are currently 60 applications for Reading pupils wishing to attend the Avenue School who cannot be granted a place.

- 11.2 Due to the uncertainty of demand and therefore future capacity within our neighbouring authorities, the opportunity of using The Avenue Centre building, which will be vacant, should be converted to further SEND places and reserved for Reading pupils if confirmed legally possible.



Equality Impact Assessment

Provide basic details

The Expansion of The Avenue School

Directorate: Economic Growth and Neighbourhood services

Service: Education Asset Management

Name and job title of person doing the assessment

Name: Linda Church

Job Title: Education Assets manager

Date of assessment: 28/1/21

Scope your proposal

What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?

To expand the Avenue School to create 60 more SEND places within the borough, by refurbishing The Avenue Centre.

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

Children from across Reading aged 2-19 with complex Special Educational Needs. We will be creating an additional 60 SEND places within the borough enabling local children to access a local school.

What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?

The project aims to provide more specialist places for children with complex Special Education Needs within the borough, responding to the increase in demand. The pupils will be able to attend a local school within Reading, reducing travel time and allowing them to make local friendship groups. The additional places will reduce revenue spent on Out of Borough Places and home to school transport.

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

The school - the ability to provide more places within the borough to meet the increasing demand for places at the school.

SEND pupils and their parents - more specialist SEND places within Reading to reduce travel time and support their children with specialist knowledge and facilities

Neighbouring Local Authorities - SEND schools in neighbouring authorities are also at capacity.

Assess whether an EIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.)

No *(delete as appropriate)*

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, and feedback.

No *(delete as appropriate)*

If the answer is **Yes** to any of the above, you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because: The new proposal will positively affect SEND students and their families by providing more specialist spaces within Reading and reducing the need to SEND children out of borough.

Signed (completing officer)

Date

Linda Church

28/1/21

Signed (Lead Officer)

Date

Appendix B

Total Cost of Pupils attending Independent or Non-maintained Special Schools



NCY	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	0	0	0	0
2	1	1	1	0	0	0
3	0	2	2	1	0	0
4	2	0	0	2	2	0
5	0	2	0	0	2	2
6	2	0	2	0	0	2
7	1	2	0	2	0	0
8	7	1	2	0	2	0
9	3	7	1	2	0	2
10	5	3	7	1	2	0
11	7	5	3	7	1	2
12	15	7	5	3	7	1
13	5	15	7	5	3	7
14	3	5	15	7	5	3
15	0	3	5	15	7	5
Total Cost	£ 2,587,878.28	£ 2,687,412.06	£ 2,488,344.50	£ 2,239,510.05	£ 1,542,773.59	£ 1,194,405.36

This assumes that the 60 places from the Avenue expansion come on line in 2022 and the 75 places from the new SEN Special school in Wokingham come on line in 2022.

Appendix C

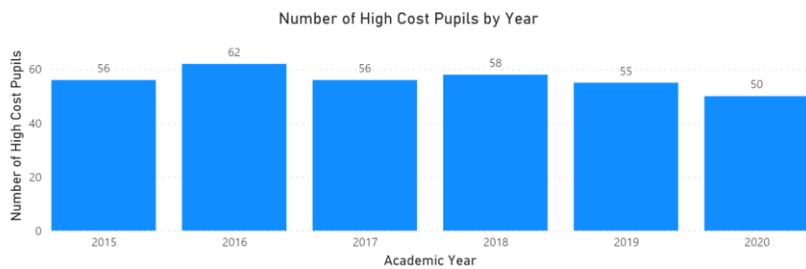
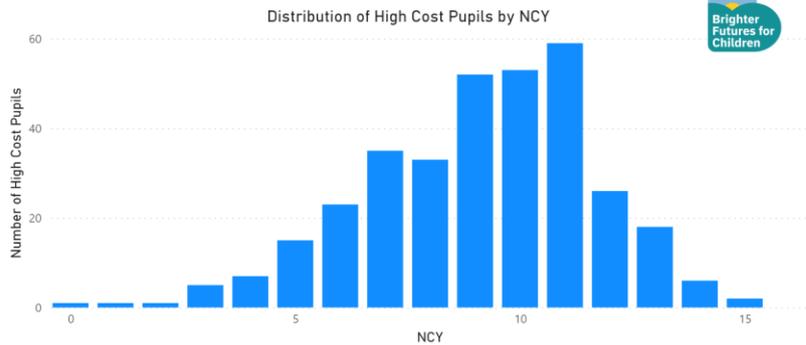
Pupils with Education & Health Care Plans attending Independent or Non-maintained Special Schools

NCY	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
0			1			
1				1		
2					1	
3	1	2				2
4	4	1	2			
5	1	8	1	3		2
6	8	1	8	1	4	1
7	8	8	1	8	3	7
8	3	9	8	2	8	3
9	10	10	10	14	3	5
10	8	8	8	8	14	7
11	6	9	7	9	13	15
12	5	2	6	4	4	5
13	1	4	2	5	3	3
14	1		2	2	1	
15				1	1	
Total	56	62	56	58	55	50

The table shows the distribution of Reading pupils, funded by Reading and attending independent or non-maintained special schools, with EHC plans over the past 5 years.

The top chart shows the distribution of pupils by national curriculum year group. The bottom chart shows the yearly total number of pupils funded by Reading with EHC plans attending independent or non-maintained special schools. The total number of pupils has remained relatively stable but has fallen by 13.8% in the last 3 years.

As demand is continuing to rise faster than the capacity it is likely that this number will rise until the new special school is opened (in 2022?)



Appendix D

Number of Children with EHC plans Funded by Reading Attend Avenue School

Academic Year	Number of Reading Pupils on Roll	Total Avenue NOR
2015	104	115
2016	105	120
2017	108	127
2018	126	142
2019	137	153
2020	159	172

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ADULT CARE AND HEALTH SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	12 JULY 2021		
TITLE:	ROUGH SLEEPING DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT GRANT		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR GRAEME HOSKIN	PORTFOLIO:	LEAD COUNCILLOR FOR HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SPORT
SERVICE:	PUBLIC HEALTH	WARDS:	BOROUGH WIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	SALLY ANDERSEN	TEL:	0118 9373244
JOB TITLE:	SENIOR COMMISSIONER DRUGS AND ALCOHOL	E-MAIL:	Sally.andersen@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), announced at Budget in March 2020 that they had secured £262m to be made available over the next four years for drug and alcohol treatment and related provision, specifically to meet the needs of people experiencing rough sleeping who have drug and alcohol dependence needs.
- 1.2 In August 2020, it was announced that the 2020-21 funding will focus on providing additional resources in the MHCLG 43 Taskforce Priority Areas. Reading is one of these priority areas having a higher number of people sleeping rough who have been moved into emergency accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.3 The purpose of the funding is to boost structured drug and alcohol treatment services, to account for additional costs from increased access and engagement from the rough sleeping population with consideration being given to how existing services can find ways to adapt, improve or extend their support to rough sleepers in the area.
- 1.4 Public Health England (PHE) announced a very tight deadline for the submission of proposals by local authorities for the Public Health England Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant funding. Reading worked on its proposal with the local drug and alcohol provider Change, Grow, Live (CGL) on an evidence-based model piloted in one of its Southampton services as well as with the local authority homelessness and rough sleeping commissioning lead and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). PHE shared the funding paperwork on 4th September 2020 with a return date of 2nd October 2020.
- 1.5 PHE delayed the announcements of the awards. Reading was informed of the success of its proposal in late December 2020, with a service delivery commencement date of January 2021. £637k grant funding was awarded to Reading to spend in Quarter 4 2020-21. In order to ensure the grant funding from PHE was spent within the timescales set out in the funding agreement recruitment of staff for the project started in early 2021. In March 2021 Reading was informed that the grant funding could be rolled over into 2021-22. Public Health has worked with the Procurement

team to find a solution that meets Council's due process for the expenditure of the grant funds and this is summarised in 1.6.

- 1.6 This report sets out our proposal to award the PHE Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant in two phases;

Phase one - January 2021-December 2021: As the core drug and alcohol provider, it is recommended that CGL is awarded the Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant to provide the evidence-based model submitted in Reading's proposal to PHE for year one. This will be a pilot project in order to ensure the proposal is fit for purpose and to give Reading time to adjust its requirements as necessary, and to draw up a specification for its future requirements in respect of this project.

NB: In compliance with procurement legislation and Reading's internal Contract Procedure Rules, it is possible for a direct award to be made to CGL as detailed further in section 4 of this report and the legal implications paragraph of this report.

The time limits and constraints of the grant award should also be noted.

Phase two - August 2021- and possible 4 years. As further grant funding is likely to become available from PHE for the same purposes, it is proposed that an accelerated open procurement process be undertaken (in line with the Public Contract Regulations 2015, as amended (PCR 2015) and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs) to allow for a best-value solution to be procured in respect of any future funding from PHE for the same purpose. Phase 2 will allow any provider to bid for the contract. Any staff already supporting the rough sleeping population (if applicable) will transfer to the new provider in line with the TUPE Regulations.

- 1.7 *Appendix One - EIA*

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

For decision by Policy Committee:

- 2.1 Award the contract for provision of Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment service for the full value of the Year one (FY2021-22) allocation to CGL commencing on January 2021 pursuant to Regulation 32 of the PCR 2015. The Year one allocation currently being £637,000 together with any further funding allocated by PHE during 21/22 to provide the pilot project, as described in Reading's proposal and approved by PHE for Year one.
- 2.2 Agree to the decision to re-tender the services through an accelerated open procurement for the Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant (Rough Sleeper Grant Phase 2) (for a period of up to 4 years).
- 2.3 That delegated authority is given to the Executive Director Social Care and Health in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport and the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services to award the new Rough Sleeper Grant Phase 2 contract for a period of up to 4-years commencing in January 2022.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Government's rough sleeping strategy (August 2017), sets out the vision for halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2027. **Rough Sleeping** means people sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or "bashes") are also

included.

3.2 The Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant fund compliments key themes to two of Reading's Strategies:

- *Reading Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2018-2022 - Ensuring individuals understand the health risks associated with drugs and alcohol, the consequences using can have on education, employment, relationships, housing and the impact on the environment where the individual is misusing can have.*
- *Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 - to prevent those who are vulnerable to sleeping rough from moving towards entrenched and harmful behaviours and lifestyles by intervening as early as possible.*

3.3 Substance dependence can be both a cause of and a barrier to ending rough sleeping. Improving access to and engagement with drug and alcohol treatment services is therefore vital in ending rough sleeping. In October 2019, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) published death statistics which revealed that there were an estimated 726 deaths of homeless people in England and Wales registered in 2018 - the highest year-to-year increase (22%) since the time series began. Two in five of these deaths (40%) were related to drug poisoning. In addition, in 2017, Reading Housing team undertook a Homeless Health Needs Audit with people who were homeless in Reading, of which 73% of respondents advised that they were dependent upon drugs, alcohol or both.

3.4 The 2020-21 MHCLG funding will focus on providing additional resources in the MHCLG 43 Taskforce Priority Areas, of which Reading is one. These are the Local Authorities with the highest numbers of people sleeping rough who have been moved into emergency accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding is to be utilised and proposals mobilised as quickly as possible to ensure that the engagement that people have had with drug and alcohol treatment services whilst in emergency accommodation, during the pandemic is maintained as they move into longer term accommodation detailed under phase 1 (see 1.6).

3.5 In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many people sleeping rough have been housed in emergency accommodation which has presented a unique opportunity, including to contribute to the government's manifesto commitment to end rough sleeping in this Parliament. It is likely that most (if not the majority) of those in emergency accommodation with a substance dependence need had not been in contact with drug and alcohol services previously and there is an unprecedented opportunity to ensure that any initial treatment contact and engagement is sustained. Conversely if the drug and alcohol needs do not continue to be met, these initial gains will very likely be lost, reducing the likelihood of remaining in stable accommodation and in contact with support services going forward.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position

4.1.1 Local Authority Public Health is responsible for commissioning drug and alcohol treatment. Whilst drugs/alcohol is a non-mandated service, the Public Health grant condition state Local Authorities must have regard to the need to improve the take up of, and outcomes from, its drug and alcohol misuse treatment services.

Reading awarded a "Drug and Alcohol; Behaviour change, treatment and recovery service" contract to CGL in 2019 for an initial period of 3 years plus up to 2 further extensions of 2 years (up to a 7-year total term). This contract includes working with rough sleeping populations. It doesn't however offer outreach, out of hours access to

a dedicated prescriber, nurse or psychologist - this is within the new proposal under the Rough Sleeper Grant.

- 4.1.2 Local Authority Housing is responsible for commissioning housing services (a proportion of the funding for the rough sleeper services is funded by the Public Health budget). Housing awarded contracts following a procurement exercise in 2018 to 3 providers to work collectively in Reading towards the shared aims of reducing and maintaining a reduction in homelessness and rough sleeping; pre-empting and preventing homelessness for households at risk of homelessness; and supporting individuals to acquire independent accommodation that is realistically sustainable, where people with a history of homelessness are enabled to maintain housing stability

The 3 contracts are:

- Intensive and Engaging Support; Hub and Accommodation,
- Rough Sleeper Outreach Support,
- Working towards Independence Accommodation

Contracts were awarded for an initial term of 5 years with the option for up to two extension, each of up to 24 months in total (up to 9 years total term).

- 4.1.3 Public Health England (PHE) asked public health drug and alcohol commissioners in the Taskforce areas to lead on the completion of the Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant funding application. PHE gave a period of 4 weeks to collate local data and submit a proposal. PHE shared the funding paperwork on 4th September 2020 with a return date of 2nd October 2020.
- 4.1.4 Due to the time constraints on submitting a proposal for the Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant and to ensure the highest possibility of both securing funding and delivering a model that would be most likely to have a positive impact, the drug and alcohol commissioner worked with the local drug and alcohol provider CGL to submit a bid based on an evidence-based model piloted in one of their Southampton services. The bid was also supported by the local authority homelessness and rough sleeping commissioning lead and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).
- 4.1.5 PHE announced a delay to the award process timetable. Reading was informed its proposal was successful late December 2020 for a grant start of Jan 2021.
- 4.1.6 Reading was awarded £637,000, initially to be spent in the period Jan 2021-March 2021. A full procurement process including relevant Committee approvals can take between 9-12 months. Even an accelerated process and relevant approvals can take 3-4 months and the timescales for the grant did not allow this to take place. In March 2021 PHE determined that the grant monies could be carried over to 2021/22.
- 4.1.7 Public Health and Procurement have been working to seek a way to spend the £637,000 within PHE timescales and without breaching procurement regulations.
- 4.1.8 As stated in 4.1.4, above, in order to ensure the grant was secured within the timescales, RBC and CGL collaboratively produced the successful bid, detailing commercially sensitive information and design relevant to CGL. This approach allows prompt mobilisation and maximised use of the available funds to support RBC's rough sleeping prevention agenda through a pilot scheme (for year one, phase 1). In such circumstances, it is possible to justify an exemption from the PCRs under Regulation 32, this being recommended by Procurement to allow CGL to commence a recruitment process in Jan 2021 for year one pilot project. In order to ensure the grant was spent within the timescales, recruitment started in early 2021. In March 2021 we were informed that the grant money could be rolled over into 2021-22. Public health have worked with procurement to find a solution that meets councils due process and is summarised in 1.6.

4.1.9 It is to be noted that the funding being distributed in Year one could potentially be the first year of a four-year funding programme, if outcomes are met. This means that a full procurement process will be required for the expenditure of any further funding (phase 2) due to the sum of the grant over the 4-year period. This also provides an opportunity for the pilot model of service delivery to be adapted if and as necessary. For this phase 2 contract, to ensure that a compliant contract is in place whilst allowing time for any specification amends, it is proposed to use the accelerated procedure. This will take around 3-4 months, which is the shortest timescale that the regulations permits.

4.2 Options Proposed

It is recommended to award the Rough Sleeper Grant in two phases.

4.2.1 Phase One - January 2021 - December 2021

It is recommended that we award the Rough Sleeper Grant to the drug and alcohol provider CGL under the Contract Procedure Rules, Regulation 32 for year one. This is due to the time constraints and disbenefit RBC would have been in should we have not submitted an evidence-based model in the short timeframe given by PHE.

The Council's Corporate Procurement Rules state that contracts are exempt from following the standard procedures as set out in the CPRs where such exemptions are permitted by PCR2015. PCR Regulation 32 may be used for procuring service contracts where services can be supplied only by a particular provider for the protection of exclusive rights, including intellectual property rights.

To ensure continuity of service and protect vulnerable residents, the pilot is proposed to have up to a 12 month duration (until Jan 22) to maximise outcomes to be achieved from the service, allow for value review of the design, and allow for TUPE of staff should another provider win the Phase 2's contract (see below). In order to award this pilot contract, committee authorisation of the scheme is required since its value falls above £500k.

It is to be noted that the pilot project will be evaluated at the end of 2021, and the outcomes will enable Commissioners to design a future procurement to open market of an rough sleeper outreach specification beyond this grant funding (budget allowing).

4.2.2 Phase two - August 2021 - potentially up to 4 years

As further grant funding is likely to become available, potentially up to 4 years, it is proposed an accelerated open procurement process be undertaken to allow for a best-value solution be procured for any future funds.

Phase 2 will allow for any provider on the market to bid and TUPE of any staff already supporting the customers (if applicable).

As the value is over £500k, Committee approval must be sought and it is recommended this occurs alongside the Phase 1 approval, requesting that delegated authority to Executive Director Social Care and Health in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport be provided so that any contract procured through the process can be promptly mobilised.

4.3 Other Options Considered

There were no other options to enable us the time to spend the grant as per the conditions set by PHE within the grant period. The grant monies must be spent within a limited timeframe commencing January 2021.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The rough sleeper grant will work towards ensuring we are working towards meeting the Corporate Plan priorities:

1. To protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable adults and children

The rough sleeper grant contributes to ensuring the Council fulfils its aim of ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable are met and that people are supported to be healthy and active.

There is evidence based, high-quality treatment and other harm-reduction interventions, supply reduction, and education and prevention initiatives that are effective ways of tackling illicit drug and other harmful substance use. This grant will enable us to work to tackle some of the multicomplex issues faced by rough sleepers; expanding and developing trauma informed approaches.

5.2 The decision contributes to the Council's strategic aims:

- To Develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley
- To establish Reading as a learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit
- To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all -

Rough sleepers are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The additional grant funding will help to meet the health and housing needs of rough sleepers. It will support our vulnerable rough sleeping population to become well enabling them to be more economically active, and involved with learning, employment and training.

5.3 Contributions are also made to the following:

- Sustainability - the funding aims to build resilience and capacity in local drug and alcohol treatment systems to continue to meet the needs of this population in future years (resilient and sustainable models of care).
- Community Safety - Tackling rough sleeping, drugs and alcohol also promotes Community Safety by reducing anti-social behaviour; by encouraging harm reduction messages and reducing health risks to the community. Making communities safer by ensuring early identification and access to support and treatment for those misusing substances.
- Health - the funding is designed to support individuals in accessing, engaging with and sustaining engagement with drug and alcohol treatment and other relevant health services. This is particularly relevant for those who have multiple and complex needs, including co-occurring mental ill health and substance dependence, and experiences of trauma.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Not applicable.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".

7.2 The pre-decision consultation on the bid proposal has involved engaging with several stakeholders;

- Public Health
- Housing colleagues
- CCG colleagues
- Provider of adult drug and alcohol treatment services

7.3 Other suggestions following consultation for developing the proposal have included joint outreach, e.g. with housing providers and other health organisations in Reading, developing better partnership working, joint working protocols, co-location in the Council and with Partners, better transitioning into primary and secondary healthcare settings, and increased mental health provision.

7.4 It is to be noted that there is a lack of local qualitative intelligence and some learning to gain via the bid's proposal on the effectiveness for rough sleepers in having a specialist clinical drug and alcohol outreach service that also works with their physical, co-occurring mental ill-health and substance dependence:

The proposal pilot project during year one will gain intelligence to address:

- The gaps around the accessibility, engagement and sustainability of the new service
- Some of the key issues raised by service users in Reading's Housing Health Needs Assessment 2017
- Supporting the NHS Long-term plan and local authority in scoping and commissioning a model that could ensure better access to specialist NHS mental health support, integrated with existing outreach services for Rough Sleepers in the future.

7.5 Further consultation with the wider market place will take place once the draft service specification is completed for the new contract.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 The proposal and full procurement process aims to tackle equality issues. Rough sleepers are some of the most marginalised and excluded individuals in society and the aim of the service is to improve services for these people and enable them to achieve their hopes and ambitions and play an active role in their community.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 **Rough Sleeper Grant - Phase One** - The Council intends to make a direct award of the Phase One contract to the current contractor CGL under Regulation 32(2)(b)(iii) of the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015 which allows for negotiated procedure without prior publication for the protection of exclusive rights, including intellectual property rights.

It will be necessary for the Council to enter into a new contract with CGL for Phase One to document the terms and conditions of the services.

9.2 **Rough Sleeper Grant - Phase Two** - A full procurement process via an "accelerated open procurement process" will be undertaken in line with PCR 2015 Regs 22, 27 and 76 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules 9 and 10, to allow for a best-value solution in respect of any future funds from PHE to support rough sleepers in need of drug and alcohol services.

The Council must follow the procurement process, that offers equal treatment and transparency and the process is advertised in accordance with contract procedure

rules. A notice will be required to be published to the UK e-notification service, Find a Tender for advertising the services. Contractual terms and conditions will be published with the procurement documents and will address any TUPE issues.

It will be necessary for the Council to enter into a contract for Phase 2 with the successful tenderer.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Reading was successful in securing £637,000 (2020/21) of MHCLG grant funding. Conditions of this funding is that the spend is in accordance with the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant Scheme 2020-21 for which it is awarded and that the appropriate data and documentation is submitted to PHE, when requested. The grant conditions state that the funding can only be spent in accordance with the proposal that has been submitted.

10.2 Grant payments will be awarded by PHE to the Local Authority as a section 31 grant, under the Local Government Act 2003.

10.3 Phase two - If no further funding is awarded to Reading Borough Council due to no successful outcomes during year one, then Year two contract will not go ahead.

10.4 Value for Money - there is an evidence-base for the effectiveness of drug and alcohol treatment. Evidence shows that treatment provides value for money, improves public health and reduces crime. Treatment enables people to recover from dependence and addiction, improves their physical and mental health and reduces the harm caused to themselves and people around them, including reducing crime. Evidence-based treatment is provided in accordance with the UK Clinical Guidelines, 'Drug misuse and dependence: UK guidelines on clinical management'.

10.5 A full procurement process will ensure best value for money is sought for future contract awards.

10.3 Risks - If we do not spend the grant monies, this will have to be returned to PHE.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 Appendix One - EIA

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report are set out below:-

1. Revenue Implications

Use this Table in the report or as an Appendix to set out the revenue implications:

	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000
Employee costs (see note1) Other running costs Capital financings costs		£637,000	TBC
Expenditure			
Income from: Fees and charges (see note2) Grant funding (specify) Other income		£637,000	TBC
Total Income			
Net Cost(+)/saving (-)		NIL	NIL

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Provide basic details

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed

Directorate: Adult Care & Health Services

Service: Drug and Alcohol Service (Rough Sleepers)

Name and job title of person doing the assessment

Name: Sally Andersen

Job Title: Senior Commissioner Drugs and Alcohol

Date of assessment: 24.06.2021

Scope your proposal

What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?

Rough Sleeper drug and alcohol outreach service

Rough sleepers/those at risk in Reading cannot currently access bespoke, immediate support that addresses co-occurring mental ill-health/substance dependence in a trauma/psychologically informed way. Thus, preventing them from returning to rough sleeping/enabling sustainment of accommodation. The proposal includes a specialist outreach clinical team who can provide intensive support to address unmet drug and alcohol, mental health and trauma needs.

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

Rough Sleepers and those who have been moved in to emergency accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?

This service will aim to achieve outcomes for rough sleepers

To improve:

- (i) access to treatment
- (ii) sustained engagement
- (iii) successful completion of drug and alcohol treatment
- (iv) stable accommodation

- (v) co-occurring drug and alcohol dependence and mental ill health needs
- (vi) GP registration
- (vii) general health care engagement
- (viii) access to inpatient detox/residential rehab (where appropriate)

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

Rough sleepers

There isn't a targeted and bespoke community-based in-reach/outreach solution for rough sleepers and those at risk of returning to rough sleeping, who are experiencing co-occurring mental ill-health and substance dependence in Reading. Evidence shows this cohort do not access mainstream drug services within the current model. The proposal includes a clinical outreach team who will work flexibly, delivering increased accessibility outside of core working hours.

Assess whether an EqlA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.)

No

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, and feedback.

No

If the answer is **Yes** to any of the above you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:

Rough sleepers are some of the most marginalised and excluded individuals in society and the aim of the service is to improve health and treatment services for these people and enable them to achieve sustained recovery and play an active role in their community.

Signed (completing officer Sally Andersen

Date 24.06.21

Signed (Lead Officer)

Date

Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- **Consultation**
- **Collection and Assessment of Data**
- **Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive**

Think about who does and doesn't use the service? Is the take up representative of the community? What do different minority groups think? (You might think your policy, project or service is accessible and addressing the needs of these groups, but asking them might give you a totally different view). Does it really meet their varied needs? Are some groups less likely to get a good service?

How do your proposals relate to other services - will your proposals have knock on effects on other services elsewhere? Are there proposals being made for other services that relate to yours and could lead to a cumulative impact?

Example: A local authority takes separate decisions to limit the eligibility criteria for community care services; increase charges for respite services; scale back its accessible housing programme; and cut concessionary travel.

Each separate decision may have a significant effect on the lives of disabled residents, and the cumulative impact of these decisions may be considerable.

This combined impact would not be apparent if decisions are considered in isolation.

Consultation

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts. If you haven't already completed a Consultation form do it now. The checklist helps you make sure you follow good consultation practice.

[My Home > Info Pods > Community Involvement Pod - Inside Reading Borough Council](#)

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
Rough Sleepers	Reading Homeless Needs Audit The aims of the Audit was to listen to and take account of single homeless people's views on their health.	Jan - Mar 2017
Homeless Providers in Reading	Via 121 consultation	Jan- Mar 2021
Drug and Alcohol Provider in Reading	Via 121 consultation	Jan - Mar 2021
CCG partners	Via 121 consultation	August 2020
Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT)	Via 121 consultation	Jan - Mar 2021

Collect and Assess your Data

Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.

(Please delete relevant ticks)

Describe how this proposal could impact on Racial groups

The new service will be required to deliver a service to rough sleepers regardless of their racial status.

We are however aware that current mainstream services tend to see a majority of White British individuals. The service will be required to actively look to engage with all BAME groups.

Data collection will be a requirement for the provider to ensure we are meeting the needs of all.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)

The new service will be required to ensure the safeguarding of female rough sleepers.

There is no impact on gender/ transgender identified.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability

The new service is to be delivered on an outreach basis so there is no impact on disabilities. Current use of building for clinical work offers disability access.

The provider of the service is expected to offer language translators and a range of literature on the new service.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)

No impact identified, the service is required to offer a service regardless of sexual orientation.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Age

The service is available to anyone aged 18+. In the event that a young person is identified on the street, the relevant safeguarding measures will be followed to ensure the young person is referred to the relevant services.

According to the latest rough sleeping data head counts, there are 0 young people identified as rough sleeping in Reading.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief?

There is no known impact on religious belief. The service is to offer a service in a range of languages.

The service will not discriminate, harass or victimise for any characteristic.

Is there a negative impact? No

Make a Decision

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you **MUST** assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

Tick which applies (Please delete relevant ticks)

1. **No negative impact identified** **Go to sign off**

2. **Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason**

You must give due regard or weight but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.

Reason

3. **Negative impact identified or uncertain**

What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact? Set out your actions and timescale?

How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

The service is required to monitor needs and tailor services quarterly to avoid any negative impact on anyone with a protected characteristic

Access to the service must be promoted and tailored for differing needs and personalised for each individual.

Signed (completing officer)	Sally Andersen	Date	24.06.2021
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Signed (Lead Officer)		Date	
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READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOODS AND THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	12 JULY 2021		
TITLE:	CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME ANNUAL UPDATE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR MCEWAN	PORTFOLIO:	CORPORATE RESOURCES AND CONSUMER SERVICES
SERVICE:	CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	ISABEL EDGAR	TEL:	
JOB TITLE:	AD CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICES	E-MAIL:	Isabel.edgar@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council's Customer Experience Strategy (2020-2024) was adopted in January 2020. The Strategy sets out a vision to achieve the best possible experience for customers, whoever they are (residents, businesses, partners or suppliers) and whenever they deal with us. It also sets out our plan to achieve the vision by putting customers at the heart of everything we do as a Council, using innovative thinking, technology and data to achieve customer service excellence whilst also delivering savings to support the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
- 1.2 The purpose of this paper is to update Members on the successes achieved in year 1 of the programme, lessons learned and plans for year 2.
- 1.3 Appendix 1 - Service Reviews outputs
Appendix 2 - Data Dashboard

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 The Committee are asked to note the progress made in year 1 of the Customer Experience Programme, and the work to be progressed in year 2.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Council's Customer Experience Strategy (2020-2024) was adopted in January 2020. The strategy sets out our vision to achieve the best possible experience for our customers, by putting customers at the heart of everything we do. The strategy included a high level roadmap of transformation over the next 4 years and was proposed to be delivered in 1 year phases of activity.
- 3.2 Underpinning the Customer Experience Strategy are 6 core themes:
 - Achieving Customer Service Excellence
 - Adopting a mindset and promise
 - Involving the organisation

- Putting the customer at the heart of service and process design
- Harnessing digital technology
- Realising the power of data.

3.3 Ultimately, the Strategy will facilitate a culture and channel shift, by providing a 24/7 online service, designed around the customer, where customers can connect with us as and when it suits them. The majority of queries that cannot be resolved online will be answered at first point of contact by a central Customer Fulfilment team. This will be comprised of customer service experts from across the organisation, who will be brought together into a highly skilled team, with refined processes and ways of working. Only complex specialist queries will be transferred to other teams in the Council.

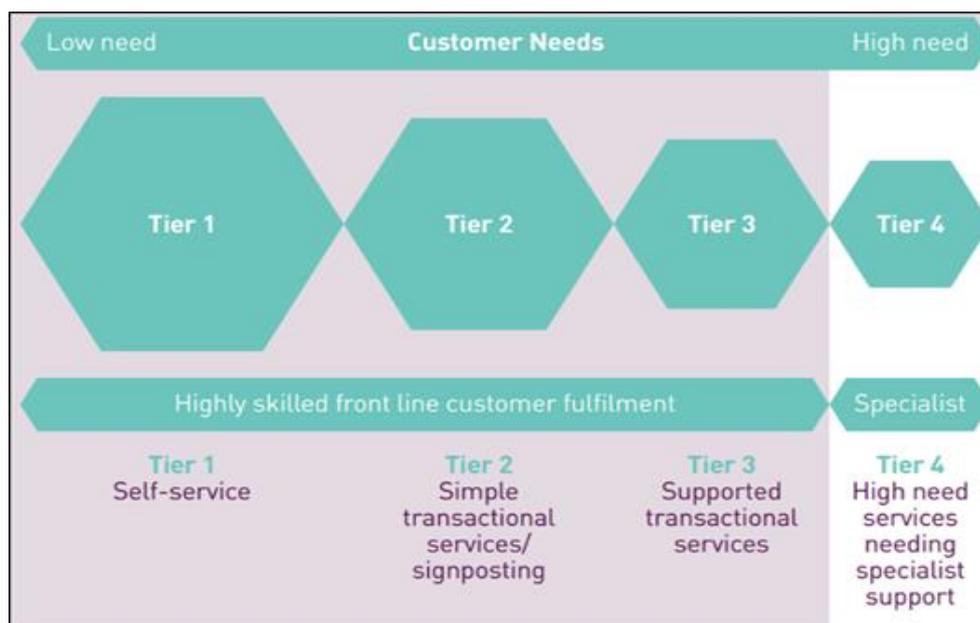


Figure 1 - Customer Fulfilment Model

- 3.4 When the Civic Offices closed in March 2020, our reception and face-to-face appointments were also closed down. During the year we saw footfall into the reception fall from nearly 84k per year (74K in the hub, 10k counsellor / officer services) to a few thousand. In response, the programme rapidly developed an internal-facing booking form, so that when a customer called up who needed further support, then the contact centre could book time for them to come in face to face. This illustrates how customers shifted to using new channels to transact with us, interacting with us online at a time that suited them, while phone / face-to-face channels are open to those with complex queries / needs.
- 3.5 This shift in customer behaviours has given us the opportunity to review the space required to deliver face to face services, and provide enhanced targeted services to customers that require additional support or have additional needs.
- 3.6 The Customer Fulfilment Model and the shift to digital will result in fewer customer “hand offs” between teams, and will reduce demand into the contact centre, allowing the realisation of financial targets. The programme has ambitious savings targets against it as set out in the table below.

Table 1 - Savings schedule

21/22 (£000's)	22/23 (£000's)	23/24 (£000's)	TOTAL (£000's)
257 ¹	368	295	986

4. YEAR ONE OVERVIEW

4.1 Against the backdrop of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Programme has made significant progress on discovery and foundational work in year 1, despite members of the delivery team being re-deployed to work on the Council's response to Covid-19 for part of the year. This section covers the Programmes achievements to date, and initiatives not progressed in the first year of the Programme.

4.2 Year 1 - Service Reviews

A key aspect of year 1 was the delivery of service reviews. These involved working with service areas with customer contact functions (e.g. responding to emails, answering calls) and reviewing opportunities to enhance the customer experience. Reviews have two purposes:

- a. To review processes through a customer lens, looking for opportunities to enhance self-service, improve our processes and streamline interactions, "leaving every customer with a positive impression of the Council and feeling their day is just a little better."
- b. To bring customer service teams and functions together into one highly skilled Customer Fulfilment Team, equipped to deal with a range of issues.

4.2.1 To date, reviews have been completed in Facilities Management, Parking Services and Environment and Commercial Services. A review of Planning is about to complete. Further details on the outputs and opportunities from the review are in Appendix 1.

4.2.2 Two service areas moved to the new Customer Fulfilment Centre in April 2021. The transition to the new team and ways of working has been supported by a programme of training and mentoring. Additionally, detailed Service Level Agreements have been agreed between 'back office' services and the Customer Fulfilment centre to ensure that service delivery is uninterrupted and standards of work are specific and measured. A period of data gathering will enable us to demonstrate improvements in the service delivery around key aspects such as: telephone wait times, faster response to enquiries and applications, customer satisfaction, reduction in manual tasks etc. This will be monitored and reviewed at intervals as necessary.

4.3 Year 1 - Data and Insight

A core element of the Customer Experience Strategy is "Realising the Power of our Data." This means using data to better plan the shape and size of our services according to need and demand. Whilst there are still gaps in our customer data, in year 1 of the Programme we have made good progress against this element of the Strategy.

4.3.1 The Data and Insight Team have been working closely with the Programme to improve the quality of customer data, and to support the organisation in its move towards data and insight driven decision making.

4.3.2 The Team have developed performance dashboards using data from Granicus Firmstep (our system which holds information about a large proportion of customer transactions). The aim is to provide this information monthly to service managers, so they can address issues around repeat calls (failure demand) or look to set standards for response

¹ The 21/22 figure includes savings of £66k carried forward from 20/21

times. As we develop our dashboards we will begin to see trends and demands, so that we can capacity plan or tackle tricky issues. See figure 2 in Appendix 2.

4.3.3 The digital team also used customer insight to refine and streamline the website look and feel prior to its launch. Customers were asked to carry out some key transactions or to find information on the website and their experience (the number of clicks to arrive at a page, the pages visited, search words etc) were analysed to improve the customer journey.

4.4 Year 1 - Building Digital Foundations

A quality online “tier 1” offer is central to realising the Customer Experience Strategy. A quality self-service offer will enable customers to resolve their queries more quickly and easily, as well as reducing demand on the Customer Fulfilment Team. Significant progress has been made in this area, as outlined below.

4.4.2 **Website Design** - The corporate website (www.reading.gov.uk) was redesigned to offer a user centred design with a fresher more modern look and feel for customers. The new look is optimised for accessibility and the Council now ranks highly in the [Silktide Index](#) (92% accessibility score - putting the site in the 90th percentile for the Local Authority Sector). The new responsive design also works seamlessly across both mobile and desktop.

4.4.3 **Technical Platform** The front-end of the website uses the latest digital technology to enable rapid development and ensure the website is fit for the future. An example of application development using the new platform is the new [Bin collection date](#) service. This service has been very well received by customers and already used 340k+ times since its launch at the end of 2020. The website moved hosting location from a private data centre to Amazon Web Services (AWS) Cloud. This hosting offers better resilience (fail-over speed and uptime SLA’s) and a future proof technology environment for website development.

4.4.4 **Customer Account Portal (MyAccount) design and development** - The MyAccount portal was designed to provide a seamless transition from the corporate website to MyAccount. A number of new core features were launched on the MyAccount portal this year, including a new address lookup service (allowing more accurate searching within and outside the Borough) and improved customer notifications (with increased resilience for situations where the Council suffers poor or no network access).

4.4.5 **Digital Content Strategy.** Our refreshed Content Strategy was launched. This covers guidelines on:

- Our Content Strategy for the website
- Content Governance
- Continuous Content Review Programme
- Writing Style Guidelines

4.4.6 **Continuous Content Reviews.** A programme of work set out to make sure all website content is up to date, useful, usable and used. This work started independently of the Customer Experience Programme but now is embedded into its service review process.

4.4.7 **Reading API.** Reading API is a layer which allows business systems to talk to customer-facing web services. We have successfully built a number of services using this platform so far, including missed bin reporting and the bin collection date service. More applications are under development including facilities management booking, new bin ordering and bulky waste bookings (part of year 2 work, see section 6).

4.4.8 **Robotic process automation** is a form of business process automation that allows us to define a set of simple instructions for a robot to perform. This enables repetitive, time-intensive tasks, such as copying information from one system to another, to be

completed automatically in a quick and error-free way. This frees up staff to do more complex, emotive and interesting tasks.

4.4.9 In year 1, RBC commissioned support from a company called Blue Prism to run a proof of concept pilot. The pilot, is looking to test how the tech can help us cleanse data, share information and find efficiencies. It is due to run over the next few months, automating the following processes:

- Indexing incoming customer contacts into the information @ work system - this will remove a large administrative task from staff in Revenue and Benefits, freeing them up to address more complex customer queries that require human intervention.
- Automating the addition of new members of staff on to the intranet, intranet management (when staff move within the council) and deleting users from the intranet (when they leave the Council). This will improve processes for staff and will support quicker resolution of customer enquiries when they have to be passed onto back office service Teams.

4.4.10 Initial processes for RPA were intentionally internal, to minimise the risk of trialling new technologies. The findings of the pilot will inform a business case, which will set out the options for how we might use RPA in Reading going forward.

4.4.11 **Booking Forms** - A corporate booking system (bookinglab) has been procured to reduce the number of different ways customers can making a booking with us - streamlining the customer experience and allowing us to rationalise multiple booking systems.

4.4.12 In November 2020, the Programme launched its first new booking form on the platform, allowing customers to book a slot at refuse sites. When the first lock down started the Bracknell refuse site was receiving 1,500 visits a day (a new visitor every 24 seconds), which made social distancing a challenge and resulted in long queues for the site. In response, we launched a new self-serve form for RE3 which allowed customers to book time slots to visit the refuse sites seven days in advance. The new form has been positively received by customers.

4.5 Year 1 - Customer at the Heart

The Customer Experience Strategy states:

“We will embed an exemplary customer experience philosophy that shapes the way all our staff across the Council deal with customers, whether they are residents, businesses, partners or suppliers and we will also adopt this approach when working with our colleagues and delivery of our internal services”

4.5.1 This philosophy is being embedded through targeted culture work, which is a core element of the delivery Programme. Work to date in this area has included:

- Launching the “Customer Promise” (internally) which sets out our commitment to customers. Communicating and embedding the promise will form part of year 2.
- Working closely with Occupational Development and the Team Reading project to incorporate customer experience principles into organisation-wide initiatives, such as performance management, recruitment, leadership development and training
- Working with Customer Fulfilment to baseline performance data and introduce performance measures to create a gold standard across our customer service delivery.

4.5.2 A new Accessible Information Policy is currently going through informal consultation with Voluntary and Community Groups to help us shape and inform the policy. The

policy will be brought back to Policy Committee for adoption in Autumn 2021. Following adoption, the programme will support the embedding of best practice across the organisation. The aim of the policy is to provide a clear, consistent, transparent and fair approach to the provision of accessible and inclusive information for:

- People who are disabled
- People who do not speak or read English at all or very well
- People with low literacy
- People in digital poverty or who don't have access to IT

4.6 Year 1 initiatives not completed

Whilst the Programme has made significant progress in year 1, there were some delays due to the pandemic which have held us back from delivering against all of the initiatives set out in the Strategy. An update on what we have not completed can be found in the table below.

Table 2: Outstanding initiatives

Initiative	Update
<i>One Council Phone Number</i>	This has been pushed back to later in the programme as there were a number of risks/considerations including: Changing the existing telephone systems contract due to the new IT contract, changing the telephony strategy during the pandemic when this had become our primary channel for vulnerable customers and moving to one phone number before moving customer service teams together ran the risk of increased calls to the central Customer Fulfilment Team, which could have become a switch board.
<i>Customer Experience Training all staff</i>	This has not been progressed in year 1 due to the pressures of Covid, however an options appraisal is now being worked up as part of year 2.
<i>Service and process redesign phase 1</i>	Whilst reviews have been completed in some areas of the Council, there have been delays due to the pandemic. Year 2 is restructuring the existing model to focus in on the delivery of process redesign which will slow progress but should enhance the impact on staff and customers. Due to the delays to the programme only £66k of year 1 savings have been realised. A further £66K has been carried over to Year 2.
<i>Closure of unstructured data</i>	Linked to the above, phase 1 of redesign was delayed with the pandemic and pressures on resources. We will continue to work on consolidating inboxes and closing unstructured email through year 2.
<i>RPA proof of concept</i>	This work is underway, however has been delayed. A business case setting out options for year 2 is now expected Autumn 2021.

4.7 The first year of the Customer Experience Programme has been challenging. The Programme is being delivered by new teams, establishing new ways of working during a pandemic. Despite this, good progress has been made and foundations put in place for year 2 of the Programme which should enable us to progress at pace.

4.8 **Year 1 Lessons Learned** - As the first year of activity came to an end, the delivery team, Board and stakeholders have taken time to reflect on progress made, and opportunities for the coming year.

- *Lesson 1: Slow down discovery to free up time to deliver.* In year 1, the Programme spent a lot of time understanding service areas and identifying

opportunities for service redesign. This has left us with a backlog of opportunities for enhancing the customer experience. In year 2 we are going to slow down “discovery” work to give the team a chance to deliver against opportunities identified. This approach will help us build momentum and will support the realisation of savings.

- *Lesson 2: Role model best practice.* As a programme, we are championing the “customer at the heart” philosophy. In year 2, we want to work more collaboratively with services to understand and design processes around customer needs. We will also increase our engagement with customers, using tools such as data, personas and workshops to understand customer requirements as the basis for process redesign.
- *Lesson 3: Be agile and use data to inform work.* The Programme now has access to data which shows us why and when customers are contacting us. We will use dashboards to understand trends and, where appropriate, will adjust the focus of work to concentrate on customer pain points / high demand areas.

5 Year 2 | What are we looking to achieve?

- 5.1 Going in to the second year of the programme, we have taken the opportunity to reflect and adjust ways of working to support the delivery of impactful, sustainable change. The table below summarises the Outputs, Outcomes, Benefits and Impact we will make in Year 2 of the programme.

Outputs (what will we deliver?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An expanded and stable online self-serve offer (tier 1) • Optimised key customer journeys, as well as better understanding of user-centred design across the organisation • Embed the customer promise and “customer at the heart” philosophy • More automation of online forms • Data strategy in place, and an understanding across the organisation of data-driven decision making • Make the case for continued funding for RPA • Implement Accessible Information Policy • Delivery of improved customer journeys and embedding new ways of working
Outcomes (why? What are we looking to achieve?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers are empowered to self-serve, allowing them to interact with the Council easily at a time and place that is convenient for them • When customers contact the council, they are given clear, concise information. Issues are heard and resolved at pace. • The customer is put at the heart of everything we do and is heard. Work is adapted to fit around evolving expectations. • As an organisation, we value data. We handle it securely, strive for accuracy and use it to make decisions that support continuously improving services for our customers. • A customer centric philosophy extends across the organisation; who are engaged, and keen to be part of this transformation. • Adopting a test and learn approach, ensuring we include the customers voice and experience in process design.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased customer satisfaction - with more processes putting their requirements first

(How do we measure progress?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in website activity and a reduction in telephone enquiries (more self-service); leading to lower demand on the contact centre and creating an opportunity to realise savings • Better ways of working across customer facing teams mean fewer hand overs and fewer return calls, reducing demand and creating an opportunity to reduce FTE
Impact (How does it fit with bigger picture?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realisation of savings to support the MTFS (target £986k) • Supporting strategic goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Thriving communities - supporting more people to interact with us online, means staff are freed up to support people with more complex needs. The programme is also about meeting the enhance digital requirements of a population who has become more accustomed to interacting with businesses and each other online. ✓ Proud of our public services - focusing on making services simpler, faster and better through enhancements to the website, streamlined processes and online services available 24/7/365

Table 3. Outputs, outcomes, benefits and impact

5.2 Year 2 | What does this look like in practice?

5.3 Customer at the heart

Work on embedding a “customer at the heart” philosophy will continue into year 2, and throughout the duration of the programme. Focus for coming months will include:

- Linking in with the Team Reading delivery plan, to embed the philosophy in planned activities (e.g. recognition, recruitment, training, induction)
- Planning a programme of Customer Experience specific activity (e.g. external speakers, workshops)
- Role modelling new behaviours and ways of working through programme activity by consulting with customers and using data / personas to inform service redesign

5.4 Service Reviews

5.4.1 Work will continue to complete the Planning and Regulatory services reviews, and the review findings will be added to our pipeline of opportunities. Service reviews will then be paused and resources reallocated to the delivery of process improvements that had been identified in the services reviews carried out to date and outlined in section 5.5. These process or digitisation improvements contribute to the savings delivery. See table in section 5.9.

5.4.2 Following up reviews with tangible improvements to processes also has the benefit of building staff buy-in to the programme, as they can see the ideas put forward materialise and feel listened to in how best to improve their area of work.

5.4.3 The programme has talked to Unions about this change, and it has been positively received. Working together, we have worked through necessary changes in the consultation approach. Consultation with staff will go from mini-consultations with service areas, followed by a larger consultation at a later date to two larger consultations, one in January 2022 and one in January 2023. This approach sticks to the 18-month consultation period flagged for transitioned staff, while allowing the programme to implement process changes to reduce demand coming into the Customer Fulfilment team.

5.4.4 In six months, the programme will reflect on the progress on delivery the process / digital improvements and available data to review whether further reviews will be carried out or additional improvement opportunities implemented.

5.5 Delivery of Process and Digital Improvements

5.5.1 The refocusing of resource will enable the Programme to rapidly drive forward with delivery. An opportunity pipeline has been built, and opportunities have been prioritised looking at potential benefit and complexity of implementation. The following opportunities will be progressed in the next six months of work:

5.5.2 **Booking Forms and Payments** - work will be done to further roll out our corporate booking solution. Opportunities identified to date including bulky waste booking, Council facilities booking form (booking Council spaces) and reception booking form (including a check-in station in reception). Frequently booking forms require a payment (e.g. you pay for a bulky waste pick up), so these two key customer interactions will initially be considered together.

5.5.3 **Fly Tipping and Fixed Penalty Notices** - The current process involves multiple systems and hand offs between members of staff. To improve the customer journey, we will reduce the number of touch points to enhance the customer experience.

5.5.4 **Missed Bin Reporting process** - In 2020 there were circa 7,000 waste enquiries to the Customer Fulfilment centre that could have been avoidable, had there been a fully digitised process for reporting missed bins. Significant work has been done in this area, including enhancing online information available to customers and the allocation of a dedicated resource to reduce complaints. Savings generated from this work relate to a reduction of calls into the contact centre.

5.5.5 **Resident Parking Permits (scoping only)** - Following the review in parking, this short piece of work will scope what activities and timescales might be involved in progressing in this area. Proposals will be discussed with members before being taken forward. Savings will be generated from reduction in postage costs and a reduction of enquiries into the Customer Fulfilment Service

5.5.6 **Website Content** - A continuation of work already underway to review online content and to allow customers to self-serve information. This work will focus in on why customers contact the Council in key areas and ensure that important information is readily accessible on the website. This piece of work includes the Single Sign On to My Account pipeline of work.

5.5.7 **Robotic Process Automation (RPA)** - Work will continue on the RPA proof of concept pilot, with a business case detailing options and next steps due in the Autumn.

5.6 **Customer Fulfilment Team Build** - Staff moving across to the Customer Fulfilment team will continue to be supported through the transition. Work will look to up and cross-skill the team, refine processes and implement consistent performance metrics. Work will also cover reviewing the tools and systems used by the team, to enable them to deliver excellent customer service.

5.7 **Customer Services Reception Hub** - Planning for the 'reopening' of reception is underway. Work has been separated into two phases; Phase 1 focusses on 'reopening' post-COVID restrictions, Phase 2 will design and implement a full revamp of the Reception space. Savings have already been built into the base budget outside of the programme and are expected from the encouragement of self-serve and digitisation

5.8 Comms and Engagement

- 5.8.1 Externally, communications to date have been limited since the launch of the strategy. It is proposed that year 2 takes an “engage, listen, learn” approach engaging with existing forums including the citizens panel and housing / social care forums to identify pain points for customers and test ideas. Changes to processes, teams and the online offer will be soft launched, as we build momentum on delivery. Moving into year 3, we will consider more proactive communications to drive up online transactions and reduce demand on Customer Fulfilment.
- 5.8.2 A detailed communications plan has been developed for internal staff. Regular communications rhythms are being set up, including a monthly email to Assistant Directors and impacted Managers, open-invite show and tells, blogs and engagement with front line teams (e.g. Customer Fulfilment).
- 5.8.3 For Members, the recommendation is that quarterly updates are given to lead members and an update comes to committee every six months.
- 5.9 Implementation of this plan would deliver the following estimated savings for the first 6 months activity:

Opportunity	Saving Identified
Planning Services Review	To be finalised - Early estimates suggests opportunities equating to £35k once delivered
Regulatory Services Review	To be determined
Missed Bins Reporting	To be determined
Residents Parking Permits	To be determined
Booking System Process	£60k - £67k
Flytipping and Fixed Penalty notices process	£115k - £165k
Total for first 6 months	£175k - 232k

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 6.1 The Customer Experience Strategy supports the Council’s vision and Corporate Plan priorities. The Council’s vision is:

To help Reading realise its potential - and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

- 6.2 The Customer Experience Strategy sets out how we will support our communities to interact with us online, this means staff are freed up to support people with more complex needs. The programme is also about meeting the enhanced digital requirements of a population who has become more accustomed to interacting with businesses and each other online through the Pandemic.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct impacts as a result of the Customer Experience Programme as the programme deals with Culture and Channel shift. Indirectly a reduction of people visiting the civic centre to transact with us may contribute to a reduction in journeys to the town centre.

8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 8.1 Both customer insight (using the citizen panel or through user testing) and customer transactional data has been used to inform the year 2 plan. The implementation of the new digital processes are being directly tested with customers to ensure the process are designed with the lens of the customer.

8.2 The Accessible information Policy is currently being consulted on through Voluntary and Community Sector organisations that specialise in support customers with Accessibility needs. Further information will follow when the Policy goes to Policy Committee in the Autumn.

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 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed to inform the Accessible Information Policy. This will be included in the report tracking to Policy Committee in the Autumn.

9.3 Where appropriate further EIA's will be completed for individual projects such as the reconfiguration of the Reception. The Customer Experience Strategy recognises that not all customer can self serve digitally, this may be due to having additional needs, language barriers, or being digitally excluded for example. All the programmes activities are shaped to ensure where feasible and appropriate customers self serve as the primary channel for customers to transact to us and additional provision is then made for those where this is not possible.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 *none*

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 In 2020/21 the Council agreed a £2.5 million capital investment programme to deliver the outcomes of the Strategy. Revenue savings attached to this investment are as follows:

21/22 (£000's)	22/23 (£000's)	23/24 (£000's)	TOTAL (£000's)
257 ²	368	295	986

11.2 A further £418k of savings were identified as a contribution to the Housing Revenue Account. These savings are in the main being delivered through the Housing Services new technology platform implementation.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 *The Customer Experience Strategy 2020 - 2024*

² The 21/22 figure includes savings of £66k carried forward from 20/21

Appendix 1 Service Reviews

Introduction

Customer Experience service reviews have currently been undertaken in Facilities Management, Parking and Neighbourhood Services, with a Planning review due to complete shortly. The aim of each review is to identify process improvement opportunities which align with our new 4-tier operating model; transforming our self-serve and digital offer, bringing together our customer transactions into one Customer Fulfilment function, and enabling our services to focus on specialist, technical activity. For each review, a multi-disciplinary working group is created to understand the current 'as-is' customer journey and brainstorm ideas on how to transform the service. Ideas and opportunities are then further detailed to understand the benefit to our customers and the organisation.

Recommendations made as a result of the reviews are prioritised for delivery as part of the Customer Experience programme.

Parking

The following recommendations were made following detailed analysis with Network and Parking Services:

Opportunity	Status
Transfer all Civil Enforcement roles (equivalent to 12.9 FTE) into Customer Fulfilment to harmonise processes and create a consistent customer experience	Following a consultation, all identified roles have now fully transferred into Customer Fulfilment
Remove outstanding Civil Enforcement vacancies (equivalent to 3 FTE)	All roles deleted and savings attributed to MTFS
Customer Fulfilment to work with Parking to agree service measures for customer-facing activity	Service measures agreed, pending final Director sign off
Undertake a service webpage review, using customer behaviour knowledge to reduce unnecessary phone and email contacts	Prioritised as part of Year 2 Web Programme delivery
Replace unstructured email with automated webforms	Prioritised as part of Year 2 Web Programme delivery
Work with the RPA project team on identified opportunities for automation, including PCN processing and concessionary pass issuing	Future RPA opportunities being reviewed as part of RPA business case
Implement a web chat function for Parking	To be resourced following 8x8 implementation
Review outstanding opportunities from the Parking fundamental service review and prioritise based on new Customer Fulfilment structure	To be reviewed between Customer Fulfilment and Parking
Undertake a digital permits pilot	Resourced as part of proposed CX Year 2 delivery plan

Facilities Management

The following recommendations were made following detailed analysis with Facilities Management:

Opportunity	Status
Transfer all Facilities Support and Lettings roles, (equivalent to 7.4 FTE) into Customer Fulfilment to harmonise processes and create a consistent customer experience	Following a consultation, all agreed roles have now fully transferred into Customer Fulfilment

Customer Fulfilment to work with Facilities Management to agree service measures for customer-facing activity	Service measures agreed, pending final Director sign off
Work with the RPA project team to continue evaluating identified opportunities for automation, such as regular and one-off bookings and Fees for Projects	Future RPA opportunities being reviewed as part of RPA business case
Implement BookingLab booking solution for regular and one-off bookings, with integrated payment solution	Underway
Undertake a service webpage review, using customer behaviour knowledge to reduce unnecessary phone and email contacts, including video building tours	Prioritised as part of Year 2 Web Programme delivery
Replace unstructured email with automated webforms	Prioritised as part of Year 2 Web Programme delivery
Implement a self-serve Facilities Support customer portal	Requirement captured as part of wider review of Planet FM

Neighbourhood Services

The following recommendations were made following detailed analysis with Neighbourhood Services:

Opportunity	Status
Customer Fulfilment to work with Neighbourhood Services to agree service measures for customer-facing activity	Service measures to be drafted
Redefine processes to remove the handoffs between service experts and support staff through system integration and access	To be resourced as part of pipeline delivery
Extend the use of Love Clean Reading Solution (or similar product) to manage all environmental reporting. Additional functionality will include detecting duplicate reporting, map layers, public/private land identification, task management	To be resourced as part of pipeline delivery
Develop an Enforcement Case Management module on Firmstep, the customer digital platform. The module will manage the lifecycle of any Fixed Penalty Notices issued (issue, payment, reminder and interviews etc.)	Resourced as part of proposed CX Year 2 delivery plan
Extend the use of Love Clean Reading to all mobile/remote officers, removing the dependency on paper and enable real time progress updates	To be resourced as part of pipeline delivery
Use Power BI dashboard to improve reporting between Customer Fulfilment and the service by making data available on demand	Relevant licenses to be obtained
Redesign the process for issue reporting on Love Clean Reading, putting the customer at the heart of the process	To be resourced as part of pipeline delivery
Review all waste related calls to Customer Fulfilment and redesign each resolution	Resourced as part of proposed CX Year 2 delivery plan

path, to reduce the number of contacts received and encourage self-serve	
Undertake a detailed review the current Clinical Waste operations; explore the opportunity to bring back in-house to improve customer experience, communication and ways of working	To be resourced as part of pipeline delivery

Appendix 2 - Data Performance Dashboard



15/05/2020 03/05/2021



Fiscal Year

All

Purpose of Enquiry

All

Channel

All

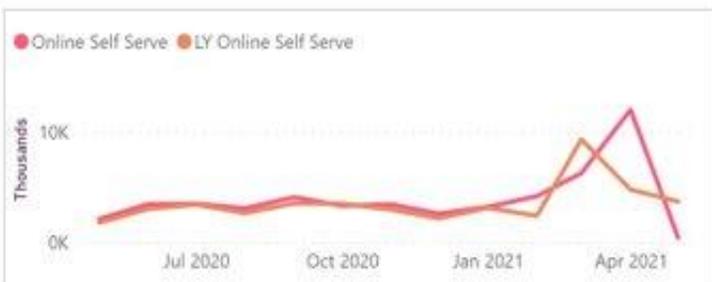
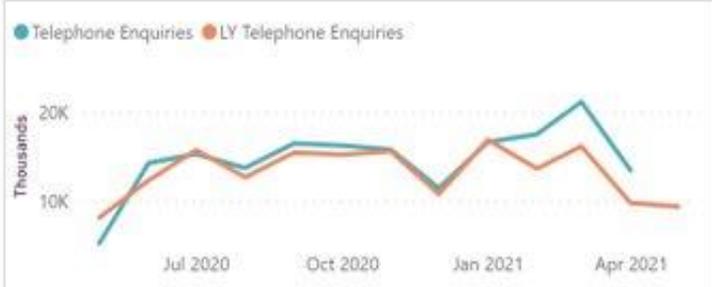
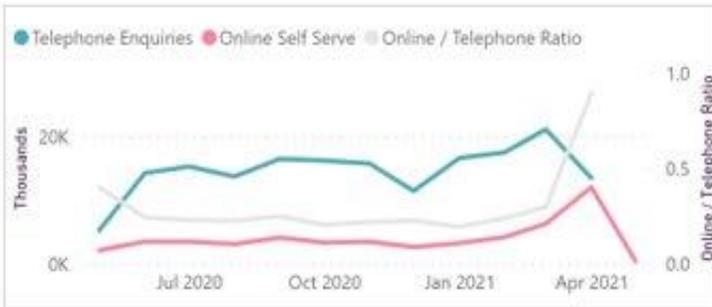
Service Area

All

Directorate

All

May 2020 - May 2021



All Enquiries

229K

Telephone Enquiries

177K
77.44%

Online Enquiries

52K
22.56%

Service Area	Telephone	LY Telephone	Diff %	Online	LY Online	Diff %
Council Tax	34,747	33,365	4.0%	11,616	11,294	2.8%
Wrong No.	23,087	25,864	-12.0%			
Neighbourhood Services	20,202	14,375	28.8%	25,199	20,266	19.6%
Benefits	18,858	19,515	-3.5%	281	238	15.3%
ASC	17,175	18,633	-8.5%			
Registrar Enquiries	15,379	10,262	33.3%			
Repairs	12,654	10,253	19.0%	542	399	26.4%
Housing	11,861	9,766	17.7%	1,314	1,108	15.7%
Switchboard	7,893	8,877	-12.5%			
School Admissions	4,111	7,740	-88.3%	9,942	10,277	-3.4%
Planning	3,152	3,824	-21.3%	230	190	17.4%
Electoral Reg	2,201	4,212	-91.4%			
One Reading Hub	1,428		100.0%			
Env Health	1,134	1,314	-15.9%			
Highways	953	1,126	-18.2%	2,098	2,080	0.9%
Parks	871	1,058	-21.5%			
Network Mgmt	851	783	8.0%			
Chasing early	475	547	-15.2%			
Total	177,032	171,514	3.1%	51,573	46,262	10.3%

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	12 JULY 2021		
TITLE:	DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR McEWAN	PORTFOLIO:	CORPORATE & CONSUMER SERVICES
SERVICE:	ICT	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	MARTIN CHALMERS	TEL:	07970 963741
JOB TITLE:	CHIEF DIGITAL AND INFORMATION OFFICER	E-MAIL:	martin.chalmers@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents the Council’s draft Digital Transformation Strategy *Connected Reading* (attached at Appendix 1) for approval, together with a recommended work programme for year 1, known as the Digital Accelerator Programme.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

That Policy Committee

- 2.1 Approve the *Connected Reading* Digital Strategy as set out in Appendix 1;
- 2.2 Agree the Year 1 Digital Accelerator work programme set out in this document and in the business case at Appendix 2; and
- 2.3 Note that a report on progress and an updated business case will be brought to Policy Committee in the autumn of 2021, prior to budget-setting, together with detailed proposals for future work.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The draft Strategy was developed by a joint team from Reading Borough Council (RBC) and FutureGov, which is a digital transformation specialist firm selected through a competitive process. It was based on interviews with staff, including Senior Leadership Group members, the Leader, Deputy Leader, former Lead Member for Corporate and Consumer Services, and a range of staff from across all directorates.
- 3.2 The draft Strategy attached at Appendix 1, emphasises that Digital goes beyond technology and means, to quote former Government Digital Service

senior Tom Loosemore “applying the culture, practices, processes, business models and technology of the internet-era to respond to people’s raised expectations”. Aligning with the Corporate Plan, the proposed vision for the Council’s Digital Strategy – *Connected Reading* – is:

Strong, connected relationships with residents, businesses and partners underpin a healthy, thriving and inclusive borough.

- 3.3 The Strategy proposes five themes against which action should be pursued to turn the vision into reality. Appendix 1 uses a range of personas to indicate what that reality would mean for different types of staff and stakeholder. In summary, these themes are:



Developing Foundations - to ensure that the right technology and business applications are in place and kept up to date, thereby underpinning the other four themes, along with best practice approaches to service design, development and change



Sharing Information - to enable information to be shared safely and securely between residents and businesses, the Council and delivery partners, so that it can be used to optimise the services delivered to residents and businesses



Improving Skills - to grow everyone’s confidence and ability, both within the Council and the wider community in using and exploiting digital tools and digital-era delivery approaches



Connecting Communities - to enable communities to support themselves and to strengthen digital inclusion



Enabling Investment - to work with partners and suppliers to create the right infrastructure in Reading for our residents and businesses to thrive.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1.1 Digital has significant potential to deliver direct financial benefit, with research¹ by Nesta and the Local Government Association suggesting that, based on studies of best-in-class digital transformations, the average unitary authority could save 13% of its budget through change projects founded on digital technologies. The potential is particularly great in our region where 86% of the population is digitally skilled at a time when both national research by OfCom² and local research by Reading University³ have found that Covid has led to increased takeup of online services and activities.

4.1.2 The benefits potential of Digital has already been recognised by the organisation. The MTFS agreed by Council in February 2021 includes £5m of annual savings (4% of revenue budget) to be realised by 2023/24 that have

¹ *Connected Councils: a digital vision of local government in 2025*, Nesta, 2016, [connected_councils_report.pdf \(nesta.org.uk\)](https://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/connected-councils-report)

² *Online Nation 2021 report* ([ofcom.org.uk](https://www.ofcom.gov.uk/consult/condocs/onlinenation2021/onlinenation2021.pdf))

³ *Digital-Inclusion-in-Reading.pdf*, University of Reading, 2021

dependencies on Digital. This includes £1m of savings from the Customer Experience Strategy agreed by Policy Committee in January 2020, which identified explicit dependencies on Digital, most notably the introduction of a customer experience platform.⁴

4.1.3 The Council has already taken a first enabling step through putting in place new arrangements for its core Information & Communications Technology services through the implementation of the Future Operating Model which went live in April 2021. To realise the benefits of digital transformation, however, we now need to overcome some significant technical and business obstacles and modernise our ways of working. For example:

- A number of our most significant core business applications are end-of-life and need to be replaced in the next 1-3 years. Out-of-date unconnected systems have led to operational inefficiencies (eg double entry of social care assessment data into workflow and case management tools) and the development of undocumented work arounds in response to technology challenges (eg the creation of undocumented spreadsheets where data reporting and analysis are inadequate), making some of our processes overly complex. Modernising our applications, and working to well-defined, customer-centric processes will increase both the efficiency and quality of services.
- Organisational digital maturity (a measure of our ability to implement digital change readily, effectively and consistently across the organisation) is low, with interviewees placing us between level 1 and level 2 on FutureGov's 4-point maturity scale, while digitally advanced councils are typically at level 3 and targeting level 4.
- There is a lack of technical capacity to support change. For example, our current web team is made up of six staff who cover both normal business and delivery against organisational change initiatives such as the Customer Experience Programme. In practice, normal business demands almost the entire time of that team.
- In the absence of a digital strategy, the organisation has evolved by using multiple systems. This can be challenging for staff who need to navigate multiple systems as part of their day-to-day work, and also residents who are exposed to this complex array of systems through the website.

4.1.4 Notwithstanding these obstacles, the £5m savings included within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy is reasonable, given that other councils of our size and digital maturity are targeting savings of 3.5-5%. However, action as proposed below is required to overcome the barriers.

⁴ Customer Experience Platform = tool(s) to provide forms, workflow and access to customer information for use by public via website and by Customer Fulfilment staff.

4.2 Recommended Actions

4.2.1 Firstly, it is recommended that we build internal digital capability, so as to minimise ongoing dependence on external consultants for disciplines which are core to digital-era business delivery. Based on the first-year roadmap below, it is expected that there would be an increase of 5 digital and data posts in 2021/22 (2 designers, 2 developers, 1 data analyst), noting that current teams (3 digital developers on fixed term contracts, 4-person data analysis team) are fully occupied with current normal business (on the basis of which the fixed-term roles are expected to be made permanent). Comparison with other councils suggests that the team size required will grow by a further 5-6 posts in 2022/23, but this would be subject to a further business case.

4.2.2 Secondly, it is recommended that the Digital Accelerator Programme set out below is implemented, with the twin objectives of delivering demonstrable benefit now and, at least as importantly, building people, process and technology capability to deliver further benefit in the future. This would involve engaging external support to drive the initial work forwards while building the incoming team. The objective is to eliminate dependency on external support for non-transient needs by the end of year 1.

4.2.3 The proposed approach is to build functional and system capabilities in a cross-cutting way (eg implementing a payment system that will ultimately be used by all parts of the business). Three pathfinder areas of the business who have urgent, high-value change planned which have digital dependencies will be used to prove the concepts involved:

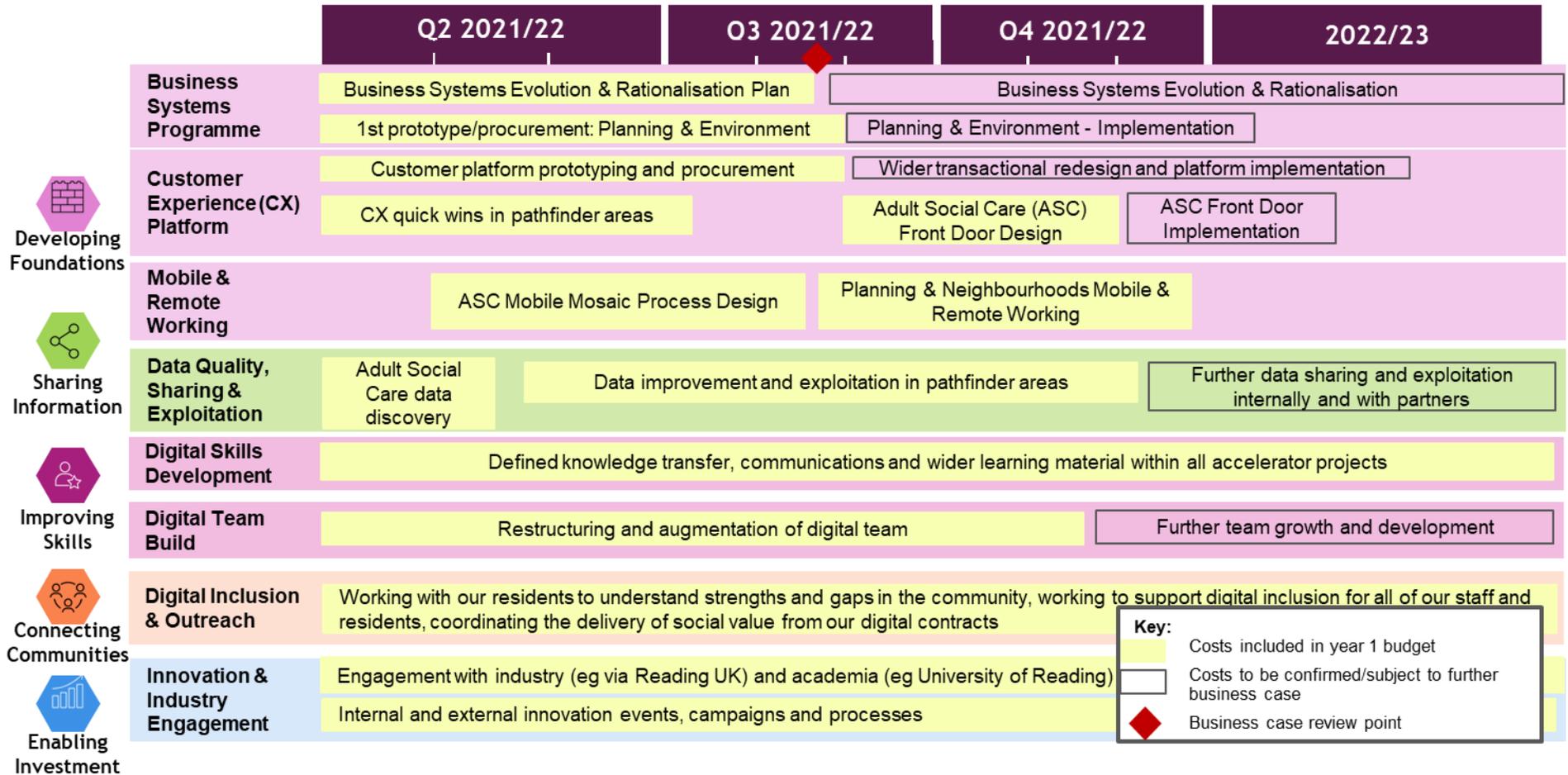
- In the Directorate of Resources, the pathfinders will be:
 - the Customer Fulfilment Team, which is being established as part of the Customer Experience Programme;
 - an area of the directorate that generates high customer call volumes, eg Revenues and Benefits.
- In the Directorate of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, the pathfinders will be:
 - Planning & Regulatory Services;
 - those parts of Environment & Commercial Services that use the Civica APP business application (which is end of life and must be replaced this year) and/or are linked with the Customer Experience Strategy.
- In the Directorate of Adult Care and Health Services, the pathfinders will be digital projects which were identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy as being fundamental to the realisation of planned savings.

4.2.4 The roadmap overleaf shows what will be delivered when in the cross-cutting workstreams. The work shown in yellow (or light grey if viewing in black and white) boxes is factored into the year 1 budget in this paper. This work will directly enable the realisation of £700-750k of the digital-enabled savings identified in the MTFs, but will also provide critical building blocks to enable the delivery of further benefit: the remainder of the £5m target.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Accelerator Programme

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READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

4.2.5 A critical gateway will be a review this autumn, and presentation of a revised business case to this Committee, to provide confidence that as a minimum the remaining digital-dependent MTFs savings can be realised and to inform the 2022 budget setting process. This review is represented by the red diamond on the roadmap diagram above. We expect that our work on the communication of capabilities and benefits delivered by the Accelerator, and the introduction of an innovation process, will help to foster a constructive climate for the review. However, the review will involve firm challenge too:

- Challenge sessions with each project/area targeting digitally enabled savings to review progress and potential
- Challenge/innovation events with each directorate bringing together external expertise/experience, informed by information gathered from the work carried out by the Accelerator set out below, including economic modelling.

4.2.6 The Digital Accelerator will deliver the following in year 1. Delivery, driven by the newly built inhouse capability, would continue in year 2.

Digital Capability	Specific Business Deliverables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register of business systems and a plan for their evolution/replacement and, where possible, rationalisation • Digital-era delivery processes embedded and proven: user-centred design, agile delivery, prototyping-based procurement • Customer Experience Platform procured, including payment system • Patterns Library developed (so that multiple instances of the same problem are not being solved separately) • Reusable processes and capabilities for remote working (eg rostering) • Single data toolset and strategy for sharing, analysis and exploitation of data • Robust, data-driven economic models to drive service performance measurement and benefits realisation in all areas worked with 	<p>Customer Fulfilment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process optimisation for front-end Customer Fulfilment Team, including re-engineering of 1-3 high priority problem “customer journeys” (£150k benefit through demand reduction and efficiency gains) • Quick wins in Environment & Commercial area implemented. Candidates are: waste collection ordering/payment, flytipping end-to-end process, recycling guidance (£150k-200k benefit, primarily through efficiency gains) <p>Planning & Regulatory (et al) (£200k benefit, through efficiency savings)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civica APP replaced • Top 1-3 end-to-end processes surrounding Civica APP re-engineered: candidates include planning guidance and the Love Clean Reading portal. • Remote and mobile working optimised, including appointment and visit booking <p>DACHS (£200k benefit - an assessment of the contribution made by this work to the overall efficiency savings proposed)</p>

	<p>for DACHS, enabled by improved data-driven insight into provider costs supporting cost reduction, and streamlining of processes facilitating efficiency savings through planned restructure)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work needed to drive data improvement scoped • Remote and mobile working optimised, using the Mobile Mosaic project to drive process and data improvement • Adult Social Care front door designed
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4.2.7 In addition to these specific deliverables, there would be cross-cutting workstreams focused on:

- **Digital skills development** - defined knowledge transfer, communications and wider learning to be embedded within all Accelerator projects
- **Digital Inclusion & Outreach** - engagement with Digital Inclusion Group to ensure efforts - including digital social value - are being joined up and appropriately focused; facilitation of broadband connectivity for social inclusion
- **Innovation & Industry Engagement** - engagement with industry and academia; internal and external innovation campaigns, events and processes.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The *Connected Reading* Digital Strategy has been designed to support all three objectives of the Corporate Plan. The work proposed for year 1 supports those objectives in the following ways:

- **Healthy Environment:**
 - The plan to rationalise business applications will enable us, where possible, to reduce unnecessary demand for computing power and hence carbon consumption.
 - The pathfinder quick wins in Environmental Services are targeted at relevant issues including flytipping.
 - The work to replace Civica APP is intrinsically linked with work to improve planning and regulatory services and the way in which they link to residents, as is the proposed enhancement of mobile and remote working support for those services.
- **Thriving Communities**
 - Adult Social Care Front Door and Mobile Mosaic will respectively improve the ease of access to appropriate social care (or, where relevant, alternatives) and the delivery of social care services.
 - Customer Experience quick wins in the pathfinder area of Revenues and Benefits will improve ease of access to services in this field.

- **Inclusive Economy**
 - The focus on digital inclusion: for example digital connectivity and digital skills development for residents directly supports this objective.
 - We will be engaging with local digital industry and academia as part of the innovation workstrand.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no specific environmental or climate implications from this work, but the potential for work on the rationalisation of business applications to eliminate unnecessary use of computing power and hence carbon should be noted.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 Community engagement will be central to the implementation of the Strategy. In particular:

- Wherever new services that affect residents or communities are being implemented, we propose to consult residents through such mechanisms as interviews, focus groups or engagement in prototyping exercises.
- In concert with other Council initiatives related to digital inclusion, we shall be engaging with community organisations to ensure that we are both optimising the work we do on digital inclusion and also taking the risk of digital exclusion into account in the design of digital services.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 There are no specific equality impacts arising from this decision. However, accessibility will be a design criterion for any digital services (eg compliance with the internationally accepted Web Content Accessibility Guidelines).

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 We are proposing to procure transformation support from FutureGov to support the initial delivery of the Strategy. A call-off arrangement is in place under which this work can be procured. The contract was let under the Crown Commercial Services framework Management Consultancy Framework 2.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The expected costs of the proposed Digital Accelerator programme for year 1 are shown in the table below:

Category	Year 1 cost
New internal team	£0.3m
External professional services	£1.2-1.4m
Technology licences	£0.3-0.5m
Total	£1.8-2.2m

- 10.2 In consultation with Finance, an initial estimate of the breakdown of this cost between capital and revenue has been calculated. The rules for such categorisation are complex because software solutions are likely to be purchased as Software-as-a-Service and the categorisation of spend will need to be kept under constant review. The initial assessment of the year 1 breakdown is:
- Capital: £1.45m-1.85m
 - Revenue: £0.35m
- 10.3 Assuming the carry-forward of underspend from 2021/22, the following budgets are included within the Capital Programme :
- Universal Digital Systems - £3.4m
 - Customer Experience - £2.5m (relevant for those elements of the Digital Accelerator that are enablers for the Customer Experience Programme)
- 10.4 Revenue will be drawn from the Digital & ICT reserve (£2.6m assuming the carry forward of IT budget underspend from 2020/21).
- 10.5 The technology licence element of the above costs would be a recurring cost beyond year 1 (albeit one lower than the recurring benefits enabled), though no commitment beyond the first year will be made at this stage. It is expected also that there will be a case to retain and grow the expanded internal digital team. All such future costs and their funding will be addressed in the updated business case to be presented to Policy Committee in autumn 2021.
- 10.5 Given such uncertainties as the detailed funding treatment, and the significance of this digital transformation as an enabler of change, the following controls will be applied:
- Professional services will be procured in short fixed-duration packages no longer than 12 weeks, with clearly defined outputs that will be subject to a financial assessment to confirm funding approach.
 - Each technology procurement will be the subject of its own business case to confirm that confidence in value for money remains.
 - A review will be conducted after each package to confirm the benefits delivered and to ensure that lessons learned from delivery are factored into future plans.
- 10.6 This process will be managed by the Chief Digital and Information Officer and overseen by the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance, in consultation with the Lead Member.

11. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**
None

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Connected Reading

The digital heart of the
Thames Valley

Connected Reading 2021-2024

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Introduction

This is the first digital strategy for Reading, developed in conjunction with stakeholders from across the borough and within the council. In the strategy we explore how digital processes and tools can bring a whole new way of working for residents, businesses and council staff alike.

To guide our work we've described a [vision](#) of the future in 3 years' time, and set out the [principles](#) that will guide the ways we will work in delivering that vision.

The main areas where work is required to achieve the vision are aligned to five key [themes](#) that give structure and purpose. We've also looked at how people's lives will be improved by the delivery of the strategy, and we've described those outcomes through a set of 'personas' who represent a wide range of people across the borough. The personas are grouped into [three areas](#): residents, businesses and staff, and you can look in more detail at how each individual persona will be affected.

In order to deliver the strategy we have developed a [Roadmap for Change](#), which describes the initial projects that will help to accelerate the changes across Reading. This includes the projects that our partners are delivering that support and enable the strategy, and the ways in which the digital maturity and connectedness of the entire borough will improve as the strategy unfolds.

Finally, the borough has declared a Climate Emergency in response to the ongoing challenge of climate change. Digital measures can play an important role in helping to tackle the issues effectively, and we've indicated the important areas through the document wherever you see this green earth logo: 



Addressing the Climate
Emergency through digital

Accelerating Connections in Reading

This strategy for the borough of Reading builds on our unique strengths, in particular our strong digital economy and connected geographical location, as well as the wealth of assets the council and partners have across the borough.

We wish to use digital to create new, connected relationships between residents, businesses, delivery partners, and the Council and its staff. We are using an approach – user-centred design – that puts people and their needs first, designing the digital response to fit those needs.

We have set out a Roadmap for Change to accelerate the delivery of inclusive, responsive and efficient services. We will work collaboratively, in line with the Team Reading values, to co-design solutions that meet the needs of people through digital processes and technology.

We are working towards realising this strategic vision by 2024, with a review point in September 2022 to refresh and refine the focus and Roadmap for Change.

This strategy has been shaped and developed in connection with partners and stakeholders, modelling the collaborative, transparent ways of working that lie at the heart of the strategy.

This strategy will help to deliver better outcomes for residents in our three corporate priority areas:

- **Healthy environment**
- **Thriving communities**
- **Inclusive economy**

and is designed to support a number of parallel change strategies including: Customer Experience; Workforce Reviews and the Adult Social Care Transformation.

“

Digital - applying the culture, practices, processes, business models and technology of the internet-era to respond to people's raised expectations.

Tom Loosemore @tomskitomski

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Connected Reading: **Our Vision**

Our Vision

Strong, connected relationships with residents, businesses and partners underpin a healthy, thriving and inclusive borough.

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What does the Connected Reading vision mean in practice?

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- **Everyone is more connected**, so we work face-to-face as well as digitally
- **We share our data** with partners, and they help us by sharing their data too
- People in all our **communities are able to connect** directly with each other to share their stories and help one another
- People at home and on the move are able to **connect with businesses** and access services
- We **recover from the pandemic** by helping each other in new ways
- Vulnerable **people are connected to care providers** who can respond quicker with more targeted care
- People and businesses **choose to locate here** because of the great connectivity
- The **council plays a leading role** in bringing everyone together
- People's overall **health and wellbeing improves** in measurable ways, through joining up services and data for the population
- **Events bring people together** to gain a common understanding
- We **collaborate to solve shared problems** and try out new ideas

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Connected Reading: **Principles**

Digital Design Principles

In a digital world we see the greatest benefits from new approaches when we adhere to shared standards and common methods of working.

We have drawn upon established principles from across the public, private and third sectors to create a set of digital design principles for Reading.

These digital design principles have informed our approach and guided our thinking as we developed the Connected Reading Strategy.

- Start with our community and their needs, our residents, local businesses, partners and staff
- Continuously improve our services, innovating and learning from our work
- Make things that are inclusive and accessible to everyone
- Work hard to make our services efficient, simple and person-centred
- Use modern, sustainable technology to deliver services based on shared approaches 
- Use data to gain insight and inform decisions, securely and transparently

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Connected Reading: **Themes**

Themes

Connected relationships are about much more than just technology.

These five strongly interrelated themes emerged as the most important topics for people on our digital journey.

We connected with a wide range of stakeholders and the themes surfaced as we explored the key opportunities and barriers to a successful digital transformation in Reading.

The themes provide a consistent structure and context throughout the strategy, showing how people and projects are working towards the vision.



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Connected Reading: **Connecting People**

Connecting people - the five key themes in action

In this section we look in more detail at the five key themes in action. Our layered approach to reaching our strategic vision is guided by the five key themes.

We demonstrate how the [strategic outcomes](#) are aligned to the themes. We show the ways in which [people remain at the centre](#) of this strategy and show how the themes ensure we are [meeting the needs](#) of our three key stakeholder groups. We develop the idea of [individual 'personas'](#) who represent examples of people across Reading who will be impacted by the strategy as it is delivered.



We then present the [Roadmap for Change](#), which highlights the projects positioned within the themes that will act as vehicles to reach the strategic vision.

We show first how the projects that make up the roadmap are [developed and prioritised](#) by considering the needs of our three main stakeholder groups. We then show the ways in which we will become [more digitally mature](#) in Reading as the roadmap unfurls.

Crucially, the [governance of each project](#) will follow a different path depending upon its type and its sponsorship, but all will contribute towards achieving the vision. We then show the projects in the [draft roadmap for 2021](#), split by project type.

Themes – the strategic outcomes



Developing Foundations

- The Council has digital tools and services that can readily be used by its staff and customers and that meet their needs
- Services collaborate with users to improve continually
- Processes and systems are kept up to date and maintained sustainably 



Sharing Information

- Data flows easily between council teams, residents and partners
- People are confident in the quality, security and privacy of data
- Good data improves understanding and decision-making



Enabling Investment

- Businesses and people choose to live and work here
- The council collaborates to create the right conditions for digital investment
- Up to date, accessible and sustainable infrastructure is in place as a key enabler for all 



Connecting Communities

- People connect directly to neighbours and the voluntary sector
- Services are delivered by the right partner, enabled or signposted by the council
- Digital relationships are central to supporting our communities
- People can connect to digital services, and those services are accessible, fostering digital inclusion



Improving Skills

- People across the borough are more confident and better equipped to thrive in a digital economy and be included in its benefits
- There is an increased usage of digital and other self-help tools
- Staff have the time and confidence to help those with complex needs

How the strategy will feel for people

Here we highlight the key benefits for each of our three key stakeholder groups.

To ensure our work is people-centred we have created 'personas' which aggregate the life experiences of a number of people in each group.

'Personas' help us stay connected to how the strategy will improve people's lives by demonstrating how their needs will be met, and what they will be able to do differently as a result of this work.

You can read individual personas in more depth in the Appendix, and see below how they are affected by our five digital strategy themes.



Residents

[View all Resident personas](#)

I'll be able to:

- Order and pay for services easily
- Report issues and know what's happening
- Only give information once
- Be connected
- Be confident in using digital services
- Know how to get to the help I need
- Know how I can contribute to my community



Businesses & their staff

[View all Business personas](#)

I'll be able to:

- Order and pay for services easily
- Report issues and know what's happening
- Only give information once
- Be connected
- Link with local skills initiatives
- Know how I can offer social value
- Test innovations in public services



Staff & partners

[View all Staff & Partner personas](#)

I'll be able to:

- Have technology that works
- Be confident in using technology
- Have the information I need where I am
- Have a single version of the truth
- Avoid unnecessary trips to office to give or get information 

Connecting People: Residents

THEMES

MEETING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE



Developing Foundations



Enabling Investment



Sharing Information



Improving Skills



Connecting Communities



Residents

“In the future I can...”

- Place an order for services easily and consistently
- Pay for services easily and consistently
- Book appointments easily and consistently
- Be connected at home
- Be connected on the move
- Have the right equipment
- Report issues and get regular updates
- Provide information once
- Access information and advice easily
- Build my ability and confidence in using digital services
- Gain access to local digital skills initiatives
- Get the help I need
- Contribute to my community easily
- Connect with others
- Find out what is happening in the area



Connecting People: Businesses & their staff

THEMES

MEETING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE



Developing Foundations



Enabling Investment



Sharing Information



Improving Skills



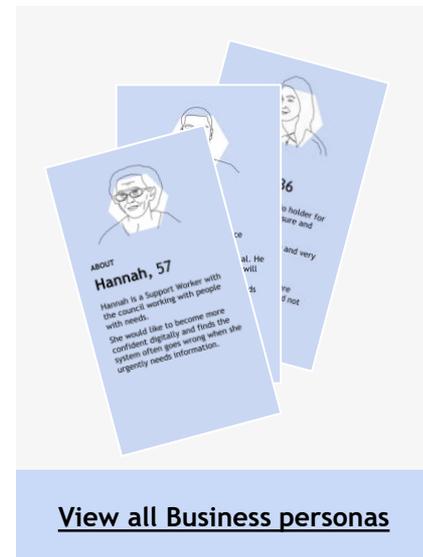
Connecting Communities



Businesses & their staff

“In the future I can...”

- Place an order for services easily and consistently
- Pay for services easily and consistently
- Book appointments easily and consistently
- Be connected in the office
- Be connected on the move
- Test innovations in public services
- Be part of improving the area
- Be involved in innovation that furthers our green strategy 
- Access a single version of the truth
- Report issues and get regular updates
- Provide information once
- Receive information and documentation easily
- Build my ability and confidence in using digital services
- Gain access to local digital skills initiatives
- Help my staff to invest in their digital skills
- Get the help I need
- Understand what information is needed to apply for services
- Contribute to add social value, support the green agenda and enable collaboration between businesses 



Connecting People: Staff & partners

THEMES

MEETING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE



Developing Foundations



Enabling Investment



Sharing Information



Improving Skills



Connecting Communities



Staff & partners

“In the future I can...”

- Have the right equipment to do my job well
- Have the information I need, wherever I am
- Work to clear, published processes
- Continuously improve my service
- Access a single version of the truth
- Avoid unnecessary trips to the office
- Share information with partners
- Share information with residents & businesses
- Use data confidently to support decision making
- Be connected in the office
- Be connected on the move
- Use my networks to catalyse investment opportunities
- Help make Reading an attractive place to invest
- Be skilful and confident in using digital tools and technologies
- Gain access to digital skills initiatives
- Plan my service visits in real time
- Have the time to provide support to people where it's needed
- Help people to help themselves and others



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Connected Reading: **A Roadmap for Change**

The Roadmap is designed to deliver people's digital needs

THEMES

MEETING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE

ROADMAP



Residents

I'll be able to:

- Order and pay for services easily
- Report issues and know what's happening
- Only give information once
- Be connected
- Be confident in using digital services
- Know how to get to the help I need
- Know how I can contribute to my community



Businesses & their staff

I'll be able to:

- Order and pay for services easily
- Report issues and know what's happening
- Only give information once
- Be connected
- Link with local skills initiatives
- Know how I can offer social value
- Test innovations in public services



Staff & partners

I'll be able to:

- Have technology that works
- Be confident in using technology
- Have the information I need where I am
- Have a single version of the truth
- Avoid unnecessary trips to office to give or get information

Inflight projects run by the council and our partners

- Where there are digital projects already inflight, we are ensuring that they not only deliver their targeted benefits but also align as far as possible to the themes and principles of this strategy

Accelerated projects

- Deliver against the themes
- Test and establish consistent ways (patterns) of solving people's needs
- Give us an opportunity to build the capacity and capability for delivering the strategy
- Test and deliver foundational digital tools and systems

Pipeline

The pipeline of future digital projects is continuously reviewed and updated to identify opportunities to:

- Address gaps in meeting people's needs
- Address gaps in meeting the themes
- Test the needs for, and value of, possible new digital tools or systems

The Roadmap will also make us more digitally mature – for future needs

Defining Approaches Testing patterns and focussing on need

We are making technology decisions that meet user needs, guided by shared principles.

We are more comfortable with testing and piloting before we commit to solutions.

We are committed to documenting our processes and being transparent about how our services work.

Service Improvement Defining patterns and technology foundations

We are identifying consistent ways of doing things across services and implementing.

We are building confidence in our digital services and self-service offer.

Technology decision making is clearly communicated across the organisation and we have a published roadmap for the future of our business systems.

We are building a cohort of people in services, in the project, data, digital and web teams that have good agile and user-centred change skills to help drive our strategy.

Shared Service Improvement Sharing patterns and technology

We have a resource of reusable service patterns that help speed up our re-design of services for staff, residents and businesses.

We have made some big steps in investing in the technology underpinning our digital services.

We are more confident in using data in day to day decision making as well as prioritisation.

Staff are confident about what good looks like and understand why they need to work to the principles for design and decision making.

Systematic Service Transformation Based on shared patterns and technology

Design-led processes are being used to deliver simple, transparent, joined-up end to end services, based on shared technology components where possible

We are working and operating services in new ways, using improved processes, tools and technologies.

We are fundamentally changing how services are designed to meet user needs and to deliver improved outcomes.

Discrete change

Systemic change

Types of Projects on the Roadmap

THEMES



Project type

Description

Example projects

Inflight Projects

Council projects that are in progress or have received resources and commitment to be delivered, which further the aims of the strategy.

- Smarter Working
- Finance System Replacement
- Housing System Upgrade

Accelerator Projects

A series of workstreams which put in place the foundational technology, tools and skills, while also boosting capacity to accelerate Reading Council's ability to deliver to the strategy.

The Accelerator projects will build cross-cutting capability (eg implementing a payment system that can be used across the whole business) but will do so by working with specific pathfinder areas which have urgent, high-benefit requirements.

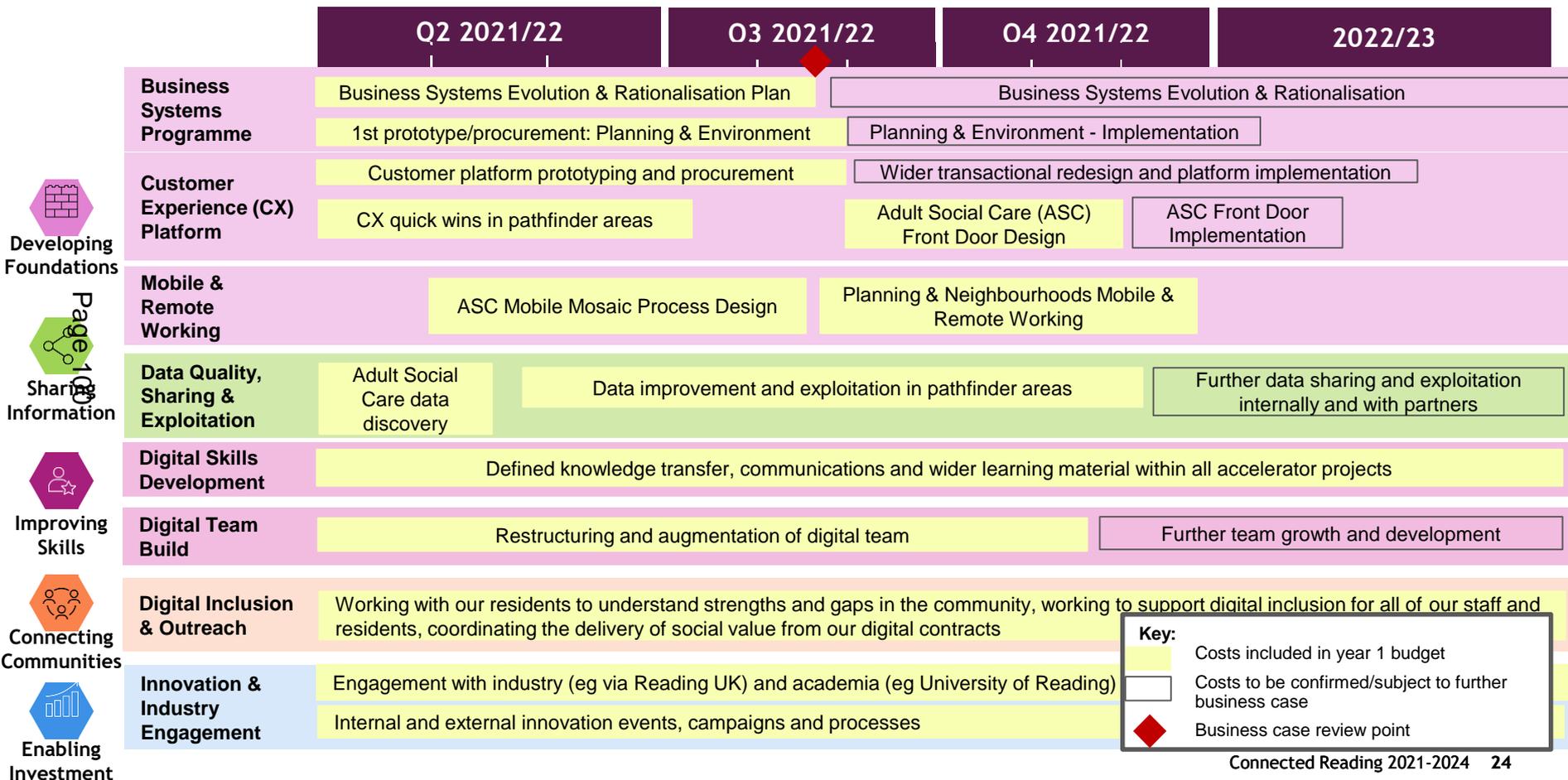
- Customer Experience Platform
- Business Systems Evolution & Rationalisation including replacement of end-of-life Civica APP product (used in Planning, Regulatory and Neighbourhood services)
- Adult Social Care data improvement and exploitation

Partnership Projects

Projects being delivered by different partnership organisations or groups across Reading which further the aims of the Strategy.

- Connected Berkshire
- Get Online Reading
- Connected Pathways

Roadmap Accelerator Projects and Activities



Connected Reading:

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The way forward

Conclusion

Thanks to everyone who helped to create, edit, comment and support this strategy.

We have researched and set out a new digital direction for the borough of Reading, its residents and its businesses. The positive impact of the strategy will reach widely across many stakeholders, some of whom we have described through the personas in the Appendix below, in order to bring the plans to life.

Our next steps after formal approval of the strategy will be to design and commence our human-centred engagement approach to the first ‘accelerated’ projects that make up the first 9-month segment of the Roadmap and set the foundations and good practice for the remainder of the programme. We invite you to get involved in our work in order to include as many diverse views as possible.



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Connected Reading: **Appendix**

Page 104

Connected Reading: Appendix

Connecting People

Personas / Residents



ABOUT

Derek, 68

“I want to stop feeling so lonely, but I’m a proud man”

Derek is a retired man who was widowed three years ago. He is isolated and lonely and is not good at keeping in touch with people.

He has some health issues that his sister is worried could be serious but he won’t go to the doctor.

He would like to make more use of digital tools but doesn’t know where to start.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Improving Skills
Connecting Communities
Sharing Information

NEEDS

- Be connected at home and on the move
- Have the right equipment
- Provide information once and access information and advice easily
- Build my ability and confidence in using digital services and gain access to local digital skills initiatives
- Get the help I need, contribute easily and connect with others
- Find out what is happening in the area

OPPORTUNITIES

Learn how to use his tablet to connect to others.

Feel confident using digital tools to access information, activities and services.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR DEREK?

Derek comes down to his kitchen on Monday morning and makes a cup of tea. He opens his tablet and jumps on to the community chat group to see which of his friends are up for a gentle stroll around the park. There’s always a few of them and it’s so easy to arrange online. They usually go for a coffee afterwards. He enjoys the company and the walking is good for his health.

When Hattie, his sister bought him the tablet a couple of years ago, he thought she was foolish. He didn’t think learning digital skills was for him. Back then, Hattie looked up some classes on the council website that Age UK were running for older residents locally. When Derek went along, he found there were lots of people there like him. Learning how to use the internet opened so many doors for him. He is once again enjoying the reggae music of his youth, and has been able to look up and talk to old friends in Jamaica. It’s easy to find activities closer to home as they are all advertised online. He doesn’t feel so lonely any more and feels confident in his digital skills now.

Personas / Residents



ABOUT

Pam, Eric & Alice 43, 39 & 8

"It's exhausting looking after a disabled child and we need more support to apply for services online"

Pam and Eric are parents and full-time carers for their daughter Alice who has complex needs. They use digital devices for social purposes but would like to be more digitally savvy.

They struggle financially and are in receipt of benefits. Broadband is expensive and their computer is old. They do a lot on their smartphones.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Improving Skills
Connecting Communities
Sharing Information

NEEDS

- Place an order and pay for services and book appointments easily and consistently
- Be connected at home and on the move
- Have the right equipment
- Report issues and get regular updates
- Provide information once and access information and advice easily
- Build my ability and confidence in using digital services and gain access to local digital skills initiatives
- Get the help I need, contribute easily and connect with others
- Find out what is happening in the area

OPPORTUNITIES

Apply for and track services online.

To gain better digital skills.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR PAM, ERIC AND ALICE?

As full-time carers to Alice, Pam and Eric use their computer for networking with other parents who have children with similar conditions. It helps them feel less isolated. Through the council website, they were referred to a small local charity who provided them with a refurbished desktop computer for a very low cost which has opened up a lot of opportunities for them.

They hope that when they move into a council property they will also benefit from the low cost fibre broadband deal the council brokered for all its tenants.

There was some training available that the council and some local charities arranged online, which was great because it's so difficult to arrange to go somewhere for a particular time when you have caring responsibilities. They both completed a few sessions. It's helped them both feel more confident and made dealing with the benefits they receive for Alice easier. They can even book Alice's carers on an app on their smartphones.

They go onto the council's bidding site every week to bid for a council property that will suit Alice's needs better. They haven't found anything yet but feel optimistic about the future.



ABOUT

Jane, 40

"I lead a busy life and want to apply for services at my convenience and trust that my online request has gone through"

Jane is a single parent with a limited income who lives in council accommodation and finds broadband access expensive

She works part-time and is reasonably digitally literate. She contacts the council about services like school admissions and housing benefit.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Improving Skills
Connecting Communities

NEEDS

- Place an order, pay for services and book an appointment easily and consistently
- Be connected at home and have the right equipment
- Report issues and get regular updates
- Access information and advice easily
- Build my ability and confidence in using digital services
- Get the help I need
- Contribute easily
- Connect with others
- Find out what is happening in the area

OPPORTUNITIES

Request and pay for services online and receive confirmation of booking by text or email with a direct link to make changes if necessary.

Council could broker a deal to provide fibre broadband to council properties.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR JANE?

With two young children and a part-time job, the evening is the only time that Jane has to go online and look for information and pay her bills. Her daughter is going to secondary school next year and Jane has researched schools and they have decided on their first choice.

She goes onto the council website to apply for a place and receives a confirmation straight away with a reference number with a link where she can track progress. All the information sits in her council account and after she has completed the school admission application she looks at her rent account to see how much of her arrears she has paid off.

Having access to information on the website helps her feel in control and she has managed to improve her financial position. She has also been able to get support from her peers by joining local online groups and feels less isolated by being part of a community.

The council put fibre broadband in all council properties last year, and it's much better value now. Jane has put the money she has saved towards a new family computer.



ABOUT
Mary, 59
Page 108

"Everyone wants me to do things on the computer now, I feel left behind"

Mary is a widow and part of her local church community.

She is registered disabled due to a visual impairment. Her mobility and access to online tools is restricted but she is still independent.

She does some volunteering and is not confident in using digital tools.

She struggles financially.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Improving Skills
Connecting Communities

NEEDS

- Access information and advice that meets disability guidelines for audio interpretation
- Build my ability and confidence in using digital services
- Gain access to local digital skills initiatives, including using disability aids
- Get the help I need
- Contribute easily
- Connect with others
- Find out what is happening in the area

OPPORTUNITIES

To develop confidence with digital tools that are designed for easy access for those with disabilities, so that she can apply for opportunities in her community online and keep in touch with family and friends.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR MARY?

Mary uses the computer at the library a few times a week now. She went to the computer club at Age UK and learnt how to do things like using audio to help read text, going on the internet and paying her bills. She did think about getting a computer at home but is satisfied with going to the library for now.

She manages quite well at home although needs to stop often to rest often. At Age UK, they showed her how to go online using the smartphone her daughter got her and headphones to use the audio guidance. At the library she searches for volunteering opportunities. She has helped at a gardening club and is looking for some opportunities to help with after school clubs. She also learnt how to contact the council and they put her in touch with a charity who provide aids and adaptations in the home to help her do household tasks more easily.

She has also learnt how to communicate with her family back in the Philippines as she can't afford to travel there. She has now met new family members and feels more involved in her family's lives.

Personas / Residents



ABOUT

Keith, 17

“I am scared that I won’t be able to cope with moving into my own flat”

Keith is a looked after young person living in supported accommodation. He has learning difficulties and is currently unemployed.

He will be given a council tenancy when he is 18, but he is worried about how he will cope.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Improving Skills
Connecting Communities
Sharing Information

NEEDS

- Place an order, make payments and book appointments for services easily and consistently
- Be connected at home
- Have the right equipment
- Report issues and get regular updates
- Access information and advice easily as its all written for reading age 11
- Build my ability and confidence in using digital services
- Gain access to local digital skills initiatives
- Get the help I need
- Connect with others

OPPORTUNITIES

Would like to learn digital skills so that he can feel informed and able to apply for jobs and services.

To be able to manage bills and apply for jobs online.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR KEITH?

Keith’s support worker showed him how to log into his council and benefits accounts so that he can manage his bills. His time living in supported accommodation taught him some important life skills, such as cleaning, cooking and looking after money. There is a private Facebook group for other young people in a similar position, and they help each other.

Keith got into some rent arrears when he first got his flat, but he came to an agreement with the council to pay off a little every week and he has nearly finished paying now.

He is able to go to one place on the council website to look at his rent and housing benefit accounts as its all set out simply and in plain English. He feels so much more confident with digital. His support worker told him about some digital skills training that was being sponsored by local tech businesses. He also received a refurbished laptop once he finished the course. He gets subsidised broadband as part of a deal the council did with a local fibre broadband provider so he doesn’t have to worry about expensive data charges.

He has started uploading videos of his music onto YouTube. He feels like he has the tools to manage his life now and feels hopeful about the future.



ABOUT

Julia & Richard

35 & 34

"We are worried about being able to borrow money to pay our service charges as we are both freelancers. We want to be able to understand our options at our convenience"

Julia is a Content Producer and Richard is a Web Designer. The service charges on their leasehold flat are high and cause them a lot of anxiety. They have an unstable income and are highly digitally literate.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Improving Skills
Connecting Communities
Sharing Information

NEEDS

- Report issues and get regular updates
- Provide information once
- Access information and advice easily
- Get the help I need
- Contribute easily
- Connect with others
- Find out what is happening in the area

OPPORTUNITIES

To find the council services and information they need all in one place, and not have to re-enter the same information again and again.

They would like to find out about proposed service charges and payment options online to allow them to be better prepared.

Julia could find out if she is entitled to any benefits due to her unstable income.

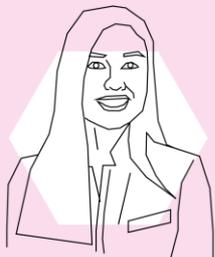
WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR JULIA AND RICHARD

Julia and Richard have always managed most of their business online but haven't always been able to apply for services and get information from the council in the same way.

They bought an ex-council leasehold flat back in 2017 and the service charges are one of their main worries. Other residents had told them that the council had underinvested in repairs on the block for a number of years and there are high charges to come.

Although it's never great to pay bills, the service charge part of the council website is clear, with a dashboard where they can find the information they need. It also gives them a range of payment options such as overpayment, which works well for them as they can put money away when Richard's work is going well and the bills aren't such a worry.

Julia has searched the council website for details about what benefits she could be entitled to. There are lots of links through to information available in the community, like free swimming lessons and community gardening clubs.



ABOUT

Imogen, 30

"I want to give something back to the local community, but the council don't seem to be interested in my ideas"

Imogen is the founder of a FinTech company. She is affluent and digitally literate.

She wants to support the local community through her company.

She is frustrated she can't do more with the council online, such as paying for her parking permit.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



**Connecting Communities
Enabling Investment**

NEEDS

- Pay for services easily and consistently
- Provide information once
- Access information and advice easily
- Get the help I need
- Contribute easily to the community
- Find out what is happening in the area

OPPORTUNITIES

To be able to pay for parking permits online.

For the council to signpost her to projects within the local community where she can make a difference.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR IMOGEN?

Imogen goes onto the council website where she is able to access lots of information about local schemes that could benefit from her company's funding or expertise.

A few months ago, she found details of the local project supporting young people develop their digital skills. Her company helped with digital mentoring after they passed all the checks. Today she's back to see who else they can help. It's great to have all the information in one place.

She lives in the centre of Reading and one of the things that used to frustrate her was renewing parking permits and applying for visitors permits. Now, the whole process is online and all she needs to do is log on to her council account and order and pay for what she needs. She has also been able to look at her council tax bill and check on her bin collection dates.

She doesn't use many council services but having all the information online, so she can do things at her convenience, has been invaluable.



ABOUT
Piper,
41

"I want to find places to go and things to do while I'm in the area"

Piper is a temporary resident. She is a Creative Director at Microsoft and usually works in the US but is over on business. She is staying for three weeks and wants to spend some time getting to know the area.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Connecting Communities

NEEDS

- Get the help I need
- Connect with others
- Find out what is happening in the area

OPPORTUNITIES

One place online to find out everything that's going on in the area for visitors.

Content or clear signposting from the council website.

Access to promotions and special offers for travellers.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR PIPER?

Piper travels across the world for business and looks forward to exploring the places the company send her on business in her free time. She is an ethical traveller and likes to contribute to the local economy.

Her trip to Reading is three weeks long, and she wants to experience it like a local. She asked at the office about things to do and got a few recommendations. Someone suggested that she went on the council website. She was really impressed with all the information she was signposted to.

She found out about some local museums and some running trails. She also booked tickets to go to see a couple of shows at the Hexagon theatre. They had a special offer so she even saved some money! Tripadvisor really only caters for tourist hotspots so it's great to find a website with a local focus where all the information she needs is in one place.



ABOUT

Hannah, 57

“I want council systems to share information to prevent people with needs falling through the cracks”

Hannah is a Support Worker with the council working with people with needs.

She would like to become more confident digitally and finds the system often goes wrong when she urgently needs information.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Connecting Communities Sharing Information

NEEDS

- Have the right equipment to do my job well
- Have the information I need, wherever I am
- Work to clear, published processes
- Continuously improve my service
- Know where to find information, with no duplication or inconsistency
- Share information with partners and residents
- Use data confidently to support decision making
- Be connected in the office and on the move
- Be skilful and confident in using digital tools and technologies
- Have the time to provide support to people where it's needed

OPPORTUNITIES

Different council systems sharing information securely so that departments are aware of the full circumstances before life changing actions such as eviction are considered.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR HANNAH?

Hannah has just finished an online course covering the latest release of the people centred system they now use to manage complex care packages. She gets lots of support from her manager and the organisation to help with her digital learning and knows where to go if she needs more help.

She feels much more confident in her digital skills now and uses her tablet when she is out and about seeing clients, so she doesn't have to spend so much time writing up notes.

Before she saw digital as a cost cutting exercise, but now she has seen that if the majority of people use digital and self-help tools, it releases more time for her and her colleagues in the voluntary sector to support those with the most complex needs.

The website is so much easier to use now, so people are able to access information, advice and guidance when it suits them, and often are able to address their needs without support from the council. One of her former clients emailed her and told her that he feels more independent now.



ABOUT
Page 14

Kuram, 24

“I need the council to invest in training for staff and local people so that they can do more online”

Kuram is a Customer Service Advisor.

He feels threatened by digital. He thinks his job will go and he will be replaced by robots. He wonders how people with needs will be supported. He worries about whether he will receive adequate training.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Improving Skills Sharing Information

NEEDS

- Have the right equipment to do my job well
- Work to clear, published processes
- Access a single version of the truth
- Share information with partners, residents and businesses
- Be connected in the office
- Be skilful and confident in using digital tools and technologies
- Gain access to digital skills initiatives
- Have the time to provide support to people where it's needed
- Help people to help themselves and others

OPPORTUNITIES

To be a confident user of systems to help people deal with the council.

To be able to use digital more confidently and for the council to invest in systems to allow residents to track their own requests.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR KURAM?

Kuram really enjoys his job in the council's contact centre. He feels valued because the council has invested in regular training to keep him and his colleagues up to date with the new customer record systems that are now in place across the organisation. The public facing website is so much better now, it's easy to find information, and if the caller is online, he can share their screen and point them to the right information. He and his colleagues have regular digital huddles to share any challenges they have with the systems, and management are very supportive of their learning.

They don't have as many phone calls as they used to, as many people self-serve, so part of his day is spent answering queries that come up on the webchat and answering queries submitted on forms, provided they are not too complex.

He and his team can see every contact someone has made with the council, however it was made. It means that they can give a user centred response, rather than the runaround they sometimes subjected people to in the past. He gets a lot of job satisfaction now, and he is able to spend the time needed to support people with needs over the phone who have a low level of digital literacy.



ABOUT

Victoria, 36

"I support digital progress but I am keen we don't exclude staff and residents"

Victoria is a portfolio holder for Environment and Leisure and Solicitor.

She is digitally literate and very positive about digital transformation.

Staff have told her they are worried about job cuts and not having the right skills.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Connecting Communities Improving Skills

NEEDS

- Continuously improve my service
- Use data confidently to support decision making
- Be connected in the office and on the move
- Use my networks to catalyse investment opportunities
- Help make Reading an attractive place to invest
- Be skilful and confident in using digital tools and technologies
- Gain access to digital skills initiatives
- Help people to help themselves and others

OPPORTUNITIES

People, both staff and residents will be supported to develop their digital skills to access digital services.

More resources for staff training and supporting non digitally literate resident.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR VICTORIA?

Victoria has seen a great deal of change in the directorate she has portfolio responsibility for. There have been some major changes to back end systems that mean staff can get the information they need to do their jobs and customers can apply and pay for services online when it's convenient for them.

The council have saved money, but not through lots of job cuts as predicted by some. A few staff left the organisation voluntarily, but the majority have been supported to develop digital skills to allow the council to transform the online customer experience.

In her area, pitch and court bookings can be done on the council app, and e-books and music can be downloaded from libraries. It means that staff can concentrate on serving people with more complex needs who have low levels of digital literacy.

Staff tell her that they feel supported in learning how to use digital services, and they know where to go if they need help. She is proud of the council's senior leadership team for shaping a culture of learning and excellence.



ABOUT
PERSONA

Julia, 37

"I need the council to invest in training for the community sector so we can give residents the support they need"

Julia is a Food Bank Manager

She has years of experience in the Charity sector. She is overstretched and over reliant on volunteers.

She is digitally literate but she worries about a society of digital haves and have nots.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



**Connecting Communities
Improving Skills**

NEEDS

- Have the right equipment to do my job well
- Have the information I need, wherever I am
- Continuously improve my service
- Be skilful and confident in using digital tools and technologies
- Gain access to digital skills initiatives
- Have the time to provide support to people where it's needed
- Help people to help themselves and others

OPPORTUNITIES

A way of empowering local people and her volunteers to gain confidence using digital tools to access vital services

Need to look at root problems such as lack of digital skills for volunteers as well as residents

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR JULIA?

Julia opens up the food bank as usual in the morning and welcomes the digital champions, who are volunteers with good digital skills who help others who need support.

The council originally set up the scheme, but it has grown across the local community and voluntary sector. The council collaborated with a volunteering platform to build a local volunteer scheduler app so that Julia always knows she has volunteers both for digital and for the food bank.

A local charity had received donations of desktop computers from one of the big tech companies who were renewing their hardware for staff and the foodbank received six of these so that people could use them and receive support when they visit. It's made a big difference to people as most benefits and council services need to be applied for digitally now and it can be daunting for people if they don't have the skills.

Personas / Businesses & their staff



ABOUT

Jon, 33

"I want to lead an ethical organisation that delivers change for local people and the environment"

Jon is the founder of an Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions start up. They have been successful in gaining two rounds of funding.

He is passionate about health inequality and sustainability.

Jon grew up in Reading, and wants to give back to the community.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



**Improving Skills
Enabling Investment**

NEEDS

- Be part of improving the area
- Be involved in innovation that furthers our green strategy
- Contribute to add social value, support the green agenda and enable collaboration between businesses

OPPORTUNITIES

To have one place to go to be able to access online information about investment which benefits the local community.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR JON?

Jon has just come out of his monthly board meeting and feels really optimistic that his goal of giving back to the community is beginning to take shape.

His HR team have worked with the council to arrange for local young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to work with them as fully funded digital apprentices.

He is also working with some leaders in the council's climate change team to discuss the progress his company have made using digital tools to achieve their sustainability and renewable energy goals.

They are working together to see whether they can build a model for other local small businesses to become more sustainable. He is excited about working with the council because they are passionate about making things better for the community and are easy to get hold of through their social media channels.

Personas / Businesses & their staff



ABOUT
Page 18

Amanda, 50

“I want a way of managing everything I need to do with the council online”

Amanda is the owner of three florist shops across Reading.

She is digitally literate but staff have poor digital skills which causes issues as more business now is placed online.

The broadband connectivity poor at two of her shops.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



**Improving Skills
Enabling Investment**

NEEDS

- Place an order, pay and book appointments for services easily and consistently
- Be connected in the office
- Be connected on the move
- Access a single version of the truth
- Report issues and get regular updates
- Provide information once
- Receive information and documentation easily
- Help my staff to invest in their digital skills
- Get the help I need

OPPORTUNITIES

To have one account for the diverse range of services she needs to access and pay for from the council.

To benefit from improved broadband connectivity.

WHAT COULD THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR AMANDA?

Amanda has seen an increase in online orders, which now account for 60% of the business. She closed her least profitable shop and now rents a unit on an industrial estate where she has staff processing and fulfilling digital orders.

The shops catch spontaneous purchases and she has added a gift range in them to complement the flowers. Strong and fast broadband across the sites is key to their success and she is happy that broadband connectivity across Reading has improved recently.

She now has an online council account where she can manage a number of things across the sites such as business rates, parking permits and business grants. She no longer has to spend so much time on the phone trying to track down the information she needs as everything is now in one place.

She found a link on the council website to a small social enterprise who arrange training for businesses that need to improve their staff's digital skills. They offered good value and she has also had someone trained in social media management. They now have a popular instagram page which generates a lot of business.

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Connected Reading
Digital Transformation Strategy

Digital Accelerator Business Case

**Appendix 2 to Submission
to July 2021 Policy Committee**

30 June 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Digital - applying the culture, practices, processes, business models and technology of the internet-era to respond to people’s raised expectations.”

Tom Loosemore, former deputy director of Government Digital Service

The criticality of Digital – in the wide sense of Loosemore’s definition – has already been recognised by Reading Borough Council and is reflected in a range of initiatives including the modernisation of the Council’s ICT operating model, the agreement of the Customer Experience Strategy, work on digital inclusion, and engagement with local digital industry, for example through the smart cities pilots sponsored by the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership.

To move to the next level in exploiting Digital, the Council has developed its proposed digital transformation strategy *Connected Reading*, with which this document should be read in conjunction.

1.1 The *Connected Reading* Strategy

Connected Reading advocates a new connected experience across the Borough in which residents, businesses and visitors are better connected to better and more efficient Council services, to opportunity and to one another.

The Strategy will be delivered through five strongly interrelated themes which emerged through research and design activity involving a wide range of stakeholders who were engaged to explore the opportunities for, and barriers to, a successful digital transformation in Reading.

The overall vision which emerged from that exploration, which aligns with the Corporate Plan, is:

“Strong, connected relationships with residents, businesses and partners underpin a healthy, thriving and inclusive borough.”

The five strategy themes are:

- **Developing Foundations** - to ensure that the right technology and applications are in place and kept up to date, underpinning the other four themes
- **Enabling Investment** - to work with partners and suppliers to create the right infrastructure in Reading for people and businesses – not least local digital industry to thrive

- **Sharing Information** - to enable information to be shared between residents and businesses, the Council and delivery partners, with confidence in security and privacy arrangements, so that service delivery can be optimised
- **Connecting Communities** - to enable residents readily to connect to Council and third sector services, and to strengthen digital inclusion
- **Improving Skills** - to grow everyone's confidence and ability, both within the Council and the wider community, in using and exploiting digital tools and digital-era delivery approaches.

1.2 Purpose and structure of this document

This document sets out the business case for the initial investment required in the Strategy: to build digital delivery capability rapidly and begin delivering the benefits of the Strategy. It is explicitly focused on the investment recommended for this financial year 2021/22, but sets this in the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). It is aligned with the 5-case model standard for business cases.¹

Section 2, the Strategic Case, sets out the scale of the potential benefits of digital and the barriers that will need to be overcome to realise them, setting out the need to accelerate delivery by putting foundational tools, processes and skills in place, building delivery capability, and connecting together the various facets of the Strategy.

Section 3, the Economic Case, sets out the options for action in 2021/22 both to deliver immediate benefit and to build the capability needed to deliver benefit in the future and assesses their value for money. Its recommended option – the Digital Accelerator – will both enable immediate benefit through work with pathfinder areas of the business which have urgent digital needs, and build long-term digital delivery capability to implement the Strategy fully. It would be delivered by an expanded internal team together with external support which would both accelerate delivery and transfer skills to the internal team.

Section 4, the Commercial Case, describes how external support for the Accelerator will be procured.

Section 5, the Financial Case, demonstrates the affordability of the proposed investment.

Section 6, the Management Case, sets out how the proposed work in 2021/22 will be governed and managed, how benefits realisation will be assured, and how the work of the Accelerator will inform future work.

¹ Guide to Developing the Project Business Case, HM Treasury, 2018

2. STRATEGIC CASE

2.1 Digital has significant potential to deliver benefit

The benefits of delivering digital services are well documented and have been independently evidenced by Nesta, whose Connected Councils research found, from case studies compiled by the Local Government Association (LGA), that an average unitary council could save up to 13% of its total budget through digital.²

Many councils and central government departments have already made significant progress in moving transactional services online or automating back office functions. For example:

- Moving transactional services online saved the London Borough of Harrow, £1.55 million.³
- A similar initiative by the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham saved £1.15m.⁴
- Scarborough Borough Council has engaged in a number of digital initiatives. These include the creation of a multi-service delivery tool (in a partnership with North Yorkshire County Council), which can provide all key services required by elderly people and vulnerable adults after just one interview/assessment, and digitisation of environmental services. These two initiatives alone saved over £0.4m.^{5, 6}

While digital change is an effective tool in helping councils realise savings, the LGA identified the following benefits that work to deliver better outcomes for residents and businesses, particularly when digital thinking is applied not only to the front-end customer experience but to whole processes end to end:

- a deeper understanding of local patterns of need and interaction with government, allowing resources to be managed, planned and directed to where they will have the greatest impact;
- more effective management of demand – for example, enabling user self-service and supporting peer-to-peer advice-giving and assistance via social media;
- more reliable, speedy, and precise handling of routine, repetitive tasks

“Councils have made a great deal of headway in moving basic transactions – from reporting missed bin collections to ordering parking permits – online. To fully realise the cost saving potential of digitisation and meet the demands of residents, the next phase of digitisation will have to redesign services from end-to-end to ensure that user pathways are smooth and frictionless and that the workforce can share data without having to resort to manual processes.”

[Connected Councils: A digital vision of local government in 2025 | Nesta](#), p17

² [Connected Councils: A digital vision of local government in 2025 | Nesta](#), p7

³ Ibid, p8

⁴ Ibid, p25

⁵ Transforming local public services using technology and digital tools and approaches, [transforming-public-servi-80e.pdf \(local.gov.uk\)](#), p32

⁶ Digital Channel Shift Programme Evaluation, LGA, [channel-shift-final-evaluation-soep_1.pdf \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

- allowing costly and scarce professional expertise to be targeted at cases which need judgement or at new and unexpected situations;
- faster access to, and sharing of, data between councils, customers, and partner organisations, avoiding the need to collect the same information many times over and saving time on research and information collation; and
- new ways of working that potentially reconcile the goals of providing a better quality of customer experience while reducing costs and improving job satisfaction as staff are focused on higher value tasks, no longer double keying data or relying on multiple systems.⁷

2.2 Lockdown has heightened citizens' digital expectations but also the digital divide

As the Customer Experience Strategy has identified, delivery to the majority of people through such digital services can release capacity both to support those people who need to access services in more traditional ways or enable resources to be directed elsewhere. Reading is well placed to realise this opportunity as 86% of the population of South-East England – above the UK average – either meet or exceed the 5 basic digital skills level.⁸

Furthermore, Covid-19 has raised people's digital expectations and confidence. From booking and seeing a GP to accessing financial support services made available by central government, the majority of residents and businesses are adapting quickly to using digital public services. OfCom's annual OnLine Nation report identified a dramatic increase in the use of alternative communications services: "More than seven in 10 online adults in the UK are now making video calls at least weekly, up from 35% pre-lockdown. This trend is particularly noticeable among older internet users; the proportion of online adults aged 65+ who make at least one video-call each week increased from 22% in February 2020 to 61% by May 2020."⁹

The same report, however, also noted that the impact of the digital divide had been heightened by lockdown. While 6% of the whole adult population is without internet access, this percentage rises to 18% for over-64s and 11% for those in lower socio-economic households.¹⁰

Both these trends are echoed in a small-scale local research study undertaken by Reading University which found that over half of its sample had increased its online activity since lockdown but that barriers such as lack of digital skills and confidence and access to equipment had impacted takeup by the remainder.¹¹

⁷ Transforming local public services using technology and digital tools and approaches, [transforming-public-servi-80e.pdf \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

⁸ Basic Digital Skills, Tech Partnership, [consumerdigitalindex_bdsextract_may17.pdf \(techskills.org\)](#)

⁹ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/media/media-releases/2020/uk-internet-use-surges>

¹⁰ [Online Nation 2021 report \(ofcom.org.uk\)](#)

¹¹ [Digital-Inclusion-in-Reading.pdf](#), University of Reading

2.3 The Council is already committed to Digital change

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) agreed by Council in February 2021 includes £5m of annual savings (4% of revenue budget) to be realised by 2023/24 that have dependencies on Digital. This includes £1m of savings from the Customer Experience Strategy agreed by Policy Committee in January 2020, which identified explicit dependencies on Digital, most notably the introduction of a customer experience platform.¹²

The Council has already taken first enabling steps through putting in place new arrangements for its core Information & Communications Technology services through the implementation of the Future Operating Model which went live in April 2021 and also replatforming its website..

2.4 Significant business and technical obstacles remain to be overcome

2.4.1 Processes are over-complex; applications are ageing and fragmented

The benefits of digitisation flow from the delivery of efficient, streamlined, easy-to-use services. This demands good processes, clear metrics to be able to measure and improve them, and a commitment to that continuous improvement. These processes should be underpinned by flexible and consistent products that are easy to use, accessible and conform to a common set of standards enabling deduplication (the elimination of duplicate or redundant information).

The Strategy research found that:

- Many processes, in both internal and externally facing services, are complex, poorly documented and not well understood.
- Legacy systems can exacerbate poor processes, requiring time consuming and unclear ways of working that encourage staff to develop their own workarounds, eg the creation of undocumented spreadsheets where data reporting and analysis are inadequate.

2.4.3 The organisation is at a very early stage of digital maturity

An industry standard maturity model, developed by Ameo/FutureGov, was used to quantify the Council's level of digital maturity and this was validated by interviews with key stakeholders.

The results reflected the fact that there have already been successes. These included the recent introduction of a video service by the Coroner due to Covid; the development of an application programming interface by the web team to futureproof data flow between platforms; and recent data analysis of customer services and website use to identify levels of

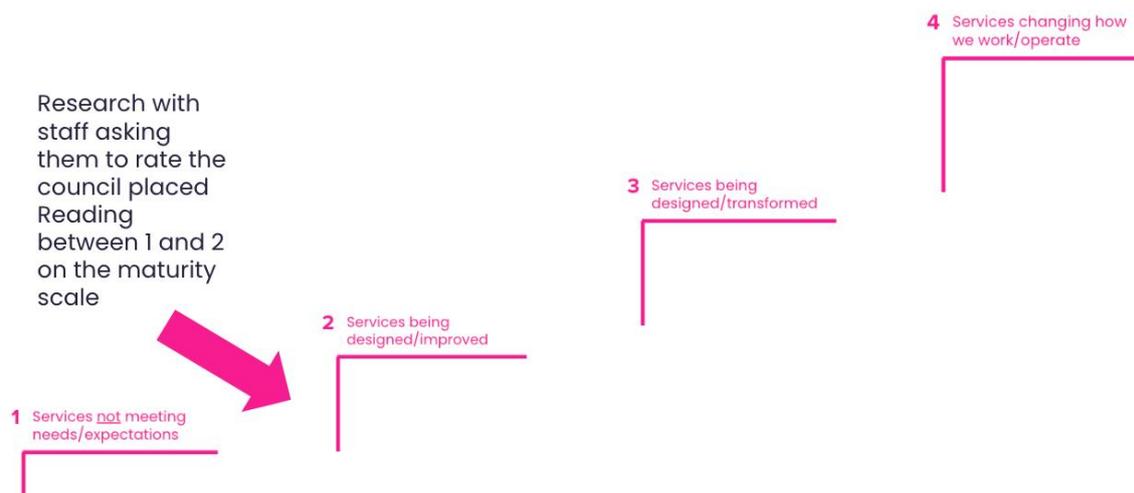
¹² Customer Experience Platform = tool(s) to provide forms, workflow and access to customer information for use by public via website and by Customer Fulfilment staff.

demand and failure, and to assess how those levels are affected by improvements to the website.

Similarly, there are already programmes in flight that will contribute to the achievement of objectives of the Strategy. These include a programme to upgrade the Council’s housing business application, the replacement of the finance system, participation in the Superfast Berkshire broadband connectivity programme and skills initiatives such as the digital courses launched by the New Directions College.

However, the research highlighted the lack of digital skills and capabilities in the Council to deliver the broader ambition set out in the Strategy. Thus staff placed the Council between 1 and 2 on the scale of 1 to 4, acknowledging the progress already made but clearly reflecting the capability gap. Typically, progressively digital councils are around 3, aiming for 4.

Moving up the digital maturity scale



The relatively low maturity is also reflected in the organisation’s level of planning for digital change and benefits realisation. For example, while there are projected annualised savings in the MTFS (2021/22-23/24) of around £5m which rely on digital change to be realisable, the majority of these are at an early stage of planning and £2m are still at concept stage.

2.4.4 The organisation does not currently have the business and technical capacity and capability to make change

Work will be required to realise the MTFS benefits identified in the Workforce Reviews, Fundamental Services Reviews and Customer Service Strategy that form the basis of a large proportion of the £5m saving. In discussions with stakeholders, Corporate Programme Management Office and finance teams, it was acknowledged that Service areas rarely have the capacity to make the change or the skills to deliver more complex improvements, and that this puts at risk the realisation of the savings and other wider benefits associated with the review recommendations.

Where efficiencies and improvements to services rely on changes in platforms and systems that were part of a wider improvement, these changes are currently relying on support from existing digital teams. Reviewing the current level of savings in the MTFS predicated on these types of changes it is clear that the current Digital, Web, Programme Management Office (PMO) and Data teams do not have the capacity or in some cases the capabilities to deliver these improvements. This potentially puts at risk savings and improvements associated with these changes. This was confirmed through reviews of the Adult Social Care Transformation technology projects as well as current plans in the Directorate of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, where projects are currently unable to progress or be prioritised because of a lack of capacity and capability.

It should be emphasised that budgetary provision has been made to support digitally enabled change, for example through the Universal Digital Systems capital budget. The need being identified here is to convert that budget into benefit-realising capability.

2.5 The savings target is reasonable but only if we act now to increase our digital maturity

Notwithstanding the barriers identified above, the overall savings target of £5m (4%) of revenue appears reasonable given that councils of a similar size to Reading starting at a similar level of maturity are working towards realising savings of between 3.5-5% of annual budgets over a 3 year period. London Borough of Bexley’s Digital Strategy identified savings of up to £10 million over a 3 to 4 year period: 5% of annual budget. Trafford Council is slightly more progressed in its Modernisation Programme and has recently invested in boosting its digital change capacity and capability to accelerate its work towards an efficiency savings target of £6million: 3.5% of annual budget.

However, realising that target will require concerted action on three fronts to overcome the barriers identified above and move the organisation to level 3 on the digital maturity model:

2.5.1 Accelerate

The first of these fronts is that of accelerating delivery by using external capability rapidly to put in place the digital tools, digital delivery processes and skills required both to start delivering benefit and to enable future delivery, overcoming barriers identified above:

Barriers overcome by Accelerator outputs
Over-complex, poorly defined processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedding of user-centred service design, applied to the collaborative redesign of priority processes with staff and residents, addressing key issues in service delivery, delivering benefits and building confidence; • Patterns catalogue – a set of standard processes and solutions for common problems (eg “making a payment”) so that they are solved only once
Ageing and fragmented digital tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems Register to identify areas of duplication and opportunities to retire legacy systems • Definition of applications standards

Barriers overcome by Accelerator outputs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement of key foundational technologies that underpin the Customer Experience Strategy and improve the delivery of resident and business facing frontline services and back end functions, including data flow • Extension of use of PowerBI (a data reporting tool) across organisation
Lack of clear planning for digital savings and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic models for measuring and achieving benefits - both savings and service improvements - from digital change that are grounded in the context of the Council • Innovation process and programme to generate, test, challenge and support ideas for digital transformation • Prioritisation process to ensure resources are focused on the right initiatives • Refined digital transformation roadmap/business case for 2022/23-2023/24, prepared as part of budget setting process, setting out approach to delivery of benefits over remainder of MTFS period
Lack of skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery through joint external/internal teams • Structured skills transfer programme to both technical and business teams involved in change coupled with upskilling of the broader organisation in the use of digital tools

The Economic Case explores the value of achieving such acceleration by applying external resource during 2021/22 to the delivery of clearly defined “pathfinder” projects to which there is already strong business commitment, so that the building of capability is combined with the delivery of tangible benefit and the building of business understanding and confidence.

2.5.2 Build

The second aspect is to build additional internal digital design, development and data analysis capability. The current staff in these areas (three developers on fixed term contracts within the web team, and a digital team of three with one apprentice) have no capacity to take on substantive delivery work given the demands on them of normal business.

It is expected that this build would take place in two tranches: the first to bring in the capacity required to work with the external team to deliver the projects planned for 2021/22; the second to deliver further benefits in 2022/23. Based on planning for the first tranche and comparison with other authorities at maturity level 3 for the second tranche, it is expected that there would be an increase in digital and data roles of 5 posts in 2021/22 (2 designers, 2 developers, 1 data analyst) and (subject to the further roadmap and business case) a further 6 posts in 2022/23 (1 designer, 2 developers, 3 data analysts). It is also expected that the existing fixed-term web development positions will be made permanent, recognising normal-business demands on them noted above.

2.5.3 Connect

The final front on which action is required is to connect the various streams of digital activity across the organisation. While the Digital Futures Board has been successful in achieving a measure of coordination, there is a need also to link in:

- Digital Inclusion, including the implementation of digital-related social value mechanisms in our contracts
- Industry engagement, eg work on smart cities initiatives.

It is envisaged that these links would be established both by coordinating planning and management of activity, to avoid overlap and maximise the benefits of synergy, and by reviewing the Terms of Reference and membership of the Digital Futures Board to ensure that these areas are properly represented.

The Economic Case sets out the options for addressing the areas of action set out above.

3. ECONOMIC CASE

This section sets out three options for short-term work to advance the objectives of the Strategy set out in section 2, giving an overview of the approach, benefits, costs and risks associated with each. It then compares the options to identify that providing best value for money.

The options considered are:

- Option 1: Digital Accelerator
- Option 2: Unsupported Development (Do Minimum)
- Option 3: Do Nothing

3.1 Digital Accelerator Programme Options

3.1.1 Option 1: Digital Accelerator

Overview of the option

The Digital Accelerator is a 10-month programme with the twin objectives of delivering demonstrable benefit now and, at least as importantly, building internal capacity and capability to deliver further benefit in the future. It would involve engaging external support to drive the initial work forwards while building the new internal team.

The purpose of using external expertise would be to:

- provide the additional skills and resources needed to deliver the work quickly and in accordance with best contemporary digital practice;
- coach the internal team members to develop new skills and become familiar with different methodologies for managing and delivering digital change;
- provide in-depth specialist knowledge to help deliver against a key challenge, eg detailed knowledge of Mosaic data structures to support work on the improvement of Adult Social Care data analysis.

The intent is, through skills transfer, to eliminate dependency on external support for non-transient needs by the end of year 1.

Functional and system capabilities would be built in a cross-cutting way (eg the Customer Experience Platform would include a payment system that would ultimately be used by all parts of the business). The programme would work with three pathfinder areas of the Council to prove the concepts involved. These are areas which have identified a need for urgent, high-value change which has digital dependencies.

In the Directorate of Resources, the proposed pathfinders will be:

- the Customer Fulfilment Team, which is being established as part of the Customer Experience Programme;

- an area of the directorate that generates high customer call volumes, eg Revenues and Benefits.

In the Directorate of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, the pathfinders will be:

- Planning & Regulatory Services;
- those parts of Environment & Commercial Services that are users of the Civica APP business application (which is end of life and must be replaced this year) and/or are linked with the Customer Experience Strategy.

In the Directorate of Adult Care and Health Services, the pathfinders will be digital projects which were identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy as being fundamental to the realisation of planned savings.

The roadmap overleaf shows what will be delivered when in the cross-cutting workstreams. The work shown in yellow (or light grey if viewing in black and white) boxes is factored into the year 1 budget sought by this paper.

A critical gateway will be a review in early autumn and report to Policy Committee, to provide confidence that as a minimum the remaining digital-dependent MTFs savings can be realised and to inform the 2022 budget setting process. This review is represented by the red diamond on the roadmap diagram.

We expect that our work on the communication of capabilities and benefits delivered by the Accelerator, and the introduction of an innovation process, will help to foster a constructive climate for the review. However, the review will involve firm challenge too:

- Challenge sessions with each project/area targeting digitally enabled savings to review progress and potential
- Challenge/innovation events with each directorate bringing together external expertise/experience, informed by information gathered from the work carried out by the Accelerator set out below, including economic modelling.

The workstreams shown in Figure 3.1 are defined below.

Workstream 1: Business Systems

This workstream will have the following objectives:

- Develop an overall plan for the replacement, rationalisation and/or improvement of business systems, reflecting the need for the result to be coherent, with a joined-up experience presented to internal and external users, and appropriate linkage of applications and their data;
- As a pathfinder, procure a solution to replace Civica APP (a business application that supports regulatory and enforcement functions which is end of life and will not be supported from 2022).

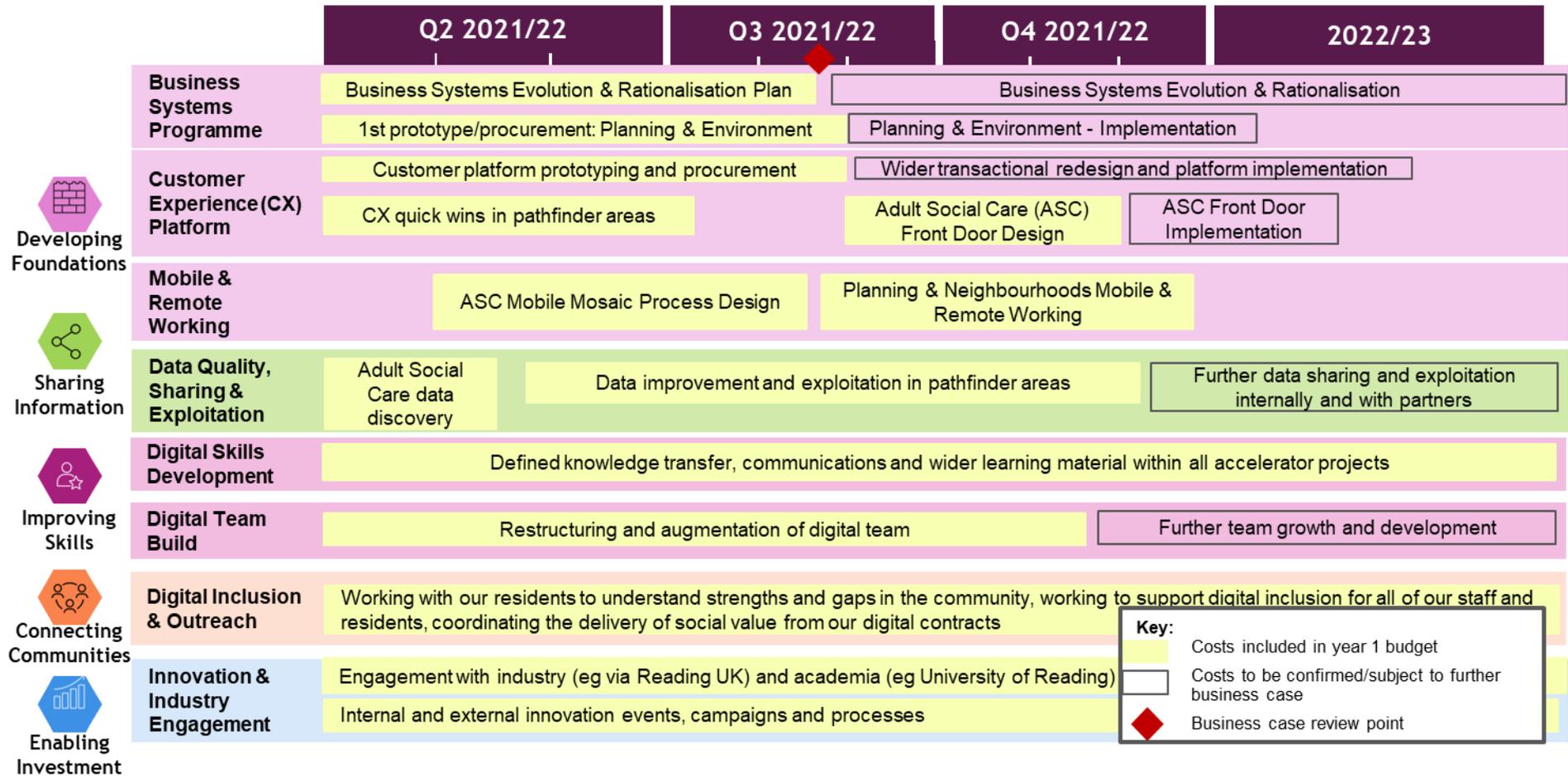


Figure 3.1 Programme plan of option 1 proposed activity

Workstream 2: Customer Experience Platform

This workstream will have the following objectives:

- Procure a Customer Experience Platform. This is one or more products that collectively provide the online forms, workflow, and customer information management functionality required to deliver the Customer Experience Programme.
- Accelerate and enhance early delivery work on that programme by injecting methodologies, technical “know how” and momentum rapidly to improve customer service and realise benefits. This will be done through work on high-priority processes, that generate high demand and/or effort for teams in the pathfinder areas. Candidate processes include waste collection ordering/payment, the end-to-end process for addressing flytipping, and the provision of recycling guidance.
- Design a digital front door for Adult Social Care. This will enable people better to manage their own care through the provision of advice, information, self-assessment tools and links to voluntary sector services, and provide a more streamlined route into Adult Social Care services.

Workstream 3: Mobile and Remote Working

Starting in Adult Social Care, this workstream will focus on providing a consistent set of tools and resources for specialist teams providing support in a range of locations.

Adult Social Care has a number of teams that are required to visit social care users regularly. Currently the teams have limited remote access to Mosaic, resulting in written notes being typed up at home or office, increasing administration time and decreasing time spent with customers. A technical solution to address this by enabling mobile access to Mosaic has been procured.

This workstream will start by supporting the implementation of that mobile solution. The approach will involve working closely with these teams and their services users to identify issues and opportunities and prototype improvements. The workstream will then turn its attention to the mobile working opportunities and requirements in Planning & Regulatory Services and Environmental & Commercial Services, applying and adapting the approaches tested with Adult Social Care.

Workstream 4: Data Quality, Sharing and Exploitation

This workstream will incrementally develop and realise a data strategy for the Council, working with the pathfinder areas to implement reporting, analytics and standards that can then be deployed more fully across the organisation. This work will again start with Adult Social Care, which is currently facing significant challenges in easily accessing and making use of data to inform decision making at both strategic and tactical levels. Challenges in this area are multi-faceted, encompassing technical issues, a legacy of extensive bespoke application configuration, and poor data quality.

Given the complexity of the challenges, this work will begin with a Discovery exercise, to understand the requirements and challenges, formulate a robust understanding of what changes in technology, processes and ways of working will collectively address the need,

and to develop a clear and firmly prioritised plan for change, underpinned by a business case for any further investment required.

Working across pathfinder areas, the workstream will establish a single data toolset and strategy for the sharing, analysis and exploitation of data.

Workstream 5: Digital Skills Development

This workstream will build internal skills so that the programme can deliver beyond the end of external engagement. This workstream will involve training in methodologies and specific skill sets to the teams that are responsible for digital change (including web, data, PMO and ICT teams, as well as staff involved in business change from across the Council).

Each internal team member working alongside the external provider on the programme will have an individual, measurable learning plan.

To extend the learning and development opportunities of the structured programme to all staff, workshops and formal development sessions delivered as part of the Structured Programme will also be made available to staff and partners through video recordings.

Workstream 6: Digital Team Build

Current levels of resourcing in the digital and data teams mean that there is only capacity to focus on normal business and minor enhancements. This workstream will build additional capacity in digital service design and development, and in data analytics, both to deliver the Accelerator projects and to provide the capacity and capability needed to deliver future projects implementing the Connected Reading strategy and the remaining benefits targeted.

It is anticipated that there would be an increase of five digital and data posts in 2021/22, comprising two designers, two developers and one data analyst. Comparison with other councils suggests that the team size required to implement the strategy would increase in year 2 by a further five or six posts, but this is to be confirmed and would be subject to the updated business case to be submitted in December 2021. It is also envisaged that the three current fixed-term web development posts – which are wholly occupied in the delivery of “business as usual” change – would be made permanent, in recognition of the need for ongoing website maintenance.

As part of this workstream, team structures would be reviewed to ensure that the organisation was optimally configured for the design, development and support of the expanded range of digital services being introduced.

Workstream 7: Digital Inclusion and Outreach

The Community and Voluntary Sector, and the Council itself, have multiple initiatives in train to address digital exclusion by supporting residents in accessing the connectivity, skills and equipment needed to get online. Working closely with the Council’s Digital Inclusion Group, this workstream will ensure that these initiatives are coordinated, and identify any gaps so that appropriate action can be taken.

This workstream will also ensure that the online services put out by the Council are accessible and usable, so that they can be used by those with disabilities or other special needs, and by those with limited digital confidence.

Workstream 8: Innovation and Industry Engagement

Reading is a digital hub, and has a unique opportunity to link in with technology companies to benefit residents. This workstream will have two areas of focus.

Firstly, it will inspire internal innovation. This will be done by encouraging staff to learn about the opportunities for exploiting digital to improve services through, for example, attending or watching the videos from the regular show and tells of the different Accelerator Workstreams. An internal programme will then be developed, encouraging teams to share challenges and invite others in the organisation to offer solutions to those challenges.

Secondly, it will drive innovation with industry, academia and in the community, building on rapidly developing industry interest in such fields as Smart Cities. Market engagement with the objective of promoting digital industry investment in Reading will be a particular focus.

Option 1 Benefits

Tactical financial benefits

This option will enable a number of benefits within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The table below summarises these, indicating both the target per-annum recurring benefit to be enabled and the total value of the benefit currently expected over the MTFS period (2021/22 to 2023/24), taking implementation timing into account.

Saving	Per-annum value	Est. total over MTFS period
Process optimisation for front-end Customer Fulfilment Team, including re-engineering of 1-3 high priority problem “customer journeys” – demand reduction and efficiency gains	£150k	£425k
Quick wins in Environment & Commercial area implemented. Candidates are: waste collection ordering/payment, flytipping end-to-end process, recycling guidance – efficiency gains	£175k (±£25k)	£425k
Planning & Regulatory (et al) efficiency gains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civica APP replaced • Top 1-3 end-to-end processes surrounding Civica APP re-engineered: candidates include planning guidance and the Love Clean Reading portal. • Remote and mobile working optimised, including appointment and visit booking 	£200k	£300k
DACHS – an assessment of the contribution made by this work to the overall efficiency savings proposed for DACHS, enabled by improved data-driven insight into provider costs supporting cost reduction, and streamlining of processes facilitating efficiency savings through planned restructure)	£200k	£300k

Saving	Per-annum value	Est. total over MTFS period
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work needed to drive data improvement scoped • Remote and mobile working optimised, using the Mobile Mosaic project to drive process and data improvement • Adult Social Care front door designed 		
Total	£725k	£1,450k

Strategic enablement benefits

Through delivery of the following outcomes, this option will put the organisation in a position to realise the Connected Reading strategy, including the delivery of the remainder of the £5m pa benefits expected to flow from digital transformation.

Outcome	Description
Robust plans for strategy implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated business case • Business application roadmap • Data strategy
Enabling tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Experience Platform • Data analysis tools
Delivery capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team with capacity to maintain delivery momentum • Established processes for digital service design and delivery • Skills built in internal delivery team
Engagement and commitment	<p>Built on the basis of a demonstrable commitment and capability to deliver, with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Residents • Industry • Delivery partners

Costs

Cost Type	Amount	Rationale
Expanded internal team costs	£0.3m	5 additional posts for the period of delivery
Technology licences (per annum recurring costs for Software as a Service)	£0.3m-0.5m	Solutions for Customer Experience Platform vary widely in price so a range of £250k-450k has been allowed. The remaining £50k covers data reporting software
External Professional Services	£1.2m-1.4m	Range reflects estimating uncertainty
Total	£1.8-2.2m	Of which £1.5m-£1.7m is one-off cost

3.2.2 Option 2 – Unsupported Development (Do Minimum)

Overview of the option

In this option, RBC does not invest in external consultancy support, but steadily grows and upskills internal capacity to deliver digital transformation. Change would be slower (24 month time scale), as work would need to be staggered to allow for the internal development of delivery processes and the onboarding and development of new staff. Work would be prioritised to maximise the delivery of financial benefit.

This would have the following impact on the work described for option 1.

Project	Start	Duration	Discussion of impact
Workstream 1 – Application Roadmap	Q2 21	Ongoing	This work would continue within the ICT Design Authority function, although its effectiveness would be compromised by delays in putting in place enabling platforms, so completion to the desired level would slip by ~18 months
Workstream 1 - Civica App replacement	Q2 21	10 months	This work would be prioritised given its criticality, but it is estimated that it would extend by 5 months
Workstream 2 - Customer Experience Platform	Q3 22	12 months	Selection of a platform would be delayed by 18 months, impacting full implementation of the Customer Experience strategy
Workstream 2 - Customer Experience related “quick wins”	Q2 21	9 months	This work (not dependent on the platform) would be prioritised given the high potential benefits but it would have less resource dedicated to it, impacting timescale and quality
Workstream 2 - Adults Front Door Redesign	Q2 22	6 months	Completion delayed by 9 months, reflecting reduced resourcing which may also impact quality
Workstream 3 - Mobile & Remote Working	Q3 21	6 months	This work would be limited to technical implementation of the mobile capability in Adult Social Care. There would be no capacity for process improvement and no capacity to address remote working in other areas

Project	Start	Duration	Discussion of impact
Workstream 4 - Data quality, sharing and exploitation	Q4 21	12 months	Once additional resource was recruited, this work would be progressed, but there would be no capacity to address the data analysis requirement in Adult Social Care
Workstream 5 - Digital skill development	N/A	Ongoing	There would be no additional investment in this area
Digital Team Build	Q2 21	6 months	Design, delivery and data capability would be recruited in line with the plans set out for option 1
Digital Inclusion and Outreach	N/A	Ongoing	Limited capacity would be available for these given the need to focus on internal delivery.
Innovation and Industry	N/A	Ongoing	

Benefits

Tactical financial benefits

The table below gives an assessment of how the financial benefits described for Option 1 would be impacted in an Option 2 scenario.

Saving	Per-annum value	Est. total over MTFS period
Process optimisation for front-end Customer Fulfilment Team – <i>benefit expected to be delayed by 6 months and reduced in scale</i>	£100k	£200k
Quick wins in Environment & Commercial area implemented - <i>benefit expected to be delayed by 6 months and reduced in scale</i>	£100k	£200k
Planning & Regulatory (et al) efficiency gains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civica APP replaced – <i>delayed by 6m</i> • Top 1-3 end-to-end processes surrounding Civica APP re-engineered: candidates include planning guidance and the Love Clean Reading portal – <i>not included</i> • Remote and mobile working optimised, including appointment and visit booking – <i>not included</i> 	£50k	£100k
DACHS – <i>no data benefits; mobile working benefits reduced and front door delayed</i>	£50k	£75k
Total	£300k	£575k

Strategic enablement benefits

The table below sets out how the strategic enablement benefits of option 1 would be impacted in an option 2 scenario.

Outcome	Description
Robust plans for strategy implementation	Significantly impacted – Given delivery delays in the programme as set out above, it is estimated that it would take at least 18 months to reach the required level of planning
Enabling tools	Significantly delayed – notably 18-month delay in customer experience platform
Delivery capability	Significantly impacted – the development of capability would take place organically over the life of the 24-month programme
Engagement and commitment	Not substantively delivered – This option would not build the momentum of delivery required for this level of engagement; indeed the effect of slow delivery could prove negative

The consequence of these impacts is that the realisation of the remainder of the £5m savings targeted would be delayed by at least 18 months and the risk associated with their delivery considerably increased.

Costs

Cost Type	Amount	Rationale
Expanded internal team costs	£0.6m	5 additional posts for the extended period of delivery. Note that this is a conservative estimate
Technology licences (per annum recurring costs for Software as a Service)	£0.3m-0.5m	These would be incurred in year 2 rather than year 1 given slippage in procurement
External Professional Services	0	Range reflects estimating uncertainty
Total	£0.9m-1.1m	

3.1.3 Option 3 – Do Nothing

Overview of the option

This option maintains the “as is” without any external support or internal digital skills build.

Benefits

While work would continue to seek to deliver the Customer Experience related benefits, it is likely that these would be seriously impacted given other pressures on the resources required for digital development. Furthermore, the organisation would be exposed to risk through the inability to undertake the replacement of Civica APP, which is end of life. Consequently, it is reasonable to judge the level of net benefit of this option to be zero.

None of the strategic enabling benefits would be delivered and consequently the £5m savings targeted by the digital strategy would be at high risk. Further risks include:

- Capacity to deliver digital change is limited, and significant pressure will be put on existing resources, which could impact on morale
- Pace of change is likely to be slow, and to lag behind the digital expectations of our residents, which could impact on customer satisfaction
- Lack of investment in skills will leave RBC reliant on external support to deliver meaningful transformation

Costs

The costs described for other options would not be incurred. However, it should be noted that the reality of the issues faced by, in particular, the pathfinder areas targeted by option 1 is so pressing that tactical action – which on its own would be unlikely to contribute to the achievement of the benefits set out here – could well be required simply to maintain current delivery. Zero is therefore arguably an overly optimistic estimate of the true cost.

3.2 Options Appraisal

The table below summarises the costs and benefits of the options

Option	1 – Accelerator	2 – Do Minimum	3 – Do Nothing
Programme delivery cost (£m)	1.8-2.2	0.9-1.1	0
Recurring benefits enabled (£m)	0.7	0.3	0
Benefit in MTFs period (£m)	1.4	0.6	0
Strategic enablement (overall £5m pa target)	Good	Seriously impacted – minimum 18 - month delay and increased risk	Not enabled – very high risk to benefits delivery

Option 3 (Do Nothing) would create operational delivery risk (eg through the failure to replace Civica APP promptly), seriously endanger the delivery of the benefits targeted by the strategy and signal to staff and other stakeholders a lack of intent to invest in digital transformation. It is not recommended.

In the short term, Option 2 (Do Minimum), in which the strategy would be pursued but through organic internal growth rather than a focused external investment would attract lower cost and deliver benefit at only a slightly lower rate of return. However, the need to elongate the programme to allow for that organic development would drive a slippage of around 18 months in overall strategy delivery, and the loss of momentum creates a risk of disengaging staff and other stakeholders that could create further risk.

Option 1 requires £1m more investment than option 2, but 80% of this is recouped in additional benefit realised in the MTFs period; there is no delay in the ability to pursue the wider strategic potential of digital transformation; and momentum is maintained.

Option 1 is therefore the recommended option because it has the greatest potential to develop digital skills and establish confidence within the organisation that digital solutions can deliver benefits.

4. COMMERCIAL CASE

The Commercial Case summarises how the external support for the preferred option – the Accelerator (Option 1) – will be procured and how the contract will be managed.

4.1 Procurement

At the outset of work on the Digital Transformation Strategy, the support of an external partner, Ameo (part of FutureGov) was procured through a competition run using Lot 1 of Crown Commercial Services' Management Consultancy Framework 2 (RM6008). The tender covered the development of the Strategy with the potential (not committed at that point) for future assistance in implementation of the Strategy and knowledge transfer to RBC staff.

Proposals were received from eight suppliers and evaluated against published Most Economically Advantageous Tender criteria. The financial evaluation took account of the ratecard that would be used to price future work such as that required for the Accelerator. The evaluation process included both the analysis of written proposals and presentation sessions, which included senior business stakeholders from all directorates, with five shortlisted suppliers. The Ameo/FutureGov proposal was assessed to be both the highest quality proposal and the Most Economically Advantageous Tender overall.

Given the robustness of the competitive process already undertaken, the quality of the work done to date and the knowledge of the organisation that Ameo/FutureGov has established, it is assessed that procuring the services required for the Accelerator from Ameo/FutureGov represents the best value for money and lowest risk approach.

4.2 Contracting approach

As set out in Section 6 (the Management Case) below, projects within the Accelerator will be delivered by a combined RBC and FutureGov/Ameo team. An agile approach will be employed, in which the definition of both the outputs and detailed resource allocation of each two-week sprint will be informed by the findings of the preceding sprint.

To satisfy the need for flexibility demanded by this approach while ensuring control, the following approach will be adopted:

- Ameo/FutureGov will be contracted on a time-and-materials basis to allow flexibility in output and resource definition.
- Work will be contracted in short work packages with a cap on total cost for each work package. The effectiveness of the approach will be reviewed at the end of each work package and adjustments made if appropriate.
- Work packages will be no longer than twelve weeks and the first package will be limited to six weeks so that the effectiveness of the approach can be reviewed early.
- Contract reviews will be held at least every six weeks between RBC's Chief Digital & Information Officer and Ameo/FutureGov's project sponsor.

5. FINANCIAL CASE

The purpose of the financial case is to demonstrate the affordability of the preferred option. It sets out the capital and revenue requirements of the option and sets out how these will be funded.

Given that the focus of this case is on the year 1 Accelerator work, and that a revised and expanded business case in support of the future Digital Transformation programme will be brought to Policy Committee in the autumn of 2021, this section focuses on the year 1 costs. However, it does also comment on recurring costs.

Given the early stage of the Programme, there is significant uncertainty over some costs. For example, the costs of software solutions for the Customer Experience platform vary differently in respect of both product costs and ongoing capability development costs (ie the size and skills of the team needed to develop capability using the platform). Close scrutiny of cost estimates will therefore be applied at the point of each major decision (eg the selection of products) as well as at programme checkpoints, notably the first key review point in the autumn of 2021.

5.1 Capital and revenue requirements

The capitalisation treatment of Software as a Service (SaaS) and services related to it is a complex matter and guidance is evolving. On the basis of discussions between the project team, RBC Finance and an external financial advisor, we have agreed the following broad assumptions, which will be discussed with the Council's external auditors.

Type of expenditure	Treatment
Licences for SaaS products	First year capital Subsequent years revenue
Research activity, eg determining whether a requirement should be addressed by procuring one SaaS product or by procuring and integrating two products	Revenue
Procurement activity for SaaS product once the scope of procurement is clear	Capital
Development of design, documented processes and applications/configuration within a SaaS product in order to produce a usable business capability	Capital
Training of staff including skills transfer to internal digital team	Revenue
Internal staff time spent on activities identified as capital above	80% capital, recognising that a proportion of staff time will be spent on activities that cannot be capitalised (eg administration)

It will be necessary to apply this guidance to the detail of the actual costs incurred in each project to ensure that treatment is correct, and the overall picture will therefore need to be reviewed regularly. However, applying the guidance above at a broad level to the year 1 costs of the project indicates the following requirements.

Cost category	Y1 capital (£m)	Y1 revenue (£m)	Y1 total (£m)
Expanded internal delivery team	0.25	0.05	0.3
Professional services	1 ± 0.1	0.3	1.3 ± 0.1
Product licences	0.4 ± 0.1		0.4 ± 0.1
Total	1.65 ± 0.2	0.35	2.0 ± 0.2

As set out above, the majority of this cost is associated with the specific projects in the Accelerator delivery plan and is therefore specific to year 1. However, it should be noted that:

- The product licence cost is expected to become an annual recurring revenue cost as products are expected to be purchased on a Software-as-a-Service basis in line with current best practice.
- While the majority of the team cost is specifically associated with the delivery of projects, we expect that the enlarged team will also be retained (and grown further) in future years in order to continue delivery of the strategy and its benefits after this stage. Indeed, this is necessary for the full realisation of the skills transfer benefits offered by the Accelerator. While it is to be expected that much of this team's time would continue to be capitalised, there is at least a revenue commitment of the year 1 scale implied.

5.2 Funding

Year 1 capital requirements (estimated to be £1.65m ± £0.2m) can be met from a combination of the following:

Budget	Size (£m) (assuming carryover of 2020/21 underspend)	Notes
Customer Experience	2.5	Relevant for elements of the Strategy directly supporting the Customer Experience Programme - ~£0.5m
Universal Digital Systems	3.4	Budget intentionally set aside to fund strategic digital capability across organisation

Year 1 revenue requirements (estimated to be £0.4m) can be met from the ICT reserve, which is £2.6m (assuming the carry forward into that reserve of ICT underspend in 2020/21).

We are therefore confident in the affordability of the year 1 costs, even allowing for the fact that there is some uncertainty over capitalisation.

Recurring revenue costs from year 2 onwards specifically attributable to the year 1 activity are around £0.4m. This should be considered in the context not just of the initial £0.75m

annual recurring savings but the wider target figure of £5m that they will help to enable. The size, funding arrangements and return on investment pertaining to these and any other future costs will be presented in the business case update. They will be incorporated into the 2022/23 budget submission, along with the savings they enable.

6 MANAGEMENT CASE

The Management Case sets out how the Accelerator will be robustly governed and managed, and how benefits realisation will be assured.

6.1 Governance

6.1.1 Projects and project roles

The Accelerator will be run as a number of projects. The set of projects will vary over time in line with the programme plan (see figure 3.1) but will initially comprise:

- Civica APP replacement project
- Customer Experience Platform procurement project
- Customer Experience Quick Wins project
- Adult Social Care Data Discovery project

Each project will have individuals allocated to the following roles:

- Project manager – accountable for coordination and delivery of the project and typically drawn from the RBC Programme Management Office
- Business sponsor – accountable for ensuring business participation, championing of the project and ensuring that its objectives and business benefits are realised, and typically drawn from the relevant business area.

Additionally, programme managers from both RBC and Ameo/FutureGov will be allocated to manage coherence across delivery of the overall programme.

6.1.2 Governance bodies and principles

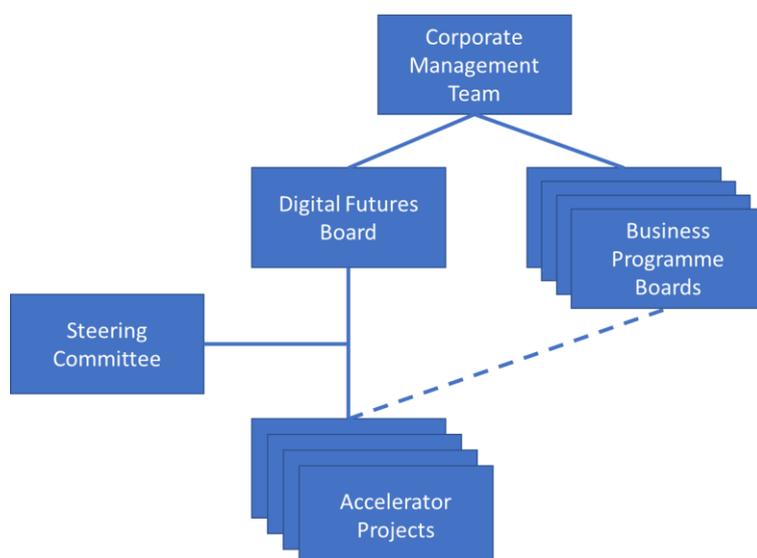


Figure 6.1 – Governance Structure

The roles of the governance bodies shown in Figure 6.1 are as follows. The structure reflects the fact that Accelerator projects have a dual purpose: to deliver a business benefit and to develop strategic digital delivery capability that will enable the delivery of future benefits in other areas.

- **Corporate Management Team (CMT)** – Given the centrality of digital transformation to the organisation, the Accelerator will report quarterly into the CMT (chaired by the Chief Executive) for the purposes of strategic oversight. In particular, the CMT will be a key reviewer of the business case update to be presented Autumn 2021. CMT will also be the ultimate decision-making body in the unlikely event that the Digital Futures Board and a business programme board disagree over a decision in which they both have interest.
- **Digital Futures Board** – Responsible for delivery of the Digital Transformation Strategy overall, this Board will hold projects to account for their delivery of project objectives and performance against budget. The Digital Transformation Board meets monthly and is chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive.
- **Business Programme Boards** – Typically, Accelerator projects will be supporting delivering of transformation savings being delivered by other Business programme Boards. These Boards will, where appropriate, ensure alignment with Strategies in those business areas, and receive and monitor reports on the delivery of associated business benefits. These boards typically meet monthly and are chaired by Executive Directors. Examples of this type of second reporting relationship are:
 - Customer Experience Platform procurement project to Customer Experience Programme Board
 - Adult Social Care Data Discovery project to Adult Social Care Transformation Board
- **Steering Committee** – This group will meet weekly, bringing together project managers with those who have cross-cutting management (eg programme manager) and assurance (eg RBC's Design Authority) roles. Its objective will be to identify and address any exceptions or blockers to progress, and to ensure common understanding of the whole programme picture across projects.

The following principles will be adopted to ensure that projects are able to make rapid progress:

- Each project will have a charter, agreed by the boards to which it reports. The charter will set out the project's objectives and benefits, budget and any constraints within which it must operate. In particular, the charter will set out the role of boards in key decisions (eg the selection of the Customer Experience platform). This will mean that there will be clarity for project and programme managers over what decisions can be made internally and what decisions need to be referred upwards.

- The project manager will report to the Boards a meaningful statement of progress against achievement of the charter, highlighting risks or issues in that are substantively endangering achievement of what is set out in the charter, with their mitigation plans.
- If the project is on track (ie the project manager is content and the boards to which the projects report have no cause to disagree), they will be allowed to deliver unimpeded.
- If this is not the case, then the project is in exception, and appropriate representatives of both boards should be involved in the remedial plan, as agreed appropriate at the time.

6.1.3 Reporting to Policy Committee

Officers will report to Policy Committee on the delivery of the Digital Transformation Strategy. The first such report will be in autumn , at which a report on delivery by the Accelerator will be presented, together with an updated business case setting out the plans for delivery of the further benefits targeted by the Strategy.

6.2 Project Management

Each project will use Agile project management structures to shape the delivery, focus and pace the work. Sprint plans will be developed during the setup of each project with the project manager and business sponsor integral to this process.

Each project will work in 2-week sprints, with twice weekly “standup” meetings, and fortnightly checkpoints at which the results of and lessons from the previous sprint will be reviewed and the next sprint planned. “Weeknote” reports will be used to communicate progress and findings between teams and to stakeholders and will be an input to the Steering Committee.

Show and Tell sessions, open to all in the business, will be used to share progress and engage staff. These sessions, which were well attended and well received during the Strategy’s development, will be recorded and made available to review along with any supporting materials.

At the end of each project (or project stage for longer projects), there will be a full lessons-learned exercise to ensure that the knowledge developed during the project is codified to inform future work.

6.3 Benefits Realisation

Given the scale of both the investment in digital transformation proposed and the benefits targeted, it is important that a robust approach is taken to the identification and realisation of benefits.

Each project will develop, on the basis of data analysis, field interviews and observation, a view of how digital interventions will give rise to beneficial impacts that can be realised as tangible benefits. An illustrative example is shown in figure 6.2

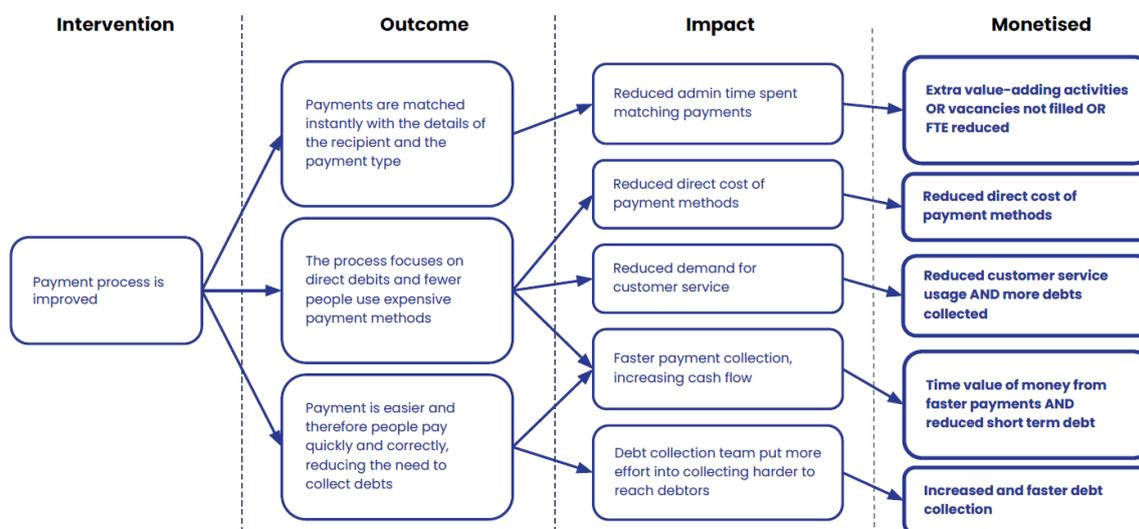


Figure 6.2 – Illustrative example of theory of change

Links such as those shown in the diagram can be developed into hypotheses. For example, taking the "reduced demand for customer service" impact box of figure 6.2, an analysis might conclude: *if 10% of calls to the contact centre are no longer required as payment methods are easier and citizens can self-help then this would enable savings in administration time of £25k per annum.*

Prototyping will be used to validate aspects of the theory of change around which there is substantive uncertainty. Depending on the nature of the theory and the uncertainty, this may be "low fidelity" prototyping, where paper or visual mockups of a process are tested with staff and/or residents, to "high fidelity" prototyping, where an initial version of a new service is implemented and tested with a limited group, or even more widely with the public.

These approaches will be employed to ensure that the "theory of change" is validated with real evidence, before committing to the full implementation of a digital service, providing confidence that the benefits forecast will actually be realised.

As a digital service moves into implementation, the business change activities required to monitor and realise benefits will be reflected into project planning and the Corporate Savings Tracker managed by the Corporate PMO.

A knowledge bank of theories of change will be maintained, and updated to reflect the results of benefits realisation activity. This evidence will be used to stimulate the identification of further digital transformation opportunities and to provide evidence substantiating the business case for their implementation.

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READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	12 JULY 2021		
TITLE:	DRAFT DESIGN GUIDE FOR SHOPFRONTS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	PLANNING	WARDS:	ALL
LEAD OFFICER:	MARK WORRINGHAM	TEL:	0118 9373337
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 With the new Reading Borough Local Plan having been adopted in November 2019, the Council is in the process of publishing a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), which give further guidance on the implementation of policies within the Local Plan.
- 1.2 This report seeks Committee’s approval to undertake community involvement on a Draft Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD (Appendix 1), which gives user-friendly guidance on how planning applications for applications affecting shopfronts will be decided. Community involvement will then be undertaken, and will be considered in preparing a version for adoption.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Draft Design Guide for Shopfronts SPD (Appendix 1) be approved for consultation.
- 2.2 That the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the SPD that do not alter the policy direction, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, prior to consultation.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 In November 2019, Reading Borough Council adopted a new Local Plan. This sets out planning policies and proposals up to 2036 and is the main consideration in determining a planning application.
- 3.2 Some of the policies within the Local Plan require additional detail to be provided to assist with their implementation. A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is a type of planning policy document that provides this additional detail. A SPD cannot make policy on its own, and can only provide additional detail on how policies in the Local Plan will be implemented.
- 3.3 The Local Plan contains policy OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines, which is a high-level policy dealing with the matters that typically arise on proposals for shopfronts. It operates in tandem with other Local Plan policies, in particular policies
- EN1: Protection of the Historic Environment, EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas and EN6: New Development in a Historic Context which ensure that developments protect and enhance the historic environment; and
 - CC7: Design and the Public Realm, OU4: Advertisements, CR2: Design in Central Reading, CR7: Primary Frontages in Central Reading and CR8: Small Shop Units in Central Reading which ensure that developments do not have negative visual impacts.
- 3.4 Currently, Reading does not have an adopted Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD. This document will be critical in delivery of the Reading Heritage High Streets Heritage Action Zone, although it will apply to shopfronts across the whole Borough. Additionally, as the nature of the high street is changing this document will provide advice for conversions of shopfronts to residential use.
- 3.5 The Reading High Streets Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) programme is a heritage-led regeneration initiative lead by Historic England, working with local councils and the community to create economic growth and improve our historic high streets through physical interventions, community engagement and cultural programming. The programme is based around areas on the Oxford Road, Castle Street, Gun Street, the southern end of St Mary's Butts and Market Place. Existing shopfronts will form a major focus for improvements and this SPD will provide guidance for applicants and planning officers that will tie in with the delivery of that programme.

4. THE PROPOSAL

(a) Current Position

- 4.1 Due to the lack of an existing Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD, there is limited guidance for both applicants and planning officers in determining planning decisions, and it would be timely to produce the document now to establish such guidance, particularly as the Council

begins to deliver the Reading Heritage High Streets Action Zone programme.

(b) Option Proposed

4.2 Committee is recommended to approve a new draft Design Guide for Shopfronts SPD for consultation. Appendix 1 contains a full draft of the SPD.

4.3 If agreed, the document will be subject to a consultation, to begin in July. SPD consultations generally last for six weeks, but the Council's Statement of Community Involvement proposes that this be extended to eight weeks where a consultation takes place during the school summer holidays, and this will be the case here.

4.4 Responses received will be considered in preparing a final draft SPD for adoption, which is intended for later in Autumn 2021.

(c) Other Options Considered

4.5 The main alternative option is to continue without a Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD. However, this would fail to provide applicants and planning officers with specific guidance for shopfronts, which affects both the quality of planning applications received and the determination of planning applications. This would miss an opportunity make the policy context much clearer for those Reading shop owners applying for planning permission, and would fail to provide additional guidance in implementing the HSHAZ programme.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 Adoption of the SPD will guide future development in a way that will contribute to achieving the Council's priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan (2021-2022)¹. It will help with "keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe" by ensuring that the effects of development on the wider environment are controlled and will also help with creating an "inclusive economy" by enabling improvements to existing shops and the establishment of new high-quality shopfronts that contribute to the growth and success of the town.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policies on climate change and sustainable design that apply to various forms of development are set out elsewhere, within the Local Plan and Sustainable Design and Construction SPD. Additionally, the draft Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD emphasises the use of sustainable materials as well as retention and restoration of existing elements to minimise environmental impact.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

¹ <https://www.reading.gov.uk/council/policies-finance-and-legal-information/corporate-plan/council-corporate-plan-2021-to-2022/#themes>

- 7.1 The Council's consultation process for planning policy, as set out in the Statement of Community Involvement (adopted March 2014), is that the widest and most intensive community involvement should take place at the earliest possible stage, to allow the community a genuine chance to influence the document. Therefore, significant and wide-ranging community involvement exercises took place during development of the new Local Plan. The draft SPD provides more details for implementation.
- 7.2 Consultation is expected to last a period of eight weeks as described in paragraph 4.3 above. The consultation will involve contacting all individuals and groups on our consultation lists, as well as publication on the website.

8. EQUALITY ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The Sustainability Appraisal of the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan incorporates the requirement to carry out a screening stage of an Equality Impact Assessment. A full Sustainability Appraisal that examines the effects of the shopfronts policy (and any related design policies) has already been completed as part of the Local Plan, and therefore additional Equality Impact Assessment is not required. It is not expected that there will be any significant adverse impacts on specific groups due to any of the protected characteristics.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Regulation 12 and 13 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the requirements for undertaking consultation on Supplementary Planning Documents, which must last for a period of at least six weeks. Once the SPD is adopted by the Council, it will hold weight in the determination of planning applications for any development in the Borough.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The SPD has been paid for by Planning Services.
- 10.2 Consultation exercises can be resource intensive. However, the Council's consultation process is based mainly on electronic communication, which helps to minimise resource costs.
- 10.3 The SPD does not contain any proposals that would have additional financial implications for the Council.

Value for Money (VFM)

- 10.4 The preparation of a new SPD will ensure that development is appropriately guided and that significant effects are minimised. Production of the SPD, in line with legislation, national policy and best practice, therefore represents good value for money.

Risk Assessment

10.5 There are no direct financial risks associated with the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

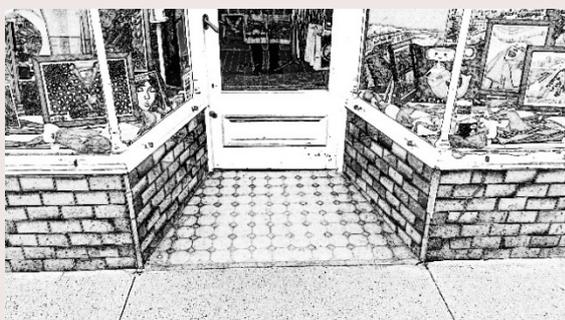
- The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012
- National Planning Policy Framework
- Reading Borough Local Plan, adopted November 2019

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DESIGN GUIDE FOR SHOPFRONTS

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Draft for Consultation, July 2021



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 High streets define character and place, serving as the centre of the community. Individual shopfronts have a major impact on the streetscape and help to shape the daily experience of Reading for residents and visitors.

Figure 1: Castle Street. (Source: RBC Library Archive)



Figure 2: Oxford Road (82). (Source: RBC Library Archive)



1.2 The benefits of physical improvements to shopfronts are wide-reaching. These include:

- Contributions to placemaking and vibrancy;
- Increased retail footfall and dwell time;
- Attractiveness to investment;
- Greater levels of occupancy;
- Improved community cohesion and social outcomes;
- Enhanced sense of civic pride and higher levels of engagement;
- More usable floorspace;
- Higher land values; and
- Achieving an appropriate mix of uses including residential, commercial and retail. In particular, historic high streets are correlated with better economic outcomes and prove to be more resilient in times of economic downturn¹.

Figure 3: Oxford Road. (Source: RBC Library Archive)



¹ [Policy Implications of Recent Trends in the High-Street/Retail Sector \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Figure. 4: Oxford Road. (Source: RBC Library Archive)



Figure. 5: Oxford Road. (Source: RBC Library Archive)



Figure. 6: Oxford Road. The original character has been lost over time. (Source: RBC Library Archive)



2. Planning Context

- 2.1 Once adopted, this supplementary planning document (SPD) will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. It will apply to all shopfronts within Reading Borough, both historic and traditional as well as modern frontages. It will supplement the policies in the [Reading Borough Local Plan](#) (adopted November 2019).
- 2.2 For the purposes of this SPD, shopfronts include all ground floor premises with a fascia and/or window display. This may include non-retail uses such as banks, estate agents, cafes, bars, restaurants and hot food take-aways.
- 2.3 All applications should clearly illustrate the plans, sections and elevations while including adjacent buildings and upper floors.
- 2.4 This SPD may also guide applications for advertising consent, but only in cases where advertisements are directly related to a specific shopfront.
- 2.5 This SPD should also be used to guide applications for conversions of existing shopfronts to other uses, such as residential.

When is planning permission required?

- 2.6 A new or replacement shopfront will always require planning permission. Alterations to an existing shopfront that involve a material change will also require planning permission. This may include:
 - Removal of a shopfront (either in whole or part);

- Alteration or replacement of features such as doors, window frames, cornices, corbel brackets or mouldings;
- Alteration of the frontage line;
- Changes to the size, shape or materials of a shop window (includes installation of reflective or obscure glazing);
- Removal or addition of mullions, transoms or glazing bars;
- Repositioning of the entrance;
- Enlargement or reduction of the fascia, as well as changes to depth or bulk;
- Changes to the facing materials;
- Removal or installation of an accessibility ramp;
- Installation of awnings or security shutters; and
- Repair works and maintenance: Repair works, interior redecoration or like-for-like replacement of features do not require planning permission, unless the building is statutorily listed. However, it is advisable to check with the RBC Conservation and Urban Design Officer before starting works to determine whether approval is required.

2.7 Listed building consent is required when a new or replacement shopfront is within or attached to a listed building, as unapproved to a listed building is a criminal offence. In addition to the items listed above requiring planning permission, the following works will require listed building consent:

- Removal, addition or alteration of entrance floor tiles;
- Removal of an original blind and/or blind box;
- Installation of an extractor fan outlet;
- Painting any previously unpainted exterior walls (as it is generally not supported);
- Repainting in a markedly different colour or with a textured wall paint; and
- Alterations to the interior of the shop.

2.8 Building regulations approval will likely be required for all new or replacement shopfronts and for some alterations. Applicants should contact [building control](#) before proceeding.

National Planning Policy

2.9 [The National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) states in paragraph 85 that planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should promote long-term vitality and viability of town centres.

2.10 Section 8 (promoting healthy and safe communities) emphasises that planning policies and decisions should achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

- Promote social interaction through strong neighbourhood centres and active street frontages;
 - Are safe and accessible with high quality public spaces;
 - Enable and support health and wellbeing through provision of local shops;
 - Plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, such as local shops, and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities; and
 - Ensure that established shops are able to develop and modernise and are retained for the benefit of the community.
- 2.11 Paragraph 118 states that planning policies and decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example, converting space above shops).
- 2.12 Paragraphs 189 to 202 state the requirements for applicants and local authorities when considering applications that affect heritage assets. Applicants must describe the significance of the asset and any potential impacts on their significance or setting.

Local planning policies

- 2.13 This SPD provides specific guidance on shopfront design, but forms part of a wider planning policy framework and should be read in conjunction with other relevant planning policy documents, particularly the Local Plan (adopted November 2019). This SPD specifically supplements the following policies (full text is included in Appendix 1):
- CC7: Design and the public realm;
 - EN1: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment;
 - EN3: Enhancement of conservation areas;
 - EN6: New development in a historic context;
 - OU4: Advertisements;
 - OU5: Shopfronts and cash machines;
 - CR2: Design and central Reading;
 - CR7: Primary frontages in central Reading; and
 - CR8: Small Shop Units in central Reading.

Other local policy

- 2.14 The three themes of [Investing in Reading's Future: Reading Borough Council Corporate Plan 2021/22](#) are:
- Healthy environment - making Reading a nicer, greener, more attractive place to live;

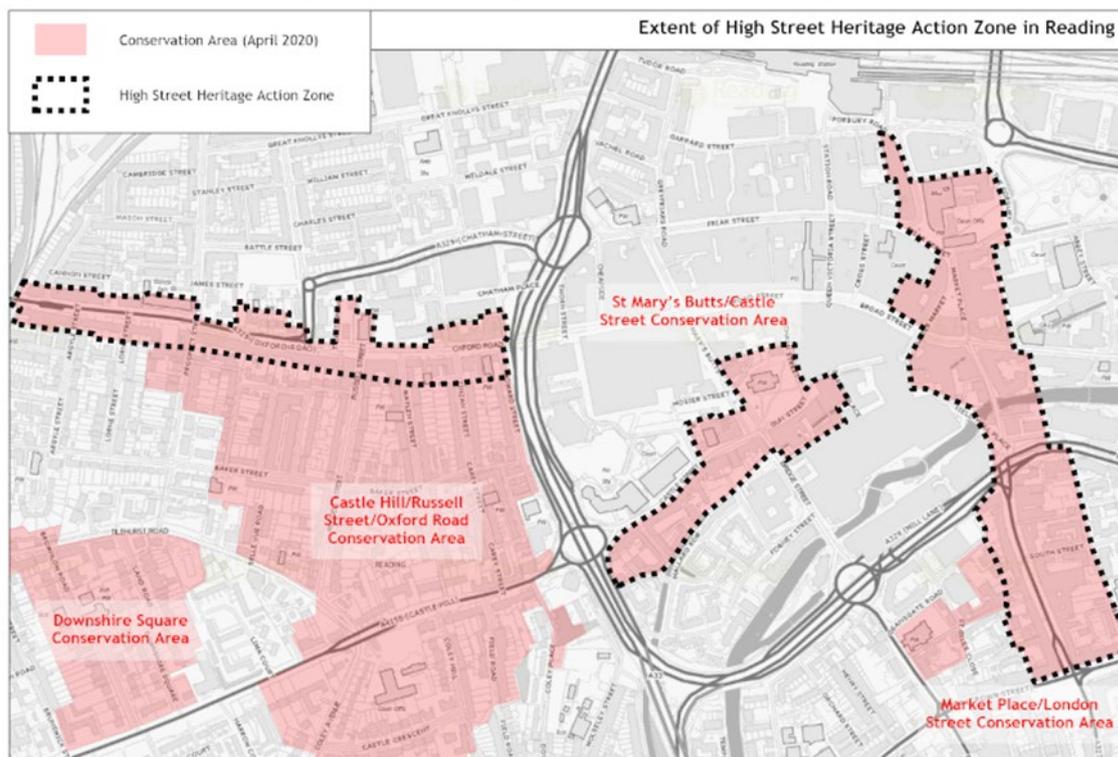
- Thriving communities - embracing diversity and community and ensuring that everyone has an equal chance to thrive; and
- Inclusive economy - a town where everyone can access education, skills and training, good jobs and decent housing.

Delivering a vibrant town centre with shopfronts that contribute to the character of the area is a key part of achieving these objectives.

- 2.15 [Reading’s Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030](#) aims to enhance Reading’s identity as a cultural and historic destination. Restoration of historic shopfronts will serve to engage local businesses, attract and retain investment and promote Reading as a visitor destination.
- 2.16 [The Reading High Streets Heritage Action Zone \(HSHAZ\)](#) programme is a heritage-led regeneration initiative led by Historic England, working with local councils and the community to create economic growth and improve our historic high streets through physical interventions, community engagement and cultural programming. The programme is based around areas on the Oxford Road, Castle Street, Gun Street, the southern end of St Mary’s Butts and Market Place. One of the major objectives of the programme is:

“To improve the physical condition and the viability of the high streets within the three conservation areas by identifying those properties most at risk and engaging with property owner to help them to restore the building, to show them how to maintain the building and to share best practice. We want to see premises viably and fully occupied and footfall and customer satisfaction increasing.”

Figure 7: Map of the High Street Heritage Action Zone in Reading



3. Historic Context

- 3.1 Reading is home to a variety of surviving historic shopfronts which together illustrate a rich history of our high streets.

Figure 8: Broad Street, Reading in 1905 (Source: Reading Library).



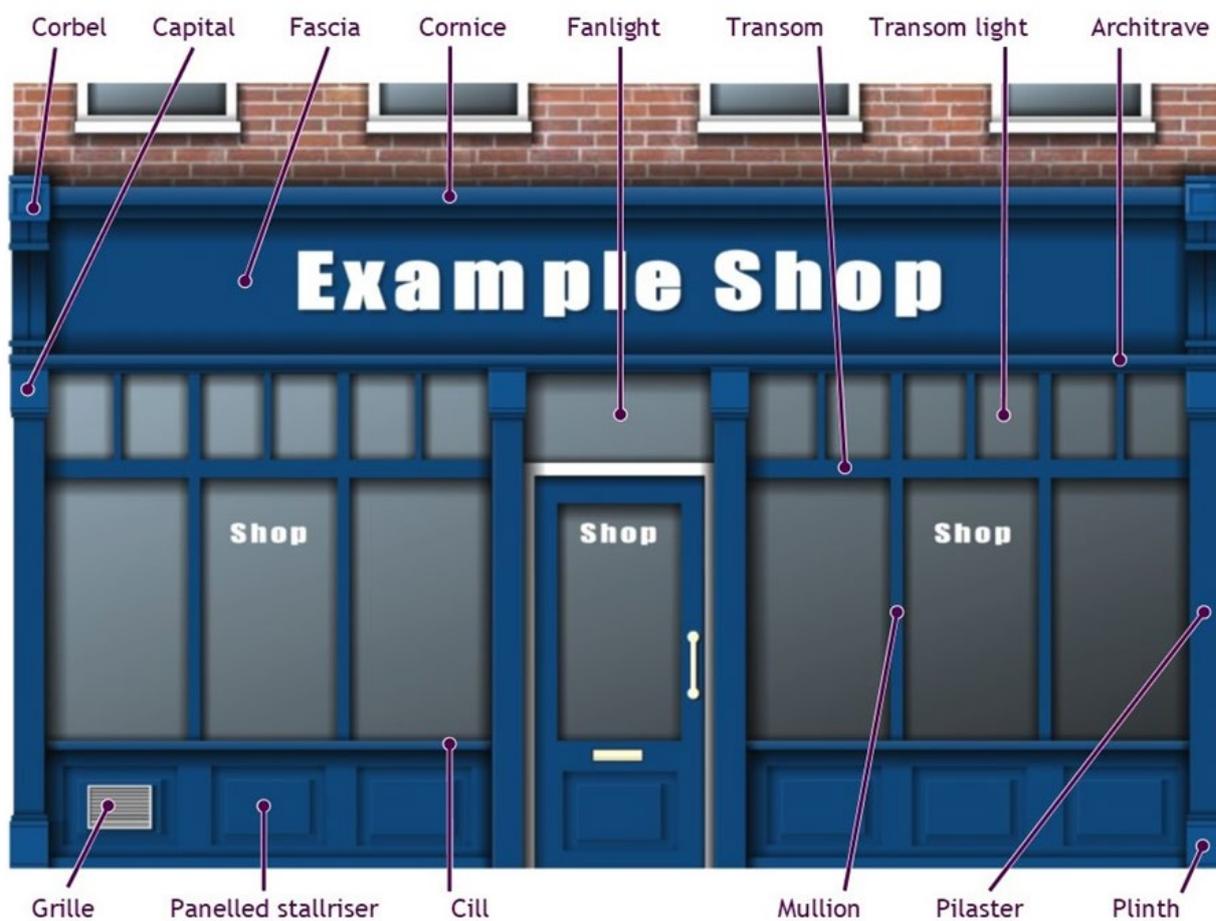
Figure 9: Broad Street, Reading in 2021. (Source: Reading Library).



Elements of a shopfront

3.2 The following elements of shopfronts are referenced in this document.

Figure 10: Elements of a shopfront



Overview of shopfront design

- 3.3 Medieval shopfronts (14th or 15th century), have rarely survived in Reading, but can sometimes be seen on the ground floors of timber-framed buildings. The work area or shops were usually on the ground floor, with residential on the upper floors. The ground floor, usually consisted of a simple door and windows (originally shutters), sometimes open to the street, and did not resemble shopfronts as we recognise them today.

Figure 11: Example of a medieval shopfront on corner of London Street and London Road, Reading. (Source: RBC Planning)



Figure 12: Ground floor of Figure 11, showing front door. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 3.3 As times changed so the design of shopfronts evolved. After the great fire of London, generally buildings were designed in brick. In the 17th and 18th centuries. In Reading, a number of original medieval buildings had their facades updated.

Figure 13: Medieval Back (15th) / Georgian (18th) shopfront, London Street, Reading. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 3.4 Georgian shopfronts (c. 1710s - 1830s) established many familiar elements of shopfronts such as glazed windows to display goods with numerous panels divided by glazing bars, as well as decorative exterior elements such as pilasters, stall-risers and cornices.

Figure 14: Georgian shopfront on London Street, Reading (Source: RBC Planning)



- 3.5 Regency & Mid-19th century Victorian Shop fronts had multi-pane full height windows, with decorative cornices. In time as window glass was made bigger, the number of panes reduced. Then towards the end of the 19th century full height glazed shopfronts became the norm. The shopfronts were then placed in ornate timber frames with decorative columns, moulded panelling and cornices, sometime with rows of dentils. There was also the introduction of panels of stained or frosted glass.

Figure 15: Example of an Inter-war shopfront, the Lanes, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning).



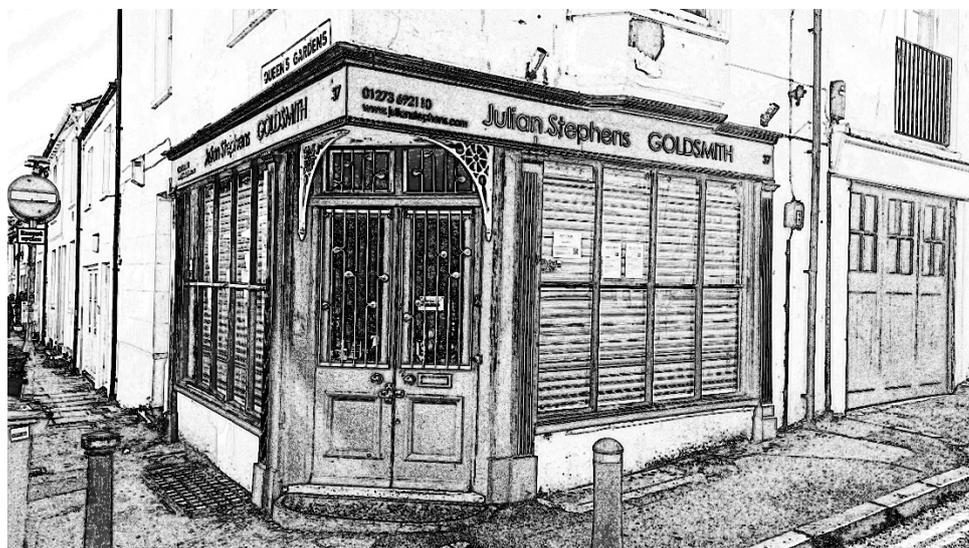
Figure 16: Example of an Inter-war shopfront, the Lanes, Brighton. Dated 1846. (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 17: Example of a Mid-19th century shopfront, High Street, Oxford (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 18: Example of a Mid-Victorian shopfront, the Lanes, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning).



- 3.4 Victorian shopfronts (c. 1840 - 1900) exhibited larger single-paned display windows made possible for the first time by plate glass framed by decorative architectural elements and fasciae displaying the shop name. A feature which became very common was retractable canvas awnings, traditionally with a timber panel on the exterior end.

Figure 19: Regency / Classical motifs Early 19th century. the Lanes, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning)

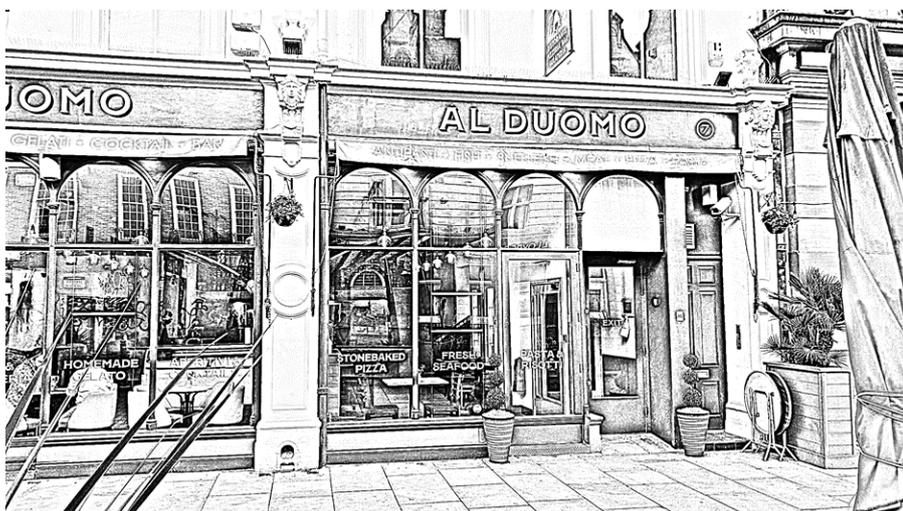
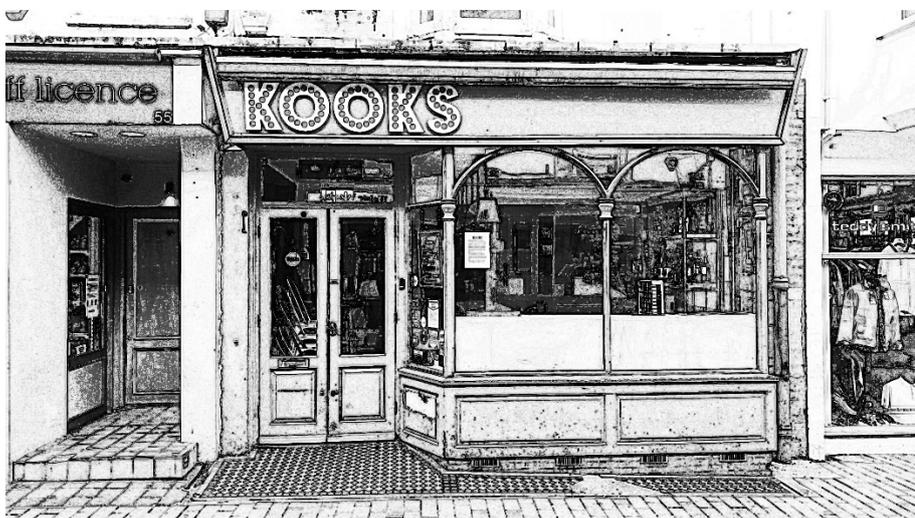


Figure 20: Example of a Mid-Victorian shopfront, the Lanes, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning).



- 3.5 During the Edwardian period (c. 1900 -1915) many stallrisers were lowered, fasciae enlarged and doorways recessed.

Figure 21: Edwardian. (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 22: Edwardian. (Source: RBC Planning).



3.6 The 20th century saw the advent of new materials, such as chrome or vitrolite.

Figure 23: Interwar. (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 24: Interwar. Art Deco or Moderne. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 3.7 Today, contemporary shopfronts are often made of plastics, metal or stainless steel with large expanse of undivided glass and wide, level entrances.

Figure 25: Modern. (Source: RBC Planning).



4. General Design Principles

4.1 Proposals for new or replacement shopfronts or alterations to an existing shopfront are expected to:

	Principle	Local Plan Policy Reference
1.	Respect or enhance key features of any historic interest, aiming to enhance and improve upon any original features through repair in the first instance, rather than replacement;	OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines (Part A) EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
2.	Respect the character of the building and the wider area in terms of design, colours, materials, lighting and location;	OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines CC7: Design and the Public Realm CR2: Design in Central Reading CR8: Small Shop Units in Central Reading
3.	Employ signage that enhances the street scene and does not detract;	OU4: Advertisements OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines
4.	Provide safe and inclusive access for all;	CC7: Design and the Public Realm
5.	In the case of conversions from shopfront to residential or non-retail uses, retain original shopfront features to the greatest extent possible; and	CC7: Design and the Public Realm
6.	Present an active frontage to the street at all times and minimise any opaque coverings that obscure the shop window.	OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines (Part E) CR7: Primary Frontages in Central Reading

- 4.2 Shopfronts of architectural and historic merit are expected to be retained and restored. Wherever possible, shopfronts should be restored to original designs, particularly if the shopfront is in an area of other traditional shopfronts. Applicants should identify a local example that has retained original details to guide design proposals.

Figure 26: Watlington Street 19th century Shopfront, Reading. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 4.3 Shopfronts should not be designed in isolation. Applicants should treat the building as a unified whole, thinking carefully about upper storeys and neighbouring properties. Proposals are expected to relate to the scale, proportion and architectural style of the host building and wider streetscape by acknowledging common features that occur on surrounding shops.

Figure 27: Elevation showing the plot spacing and shopfront details.



X Continuous facades which extend across several buildings weaken the rhythm of the streetscape and create a horizontal emphasis



✓ Subdividing the street into individual shopfronts and varying the size and height of the fascia to suit the scale of the building reinstates the rhythm of the streetscape

Figure 28: Photo of historic façades, showing the plot spacing and shopfront details. (Source: RBC Planning).

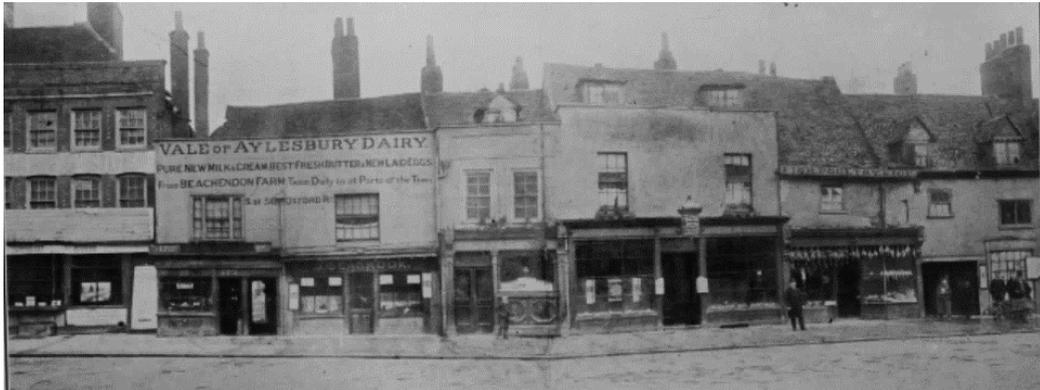


Figure 29: Detail photo of historic façades, showing the plot spacing and shopfront details. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 4.4 Modern shopfronts are almost never appropriate as part of a historic building or within a Conservation Area. Chain shops or larger shops that wish to use a house style or corporate image must adapt these to fit within the historic environment.

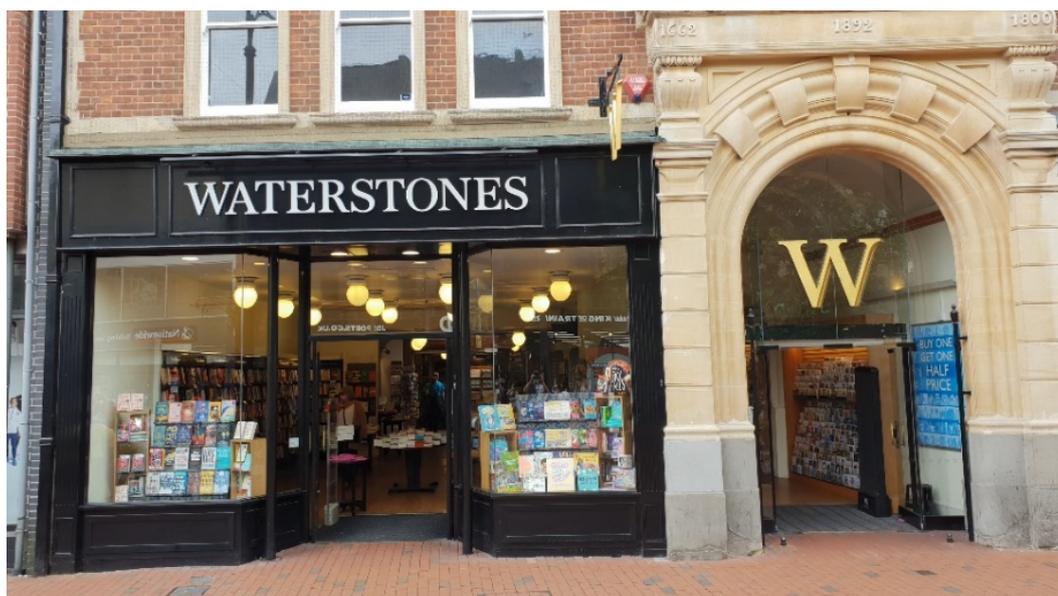
Figure 30: On left - Recent (2021), newly completed shopfront on corner of Friar Street and Station Road. New Wendy's fast food shop. (Source: RBC Planning).



Frontages

- 4.5 Display windows should avoid large frontages of undivided glass. Vertical and horizontal subdivision of the façade is preferred. Display windows should avoid clutter, as well as proliferation of advertising and/or posters. Glazing should be clear glass.

Figure 31: Broad Street. This is a relatively good example of a timber glazed shopfront. However, the silicon joining the corners of the glass need timber frames to make it a more traditional detail. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 4.6 Opaque coverings on shop windows, such as paint, films and temporary or permanent posters applied to the interior or exterior of the window should be minimised and should not obscure the shop window. The area of opaque coverings should not exceed 30% of the total area of glazing. Shopfronts should remain active during both the day and night.

Figure 32: Oxford Road. Good example of sympathetic window display. (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 33: Poor example of shopfront windows that are obscured by advertising with poor visibility (Source: RBC Planning).



4.7 Natural ventilation via grilles or opening lights should be considered.

Figure 34: Photo of historic façades, with air grilles in Friar Street. (Source: RBC Planning).



Stallrisers

- 4.8 Applicants should retain or install a Stallrisers with a moulded and projecting cill at the base of the shopfront of at least 300mm (450mm to 700mm preferred) in height in order to form a solid visual base. This prevents damage to glazing and reduces cleaning and maintenance.

Figure 35: Stall riser new shopfront on Broad Street. (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 36: Historic Tiled Stallrisers in Hay-On-Wye (Source: RBC Planning)



Figure 37: Shopfront with no Stallriser, Oxford (Source: RBC Planning).



Advertisements related to shopfronts

Fascia

4.10 Fasciae should:

- relate appropriately to the scale, character and features of the building and the adjacent buildings;
- be located beneath the sills of first floor windows and above the highest part of the ground floor windows;
- span the entire width of the shopfront between the corbels;
- not block or extend onto a cornice or stringcourse;
- be positioned evenly between corbels;
- Signage: Discrete downlighting is the preferred choice, avoid lettering which is internally illuminated and comply with the illumination requirements of the Local Plan (Policy OU4 and paragraphs 4.7.24 - 4.7.31); and
- avoid excessive use of bright colours or any use of fluorescent colours (bright colours and reflective materials such as mirrored lettering should be avoided entirely on traditional shopfronts and historic buildings).

Figure 38: Good example of signage, on Oxford Road, Road. Note a well detailed timber glazed black shopfront. Source: RBC Planning



- 4.11 Best practice guidance regarding illumination can be found in the [Professional Lighting Guide 05: The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements](#).
- 4.12 Multiple fasciae should be avoided. On double or multiple shopfronts the dividing corbel and pilaster should be retained, and the fascia divided.
- 4.13 Fasciae should be placed as to ensure that the first-floor window cills are visible from the pavement on the opposite side of the road. The bottom edge of the fascia should not extend over the edge of the ground floor windows.
- 4.14 Text should not occupy the entire fascia and should be well-proportioned. As a guide, text should occupy no more than half the width and half the height of the fascia.
- 4.15 A modest logo may be included. Corporate images are expected to suit local characteristics and may need to be reduced in size. Contemporary designs may be acceptable provided they respect historic context. Refer to Figure 39.

Other advertising considerations

- 4.16 'A-boards' should be avoided in order to avoid a cluttered appearance or obstruction of footpaths or pavements. These may be appropriate within a private forecourt but should be modest in size and colour and reflect the design of the shopfront itself. A [license](#) is required for any A-boards or other freestanding adverts, directional signs or information signs and inanimate characters on the public highway.
- 4.17 Estate agent boards on shopfronts should be avoided unless permitted under deemed consent in the national regulations. More information is available on the [Council's Planning Enforcement page](#).

- 4.18 Signage at high levels should be avoided.
- 4.19 One, small projecting sign per shopfront frontage may be appropriate. These should be reasonable in scale, avoid internal illumination and should reflect the style of the fascia. In some cases, a larger sign may be appropriate if it reflects traditional character (such as a larger, flat painted pub sign).

Figure 39: Good example of hanging signage, on Broad Street. Note new Bank Machine, in shopfront. Source: RBC Planning



Figure 40: Good example of hanging signage, on Broad Street. Note new Bank Machine, in shopfront. Source: RBC Planning



- 4.20 Temporary signage, such as banners, should be avoided. Signage applied to windows either internally or externally should never occupy more than 30% of the shopfront window. Refer to Figure 34.

Other considerations

Figure 41: 1979 The Horn. Public House. St Mary's Butts, Reading. Source: RBC Planning



Accessibility

- 4.21 Any proposed alterations should result from a full consideration of accessibility. For historic shopfronts, a pragmatic approach should be taken to ensure both reasonable accessibility and retention of historic interest.
- 4.22 Access points should:
- be wide and level in order to be accessible for individuals with disabilities, elderly individuals and those with prams;
 - have entrance doors that are visually distinguishable from the rest of the shopfront;
 - employ visual manifestation on glass such as small opaque decals to highlight the presence of glazing and to prevent accidents;
 - ensure that wheelchair access can be achieved without users opening double doors;
 - utilise doors that are easily opened by those with limited strength; and
 - avoid automatic sliding doors (unless on large modern shopfronts).

Forecourts

- 4.23 Forecourt seating or trading can invigorate the street scene but must avoid causing obstruction to pedestrians or nuisance to nearby residents.
- 4.24 Forecourts must be clearly delineated from the pavement and provide adequate clearance for pedestrians free of street furniture. For primary routes with heavy footfall, 3m is required at all times. 2m is required for all other routes.

- 4.25 Forecourts must be kept uncluttered to avoid negative visual effects and obstruction. Forecourt trading must not obscure historic shopfronts or shopfronts within a Conservation Area. It is not appropriate to park vehicles on forecourts or pavements. This significantly detracts from the character of the area and obstructs pedestrian routes.

Figure 42: Shopfront with cluttered forecourt (Source: RBC Planning).



Materials

- 4.26 All shopfronts are expected to use high quality materials and avoid the use of plastics, metal and reflective materials. Modern metal frames are not supported.
- 4.27 Applicants should consider the sustainability of materials. Hardwood and softwood sourced from sustainably managed forests is preferred. UPVC should be avoided.

Figure 43: Good example of shopfront and entrance to residential above on London Street, Reading. Source: RBC Planning



- 4.28 Brickwork or stonework should not be rendered, gravel-dashed or painted. Removal of paint to restore original brickwork is encouraged.

Figure 44: Where brick is an important part of the character of the façade, it should be retained. However, tiled Stallrisers are an important character element. (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 45: Historic Tiled Stallriser in Friar street. (Source: RBC Planning).



Fixtures

- 4.29 Canopies and shopblinds should
- be at ground level only and should avoid spanning more than one structural bay;
 - be used to provide shading;

- complement the design of the shopfront in suitable colours (avoid excessively bright or florescent colours);
- use high-quality materials such as canvas or rayon, rather than acrylic or plastic;
- be retractable and avoid bulky, curved or rigid framed blinds, such as Dutch blinds;
- provide 2.4 m headroom;
- cover the full width of the fascia; and
- avoid the use of side panels.

Figure 46: Retractable awning (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 47: Shopfront with non-retractable Dutch blind (not in Reading) (Source: RBC Planning).



4.30 Blinds with lettering will likely require advertising consent.

Security

- 4.31 Shopfront security is expected to be carefully considered at the earliest design stage. Security measures should be limited to the minimum measures necessary and should be integral to the shopfront itself, appropriately reflecting the character of the building.
- 4.32 Security shutters detract from the character of the high street and should be avoided in favour of laminated glass as 10-15mm glass can often achieve the same level of security. If laminated glass is not possible, internal grilles should be used. Solid internal shutters are generally inappropriate. All effort should be made to ensure that the shopfront display remains visible. If necessary, demountable or removable grilles are preferred to external roller grilles.

Figure 48: Shopfront with solid external security shutters (not in Reading) (Source: RBC Planning).



Lighting

- 4.33 External lighting should only be used on shopfronts that trade after dark. Light-coloured writing on a dark background can be effective. In conservation areas or on listed buildings there should be particular caution with internal illumination, for instance face or halo illumination of individual letters may be appropriate and discreet slim-line LED downlighters may be acceptable.
- 4.34 Illuminated projecting or hanging signs on the exterior of the building will not be permitted.

Cash machines

- 4.35 Cash machines should be located within well-lit, busy areas and away from dark corners or deep recesses that obscure visibility. Refer to Figure 40.
- 4.36 Cash machines should be minimal in design, in keeping with the building's character and should avoid dominating the shopfront.

Periods of vacancy

- 4.37 Periods of vacancy can have a significant impact on a building's appearance and the vitality of the area. Conditions may be imposed on planning permissions to ensure that the boarding of shops is limited to a specific period of time and may specify decoration to ensure the attractiveness of the area, such as painting a colour that matches the fascia or pilasters.

Upper Floors

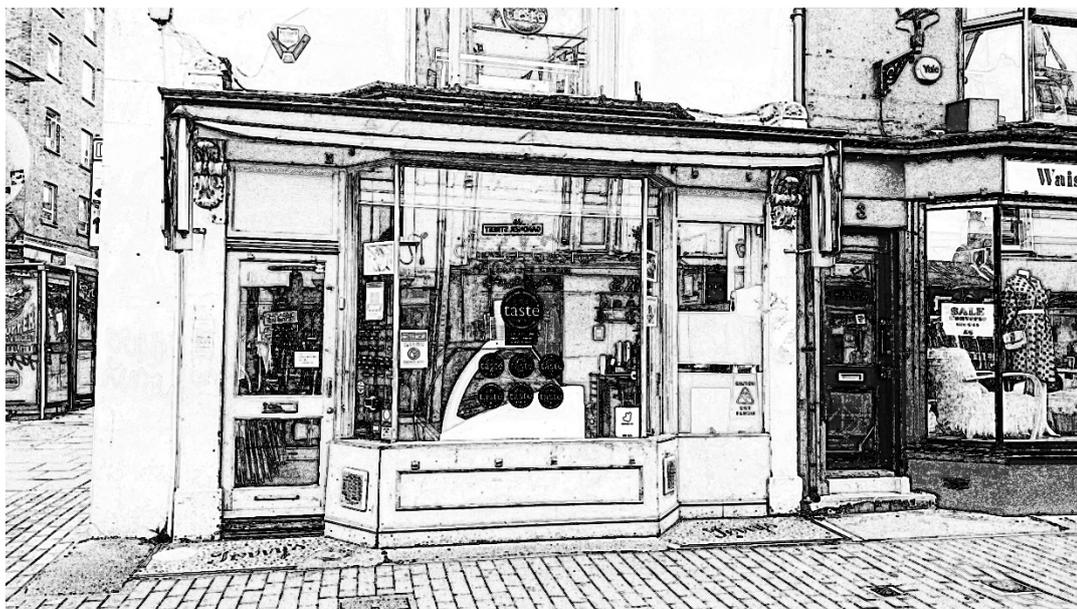
- 4.38 Applications should consider the appearance of the entire building. Applications should seek to improve the appearance of upper floors, if possible. Removal or consolidation of wiring or exterior installations on upper floors should be considered, particularly within Conservation Areas.
- 4.39 Every effort should be made to keep upper floors in use, such as for ancillary storage or residential.
- 4.40 Upper floors fenestration and architectural style should be in keeping with the ground floor and overall character of the building.

Specific considerations for historic or traditional shopfronts

- 4.41 Where a historic or traditional shopfront exists, consent will not be granted for its removal. All original elements and materials are expected to be retained and sensitively restored.
- 4.42 Applicants should use an accredited conservation architect and base designs in historic evidence, such as:
- archival materials such as historic photographs;
 - original architectural drawings; and/or
 - physical evidence uncovered during works.

- 4.43 The architectural features of reinstated shopfronts should be indistinguishable from nearby units which have been retained in good condition.
- 4.44 Many historic units featured a separate entrance to upper floors. These should be reinstated and employed to bring upper floors back into use. Upper floors should be sensitively restored and be in keeping with the ground floor shopfront.

Figure 49: Dual access shopfront. Shop entry and residential, Brighton. (Source: RBC Planning).



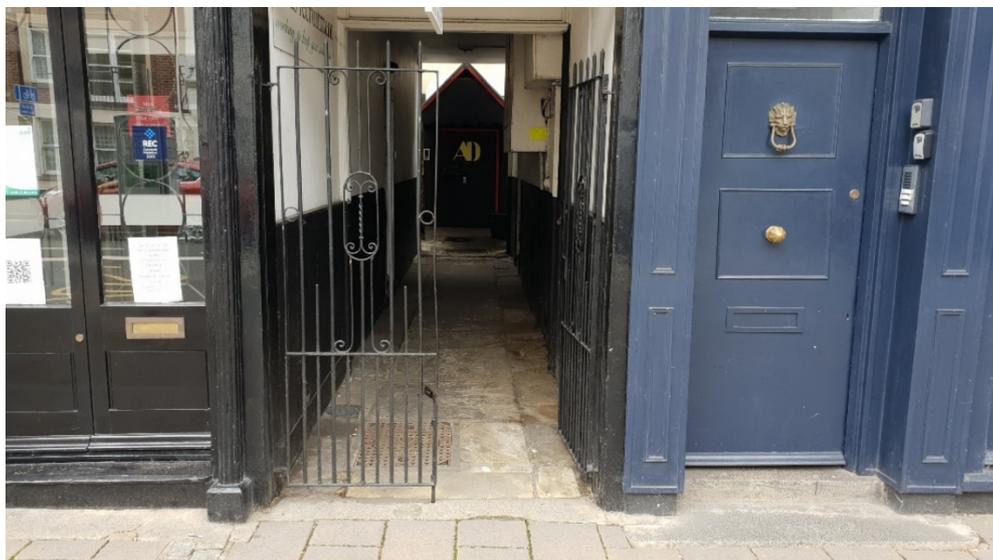
Materials

- 4.45 Timber with lead capping is the most common traditional material, as well as stall risers of stone, brick, glazed brick, render, iron, tile or bronze.

Figure 50: Cornice with lead flashing over, Reading. (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 51: Shopfront with tradition materials are part of the street character and significance. Note the stone paving in the passage. London Street, Reading. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 4.46 Raised detailing (particularly timber detailing) often serves more than a decorative purpose and is often designed to help shed rainwater. Therefore, original raised detailing should be restored and application of superficial elements for decoration should be avoided.
- 4.47 Colours should reflect the character of the particular area. Typically, rendered areas (such as Stallrisers) were painted to contrast joinery. Where a single pilaster or corbel is shared by adjoining units, they should not be painted half one colour and half another. Any original brick, bronze or hardwood should not be painted. Reflective materials should be avoided.

Doors and windows

- 4.48 Proposals to adapt historic shopfronts for disabled access will be considered and encouraged, but proposals should remain sensitive to historic character.
- 4.49 A contemporary shop window and door can sometimes be appropriately inserted within an original framework, fascia and pilasters.
- 4.50 The design of the shop door should reflect the design of the shopfront and windows, with a bottom panel or kickplate to match the height and style of the stall riser.
- 4.51 Where they have been removed on historic shopfronts, recessed doors should be reinstated.

Figure 52: Shopfront with traditional recessed entryway at High Street, Oxford.
(Source: RBC Planning).



- 4.52 Modern framing materials such as aluminium or UPVC will not be acceptable on historic buildings or within Conservation Areas.
- 4.53 Shopfronts with glazed folding doors which enable the frontage to be fully opened will only be acceptable in historic buildings if designs incorporate a stall riser.
- 4.54 Graphic window vinyl which obscures views into the shop will be discouraged. Vinyl is not permitted on listed buildings as this detracts from the character of the area.

Pilasters and fasciae

- 4.55 Original pilasters or corbels should not be altered or removed. Where a pilaster or corbel is missing or partially missing, it should be reinstated.

Figure 53: Panelled, plain and fluted pilasters with decorative consoles. Brighton.
(Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 54: Good example of signage and cornice above shopfront. Oxford Road, Reading. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 4.56 New pilasters should have a plinth at the base and be treated with the prevailing material of the building.
- 4.57 A new fascia should avoid projecting further than the original fascia.
- 4.58 Fasciae should have moulding cornices in timber with a lead flashing. Marine quality plywood is an acceptable alternative to timber.
- 4.59 Glossy, reflective or plastic/acrylic fasciae are not acceptable.
- 4.60 In well-lit areas, there should be no need to light fasciae (particularly if shops do not trade after dark). Should illumination be required, it should comply with Policy OU4 of the Local Plan and paragraph 4.7.26 which states:

“Whole fascia internal illumination should be avoided. Care should be taken to ensure that illumination is in keeping with the character of the area, particularly where it would affect heritage assets, for instance face or halo illumination of individual letters may be appropriate and discreet slim-line LED downlighters may be acceptable.”

Policy OU4 also emphasises that “care should be taken to ensure that illumination does not detract from the amenity of the area or pose a safety hazard to users of the highway.”

Shutters and blinds

- 4.61 Any original blinds or awnings should be reinstated.
- 4.62 Roller blinds made of canvas or woven acrylic fibre with a matte finish are the most appropriate solution for listed buildings, historic buildings and shops within a Conservation Area. Blinds should retract into a timber box that sits flush with the fascia. The colour should match the fascia and shopfront or be a natural canvas colour.

- 4.63 Exterior security shutters should be avoided on Listed Buildings or within Conservation Areas in favour of laminated glass. Any original or traditional wood shutters should be retained and maintained.

5. Conversions from shopfront to residential

- 5.1 Applications to convert shopfronts to residential use will be expected to retain the shopfront to the greatest extent possible. This may require improvements to the existing shopfront in order to ensure that the frontage reflects the character of the area, particularly within Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings. Please refer to figures 44 and 50 for examples of entrances to upper floors.
- 5.2 Replacement of shopfronts with solid walls and windows is not acceptable.
- 5.3 Privacy should be provided by internal blinds and/or curtains, rather than opaque film.
- 5.4 If the proposal aims to provide a glazed opening for light to a basement, removal of the stallriser will not be permitted unless glazing is appropriately obscured for example by an iron grille. A solid visual base should be maintained.
- 5.5 Changes made under permitted development rights should follow these guidelines, as well.

6. Glossary

Architrave - the moulded frame of a door or window, can also refer to the lowest member of an entablature

Awning or canopy - a sheet of canvas or other material stretched on a frame and used to keep the sun or rain off a shop window or doorway

Blind box - storage located above to fascia to store retractable blinds or awnings

Capital - ornamental feature at the top of a pilaster or column

Cill - horizontal bar at bottom of a window frame

Console brackets - located at the top of a pilaster and either end of the fascia

Conservation Area Appraisal - document that defines the special characteristics of defined areas of special architectural or historic interest which are worth preserving

Corbel - a block of masonry or material such as brick or wood which projects and supports a beam or other feature (such as a cornice)

Cornice - Flat topped ledge with moulded underside, usually found along the top or near the top of a building

Entablature - collective name for the architrave, frieze and cornice which forms the upper part of a classical building below the roof

Façade - the exterior face of the building, including the shopfront and upper floors

Fascia - flat surface above a shop window on which the name of the shop is displayed

Fluting - shallow grooves running vertically along a surface, usually on a column or pilaster

Grille - opening of several parallel slits in a wall, metal sheet or other barrier intended to let air or water enter or leave while keeping larger objects out

Halo lighting - back lighting for letters that creates a glow around a raised letter by illuminating the surface behind

Laminated glass - two pieces of glass containing a plastic interlayer. If broken, the interlayer prevents a large entry from being created.

Listed Building Consent - Permission required before works that might affect the character or appearance of listed buildings can be undertaken

Marine Quality Plywood - plywood that is more water-durable and performs better in high-moisture conditions

Moulding - continuous projection or groove used decoratively or to guide rain water off of a surface

Mullion - vertical glazing bar that divides a window into two or more sections

Pilaster - Flat representation of a pillar

Plinth - moulded projecting base at the foot of a pilaster

Stallriser - structural element that provides a solid base beneath a shop window between the ground and the glass window. These support the glazing and frame and provide protection.

String course - a projecting, decorative horizontal band on the exterior of a building

Supplementary Planning Document - Planning documents which provide more detailed information than development plans, but do not have the same weight

Transom - Horizontal bar dividing the upper section of the window

Trough lighting - enclosed lighting unit that is supported by brackets and casts light, typically onto a fascia

Appendix 1: Design Checklists

Design Checklist

Heritage	Is the building or area a heritage asset? (i.e. Listed, locally listed, within a Conservation Area)	
	Establish the building's history. Is the existing shopfront original? Are original features beneath a modern exterior? Can original features be retained and restored or an original shopfront reinstated?	
	Find any local historic records pertaining to the property, such as historic photographs. These should inform your proposals.	
	Are there any other material considerations to inform the proposal, such as a local listing description or Conservation Area Appraisal ?	
Local Plan Policies	Do the proposals comply with all relevant Local Plan policies, particularly those outlined in Appendix 2?	
Design	Is the shopfront divided vertically and horizontally to avoid large areas of undivided glass? Inactive or closed panels should be avoided.	
	Is signage and advertising kept to a minimum in order to avoid a cluttered appearance?	
	Is the fascia well-designed, positioned consistently with adjoining buildings and located as not to obscure architectural features?	
	Does the shopfront have no more than one small projecting sign?	
	Does the shopfront relate in scale, proportion and architectural style to the wider building and area?	
	Have high quality materials been used?	
	Are the materials complementary in colour and style to the existing building?	
	Are canopies, blinds or awnings integrated into the shopfront and consistent with the requirements stated in this document? Are the proportions appropriate?	
Security	Are any roller shutters internally fitted?	

	Have security measures been considered as an integral part of the overall design? What impact do these measures have on the visual appearance of the shopfront?	
Accessibility	Is the shopfront accessible for all?	
	Is the forecourt clearly delineated from the main pavement? Is it visually uncluttered with sufficient space for pedestrians?	
Illumination	Have internally illuminated fasciae and signs been avoided?	
	Are lighting levels in keeping with the character of the area?	

Additional considerations for conversions from shopfront to residential

Has the original shopfront been retained? If it is not possible to retain the original shopfront, have original features been retained or reinstated?	
Has adequate privacy been achieved without adverse visual impacts?	
Have windows been retained?	
Has a solid visual based been retained?	

Appendix 2: Relevant Local Plan Policies

CC7: Design and the public realm

All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including: -

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials*

will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: -

- *Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place*
- *Continuity and enclosure*
- *Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping*
- *Ease of movement and permeability*
- *Legibility - clear image and easy to understand*
- *Adaptability - capable of adaptation over time*
- *Diversity - meets a wide range of needs.*

Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they: -

- *Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;*
- *Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;*
- *Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;*
- *Are visually attractive as a result of good high-quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.*

Applications for major developments, or other relevant developments, should be accompanied by a design and access statement that deals with all the above matters.

EN1: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment

Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:

- *Listed Buildings;*
- *Conservation Areas;*
- *Scheduled Monuments;*
- *Historic parks and gardens; and*
- *Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.*

All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.

Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.

Applications which affect Historic Parks and Gardens will safeguard features which form an integral part of the special character or appearance of the park or garden. Development will not detract from the enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance, features or setting of the park or garden, key views out from the park, or prejudice its future restoration.

Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.

The Council will monitor buildings and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, proactively seeking solutions for assets at risk including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset, and, as a last resort, using its statutory powers.

Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or of damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

EN3: Enhancement of conservation areas

The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas. These may include:

- *Reducing visual clutter caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires, satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;*
- *Restoring original building features;*
- *Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;*
- *Protecting and encouraging the maintenance of green spaces and important trees, particularly where they are intrinsic to the history and character of the area;*

- *Improving signage and street furniture;*
- *Restoring or re-establishing appropriate paving, railings or walls;*
- *Sympathetic landscaping and planting;*
- *Improving or restoring green spaces, including front gardens, that are appropriate to the historic interest of a Conservation Area;*
- *Signage that reveals and promotes the Conservation Area and its boundaries;*
- *Interpretation panels to inform the public of the area's historical significance.*

Where a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been adopted for a particular Conservation Area, this will be a material consideration in determining applications for development.

EN6: New development in a historic context

In areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development. New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- a. *The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);*
- b. *Sensitivity to historic context;*
- c. *Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);*
- d. *Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.*

OU4: Advertisements

Advertisements will respect the building or structure on which they are located and/or their surroundings and setting in terms of size, location, design, materials, colour, noise, lettering, amount and type of text, illumination and luminance, and will not have a detrimental effect on public safety. The cumulative impact of adverts will be taken into account, and a proliferation of advertisements that detrimentally affects visual or aural amenity or public safety will not be acceptable. All adverts shall comply with the following criteria:

- a) *Advertisements will not obstruct windows, any other sign already located on the building, or cut across significant architectural features such as historic fascias, windows, pilasters, cornices or scrolls;*
- b) *Where a shop or business occupies more than one adjacent unit, the advertisement will not run between the shopfronts;*

- c) *Advertisements on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;*
- d) *Advertisements will not reduce visibility for users of the highway or accesses onto the highway;*
- e) *Illumination should not detract from the amenity of the area or pose a safety hazard to users of the highway; and*
- f) *Advertisements should not obscure the sight lines of cameras installed for public safety.*

OU5: Shopfronts and cash machines

Shopfronts, individual features of shopfronts and cash machines will respect the character of the building on which they are located and their surroundings, as well as the wider street, in terms of design, colours, materials, lighting, and location. Features that positively contribute to the character of the building and street will be retained and, where possible, restored. Safety and security will be maintained and enhanced.

For shopfronts, the following criteria will be fulfilled:

- a) *New shopfronts on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;*
- b) *Where a shop occupies multiple units, shopfronts will not run in a continuous horizontal line across the different unit façades. The fascia and the shop windows should be broken up to ensure the features of each unit are not lost;*
- c) *Fascia boards should be lower than any first floor windows, and reflect the predominant height of historic fascia boards on surrounding buildings;*
- d) *Canopies and blinds over windows and entrances should be for the shading of the shop and should be retractable; and*
- e) *Shopfronts should present an active frontage to the street at all times. Where security is essential, security features will be internal, such as internal open mesh grilles. Opaque coverings on shop windows, such as paint and films, will be minimised and will not obscure the window.*

CR2: Design and central Reading

Applications for development within Central Reading should demonstrate the following attributes:

- a. *Development will build on and respect the existing grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces, and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels, and contributing towards enhanced ease of movement through and around the central area;*
- b. *Development will provide appropriate, well designed public spaces and other public realm, including squares, open spaces, streetscape, utilising high quality*

and well-maintained hard and soft landscaped areas, and public art, that provide suitable functions and interest, sense of place and safe and convenient linkages to adjoining areas;

- c. Development should consider and, where possible, include ways of providing green infrastructure designed into the development, for instance through roof gardens, green walls and green roofs, to enhance the otherwise very urban environment;*
- d. The architectural details and materials used in the central area should be high quality and respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site;*
- e. Development and any associated public realm should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of easy adaptation over time to meet changing circumstances, and be designed to enhance community safety; and*
- f. Development should be designed with consideration of adjacent development sites, and should not prevent or cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of those sites.*

CR7: Primary frontages in central Reading

Uses on the ground floor along the designated primary frontages as shown on the Proposals Map will be within one of the following use classes: A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, C1, D1, D2 or related sui generis uses, unless it would be an entrance to upper floors. New developments (or alterations to existing uses) that front onto any of the designated primary frontages will provide an active building frontage with a display window or glazed frontage at ground floor level, in order to contribute to the vibrancy of the town centre, and provide visual interest.

Frontages should be of a high visual quality. Any frontages that have the potential to hinder movement or cause unnecessary safety risk will not be permitted.

Proposals that would result in the loss of A1 or A2 use such that the proportion of the length of frontage within the street in A1 or A2 use falls below 50% will not be permitted, unless the proposal introduces a use that makes a positive contribution to the overall diversity of the centre. 50% of new primary frontages as shown on the Proposals Map should be in A1/A2 use.

CR8: Small Shop Units in central Reading

Small shop units make an important contribution to the diversity of the centre. Some areas of the centre are particularly characterised by small units, of less than 75 sq m. These include the arcades, Cross Street, Queen Victoria Street, Union Street, and any other areas designated in the future.

Within the areas characterised by small shop units, the amalgamation of individual shop fronts will not be permitted.

Major new retail development (more than 2,500 sq m) for multiple units in the Primary Shopping Area should include some provision for a range of small shop units.

References and further reading

[Historic England \(2012-2015\), Practical Building Conservation Series](#)

[Historic England \(2015\), Easy Access to Historic Buildings](#)

[Historic England \(2017\), Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading](#)

[Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government \(2019\) National Planning Policy Framework](#)

[Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government \(2020\), Statutory Guidance: Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M](#)

Morrison, K. A. (2003), English Shops and Shopping, English Heritage.

[The Institute of Historic Building Conservation \(2018\), IHBC Guidance Note on Alterations to Listed Buildings](#)

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REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	12 JULY 2021		
TITLE:	QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORT (2020/21)		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR McEWAN	PORTFOLIO:	CORPORATE & CONSUMER SERVICES
SERVICE:	FINANCIAL SERVICES CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	STUART DONNELLY	TEL:	
JOB TITLE:	FINANCIAL PLANNING & STRATEGY MANAGER	E-MAIL:	stuart.donnelly@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the provisional revenue and capital outturn positions for the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2020/21. Further changes are not expected at this stage however the outturn is subject to audit and any material issues arising will need to be adjusted for.
- 1.2 The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a unique set of financial challenges for councils around the country, with income levels dropping; costs increasing; savings projects being de-prioritised in order to focus on the delivery of critical front-line services; and large-scale financial support programmes being implemented.
- 1.3 Reading Borough Council has distributed more than £43m of grants to thousands of businesses; awarded more than £59m of business rates relief; and awarded £0.9m of hardship funding to Council Tax Support claimants in 2021/22. And whilst collection rates have inevitably reduced from previous years, the drop was not as great as anticipated.
- 1.4 There have also been major challenges in monitoring financial performance against the budget that was approved in February 2020 as the impact of the pandemic delivered an unprecedented level of change and uncertainty. The budget was based upon a pre-pandemic set of assumptions that have had to be continually revised and adjusted throughout the year. It is in this context that the finance team has adopted a prudent approach in assessing the financial implications of the pandemic in order to protect the long-term financial stability of the Council. This report now confirms the provisional year-end position.

General Fund

- 1.5 The budget report approved by Council on 23 February 2021 assumed the use of £12.682m of reserves in order to deliver a balanced budget:
 - £9.906m of the Direct Revenue Financing of Capital earmarked reserve was utilised in 2020/21 to reduce the ongoing Minimum Revenue Provision charge to the revenue budget;

- £2.776m to balance the 2021/22 budget.
- 1.6 The 2020/21 General Fund revenue provisional outturn position is a positive net variance of £12.762m. It is proposed to utilise £8.355m to replenish those reserves that were utilised in order to deliver a balanced budget, thereby reducing the net reduction in those reserves to £4.327m.
- 1.7 This can be broken down as follows:
- £6.453m of corporate contingencies held to deal with pressures not foreseen in the original budget were ultimately not required and can now be released back to replenish reserves that were used to balance the 2021/22 budget;
 - Other budgets delivered net positive variances of £2.341m, of which it is proposed to carry forward £0.439m and to utilise the remaining £1.902m to replenish reserves that were used to balance the 2021/22 budget.
 - The Council received £20.416m of un-ringfenced Covid-19 grant funding from Central Government. £16.448m of that was utilised in year and £3.968m can now be rolled forward to 2021/22 to mitigate the ongoing impact of the pandemic.
- 1.8 Brighter Future for Children delivered within the contract sum for 2020/21.
- 1.9 In summary, this results in an overall General Fund positive net variance of £12.762m. It is proposed that:
- The £3.968m of unallocated Covid-19 grant funding be put into an earmarked reserve to be used to mitigate the ongoing financial impact of the pandemic;
 - The £0.126m positive variance on the Joint Legal Team (JLT) within Legal & Democratic Services be carried forward to fund JLT specific invest to save projects;
 - The £0.313m positive variance against IT & Digital be carried forward to contribute to the funding of the Digital Strategy;
 - The remaining balance of £8.355m be released back to replenish reserves that were used in order to deliver a balanced budget for 2021/22.
- 1.10 The original budget for 2020/21 included assumed savings of £15.344m, including £2.539m of savings brought forward from the previous year. A total of £7.579m of ongoing savings were delivered in 2020/21, and £2.640m of savings were removed as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process on the basis that they were no longer deemed deliverable. This leaves a residual balance of £5.125m to be carried forward for delivery in 2021/22. It should be noted that the shortfall on the savings target was fully mitigated by services in-year.
- 1.11 This balance of £5.125m will be added to the £15.083m of savings already included in the 2021/22 budget to give a revised savings target of £20.208m. The carry forward of non-delivered savings and the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 significantly increase the risk of delivering the 2021/22 budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy as originally approved in February 2021. Savings delivery will continue to be monitored and reported on regularly throughout 2021/22.

- 1.12 The combined gross revenue pressures for 2020/21 as a result of Covid-19 total £16.448m, which includes £1.643m of pressures in Brighter Futures for Children that the Council has agreed to fund. Funding received from Central Government included £13.269m of Central Government general support grant, £5.842m in compensation for lost income from sales, fees & charges, and (£1.305m) furlough grant. This leaves a net variance of £3.968m of unallocated Covid-19 grant funding that is proposed to be rolled forward as an earmarked reserve.
- 1.13 In addition, the Council delivered £8.794m of non-Covid related net savings, resulting in an overall positive variance on the General Revenue Fund of £12.762m.

Housing Revenue Account

- 1.14 The provisional Housing Revenue Account outturn position is a £9.306m surplus/return to reserves.

Capital

- 1.15 The provisional General Fund Capital Programme outturn is a £29.142m positive variance against the budget of £67.812m.
- 1.16 The provisional HRA Capital Programme outturn is a £4.308m positive variance against the budget of £20.457m.

Performance

- 1.17 The report also sets out performance against the measures of success published in the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 1.18 Further detail supporting this report is included in the following appendices:
- Appendix 1 - General Fund Outturn;
 - Appendix 2 - Covid-19 Grants;
 - Appendix 3 - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn;
 - Appendix 4 - Capital Programme Outturn;
 - Appendix 5 - Savings;
 - Appendix 6 - Delivery Fund;
 - Appendix 7 - Reserves Position as at 31st March 2021;
 - Appendix 8 - Performance Outturn.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

That Policy Committee notes:

- 2.1 The provisional General Fund revenue outturn position for 2020/21 is a £12.762m positive net variance;
- 2.2 The provisional Housing Revenue Account outturn position for 2020/21 is a £9.306m transfer to the HRA Reserve;
- 2.3 The provisional General Fund Capital Programme outturn position for 2020/21 is a £29.142m positive net variance;

- 2.4 The provisional HRA Capital Programme outturn position for 2020/21 is a £4.308m positive net variance;
- 2.5 That £7.579m of agreed savings have been delivered in year with £5.125m of non-delivered savings being carried forward into 2021/22;
- 2.6 That £3.256m of Capital Receipts have been used to fund transformation in accordance with the Capitalisation Directive (Appendix 4);
- 2.7 The performance achieved against the Corporate Plan success measures as set out in Section B of this report and Appendix 8.

That Policy Committee approves:

- 2.8 The service requests to roll-forward funds totalling £0.439m into 2021/22 to complete future programmes of work;
- 2.9 That £3.968m of un-ringfenced Covid-19 grant funding be put into an earmarked reserve to meet the ongoing financial impacts of the pandemic;
- 2.10 That the remaining balance of £8.355m is set aside to partially replace the drawdown of £9.906m of earmarked reserves in respect of reducing the ongoing Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charge to the revenue budget in future years that was approved in the Quarter 3 Performance and Monitoring Report;
- 2.11 The net roll-forwards of budget within the Capital Programme totalling £29.471m; resulting in a revised Capital Programme net budget of £117.624m for 2021/22;
- 2.12 The net roll-forwards of budget within the HRA Capital Programme totalling £4.419m; resulting in a revised HRA Capital Programme net budget of £44.094m for 2021/22;
- 2.13 The re-programming of the New Build & Acquisitions- Phase 4 budget of £1.400m within the HRA Capital Programme from 2023/24 to 2021/22 as set out in paragraph 8.3.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Council approved the 2020/21 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy in February 2020. This included assumptions around available resources and agreed efficiencies. Savings delivery has been monitored throughout the year and any approved costs associated with transformation savings have been tracked by the Corporate Programme Board.
- 3.2 The Covid-19 situation has meant that forecasts for 2020/21 are significantly different to the budget that was set. The Government has allocated the Council £13.269m of general support funding for 2020/21 as well as the Council claiming £5.842m in compensation for lost income from sales, fees & charges and £1.305m in Furlough grant.
- 3.3 Council in June 2018 approved Shaping Reading's Future - Our Corporate Plan 2018-21. The Plan reflects the Council's priorities for Reading and provides direction for staff in delivering services to meet the needs of the communities within the Borough whilst working to a budget and MTFS agreed at Council in February 2019.
- 3.4 This report is structured into two parts. The first (**Section A, paragraphs 4 to 12**) reports on financial performance, whilst the second (**Section B, paragraph 13**) reports on performance in delivering against the Corporate Plan.

A. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

4. GENERAL FUND REVENUE SUMMARY

4.1 The provisional outturn position of the General Revenue Fund is a positive net variance of £12.762m against the net budget of £150.920m.

4.2 It is estimated that the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in revenue cost and income pressures of £16.448m in 2020/21 which are offset by £20.416m of Covid-19 funding from Central Government and other net savings of £8.794m. The impact on individual Directorate budgets is set out below.

Table 1. General Revenue Fund Summary by Directorate

	Budget	Outturn	Variance
	£m	£m	£m
Adult Care & Health Services	38.273	38.966	0.693
Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services	19.570	29.040	9.470
Resources	15.473	14.883	(0.590)
Chief Executive	1.511	1.484	(0.027)
Children's Services retained by the Council	0.710	0.710	0.000
Children's Services delivered by BfC	48.421	50.064	1.643
Total Service Expenditure	123.958	135.147	11.189
Capital Financing Costs	14.731	14.703	(0.028)
Contingency	3.522	0.000	(3.522)
Other Corporate Budgets	8.709	8.724	0.015
Other Corporate Budgets (Covid Funding)	0.000	(20.416)	(20.416)
Total Corporate Budgets	26.962	3.011	(23.951)
Net Budget Requirement	150.920	138.158	(12.762)
Financed by:			
Council Tax Income	(96.014)	(96.014)	0.000
NNDR Local Share	(34.357)	(34.357)	0.000
New Homes Bonus	(3.988)	(3.988)	0.000
Section 31 Grant	(3.994)	(3.994)	0.000
Revenue Support Grant	(2.030)	(2.030)	0.000
One-off Collection Fund Surplus	(10.537)	(10.537)	0.000
Total Funding	(150.920)	(150.920)	0.000
(Positive)/Adverse Variance	0.000	(12.762)	(12.762)

4.3 Further detail on the variances are set out below and in Appendix 1 attached.

4.4 The following table reconciles Covid-19 and other pressures to the forecast outturn position:

Table 2. Covid-19 Revenue Pressures Impact on the 2020/21 Outturn Forecast

	Covid-19 Pressures	Other Net Pressures/	Forecast Outturn

	£m	(Savings) £m	£m
Adult Care & Health Services	1.718	(1.025)	0.693
Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services	11.665	(2.195)	9.470
Resources	1.132	(1.722)	(0.590)
Chief Executive	0.090	(0.117)	(0.027)
Children's Services retained by the Council	0.000	0.000	0.000
Children's Services delivered by BFfC	1.643	0.000	1.643
Total Service Budgets	16.248	(5.059)	11.189
Capital Financing Costs	0.000	2.312	2.312
Contingency	0.000	(3.522)	(3.522)
Other Corporate Budgets	0.200	(2.525)	(2.325)
Total Corporate Budgets	0.200	(3.735)	(3.535)
Total	16.448	(8.794)	7.654
Other Corporate Budgets (Covid Funding)	(20.416)	0.000	(20.416)
Total	(3.968)	(8.794)	(12.762)

Adult Care and Health Services

4.5 Adult Care and Health Services' provisional outturn position is an adverse net variance of £0.693m, including £1.718m of Covid-19 pressures. If Covid-19 pressures are excluded, then the directorate delivered a net saving of £1.025m.

Adult Social Care - £0.693m adverse variance

4.6 Adult Social Care's (Commissioning & Improvement, Adult Services Operations, Preventative Services and Directorate & Other) provisional outturn is an adverse net variance of £0.693m. Pressures totalling £1.718m are as a result of Covid-19 which is partially offset by net savings of £1.025m.

4.7 The Covid related impact on services of £1.718m is detailed as follows:

- £0.804m non-delivery of savings;
- £0.260m support for day care providers;
- £0.154m support for residential/nursing providers;
- £0.500m shortfall in service user contributions.

4.8 There are additional underlying non-Covid related pressures on placement budgets of £1.101m.

4.9 These pressures are partially offset by the following savings:

- £0.224m voluntary sector funding;
- £0.121m carers;
- £0.064m service development;
- £0.062m compass recovery college;
- £0.332m recovery of costs of Community Equipment Service from hospital discharge scheme;
- £0.132m in-house services (Respite, Charles Clore Court and The Willows).

4.10 These pressures are further offset by the write back of the £0.951m Sleep In provision that is no longer required following the Supreme Court judgement and full release of the £0.240m Advice & Wellbeing Hub earmarked reserve.

- 4.11 The required roll-forward of £0.453m of Better Care Funding is included within the above position.

Public Health - balanced budget

- 4.12 Public Health is reporting a balanced position which includes the required rolled forward of unspent Public Health Grant of £0.448m. The service had also rolled forward £3.738m of Track & Trace and Contain Outbreak Management Fund grants and £0.609m Rough Sleeping Drug & Alcohol Treatment Grant from Central Government.

Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

- 4.13 Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services' provisional outturn position is an adverse net variance of £9.470m, including £11.665m of Covid-19 Pressures. If Covid-19 pressures are excluded, then the directorate delivered a net saving of £2.195m.

Transportation - £8.009m adverse variance

- 4.14 Transportation is reporting an adverse variance of £8.009m.
- 4.15 £6.824m of this variance relates to the impact of Covid-19 impact on income generated from Car Parking On-Street and Off-Street as well as Civil Enforcement Services. These income streams had started to gradually recover towards the end of Quarter 2 but fell again in Quarters 3 and 4 although not to the extent seen in the 1st Quarter of the year.
- 4.16 There was another £0.861m pressure resulting from the write-off of bad debt during the course of the year. The remaining £0.324m pressure was linked to payments to Bus Service Operators during the course of the year, where the Council received a smaller amount of revenue but still had to keep making payments to operators at a certain level.

Planning & Regulatory Services - £0.153m adverse variance

- 4.17 Planning & Regulatory Services ended the year with a £0.153m adverse variance.
- 4.18 The variance for the year was made up of positive variances on expenditure of £0.874m on salaries, £0.028m on recharges and £0.089m 3rd party contracts offset by pressures of £0.082m on supplies and services and £0.011m of other minor variances. There were also income shortfalls of £0.627m across building control, license fees, planning applications and planning fees and charges as a result of Covid-19, as well as £0.446m of non-delivered savings relating to the service's various income generation proposals not related to Covid-19.

Housing & Neighbourhood Services (General Fund) - £0.783m adverse variance

- 4.19 Housing & Neighbourhood Services is reporting a £0.783m adverse variance for the year. As previously reported, this position is due to increased demand on bed and breakfast accommodation, including hotel beds, given the need to accommodate homeless individuals during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cultural Services - £2.386m adverse variance

- 4.20 Cultural Services is reporting an overall adverse variance of £2.386m for the year.
- 4.21 The service had an adverse variance of £3.091m on income foregone and expenditure incurred as a result of Covid-19, partially offset by an in-year saving of £0.537m due to

the delay in the new Leisure contract with GLL. There are additional non-Covid related net savings totalling £0.168m across the service. The Covid-19 related pressures were:

- A £1.050m income shortfall across the theatres and Town Hall, as no shows were possible. This position included a successful grant bid of £0.989m from the Arts Council in respect of the Cultural Recovery Fund. This funding covered pressures incurred at the Hexagon, South Street and the Museum until the end of March 2021, including staffing, utilities and Covid-19 adaptations;
- Play Services operated limited services supporting only SEN and key worker children leading to an income shortfall of £0.260m;
- Leisure Centres opened from the 2nd of December and then closed again, reducing the level of income achievable. An income shortfall of £1.180m occurred, plus additional expenditure of £0.298m for Covid Relief Payments to the leisure centre operator, and the positive impact of the grant from the national leisure recovery fund. The forecast for leisure centres did not change materially from Period 8, when the assumptions underpinning the forecast for leisure centres were based on a worst-case scenario of closures extending to the end of the financial year;
- A £0.203m shortfall due to the Reading Festival being cancelled;
- An income shortfall of £0.100 in Library Services, the improvement being due to additional rental income being better than previous assumptions about lock down had suggested.

Environmental & Commercial Services - £0.345m positive variance

- 4.22 Environmental & Commercial Services is reporting a positive net variance of £0.345m. The variance for the year was due to several factors including the spend on Household Waste, which did not meet the level budgeted, contributing £0.500m to the net position. There was a further benefit from a year end PFI adjustment, adding an extra £0.800m. Netting off against this was a £0.490m pressure in Waste Services as a result of an unachieved saving linked to additional revenue generated by the new Food Waste Team, which came in right at the end of the year, giving no time at all for the full year savings to be achieved.
- 4.23 Other non-Covid related pressures for the year on this service include a £0.111m pressure on inspection service income. The service also experienced income shortfalls of £0.340m as a direct result of Covid-19, made up of pressures across the Parks Service, Street Cleansing as well as Food and Green Waste. There were other net pressures of £0.014m across the service.

Regeneration & Assets - £1.488m positive variance

- 4.24 Regeneration & Assets is reporting a positive net variance of £1.488m.
- 4.25 There were favourable variances of £1.323m on income for sundry properties partly offset by £0.270m of additional premises and third-party contract costs. Garages had a favourable income variance of £0.080m, and favourable expenditure variances totalling £0.457m for supplies and services, and interest and MRP charges which had been budgeted for but where no costs arose in practice. Printing ended the year £0.197m adverse as there were fixed costs that could not be recharged out because usage was so low.

- 4.26 The service delivered a £0.150m positive variance in respect of payroll costs for buildings services due to vacancies. Recharges to housing projects were £0.346m adverse, and corporate maintenance was £0.129m favourable.
- 4.27 Taking office and community buildings lettings together these cost centres ended the year on budget.
- 4.28 There were favourable variances in building cleaning £0.029m, valuers £0.061m, the Acre Business Park £0.040m and other small positive variances totalling £0.032m.

DEGNS Overhead Account - £0.028m positive variance

- 4.29 There is a small overall positive net variance of £0.028m across all budgets in this area with no significant individual variances to report.

Resources

- 4.30 The Directorate of Resources' provisional outturn position is a positive net variance of £0.590m, including Covid-19 pressures of £1.132m. If Covid-19 pressures are excluded, then the directorate delivered a net saving of £1.722m.

Customer & Corporate Improvement - £0.301m positive variance

- 4.31 Customer & Corporate Improvement is reporting a positive variance of £0.301m. This is due to a £0.382m overachievement of income within the Registration & Bereavement Service offset by minor adverse net variances across the service which total £0.081m.

Human Resources and Organisational Development - £0.079m adverse variance

- 4.32 Human Resources & Organisational Development is reporting an adverse variance of £0.079m. There has been a shortfall on Kennet Day Nursery fees & charges income of £0.193m resulting directly from Covid-19, which is partially offset by £0.019m of additional early years funding; £0.092m of Contain Outbreak Management funding and other minor positive net variances of £0.003m.

Audit & Insurance - £0.079m positive variance

- 4.33 Audit and Insurance is reporting a 0.079m positive variance. This variance is due to a vacancy within the Corporate Investigations Team and other minor net variances.

Procurement & Contracts - £0.244m adverse variance

- 4.34 The adverse variance of £0.244m within Procurement Services is a direct result of setting up the One Reading Community Hub in response to Covid-19.

Financial Services - £0.064m adverse variance

- 4.35 Financial Services is reporting an adverse variance of £0.064m.
- 4.36 The majority of this variance is due to additional net pressures within Accountancy of £0.061m arising from a combination of recruitment and consultancy costs.
- 4.37 The remaining £0.003m adverse variance relates to the Revenues and Benefits Service. During the year there has been a reduction in income from court costs of £0.636m as a result of courts being closed due to Covid-19. This pressure has been offset by additional

government grants of £0.633m awarded to manage grants to businesses and residents in relation to Covid-19.

Legal & Democratic Services - £0.284m positive variance

- 4.38 Legal & Democratic Services are reporting a positive variance of £0.284m. This consists of £0.024m of pressures within Corporate Legal due to a decline in demand for Land Charge services and £0.035m from an anticipated shortfall of income from sales of properties and CIL/S106, all as a direct result of Covid-19. These pressures are offset by a £0.057m underspend on staffing budgets across the service, a positive variance of £0.160m in Electoral Services due to there being no local elections held in 2020/21 and a £0.126m surplus within the Joint Legal Team.
- 4.39 The service has requested that the positive variance delivered by the Joint Legal Team (JLT) of £0.126m is rolled-forward into 2021/22 to fund JLT specific invest to save projects. This request is not included in the outturn position and is requested to be funded from the overall position.

IT & Digital - £0.313m positive variance

- 4.40 IT & Digital is reporting a positive variance of £0.313m. Whilst there has continued to be upward pressures within IT & Digital, as previously reported, these have been more than offset through the realisation of savings from the move to new mobile telephony contracts and by the fact that some licence expenditure to which we have committed falls into 2021/22.
- 4.41 The service has requested that the total variance of £0.313m is rolled-forward into 2021/22 to enable projects to go ahead as planned. This request is not included in the outturn position and is requested to be funded from the overall position.

Chief Executive

- 4.42 The Chief Executive's provisional outturn position is a positive variance of £0.027m. Pressures totalling £0.090m are as a result of Covid-19 which is partially offset by positive net variances of £0.117m.

Chief Executive - £0.032m adverse variance

- 4.43 The Chief Executive's budget is reporting an adverse variance of £0.032m due to Covid-19 pressures of £0.059m relating to the Temporary Place of Rest at Wexham Park offset by £0.027m of positive net variances across the service.

Communications - £0.059m positive variance

- 4.44 Communications is reporting a positive variance of £0.059m. Covid-19 related income pressures of £0.031m have been offset by compensating positive variances on expenditure budgets of £0.090m.

Children's Services retained by the Council

- 4.45 Children's Services retained by the Council's provisional outturn position is a balanced budget.

Children's Services delivered by BFfC

- 4.46 Brighter Futures for Children's (BFfC) provisional outturn position is an adverse net variance of £1.643m. These pressures entirely relate to additional cost and income pressures arising as a result of Covid-19. The Council has funded these additional pressures from the Covid-19 grant money received from Central Government during the year.
- 4.47 Excluding the additional Covid-19 pressures, BFfC delivered all services within the 2020/21 contract sum.

Corporate Budgets

- 4.48 Corporate Budgets are reporting a provisional positive net variance of £23.951m.
- 4.49 This variance is primarily due to £20.416m of additional funding received in year from Central Government in respect of Covid-19, specifically £13.269m of general emergency support grant; £5.842m of compensation funding in respect of lost income from sales, fees and charges; and £1.305m of furlough grant.
- 4.50 Additionally, the Contingency budget of £3.522m to mitigate against non-delivered in-year savings has not been allocated out to services and has been retained corporately and therefore contributes a further positive variance.
- 4.51 A further positive net variance has arisen due to £2.931m of other corporate contingencies not being required to be used.
- 4.52 These positive variances are partially offset by a pressure of £2.340m relating to the profiling of the budget between years in respect of the net capital financing costs and associated savings in relation to the purchase of commercial properties in 2020/21 as has been previously reported. This budget has been re-aligned as part of 2021/22 budget setting and the budget in respect of further purchases of commercial properties was removed from the Capital Programme per the Quarter 3 Performance & Monitoring Report to Policy Committee in December 2020.
- 4.53 There are two corporate savings, totalling £0.200m, which were not delivered in 2020/21 which were identified and removed going forwards as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process. There are also other small adverse variances within the corporate budgets that net to a further £0.378m pressure.

5. REQUESTED ROLL FORWARDS

- 5.1 It is recommended that the following roll-forward requests as set out in paragraphs 4.39 and 4.41 above, totalling £0.439m, are agreed in order to enable planned programmes of work to go ahead as planned:
- £0.126m to a new Joint Legal Team Reserve;
 - £0.313m to the existing IT & Digital Reserve.

6. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)

- 6.1 The provisional outturn for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a positive net variance compared to budget of £9.138m which results in a return to the HRA reserve of £9.306m.
- 6.2 The outturn position was due to:

- Positive variances within Housing Management and Special Services of £1.435m and £0.237m respectively due to staff vacancies and reduced support services costs;
- A positive variance within Revenue Repairs of £1.098m mainly due to difficulties in gaining access to carry out repairs arising from lockdown. There was also a lower spend on minor voids work than anticipated after a revision of spend apportionment between revenue and capital work;
- A positive variance relating to PFI costs of £0.902m;
- A positive variance on the Bad Debt Provision of £0.727m which reflects a good performance on rent collection this year;
- A positive variance on Depreciation of £0.866m which reflected the latest HRA stock value which was lower than expected;
- A positive variance on Interest charges on borrowing ('debt costs') which were £2.355m lower compared with the budget;
- A positive variance on Interest receivable on balances of £1.249m against budget due to an increase in the average interest rate from 1.66% to 2.46% and an increase in the balances on which the interest is calculated;
- The Rent Collection rate was 97.61% for 2020/21, which is above the budgeted level of 97.40% which contributed towards an overall rent collection of £0.392m above the budgeted level;
- Other variances against budget accounted for net pressures of £0.123m across other income sources.

7. GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 7.1 The provisional General Fund Capital outturn is a £29.142m positive net variance against the revised budget of £67.812m. A revised budget of £64.938m was agreed as part of the budget setting process in February 2021 and this has since been increased by a further £2.874m due to additional capital grant funding having been received. A net £29.471m of budget is requested to be slipped between 2020/21 and 2021/22 per Appendix 4.
- 7.2 Key variances per Directorate are set out below.
- 7.3 Corporate Schemes includes the Delivery Fund which is funded from the flexible use of capital receipts. The Delivery Fund is reporting a positive net variance of £0.800m which is requested to be rolled forward to 2021/22.
- 7.4 Adult Social Care & Health Services has a positive net variance of £0.993m across four schemes., which is requested to be rolled forward to 2021/22
- 7.5 Education schemes are reporting a positive net variance of £2.188m, of which £2.007m was to be grant funded. This grant funding can be carried forward to spend in 2021/22.
- 7.6 Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services is reporting a positive net variance of £22.617m with a requested roll-forward of £22.640m. The key variances are highlighted below:

- £6.028m slippage on the Green Park station scheme which is wholly grant or contribution funded. Due to the complexity and constraints associated with the building of a new railway station on an active line, accompanied with measures taken to maintain health and safety during the Covid pandemic and the impact the pandemic and Brexit has had on the supply chain, the project has experienced construction delays, resulting in programme slippage;
- £3.477m slippage on the South Reading Mass Rapid Transit Phase 3 and 4 scheme which is wholly grant or contribution funded. Shortly following the award of contract in 2020, the national lockdown commenced and had a significant impact on the principal contractor's ability to commence works. However, progress has been made throughout 2020/21 and completion is due during 2021/22;
- £1.454m slippage on the Reading West Station upgrade scheme which is wholly grant or contribution funded. Design work was ongoing during the Covid pandemic, which in combination with working with third party stakeholders had an impact on the overall programme, with planning consent not granted until January 2021. Works are currently ongoing to delivery highway works in 2021/22, whilst some of the rail associated works, being undertaken by Great Western Railway will not be complete until Summer 2022;
- £1.603m slippage on the Accommodation Review Phase 2C scheme. This is a multi-stage project with significant uncertainty about the correct level of contingency. There was also a delay in project spend as the main staff move changed from April 2020 to August 2020 and the Records and Museum move was delayed from May 2020 to May 2021. This has pushed some expenditure on the later parts of the project into 2021/22, for the Bennet depot safety works and Records and Museum move costs. Of the 2020/21 positive net variance, £0.800m was due to lower costs in the Museum Artefacts and Records move. The costs of this element of the project were difficult to accurately estimate due to the unique nature of moving museum artefacts and became apparent only near the end of 2020/21. In the event contingencies were generally not required for areas of risk such as asbestos work. The build went well, and the delamination of screed problem did not generate extra expenditure. There are uncertainties about costs in the remaining parts of the project to be completed in 2021/22, particularly for the remaining depot safety works and associated effects of the electric vehicle charging project.

7.7 Resources is reporting a positive net variance of £2.850m which is requested to be rolled forward to 2021/22. This primarily relates to the positive variance of £1.721m on the IT Future Operating Model scheme. The shift of spend on this scheme from 2020/21 to 2021/22 reflects the fact that some work that was to be delivered by Northgate has been moved to Agilisys to avoid conflict with transition, and that the Managed Network procurement has identified the need to upgrade some infrastructure elements after the transition. The cost of these latter changes has been offset by savings in transition costs elsewhere.

8. HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME

8.1 The provisional HRA Capital outturn is a £4.305m positive net variance against the budget of £20.457m. A net £4.419m of budget is requested to be slipped between 2020/21 and 2021/22 per Appendix 4

8.2 Variances per scheme are set out in Appendix 4. The overall variance is primarily due to further slippage across the following schemes; £0.976m Major Repairs and £2.864m New Build & Acquisition Phases 1-4 resulting from Covid-19 implications.

8.3 Council approved a budget of £1.400m in 2023/24 in respect of the New Build & Acquisitions - Phase 4 capital scheme. This report is requesting that Policy Committee approve that this budget is brought forward from 2023/24 into 2021/22 to facilitate this scheme to commence earlier than previously anticipated.

9. SAVINGS DELIVERY

9.1 The Council had a challenging savings target for 2020/21 of £15.344m to meet current and expected funding pressures. This total was made up of £12.805m of in-year savings as per the 2020/21 MTFs and £2.539m of savings rolled forward from 2019/20.

9.2 A total of £7.579m of savings were delivered in 2020/21. £2.640m of savings were removed as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process on the basis that they were no longer deemed deliverable and therefore the residual £5.125m will be carried forward for delivery in 2021/22. Further details regarding the delivery of savings is set out in Appendix 5.

9.3 Despite £7.765m of savings not being delivered in 2020/21 directly as planned, the Council is reporting a positive net position against the net budget, as set out in Table 2 above, even after excluding the additional Covid grant funding received in year. These savings targets have therefore effectively been mitigated against in-year.

9.4 The following table summarises the final savings delivery for 2020/21:

Table 3. General Funds Savings Tracker Summary

Directorate	Savings Target 2020/21	Savings Delivered 2020/21	Non-Delivered Savings 2020/21	Savings Removed at 2021/22 Budget Setting	Savings Carried Forward to 2021/22
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adult Care & Health Services	(3.100)	(2.051)	(1.049)	0.000	(1.049)
Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services	(7.219)	(0.871)	(6.348)	2.440	(3.908)
Resources	(0.642)	(0.474)	(0.168)	0.000	(0.168)
Chief Executive	(0.005)	(0.005)	0.000	0.000	0.000
Corporate	(0.250)	(0.050)	(0.200)	0.200	0.000
Total Council Services	(11.216)	(3.451)	(7.765)	2.640	(5.125)
Children's Services (BFfC)	(4.128)	(4.128)	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total	(15.344)	(7.579)	(7.765)	2.640	(5.125)

9.5 The successful delivery of agreed savings remains critical to achieving the underlying balanced base budget position agreed as part of the MTFs. Accordingly, all savings have been rigorously monitored throughout 2020/21 and mitigations sought so far as possible for any identified delay in implementation or delivery.

9.6 The following table shows the revised savings required over the period 2021/22-2023/24, including the £5.125m of savings brought forward from 2020/21:

Table 4. Savings Targets 2021/22-2023/24

Directorate	Savings Target 2021/22	Savings Target 2022/23	Savings Target 2023/24	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adult Care & Health Services	(5.537)	(3.059)	(1.503)	(10.099)
Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services	(7.623)	(4.701)	(1.293)	(13.617)
Resources	(1.065)	(0.756)	(0.614)	(2.435)
Chief Executive	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Corporate	(0.865)	0.000	0.000	(0.865)
Total Council Services	(15.090)	(8.516)	(3.410)	(27.016)
Children's Services (BFfC)	(5.118)	(0.500)	(0.500)	(6.118)
Total	(20.208)	(9.016)	(3.910)	(33.134)

10. DELIVERY FUND

- 10.1 Costs of service transformation and the delivery of future ongoing savings are able to be charged to capital (and financed from new capital receipts) due to the introduction of the Flexible Capital Receipts Regulations. These regulations were due to end as at 31st March 2022, however the Chancellor announced in March 2021 as part of the Budget, a further three-year extension to 31st March 2025.
- 10.2 £3.256m was spent in delivering 2020/21 savings. Including previous years, a total of £10.825m has been invested from the Delivery Fund to assist in delivering identified savings proposals as at 31st March 2021.
- 10.3 Further details on the Delivery Fund are set out in Appendix 6.

11. RESERVES

- 11.1 The impact of the 2020/21 outturn position on the Council's reserves, as proposed in Appendix 7 is set out in the following table:

Table 5. Reserves Summary

	Balance as at 1 April 2020	In-Year Transfers (To)/From Reserves	Proposed Transfers (To)/From Reserves per Outturn	Balance as at 31 March 2021	Projected Balance at 31 March 2021 per 2021/22 Budget Setting	Movement
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
General Fund Reserves						
Minimum Balance	(7.500)	0.000	0.000	(7.500)	(7.500)	0.000
Earmarked Reserves	(48.212)	(33.043)	(12.762)	(94.017)	(72.954)	(21.063)
Total General Fund Reserves	(55.712)	(33.043)	(12.762)	(101.517)	(80.454)	(21.063)
Schools Reserves	(0.909)	0.090	0.000	(0.819)	(0.509)	(0.310)
Housing Revenue Account Reserves	(46.758)	(9.089)	0.000	(55.847)	(49.829)	(6.018)
Total Revenue Reserves	(103.379)	(42.042)	(12.762)	(158.183)	(130.792)	(27.391)

- 11.3 The General Fund Reserve balance of £7.500m is in line with the recommendation made in the Chief Finance Officer's Report on the Robustness of the Council's 2021/22 budget that the level of working balance for the General Fund should be in the region of £7.500 million or 5% of net revenue expenditure.
- 11.4 Net transfers totalling £33.043m to earmarked reserves have been processed during 2020/21 to date. This includes previously approved transfers as well as those transfers that are a requirement such as required roll forwards of government grants.
- 11.5 It is proposed that the General Fund positive net variance of £12.762m is transferred to earmarked reserves as set out in Appendix 7 (which includes service roll-forward requests of £0.439m. The total earmarked reserve balance at 31st March 2021 would therefore be £94.017m which is £21.063m higher in total than the estimated £72.954m projected at 2021/22 budget setting due to the higher than previously forecast position on the General Fund and an increased level of grants carried forward. The proposals set out in this report would reimburse £8.355m of the £9.906m that was transferred from reserves in 2020/21 and used to reduce the ongoing Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charges to the revenue budget and set aside £3.968m to mitigate against the ongoing financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 11.6 Schools reserves are ringfenced for local authority managed schools. There is a net transfer from reserves of £0.090m resulting in a balance of £0.819m as at 31st March 2021.

11.7 The £9.306m surplus on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is ringfenced and must be transferred to the HRA reserve. The HRA reserve balance as at 31st March 2021 is therefore £46.154m. The North Whitley PFI reserve balance of £9.693m is also contained within the overall HRA reserves, therefore total HRA reserves as at 31st March 2021 are £55.847m.

12. IMPACT ON 2021/22 BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

12.1 The provisional outturn figures, as set out above, will have the following impact in 2021/22 and future years:

- overall General Fund Reserve balances of £80.454m was assumed as part of 2021/22 budget setting. Based on the provisional outturn there is therefore an overall net improvement of £21.063m;
- £5.125m of non-delivered 2020/21 savings have been rolled forward into 2021/22. These savings were assumed as delivered in the 2021/22 base budget setting and require delivering.

B. CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE

13. CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE

13.1 Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and associated work pressures placed on senior officers, it was agreed that the 2019/20 Corporate Plan measures and targets would roll forward into 2020/21.

13.2 A new one-year Corporate Plan for 2021/22 was published in March, and a revised set of performance measures have been developed for monitoring from April 2021.

13.3 We are using the council's performance management software system (InPhase <https://reading.inphase.com/login>) as the source for recording and monitoring progress against our performance objectives. The data for Corporate Plan performance reporting is taken from the system and the full set of quarterly data is attached at Appendix 8. Accessing the system online allows for further analysis and interaction with the data and a richer experience than when information is extracted and presented in a document format.

Key areas where we are performing well and areas for improvement as at the end of quarter four 2020/21

13.4 The table below provides a summary of the areas where the Council is performing well and the areas for improvement which show significant variance. A selection of these measures are displayed as charts from InPhase in Appendix 8.

Table 6. Performance Summary

Measure	2019/20 Outturn	2020/21 Outturn	2020/21 Target	Performance against target
Ensuring access to decent housing to meet local needs				
Performing Well				
Numbers of families in	0	0	0	

bed & breakfast accommodation (shared facilities) - snapshot				
Licensed HMOs	55%	40%	35%	
Preventing and relieving homelessness	60	65	37	
Protecting & enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children				
Performing Well				
Decrease the permanent new admissions to Residential or Nursing care per 100,000 population for people 18-64	2.77	0.94	1.08	<p>The situation has impacted on younger people accessing the service in crisis during COVID.</p> <p>This number continues to be stable, even though the target is ambitious which evidences the consistent approach across the service.</p> <p>The Review team will focus on alternatives to Residential and Nursing care using a strength-based approach, TECH and community services.</p>
Areas for Improvement				
Direct Payments	19.68	21.75	25.00	<p>Direct Payments continue to increase, although this is still below the target set. Targets for the rest of the financial year for each team to improve the number further.</p> <p>Work is underway to look at increases in the transfer from Reablement to support the transition to direct payments.</p>
Promoting Health, Education, Culture & Wellbeing				
Significant Covid Impact				
Increased participation at Council Cultural Venues (Town Hall & Museum, Hexagon,	340,394	20,161	355,000	Limited opportunity for attendance due to covid lockdown

South Street)				
Areas for Improvement				
Levels of physical activity	68.0%	61.7%	66.5%	
Ensuring the Council is fit for the future				
Performing Well				
Take up of online services - people signed up for an online account	95,338	122,653	86,488	
Customer satisfaction with front of house	86%	91%	86%	
Areas for Improvement				
Council agency spend	£4,928,740	£4,048,365	£3,900,000	RBC spend came in at £4m, reduced from £4.9m the previous year, the lowest it's been since 2014/15. A late year increase in spending, largely associated to Covid response, has meant that the target hasn't quite been met.

14. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 14.1 The Council's Corporate Plan (2018-2021) priorities take account of our need to ensure that we are financially sustainable so that we can continue to shape and influence the future of Reading and play our part in protecting the most vulnerable and shaping the Town's future by:
- Securing the economic success of Reading;
 - Improving access to decent housing to meet local needs;
 - Protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children;
 - Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe;
 - Promoting great education, leisure and cultural opportunities for people in Reading; and
 - Ensuring the Council is fit for the future.
- 14.2 The Council's new corporate plan 'Investing in Reading's Future: Reading Borough Council Corporate Plan 2021-22' was approved by Council on 23rd March 2021.

15. ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019. The Corporate Plan monitors our progress in reducing our carbon footprint (Appendix 8). There

are no specific environmental and climate implications to report in relation to the recommendations set out in this report.

16. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

16.1 Budget-related communications and consultations will continue to be a priority over the next three years as we work to identify savings.

17. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

17.1 The equality duty is relevant to the development of the Budget and Corporate Plan. The specific savings and income proposals included in the budget are subject to consultation and equality impact assessments where required and these are being progressed as appropriate.

18. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

18.1 The financial implications are set out in the body of this report.

19. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

19.1 The Local Government Act 2003 requires that the Authority reviews its Budget throughout the year and takes any action it deems necessary to deal with the situation arising from monitoring. Currently monitoring reports are submitted to Policy Committee quarterly throughout the year and therefore comply with this requirement.

19.2 There are no legal requirements to have a Corporate Plan. Nevertheless, considering the size and complexity of the services we provide and have responsibility for, it is sensible to have a strategic document for the organisation which sets out key priorities and activities against a robust and sustainable financial strategy.

20. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Shaping Reading's Future - Our Corporate Plan 2018-21
- 2020/21 Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2020/21-2022/23 Report - Full Council - February 2020
- Quarter 3 Performance and Monitoring Report 2020/21 - Policy Committee, March 2021
- 2021/22 Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2021/22-2023/24 Report - Full Council - February 2021

Appendix 1 - General Fund Outturn 2020/21

	Budget £000	Outturn £000	Variance £000
<u>Service Areas</u>			
Commissioning & Performance	846	854	8
Adults Services Operations	35,838	37,184	1,346
Directorate & Other	1,151	1,236	85
Public Health	(300)	(300)	0
Preventative Services	738	(8)	(746)
Adult Care and Health Services	38,273	38,966	693
Transportation	(168)	7,841	8,009
Planning & Regulatory Services	2,148	2,301	153
Housing & Neighbourhood Services	1,333	2,116	783
Cultural Services	4,102	6,488	2,386
Environmental & Commercial Services	14,408	14,063	(345)
Regeneration & Assets	(3,113)	(4,601)	(1,488)
DEGNS Overhead Account	860	832	(28)
Environment and Neighbourhood Services	19,570	29,040	9,470
Customer & Corporate Improvement	1,703	1,402	(301)
Human Resources & Organisational Development	1,978	2,057	79
Audit & Insurance	1,622	1,543	(79)
Procurement	490	734	244
Financial Services	2,870	2,934	64
Legal & Democratic Services	2,360	2,076	(284)
IT & Digital Transformation	4,450	4,137	(313)
Resources	15,473	14,883	(590)
Chief Executive	828	860	32
Communications	683	624	(59)
Chief Executive	1,511	1,484	(27)
Children's Services retained by Council	710	710	0
Children's Services delivered by BFfc	48,421	50,064	1,643
	123,958	135,147	11,189
<u>Corporate Items</u>			
Capital Financing Costs	12,391	12,363	(28)
Contingency	3,522	0	(3,522)
Other Corporate Budgets	11,049	11,064	15
Other Corporate Budgets (Covid Funding)	0	(20,416)	(20,416)
	26,962	3,011	(23,951)
<u>Total Expenditure</u>	150,920	138,158	(12,762)
<u>Funded by</u>			
Council Tax Income	(96,014)	(96,014)	0
NNDR Local Share	(34,357)	(34,357)	0
New Homes Bonus	(3,988)	(3,988)	0
Section 31 Grant	(3,994)	(3,994)	0
Revenue Support Grant	(2,030)	(2,030)	0
One-off Collection Fund Surplus	(10,537)	(10,537)	0
	(150,920)	(150,920)	0

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Appendix 2 - Covid-19 Grants

Business Support Grants

The following grants were paid to the Council by Central Government to pass on to eligible businesses. The Council has no discretion over the award of these grants and any balances must be reimbursed to/from Central Government once each scheme closes. Therefore any variance as at 31st March 2021 must be carried forward as an amount owing to or owed by Central Government. The reported provisional outturn position in the main body of the report has been adjusted to reflect this position.

Type	Grant	Purpose	Ringfenced	Allocation (£m)	Spend/Utilised (£m)	Repaid to Central Government (£m)	Variance (£m)
Support for Businesses	Small Business Grant Fund/Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund	In response to the Coronavirus, COVID-19, the government announced there would be support for small businesses, and businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.	Yes	(28.395)	27.009	1.211	(0.175)
Support for Businesses	Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Addendum	A single grant to cover the period of 04/11/20 - 02/12/20 to be paid to each eligible business.	Yes	(3.292)	1.735	0.000	(1.557)
Support for Businesses	Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Addendum	A single grant to cover the period of 05/01/21 - 15/02/21 to be paid to each eligible business.	Yes	(4.937)	2.624	0.000	(2.313)
Support for Businesses	Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Addendum	A single grant to cover the period of 16/02/21 - 31/03/21 to be paid to each eligible business.	Yes	(5.173)	2.697	0.000	(2.476)
Support for Businesses	Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed)	A grant for businesses that are required to close under Tier 2, Tier 3 or Tier 4 restrictions for the period 02/11/2020 - 05/01/2021.	Yes	(2.029)	1.100	0.000	(0.929)
Support for Businesses	Local Restrictions Support Grant (Sector)	A grant to support businesses that must close from 05/01/2021 due to the introduction of national restrictions.	Yes	(9.873)	5.251	0.000	(4.622)
Support for Businesses	Christmas Support Payment for wet-led pubs	Grant of £1000 for wet led pubs Xmas Payment	Yes	(0.064)	0.069	0.000	0.005
				(53.763)	40.485	1.211	(12.067)

Specific Covid Grants

The following grants were paid to the Council by Central Government for specific purposes. Any amounts of grant not spent by 31st March 2021 have been rolled forward to 2021/22 where allowable to facilitate funding of appropriate expenditure in 2021/22. The reported provisional outturn position in the main body of the report has been adjusted to reflect this position.

Type	Grant	Purpose	Ringfenced	Allocation (£m)	Spend/Utilised (£m)	Repaid to Central Government (£m)	Variance (£m)
Support for Businesses	Local Authority Discretionary Fund	This grant scheme widens access to support to businesses who are struggling to survive due to the Corona virus shutdown but are unable to access other grant funding.	Yes	(1.420)	1.420	0.000	0.000
Support for Businesses	Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open)	A single grant to support businesses deemed to be hospitality, accommodation and leisure that are in a designated Tier 2 area for the period 02/12/2020 - 18/12/2020.	Yes	(0.408)	0.002	0.000	(0.406)
Support for Businesses	Additional Restrictions Support Grant	A grant to support businesses that are not covered by other grant schemes or where additional funding is needed.	Yes	(4.673)	1.175	0.000	(3.498)
Support for Individuals	Council Tax Hardship Fund	To provide council tax relief, alongside existing local council tax support schemes.	Yes	(0.953)	0.905	0.000	(0.048)
Support for Individuals	Local Emergency Assistance Grants for Food and Essential Supplies	The Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies is for local authorities in England to use to support people who are struggling to afford food and other essentials due to COVID-19.	Yes	(0.172)	0.172	0.000	0.000
Support for Individuals	Test & Trace	To provide support to local authorities in England towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred in relation to the mitigation against and management of local outbreaks of COVID-19.	Yes	(0.901)	0.000	0.000	(0.901)
Support for Individuals	Clinically Extremely Vulnerable	To deliver the activities and outcomes outlined in the Shielding Framework.	No	(0.429)	0.067	0.000	(0.362)
Support for Individuals	Covid Winter Grant Scheme	The Winter Grant Scheme will enable LAs to provide support to families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals from early December 2020 and covers the period until the end of March 2021.	Yes	(0.232)	0.582	0.000	0.350
Support for Local Authorities	Test & Trace Support Discretionary Grant	A single grant of £500 to cover the Isolation period of to be paid to each eligible resident. Central Government will fully reimburse LAs if eligible residents exceed allocation.	Yes	(0.295)	0.182	0.000	(0.113)
Support for Local Authorities	Test & Trace Support Discretionary Grant	A single discretionary grant of £500 to cover the Isolation period of to be paid to each eligible resident	Yes	(0.195)	0.007	0.000	(0.188)

Type	Grant	Purpose	Ringfenced	Allocation (£m)	Spend/Utilised (£m)	Repaid to Central Government (£m)	Variance (£m)
Support for Local Authorities	Local Authority Enforcement & Compliance	To provide support to district and unitary authorities including metropolitan borough and London borough councils in England towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by them in relation to COVID-19 related enforcement and compliance activity.	No	(0.087)	0.087	0.000	0.000
Support for Local Authorities	Infection Control Grant Round 1	To support adult social care providers, including those with whom the local authority does not have a contract, to reduce the rate of COVID-19 transmission in and between care homes and support wider workforce resilience.	Yes	(1.169)	1.088	0.048	(0.033)
Support for Local Authorities	Infection Control Grant Round 2	To support adult social care providers, including those with whom the local authority does not have a contract, to reduce the rate of COVID-19 transmission in and between care homes and support wider workforce resilience.	Yes	(1.324)	1.200	0.000	(0.124)
Support for Local Authorities	Adult Social Care Rapid Testing Fund	To support increased lateral flow testing of staff in care homes.	Yes	(0.289)	0.196	0.000	(0.093)
Support for Local Authorities	Workflow Capacity Fund for Adult Social Care	To support local authorities and social care providers to maintain safe staffing levels over the winter period and to continue working with the care sector to ensure there is sufficient workforce capacity across services as part of the adult social care Covid-19 winter plan.	Yes	(0.285)	0.285	0.000	0.000
Support for Local Authorities	Contain Outbreak Management Fund	To support LA's to put additional public health and outbreak response measures in place due to the County going into national restrictions.	No	(3.871)	1.034	0.000	(2.837)
Support for Local Authorities	Community Testing	To support community testing sites to identify asymptomatic Covid-19 cases through lateral flow testing.	Yes	(0.163)	0.163	0.000	0.000
Support for Local Authorities	LA Practical Support Framework Grant	To provide funding to provide practical support for those self-isolating.	Yes	(0.038)	0.038	0.000	0.000
Support for Local Authorities	Next Steps Accommodation Programme	The funding can cover a range of interventions, from moves into the private rented sector, to extending or procuring interim accommodation such as hotels or student accommodation and supporting individuals to reconnect with friends or family	Yes	(0.745)	0.637	0.000	(0.108)
Support for Local Authorities	Cold Weather Fund	To support councils to help to keep rough sleepers safe this winter	Yes	(0.090)	0.090	0.000	0.000
Support for Local Authorities	The Protect Programme	This funding is for the sole purpose of delivering Protect Program funded services for people sleeping rough.	Yes	(0.115)	0.000	0.000	(0.115)

Type	Grant	Purpose	Ringfenced	Allocation (£m)	Spend/Utilised (£m)	Repaid to Central Government (£m)	Variance (£m)
Support for Local Authorities	Re-opening High Streets Safely	To support the safe reopening of high streets and other commercial areas. The money will allow local authorities in England to put in place additional measures to establish a safe trading environment for businesses and customers, particularly in high streets	Yes	(0.145)	0.000	0.000	(0.145)
Support for Local Authorities	Active Travel Fund - Tranche 1	To create safe space for cycling and walking	Yes	(0.044)	0.044	0.000	(0.000)
Support for Local Authorities	Active Travel Fund - Tranche 2	To create safe space for cycling and walking	Yes	(0.236)	0.217	0.000	(0.019)
Support for Local Authorities	Travel Demand Management	To provide support to manage travel demand when schools returned from September 2020 onwards	Yes	(0.175)	0.000	0.000	(0.175)
Support for Local Authorities	Home to School Transport	To add additional home to school transport to enable full return to education from September 2020 onwards	Yes	(0.124)	0.124	0.000	0.000
Support for Local Authorities	Covid Bus Services Support	To maintain contract bus services at pre-COVID levels	Yes	(0.390)	0.274	0.000	(0.116)
Support for Local Authorities	Provisional Rough Sleeping emergency funding	To assist with funding that could be used to provide accommodation and support to people who are at high risk, or had been diagnosed with, Coronavirus.	Yes	(0.021)	0.021	0.000	0.000
Support for Local Authorities	Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage	To safeguard cultural and heritage organisations across the UK from the economic impact of COVID-19	Yes	(0.989)	0.989	0.000	0.000
				(19.978)	10.999	0.048	(8.931)

Business Rate Reliefs

The following grants were paid to the Council by Central Government to fund the additional business rate reliefs introduced in 2020/21 to aid businesses in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the required accounting treatment of Business Rates income as part of the Collection Fund, the financial impact of those reliefs affects 2021/22 rather than the year they were awarded larger than normal deficit balances in which was 2020/21. The grants are therefore required to be carried forward; the Council element via earmarked reserves to fund its share of reliefs, with the Central Government and Fire shares carried forward as a creditor. The reported provisional outturn position in the main body of the report has been adjusted to reflect this position.

Type	Grant	Purpose	Ringfenced	Allocation (£m)	Spend/Utilised (£m)	Repaid to Central Government (£m)	Variance (£m)
Support for Local Authorities	COVID Business Rates Reliefs (billing only) (£m)	Non-domestic rates relief issued as a section 31 grant in response to Covid-19. Due to the complexities of the accounting requirements of the Business Rates Collection Fund, this grant funding will be required in 2021/22 and cannot be utilised for other purposes in 2020/21.	No	(59.579)	0.000	0.000	(59.579)
				(59.579)	0.000	0.000	(59.579)

Corporate Grants

These grants have been accounted for corporately. The £4.468m underspend contributes towards the Council's overall underspend position.

Type	Grant	Purpose	Ringfenced	Allocation (£m)	Spend/Utilised (£m)	Repaid to Central Government (£m)	Variance (£m)
Support for Local Authorities	Coronavirus Emergency Funding (4 Tranches)	An unringfenced grant to support Local Authorities to manage against additional financial pressures resulting from the pandemic.	No	(13.269)	8.801	0.000	(4.468)
Support for Local Authorities	Sales, Fees & charges Income Compensation Scheme	Compensation for irrecoverable income losses through sales, fees and charges due to Covid-19.	Yes	(5.842)	5.842		0.000
Support for Local Authorities	Furlough	Compensation in respect of employee costs for those employees that have been furloughed.	Yes	(1.305)	1.305		0.000
				(20.416)	15.948	0.000	(4.468)

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Appendix 3 - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn 2020/21

	Budget	Outturn	Variance
	£000	£000	£000
Housing Management	8,410	6,975	(1,435)
Special Services	2,933	2,696	(237)
Revenue Repairs	5,355	4,257	(1,098)
PFI costs	7,238	6,336	(902)
Bad debt Provision	956	229	(727)
Depreciation	8,317	7,451	(866)
Debt Costs	7,633	5,278	(2,355)
Other Expenditure	77	77	0
Total Expenditure	40,919	33,299	(7,620)
Dwelling Rents	(35,604)	(35,996)	(392)
Service Charges	(1,104)	(999)	105
PFI Credit	(3,997)	(3,998)	(1)
Interest on Balances	(181)	(1,430)	(1,249)
Other Income	(201)	(182)	19
Total Income	(41,087)	(42,605)	(1,518)
Net (Surplus) / Deficit	(168)	(9,306)	(9,138)

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General Fund Capital Programme Outturn 2020/21

Scheme Name	2020/21 Approved Budget	2020/21 Adjustment for further grant funding	2020/21 Revised Budget	2020/21 Provisional Outturn	2020/21 Variance	2020/21 Roll- Forward/ Back Requests	2021/22 Approved Budget	2021/22 Revised Budget
	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)
Delivery Fund (Pump priming for Transformation projects)	4,056		4,056	3,256	(800)	800	1,732	2,532
Loan To RTL (Bus replacement programme)	700		700	700	-	-	5,000	5,000
Oracle Shopping Centre capital works	71		71	376	305	-	100	100
Minster Quarter	-		-	-	-	-	5,000	5,000
Corporate Total	4,827	-	4,827	4,333	(494)	800	11,832	12,632
e-Marketplace & Equipment Renewal Portal Software	170		170	-	(170)	170	-	170
Mobile Working and Smart Device	150		150	-	(150)	150	-	150
Replacement of Community Re-ablement Software	85		85	-	(85)	85	-	85
Co-located profound and multiple learning disabilities day opportunities and respite facility and sheltered housing flats	668		668	80	(588)	588	279	867
DACHS Total	1,073	-	1,073	80	(993)	993	279	1,272
Additional School Places - Contingency	258		258	-	(258)	258	1,170	1,428
SEN Provision - Avenue Centre	120		120	3	(117)	117	1,500	1,617
Asset Management	280		280	-	(280)	280	286	566
Blessed Hugh Faringdon - Asperger Unit 30 place expansion (CEA)	-	2	2	2	0	(0)	-	(0)
Children in care Emergency Provision	35		35	-	(35)	35	-	35
Civitas- Synthetic Sports Pitch	212		212	194	(18)	18	10	28
Contribution to SEN School Wokingham	-		-	-	-	-	-	-
Cranbury College at JMA	-		-	-	-	-	-	-
Crescent Road Playing Field Improvements	2		2	0	(2)	2	314	316
Critical Reactive Contingency: Health and safety (Schools)	727		727	273	(454)	454	500	954
DFC	-	469	469	469	(0)	0	-	0
Fabric Condition Programme	-		-	-	-	-	2,000	2,000
Green Park Primary School	876		876	417	(459)	459	-	459
Heating and Electrical Programme - Manor Pry Power	10		10	8	(2)	2	144	146

General Fund Capital Programme Outturn 2020/21

Scheme Name	2020/21 Approved Budget	2020/21 Adjustment for further grant funding	2020/21 Revised Budget	2020/21 Provisional Outturn	2020/21 Variance	2020/21 Roll- Forward/ Back Requests	2021/22 Approved Budget	2021/22 Revised Budget
	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)
Heating and Electrical Renewal Programme	1,124		1,124	453	(671)	671	1,000	1,671
Initial Viability work for the Free School at Richfield Avenue	80		80	19	(61)	61	80	141
Katesgrove Primary Trooper Potts Building	106		106	87	(19)	19	100	119
Low Carbon Skills Fund - Bid Development	-	27	27	27	(0)	0	-	0
Low Carbon Skills Fund - Schools Estate Project Delivery	-	59	59	59	(0)	0	-	0
Meadway Early Years Building Renovation	238		238	82	(156)	156	600	756
Moorlands Primary School 1FE Expansion	-	8	8	8	0	(0)	-	(0)
Modular Buildings Review	-		-	-	-	-	500	500
New ESFA funded schools - Phoenix College	1,563		1,563	2,372	809	(809)	6,752	5,943
New ESFA funded schools - St Michaels	608		608	334	(274)	274	-	274
Pinecroft-Children who have complex health, physical,sensorv.disabilities & challenging behaviour	150		150	-	(150)	150	-	150
Primary Schools Expansion Programme - 2013-2017	-	184	184	184	0	(0)	-	(0)
Ranikhet School - supersedes Dee Park	100		100	348	248	(248)	4,100	3,852
SCD Units	-		-	-	-	-	473	473
Schools - Fire Risk Assessed remedial Works	402		402	120	(282)	282	200	482
SEN early years at 1 Dunsfold	-		-	-	-	-	600	600
SEN Norcot	-		-	-	-	-	100	100
Thameside SEN Expansion	66		66	56	(10)	10	100	110
The Heights Temporary School	-		-	3	3	(3)	370	367
DEGNS (Education Schemes) Total	6,957	749	7,706	5,518	(2,188)	2,188	20,899	23,087

General Fund Capital Programme Outturn 2020/21

Scheme Name	2020/21 Approved Budget	2020/21 Adjustment for further grant funding	2020/21 Revised Budget	2020/21 Provisional Outturn	2020/21 Variance	2020/21 Roll- Forward/ Back Requests	2021/22 Approved Budget	2021/22 Revised Budget
	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)
Abbey Quarter restoration works	348		348	96	(252)	252	99	351
Accommodation Review - Phase 2A & B	33		33	-	(33)	33	100	133
Accommodation Review - Phase 2C (19 Bennet Road)	2,528		2,528	925	(1,603)	1,603	98	1,701
Active Travel Tranche 2	-		-	44	44	(44)	1,179	1,135
Additional Storage Capacity at Mortuary	15		15	-	(15)	15	-	15
Air Quality Monitoring	18		18	17	(1)	1	15	16
BFFC Accommodation Review	-		-	-	-	-	150	150
Annual Bridges and Carriage Way Works programme & Highway Infrastructure Works	3,733		3,733	3,471	(262)	262	5,592	5,854
Essential Bridge Works	200		200	-	(200)	200	-	200
Car Park Investment Programme (inc P&D, Red Routes & Equipment)	626		626	475	(151)	151	326	477
Cattle Market Car Park	523		523	0	(523)	523	-	523
CCTV	50		50	39	(11)	11	-	11
Central Library - Reconfiguration/Refurbishment Feasibility	50		50	-	(50)	50	920	970
Central Pool Regeneration	587		587	214	(373)	373	-	373
Chestnut Walk Improvements	35		35	0	(35)	35	-	35
Christchurch Meadows Paddling Pool	35		35	-	(35)	35	-	35
CIL Local Funds - Community	52		52	-	(52)	52	-	52
CIL Local Funds - Heritage and Culture	115		115	-	(115)	115	-	115
CIL Local Funds - Leisure and Play	446		446	233	(213)	213	-	213
CIL Local Funds - Transport	435		435	208	(227)	227	-	227
CIL Local Funds -Neighbourhood Allocation	477		477	-	(477)	477	-	477
Corporate Office Essential Works	50		50	-	(50)	50	300	350
Defra Air Quality Grant - Bus Retrofit	238		238	-	(238)	238	150	388
Defra Air Quality Grant - Go Electric Reading	35		35	22	(13)	13	17	30

General Fund Capital Programme Outturn 2020/21

Scheme Name	2020/21 Approved Budget	2020/21 Adjustment for further grant funding	2020/21 Revised Budget	2020/21 Provisional Outturn	2020/21 Variance	2020/21 Roll- Forward/ Back Requests	2021/22 Approved Budget	2021/22 Revised Budget
	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)
Transport Demand Management Scheme - Feasibility Work	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	50
Development of facilities at Prospect Park/Play	550	-	550	4	(546)	546	-	546
Digitised TRO's	-	-	-	-	-	-	300	300
Disabled Facilities Grants (Private Sector)	1,055	-	1,055	825	(230)	230	1,055	1,285
Eastern Area Access Works	200	-	200	141	(59)	59	140	199
Electric Vehicle Charging Points	200	-	200	-	(200)	200	50	250
Purchase of food waste and smaller residual waste bins	1,300	-	1,300	1,123	(177)	177	189	366
Foster Carer Extensions	70	-	70	-	(70)	70	130	200
Green Homes Scheme - GF element	-	-	-	-	-	-	495	495
Construction of Green Park Station	12,282	-	12,282	6,254	(6,028)	6,028	2,169	8,197
Grounds Maintenance Workshop Equipment	26	-	26	23	(3)	3	-	3
Invest in Corporate buildings/Health & safety works	1,092	-	1,092	907	(185)	185	1,000	1,185
Invest to save energy savings - Street lighting	700	-	700	176	(524)	524	847	1,371
Maintenance & Enhancement of Council Properties	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leisure Centre Procurement	950	-	950	688	(262)	262	21,277	21,539
Local Traffic Management and Road Safety Schemes	375	-	375	68	(308)	308	150	458
Local Transport Plan Development	399	-	399	3	(396)	396	400	796
National Cycle Network Route 422	219	-	219	62	(157)	157	-	157
New Kit/Vehicles for Commercial Services Dvlpt	122	-	122	25	(97)	97	-	97
New Vehicle for Highways & Drainage Commercial Service	-	-	-	-	-	-	71	71
Oxford Rd Community Centre	-	-	-	-	-	-	147	147
Oxford Road Corridor Works	322	-	322	24	(298)	298	-	298
Playground equipment and Refreshment: Boroughwide	337	-	337	112	(225)	225	394	619
Private Sector Renewals	240	-	240	128	(112)	112	300	412
Provision of Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation	-	-	-	44	44	(44)	50	6
Pumping Station Upgrade Scheme (new)	250	-	250	-	(250)	250	-	250

General Fund Capital Programme Outturn 2020/21

Scheme Name	2020/21 Approved Budget	2020/21 Adjustment for further grant funding	2020/21 Revised Budget	2020/21 Provisional Outturn	2020/21 Variance	2020/21 Roll- Forward/ Back Requests	2021/22 Approved Budget	2021/22 Revised Budget
	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)
re3 extending range of recyclables	10		10	(0)	(10)	10	84	94
Reading Football Club Social Inclusion Unit to SRLC	-		-	-	-	-	1,534	1,534
Reading Town Centre Design Framework	43		43	-	(43)	43	43	86
Reading West Station	1,500		1,500	46	(1,454)	1,454	2,039	3,493
Regeneration Projects	-		-	-	-	-	250	250
Renewable Energy	-		-	-	-	-	2,073	2,073
Replacement Vehicles	-		-	378	378	(378)	2,931	2,553
Rogue Landlord Enforcement	75		75	-	(75)	75	-	75
S106 individual schemes list	334		334	-	(334)	334	-	334
Salix Decarbonisation Fund	384		384	-	(384)	384	416	800
Small Leisure Schemes	258		258	59	(199)	199	150	349
Smart City Cluster project	227	274	501	501	0	(0)	-	(0)
C-ITS	-	20	20	20	(0)	0	-	0
Live Labs	-	1,794	1,794	1,794	0	(0)	-	(0)
South Reading MRT (Phases 1 & 2)	362		362	(38)	(400)	400	-	400
South Reading MRT (Phases 3 & 4)	6,954		6,954	3,477	(3,477)	3,477	-	3,477
South Reading MRT (Phases 5 & 6)	250		250	-	(250)	250	1,750	2,000
The Heights Permanent Site Mitigation	1,346		1,346	999	(347)	347	268	615
The Keep building works and improved arts/culture facilities	-		-	-	-	-	-	-
Town Centre Improvements	320		320	-	(320)	320	130	450
Town Centre Street Trading Infrastructure	34		34	6	(28)	28	-	28
Town Hall Equipment	-		-	-	-	-	205	205
Traffic Management Schools	390		390	58	(332)	332	100	432
Tree Planting	30		30	50	20	(20)	50	30
West Reading Transport Study - Southcote/Coley Improvements	-	37	37	37	0	(0)	-	(0)

General Fund Capital Programme Outturn 2020/21

Scheme Name	2020/21 Approved Budget	2020/21 Adjustment for further grant funding	2020/21 Revised Budget	2020/21 Provisional Outturn	2020/21 Variance	2020/21 Roll- Forward/ Back Requests	2021/22 Approved Budget	2021/22 Revised Budget
	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)
Western Area Access Works	128		128	-	(128)	128	-	128
Harden Public Open Spaces to Prevent Incursion	51		51	35	(15)	15	25	40
Salix Re-Circulation Fund	288		288	91	(197)	197	300	497
Sun Street - Final Phase	190		190	114	(76)	76	-	76
Community Hubs	-		-	23	23	-	-	-
Re-wilding highways, parks and open space verges	-		-	-	-	-	76	76
DEGNS Total	44,492	2,125	46,617	24,000	(22,617)	22,640	50,584	73,224
Customer Digital Experience	400		400	19	(381)	381	1,350	1,731
Universal Digital Systems	815		815	221	(594)	594	1,709	2,303
IT Future Operating Model	5,964		5,964	4,243	(1,721)	1,721	666	2,387
Re-Procurement / Reimplementation of Finance System	-		-	-	-	-	600	600
Cemeteries and Crematorium	60		60	9	(51)	51	34	85
Cremator Procurement	-		-	-	-	-	200	200
Cremator	350		350	247	(103)	103	-	103
DoR Total	7,589	-	7,589	4,739	(2,850)	2,850	4,559	7,409
Grand Total	64,938	2,874	67,812	38,670	(29,142)	29,471	88,153	117,624

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme Outturn 2020/21

Scheme Name	2020/21 Approved Budget	2020/21 Adjustment for further grant funding	2020/21 Revised Budget	2020/21 Provisional Outturn	2020/21 Variance	2020/21 Roll- Forward/ Back Requests	2021/22 Approved Budget	2021/22 Revised Budget
	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)	(£,000's)
Major Repairs	9,212		9,212	8,236	(976)	976	9,212	10,188
Hexham Road	1,178		1,178	1,200	22		-	-
Extra care (cedar court) HRA	-		-	86	86		-	-
Disabled Facilities Grants	519		519	507	(12)	12	500	512
Fire Safety Works	1,033		1,033	856	(177)	177	1,033	1,210
Green Homes Project - HRA element	-		-	-	-	-	831	831
New Build & Acquisitions - Phase 1	213		213	3	(211)	211	-	211
New Build & Acquisitions - Phase 2	4,774		4,774	2,837	(1,937)	1,937	10,682	12,619
New Build & Acquisitions - Phase 3	2,776		2,776	2,059	(717)	717	15,200	15,917
New Build & Acquisitions - Phase 4	-		-	-	-	-	-	-
New Build & Acquisitions - (Ex General Fund)	70		70	73	3		-	-
Local authority new build programme for Older people and vulnerable adults	355		355	44	(311)	311	1,940	2,251
Housing Mngt System	327		327	249	(78)	78	277	355
HRA Total	20,457	-	20,457	16,149	(4,308)	4,419	39,675	44,094

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Appendix 5

Service	Saving	Delivered Savings 2020/21 £000	Undelivered Savings 2020/21 £000	Savings Removed at 2021/22 Budget Setting £000	Savings Carried Forward to 2021/22 £000
DACHS	Mitigated - Delivery Models for Commissioning, Prevention & Quality Services	(750)			0
DACHS	Reducing Adult Social Care contracts spend (Commissioning Delivery Model)	(443)	(161)		(161)
DACHS	Income Maximisation	(395)			0
DACHS	Review of Non Staffing Expenditure Budgets	(273)			0
DACHS	Public Health Grant Reduction and Alternate Delivery Model	(121)	(93)		(93)
DACHS	Digitisation Saving	(69)			0
DACHS	Increased usage of Direct Payments		(250)		(250)
DACHS	Increased usage of Assistive Technology and Equipment		(200)		(200)
DACHS	Mental Health and Locality Team Restructure		(145)		(145)
DACHS	Extension of Provider Services		(100)		(100)
DACHS	Extension of Front Door Project; Stretch for Front Door Project		(50)		(50)
DACHS	Extension of Assistive Technology Project		(50)		(50)
DACHS	Total	(2,051)	(1,049)	0	(1,049)
DEGNS	Homelessness Prevention Grant	(212)			0
DEGNS	Reduce expenditure on homelessness B&B and temporary accommodation	(200)			0
DEGNS	Reducing use of nightly paid emergency accommodation including B&B	200			0
DEGNS	Increase income on green waste due to additional uptake in years 1-3 and fee increase in years 2-3	(103)			0
DEGNS	Food Waste and Smaller Bins	(86)	(86)		(86)
DEGNS	Parks & Open Spaces Invest to Save	(65)			0
DEGNS	Extend Residents Parking permit areas	(60)	(140)	100	(40)
DEGNS	Housing Property Services - income generation to General Fund	(60)			0
DEGNS	Increase in Savings - Waste Operations	(56)	(138)		(138)
DEGNS	Car park management processes through IT improvements and staff reductions	(50)			0
DEGNS	Reduce costs in Library Services	(49)			0
DEGNS	Review and increase all allotment rental charges and review plot sizes.	(26)			0
DEGNS	New kit and vehicles for commercial services development	(21)			0
DEGNS	Commercialisation Direct Services	(20)	(241)		(241)
DEGNS	Increase in fees and charges	(20)			0
DEGNS	Bus Services Act - reduction in RBC requirement	(15)			0
DEGNS	Strategic Transportation Savings	(11)	(14)		(14)
DEGNS	Explore creation of coordinated enforcement operation across Regulatory & Transportation services	(8)	(21)		(21)
DEGNS	Increase in fees and charges	(4)			0
DEGNS	Increase in fees and charges	(3)			0
DEGNS	Increase in fees and charges	(2)			0

Appendix 5

Service	Saving	Delivered Savings 2020/21 £000	Undelivered Savings 2020/21 £000	Savings Removed at 2021/22 Budget Setting £000	Savings Carried Forward to 2021/22 £000
DEGNS	Gross up budget for capital cost on commercial property		(2,340)	2,340	0
DEGNS	Increase income From Commercial Property Acquisitions		(469)		(469)
DEGNS	Increased revenue from on-street Pay and Display		(390)		(390)
DEGNS	Increase off street parking charges		(300)		(300)
DEGNS	Savings arising from the closure of Darwin Close, Hamilton Centre and more efficient use of Bennet		(230)		(230)
DEGNS	Increased income from Parking Enforcement		(220)		(220)
DEGNS	Review Public Car Park provision borough wide		(200)		(200)
DEGNS	Review and Restructure of Cleaning Services		(125)		(125)
DEGNS	Reduction in professional specialist, management, enforcement and administrative resources; an increase to pre-planning application fees by 10%.		(120)		(120)
DEGNS	Mandatory HMO Licensing		(115)		(115)
DEGNS	Additional Fees & Charges from Schools		(110)		(110)
DEGNS	Contribution from Public Health Grant		(100)		(100)
DEGNS	Town Hall and Museum Additional income		(100)		(100)
DEGNS	Smart Cities - communications saving		(70)		(70)
DEGNS	Review of Neighbourhood and Streetcare Services fees and charges and enforcement activity.		(69)		(69)
DEGNS	Digitisation Saving		(69)		(69)
DEGNS	Discretionary HMO Licensing		(65)		(65)
DEGNS	Increase to park permit charges		(53)		(53)
DEGNS	Review of Enforcement Contracts		(50)		(50)
DEGNS	Increased provision of Red Routes		(50)		(50)
DEGNS	Theatre Fees and Charges		(50)		(50)
DEGNS	Fundamental Service review of Highways		(50)		(50)
DEGNS	Increase in trading through Reading Commercial Services		(50)		(50)
DEGNS	Housing Building Maintenance Income		(31)		(31)
DEGNS	Town Centre Street Trading - New Pitches		(30)		(30)
DEGNS	Increase in fees and charges		(26)		(26)
DEGNS	Increase in charges for pre-planning application and planning fees		(25)		(25)
DEGNS	Proposed Fee Income Reading Festival		(25)		(25)
DEGNS	Reforecast income Licensing income budget		(25)		(25)
DEGNS	Charge for pre-application for planning		(25)		(25)
DEGNS	Additional income from advertising		(25)		(25)
DEGNS	Introduce a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week charge for all Town Centre Pay & Display (P&D)		(25)		(25)
DEGNS	Review of Rents on Garages and Shops		(25)		(25)

Appendix 5

Service	Saving	Delivered Savings 2020/21 £000	Undelivered Savings 2020/21 £000	Savings Removed at 2021/22 Budget Setting £000	Savings Carried Forward to 2021/22 £000
DEGNS	Gross up budget for capital cost on recycling bins		(19)		(19)
DEGNS	Increase in fees and charges		(16)		(16)
DEGNS	Reductions on Training Budget		(13)		(13)
DEGNS	Electric Vehicle Charging		(3)		(3)
DEGNS Total		(871)	(6,348)	2,440	(3,908)
DoR	Realignment of Revenues and Benefits Transformation Target	(277)			0
DoR	HRA share of contribution to Narrowing the Gap	(84)			0
DoR	New customer services model	(66)	(66)		(66)
DoR	Savings arising from software applications review	(60)			0
DoR	Savings from reprocurring insurance	(50)			0
DoR	Review consultancy budget and CIPFA subscription	(35)			0
DoR	Convert Locum solicitors into Permanent Solicitors	(33)			0
DoR	Flexible retirement	(28)			0
DoR	EU Settlement card service	(27)			0
DoR	Customer Services savings (Call Centre/Hub)	(24)			0
DoR	Review of SLA with Schools	(24)			0
DoR	Additional savings will be made across the ICT service including reducing spend on applications	(20)			0
DoR	Savings within Democratic Services including greater use of IT in response to climate change	(15)			0
DoR	Apprentice Levy savings	(14)			0
DoR	Legal Services Efficiencies & Income	(12)			0
DoR	Digitisation Saving	(8)	(46)		(46)
DoR	Income generation from charging for services	(2)			0
DoR	Fund two Financial Analyst posts from DUF for two years to support transformation work (Reversal of 2018-19 Saving)	90			0
DoR	Re-procurement of IT Contract	215			0
DoR	Exec Recruitment		(56)		(56)
DoR Total		(474)	(168)	0	(168)
CEX	Income, Fees and Charges	(5)			0
CEX Total		(5)	0	0	0
CORP	Reduction of cheque payments	(50)			0
CORP	Compulsory closure of Civic Offices for non-essential services		(100)	100	0
CORP	Management and Staffing Review		(100)	100	0
CORP Total		(50)	(200)	200	0
BFFC	BFFC Savings	(4,128)			0

Service	Saving	Delivered Savings 2020/21 £000	Undelivered Savings 2020/21 £000	Savings Removed at 2021/22 Budget Setting £000	Savings Carried Forward to 2021/22 £000
BFfC Total		(4,128)	0	0	0
Grand Total		(7,579)	(7,765)	2,640	(5,125)

Appendix 6 - Delivery Fund

Section 1: Summary of resources by Directorate to be funded by Capital Receipts

Table 1 summarises the Delivery Fund (Capital Receipts) programme totalling £15.028m over the 5 year period (2017-2022)

	Number of requests	Approved resources (£000) as per Capital Programme/ Capital Receipts Strategy					
		17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	Total
Total	79	1,319	3,182	3,287	3,256	3,984	15,028

Note: These figures include a contingency pot of £2,179k

Directorate	Number of requests	Approved resources (£000)					
		17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	Total
DOR	31	755	909	581	1,034	1,245	4,524
DACHS	21	462	802	844	119	831	3,058
BFFC	8	52	1,093	731	1,503	1,789	5,168
DEGNS	19	50	379	1,131	600	119	2,278
Total	79	1,319	3,182	3,287	3,256	3,984	15,028

Table 2: Summary of resources by workstreams

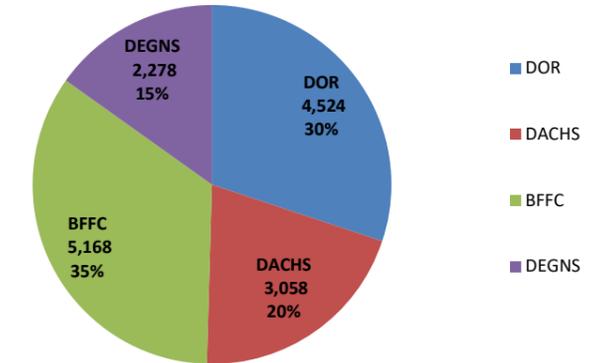
Workstream	Number of requests	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	Total
CP - Adults Transformation	26	462	802	844	119	831	3,058
CP - Commercialisation	11	20	139	197	430	61	847
CP - Cross Programme	17	156	207	222	447	836	1,868
CP - Digital Futures	19	391	216	240	520	269	1,637
CP - Transport and Parking	11	0	203	689	72	0	965
CP - Children's Transformation	34	66	1,093	731	1,503	1,789	5,182
CP - Assets	3	0	9	72	80	0	160
CP - Procurement	3	0	112	40	0	0	153
Other - Project	22	224	400	252	85	198	1,159
Total	146	1,319	3,182	3,287	3,256	3,984	15,028

Section 2: Outturn Position 2020-21

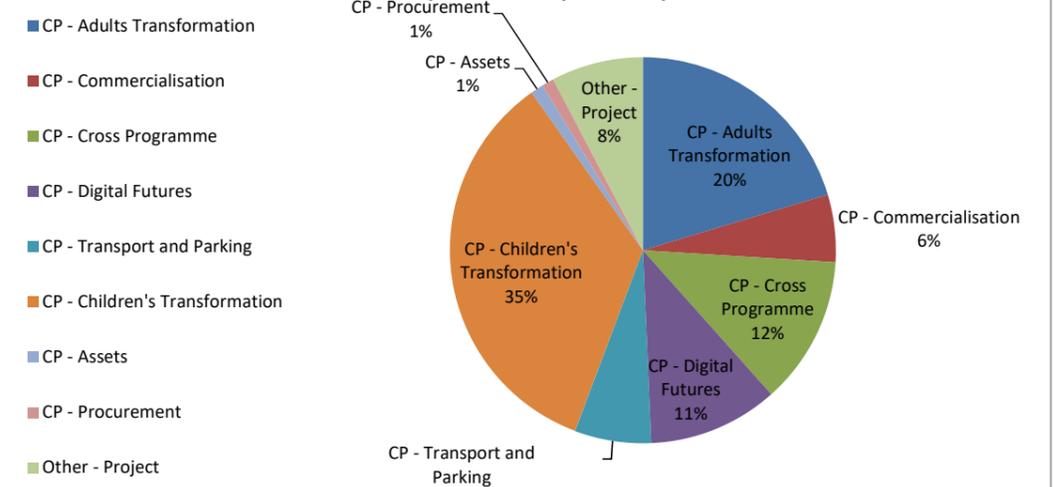
Table 3 shows the 2020/21 budget (including unspent funds from 2019/20). These are requests that have been approved by CMT.

Directorate	20/21 Budget	Outturn	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000
DACHS	119	119	-
DENS	615	600	-15
DOR	1,020	1,034	14
BFFC	1,483	1,503	20
Total	3,237	3,256	19

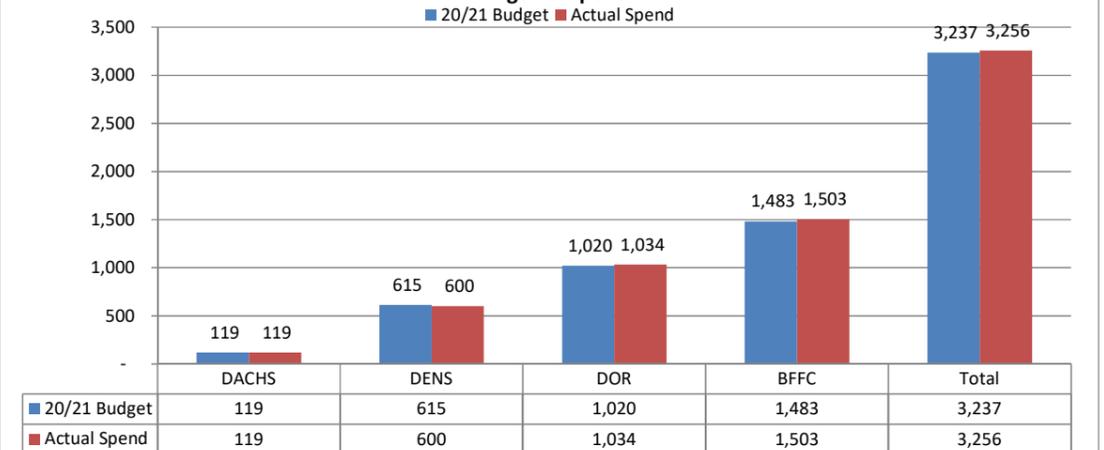
Directorate Split of Delivery Fund Requests



Workstreams Split of Delivery Fund Requests



Budget vs Spend



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Appendix 7 - Reserves Position as at 31st March 2021

		Balance 31/03/2020	2020/21	2020/21	Current Balance	Proposals per 2020/21 Outturn	Balance 31/03/2021
			Transfers In	Transfers Out			
		£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
General Fund Balance	Minimum level of unallocated reserves, 5% of net revenue budget	(7.500)	0.000	0.000	(7.500)	0.000	(7.500)
Earmarked Reserves - General Fund							
Emergency Planning Reserve	To cover for unforeseen emergencies not budgeted for	(0.610)	0.000	0.000	(0.610)	0.000	(0.610)
Communications Reserve	To allow for investment in communications strategies and engaging with the public	(0.200)	0.000	0.000	(0.200)	0.000	(0.200)
Housing Benefit Subsidy Loss Reserve	To provide for any potential clawback from central government of housing benefit subsidy following audit of the annual housing subsidy claim.	(0.300)	(0.150)	0.000	(0.450)	0.000	(0.450)
Public Health Reserve	The Public Health Grant is ring-fenced so any underspend is carried forward and spent in future years	(0.548)	(0.448)	0.000	(0.996)	0.000	(0.996)
Schools Deficit Liability Reserve	To fund potential deficits of schools that may become academies in the future	(0.850)	0.000	0.000	(0.850)	0.000	(0.850)
Climate Change Reserve	To allow for investment to address the climate emergency	(0.322)	0.000	0.102	(0.220)	0.000	(0.220)
Legal and Taxation Reserve	To meet potential one-off legal or tax liabilities	(0.300)	0.000	0.000	(0.300)	0.000	(0.300)
Pension Liabilities Reserve	To cover potential future Pension Fund liabilities arising from employer pension contribution rate fluctuations	(1.100)	0.000	0.000	(1.100)	0.000	(1.100)
Commercial Property Liabilities Reserve	To manage urgent liabilities associated with the Council's property	(1.700)	0.000	0.000	(1.700)	0.000	(1.700)
Revenue Grant Unapplied Reserve*	To hold Revenue Grant balances where the conditions for use have been met but relevant expenditure has not yet been incurred	(6.014)	(38.125)	4.279	(39.860)	0.000	(39.860)

		Balance 31/03/2020	2020/21	2020/21	Current Balance	Proposals per 2020/21 Outturn	Balance 31/03/2021
			Transfers In	Transfers Out			
		£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Self Insurance Reserve	To meet estimated liabilities in connection with internally-held risks related to the Council's Insurance programme	(5.477)	0.000	0.000	(5.477)	0.000	(5.477)
IT and Digital Reserve	To replace IT and digital equipment that has passed its useful life to improve operational efficiency	(2.278)	0.000	0.000	(2.278)	(0.313)	(2.591)
Advice & Wellbeing Hub Reserve	To enable the Advice & Wellbeing Hub programme within Adult Care Services to be commissioned	(0.240)	0.000	0.240	0.000	0.000	0.000
Flexible Capital Receipts Reserve	To allow for potential slippage in the delivery of capital receipts to fund transformation as well as funding beyond the end of the flexible capital receipts directive in 2021/22	(11.231)	0.000	0.000	(11.231)	0.000	(11.231)
Capital Financing Smoothing Reserve	To smooth funding across the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy	(5.342)	(10.537)	9.930	(5.949)	(8.355)	(14.304)
Redundancy Reserve	To fund costs of redundancy	(0.999)	0.000	0.654	(0.345)	0.000	(0.345)
Demographic & Cost-Led Pressures Reserve	To provide for potential cost pressures arising from demographic or other demand led services	(2.000)	0.000	0.000	(2.000)	0.000	(2.000)
Abortive Capital Cost Reserve	To provide for the cost of feasibility studies that do not progress into capital schemes	(0.500)	0.000	0.000	(0.500)	0.000	(0.500)
Collection Fund Smoothing Reserve	To provide for the potential downturn in the economy that would reduce the level of Business Rates/Council Tax	(7.249)	0.000	0.060	(7.189)	0.000	(7.189)
Adult Social Care Reserve	Sleep-in provision	(0.951)	0.000	0.951	0.000	0.000	0.000
Joint Legal Team Reserve	To fund JLT specific invest to save projects	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.126)	(0.126)
Covid-19 Financial Resilience	To mitigate against the ongoing financial impact of the pandemic	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(3.968)	(3.968)
Total Earmarked Reserves - General Fund		(48.212)	(49.259)	16.217	(81.255)	(12.762)	(94.017)
Total Revenue Reserves		(55.712)	(49.259)	16.217	(88.755)	(12.762)	(101.517)

		Balance 31/03/2020	2020/21 Transfers In	2020/21 Transfers Out	Current Balance	Proposals per 2020/21 Outturn	Balance 31/03/2021
		£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Other Ringfenced Reserves							
Schools Reserves							
School Balances	Schools are able to carry forward any underspends on their budgets	(2.677)	0.000	0.089	(2.587)	0.000	(2.587)
Dedicated Schools Grant	This is in deficit due to overspends in high needs block. This is planned to be repaid by 31st March 2024	1.768	0.000	0.000	1.768	0.000	1.768
Total Schools Reserves		(0.909)	0.000	0.089	(0.819)	0.000	(0.819)
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Reserves							
HRA/Major Repairs Account Balance	Represents the balance carried forward on these accounts	(36.848)	(9.306)	0.000	(46.154)	0.000	(46.154)
North Whitley PFI	To provide a smoothing reserve for PFI payments	(9.910)	0.000	0.217	(9.693)	0.000	(9.693)
Total Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Reserves		(46.758)	(9.306)	0.217	(55.847)	0.000	(55.847)
Total Revenue Reserves (including Other Ringfenced Reserves)		(103.379)	(58.565)	16.523	(145.421)	(12.762)	(158.183)

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Shaping Readings Future – Our Corporate Plan 2018-21

Performance Report

Period: Q4 2020/21



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out how the Council has performed at the end of Q4 2020/21 to deliver the mission and priorities for Reading Borough Council as set out in the Corporate Plan for 2018-21 – annual refresh Spring 2019. Our priorities are:



InPhase Performance Management Software

This is the second quarterly report using the council's performance management software system (InPhase) as the source for recording and monitoring progress against our performance objectives. The content in this report is taken from the system.

The report focuses on progress against the Council's priorities and the 25¹ headline performance measures, reported monthly or quarterly that directorates identified to best demonstrate progress in achieving the outcomes.

Through service plans the Council carries out wider work to measure performance and quality. This report is intended to provide an overview of the contribution that the

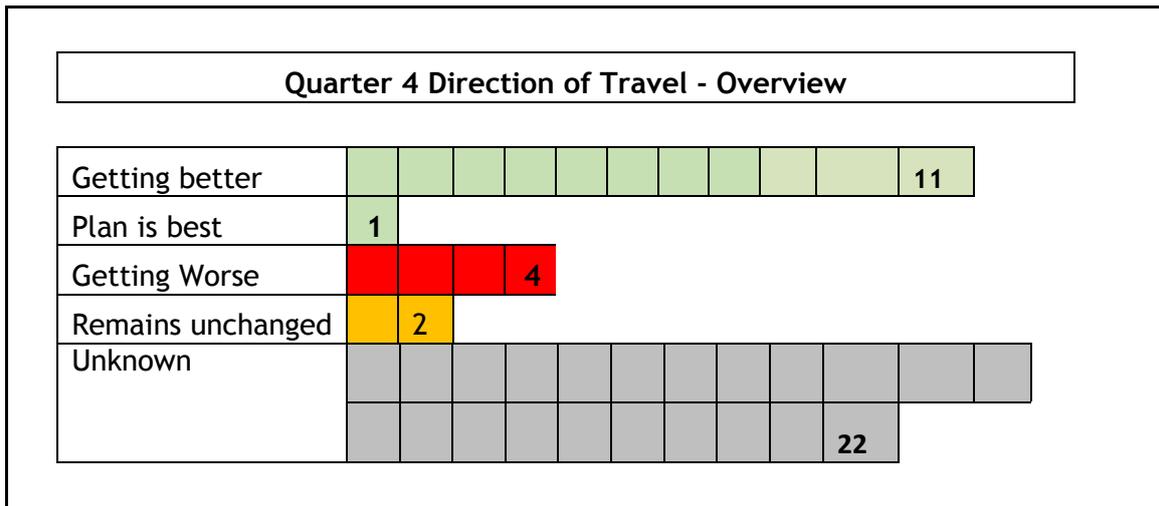
¹ In total 37 are reported annually, or more frequently, 2 measures are based on survey results scheduled for alternate years

Council makes across all its activities to improving Reading as a place to live, work and visit.

Performance Overview

Direction of travel

The chart below displays the shifts in performance for the measures, monitored monthly, quarterly or annually, published in the Corporate Plan



RAG Status

The RAG status for priority measures is also included. This is determined by the variance between the actual and target figure.

The actual trend lines displayed on the charts reflect the current RAG status of the measures.



Performance Report

Securing the economic success of Reading

Corporate Priority

Securing the economic success of Reading ✓

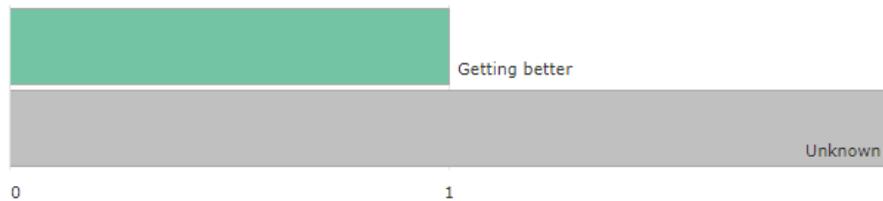
Data for NEET and GVA per worker is outstanding
 Data for people who are economically active has not been updated since June
 Superfast broadband has increased since last quarter
 Economic activity has increased

Performance Headlines

Planning Pattern

Annual Quarterly

Direction of Travel



0

Count of Red Performance Measures

1

Count of Amber Performance Measures

0

Count of Green Performance Measures

Amber = Superfast broad band

Planning Pattern

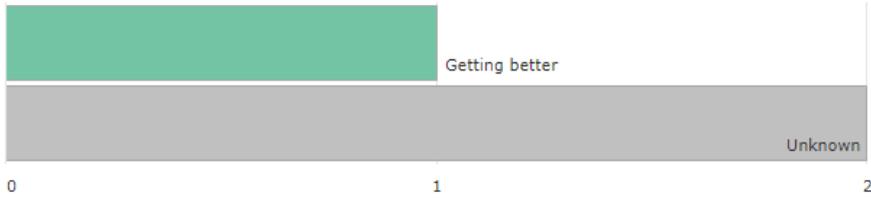
Annual Quarterly

Corporate Priority	Measure of Success	March 2021						
		Type of Measurement	Current Year Actual	Current Year Target	DoT	Baseline 2 Years Ago	Baseline 1 Year Ago	Corporate Performance Report
Securing the economic success of Reading	BFC - Young people in NEET	National	2.90	1.80	?		3.10	
	DEGNS - People who are economically active 18-64	National	84.0%	81.1%	?	80.7%	81.7%	
	DoR - Superfast broadband coverage	National	99.20%	100.00%	↓	99.01%	98.82%	

Planning Pattern

Annual Quarterly

Direction of Travel



Planning Pattern

Annual Quarterly

Corporate Priority	Measure of Success	March 2021						
		Type of Measurement	Current Year Actual	Current Year Target	DoT	Baseline 2 Years Ago	Baseline 1 Year Ago	Corporate Performance Report
Securing the economic success of Reading	DEGNS - Gross value added per worker	National	64,152.00	67,410.00	?	64,152.00	64,152.00	
	DEGNS - Journey times	National	20.00		↓	22.00	22.00	
	DoR - Growth in business rates tax base	National	2%	2%	?	3%	2%	



Performance Report

Ensuring access to decent housing to meet local needs

Corporate Priority

Ensuring access to decent housing to meet local needs ▼

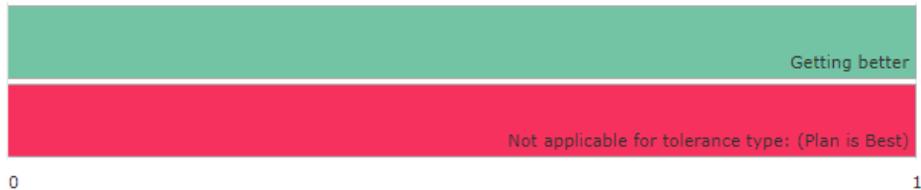
Families in B&B and licensed HMOs are unchanged
Preventing homelessness has improved this quarter

Performance Headlines

Planning Pattern

Annual Monthly Quarterly

Direction of Travel



0

Count of Red Performance Measures

0

Count of Amber Performance Measures

3

Count of Green Performance Measures

Green = Families in B&B accommodation
Preventing & relieving homelessness
Licensed HMOs

Planning Pattern

Annual Monthly Quarterly

Corporate Priority	Measure of Success	March 2021						
		Type of Measurement	Current Year Actual	Current Year Target	DoT	Baseline 2 Years Ago	Baseline 1 Year Ago	Corporate Performance Report
Ensuring access to decent housing to meet local needs	DEGNS - Families in B&B accommodation	Local	0	0	↔		0	
	DEGNS - Preventing & relieving homelessness	Local	65	37	↕	47	60	

Planning Pattern

Annual Monthly Quarterly

Corporate Priority	Measure of Success	March 2021						
		Type of Measurement	Current Year Actual	Current Year Target	DoT	Baseline 2 Years Ago	Baseline 1 Year Ago	Corporate Performance Report
Ensuring access to decent housing to meet local needs	DEGNS - Licensed HMO's	Local	40%	35%	→		55%	To continue to work with HMO landlords to ensure new and renewal licence applications are submitted

Planning Pattern

Annual Monthly Quarterly

Direction of Travel



Planning Pattern

Annual Monthly Quarterly

Corporate Priority	Measure of Success	March 2021						
		Type of Measurement	Current Year Actual	Current Year Target	DoT	Baseline 2 Years Ago	Baseline 1 Year Ago	Corporate Performance Report
Ensuring access to decent housing to meet local needs	DEGNS - Additional affordable homes	Local	80	201	?	158	80	Data available mid June
	DEGNS - Additional homes	Local	524.00	671.00	?	910.00	524.00	Data available mid June





Performance Report

Protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children

Corporate Priority

Protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children ✓

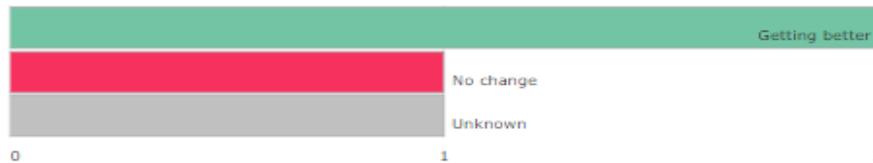
Direct Payments and Residential Admissions for 65+ have improved since the last period. Residential admissions for 18-64s stays the same but has met the target

Performance Headlines

Planning Pattern

Monthly Quarterly

Direction of Travel



1

Count of Red Performance Measures

1

Count of Amber Performance Measures

1

Count of Green Performance Measures

Red = Direct payments
Amber = Residential admissions 65+
Green = Residential admissions 18-64

Planning Pattern

Monthly Quarterly

Corporate Priority	Measure of Success	March 2021						
		Type of Measurement	Current Year Actual	Current Year Target	DoT	Baseline 2 Years Ago	Baseline 1 Year Ago	Corporate Performance Report
Protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children	DACHS - Direct Payments	National	21.75	25.00	✓	17.87	19.68	Direct Payments continue to increase, although this is still below the target set. Targets for the rest of the financial year for each team to improve the number further. Work is underway to look at increases in the transfer from Reablement to support the transition to direct payments.
	DACHS - Number of DToc Bed days (ASC)	National	0	105	?	48	0	Not currently collected due to COVID19 Pathway 1, 2 and 3 reported am and pm daily, system aim <20 on Ready to Go each day.
	DACHS - Residential admissions 18-64 (per 100,000)	Local	0.94	1.08	➔	0.93	2.77	The situation has impacted on younger people accessing the service in crisis during COVID. This number continues to be stable, even though the target is ambitious which evidences the consistent approach across the service. The Review team will focus on alternatives to Residential and Nursing care using a strength based approach, TECH and community services.

	DACHS - Residential admissions 65+ (per 100,000)	National	38.83	36.00	✓	30.15	78.82	<p>This has increased due to the higher needs of people post discharge from hospital and Covid 19 has impacted this target.</p> <p>A collaborative approach with partners supports people to remain at home, the ethos is "home first" with Reablement services when discharging people from hospital.</p>
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Planning Pattern

Monthly Quarterly

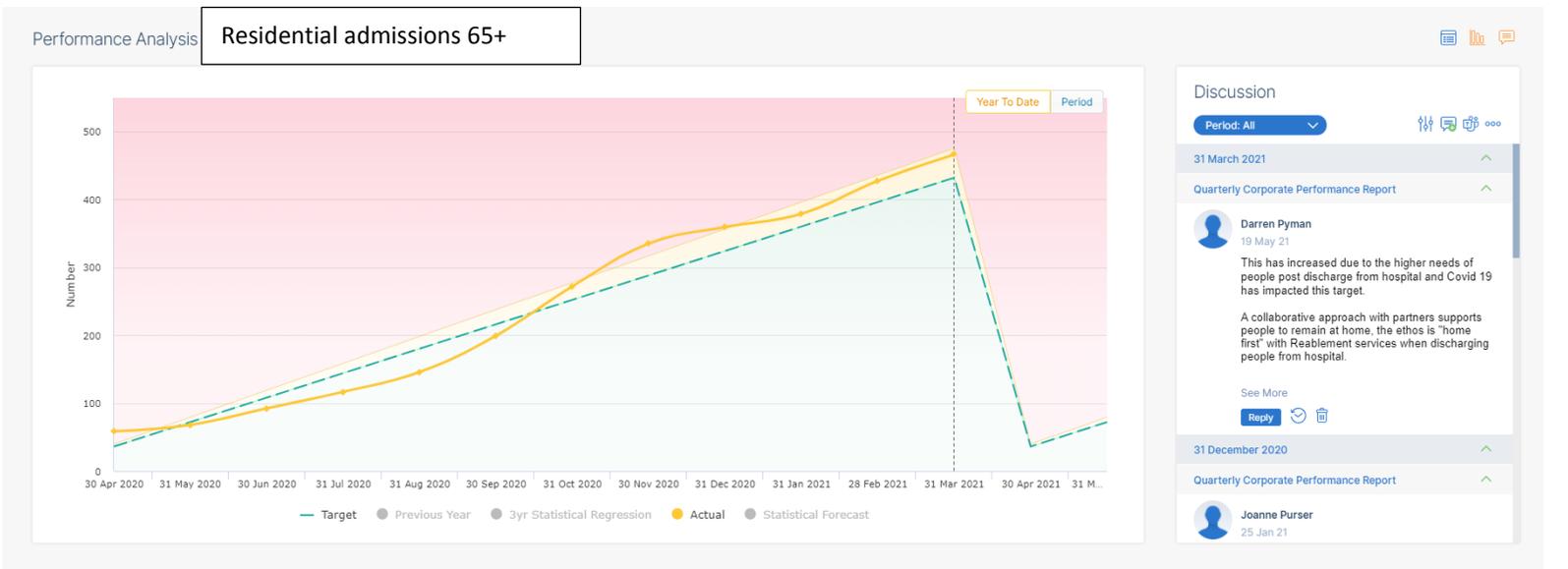
Direction of Travel



Planning Pattern

Monthly Quarterly

Corporate Priority	Measure of Success	March 2021						
		Type of Measurement	Current Year Actual	Current Year Target	DoT	Baseline 2 Years Ago	Baseline 1 Year Ago	Corporate Performance Report
Protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children	BFFC - Children looked after	National	272.00	250.00	?		277.00	
	BFFC - Children with 3+ placements in past	Local	10.00%	10.00%	?		15.00%	
	BFFC - Placements for children within 20	Local	67.00%	75.00%	?		69.00%	
	BFFC - Timeliness of Early Help assessments	Local	94.00%	95.00%	?		95.00%	





Performance Report

Cleaner, Greener, Safer

Corporate Priority

Cleaner, Greener, Safer ▼

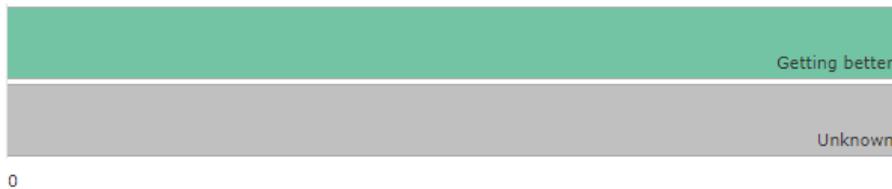
Recorded crime has improved since previous quarter

Performance Headlines

Planning Pattern

Annual Quarterly

Direction of Travel



Count of Red Performance Measures



Count of Amber Performance Measures



Count of Green Performance Measures

Amber = Recorded crime; air quality

Planning Pattern

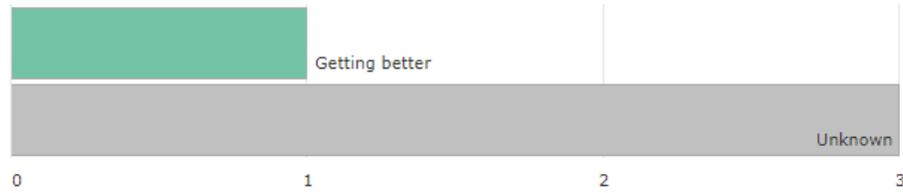
Annual Quarterly

Corporate Priority	Measure of Success	March 2021						
		Type of Measurement	Current Year Actual	Current Year Target	DoT	Baseline 2 Years Ago	Baseline 1 Year Ago	Corporate Performance Report
Cleaner, Greener, Safer	DEGNS - Recorded crime	National	23.52	25.83	↓		8.36	
	DEGNS - Waste Recycling	National	33%	38%	?	32%	35%	

Planning Pattern

Annual Quarterly

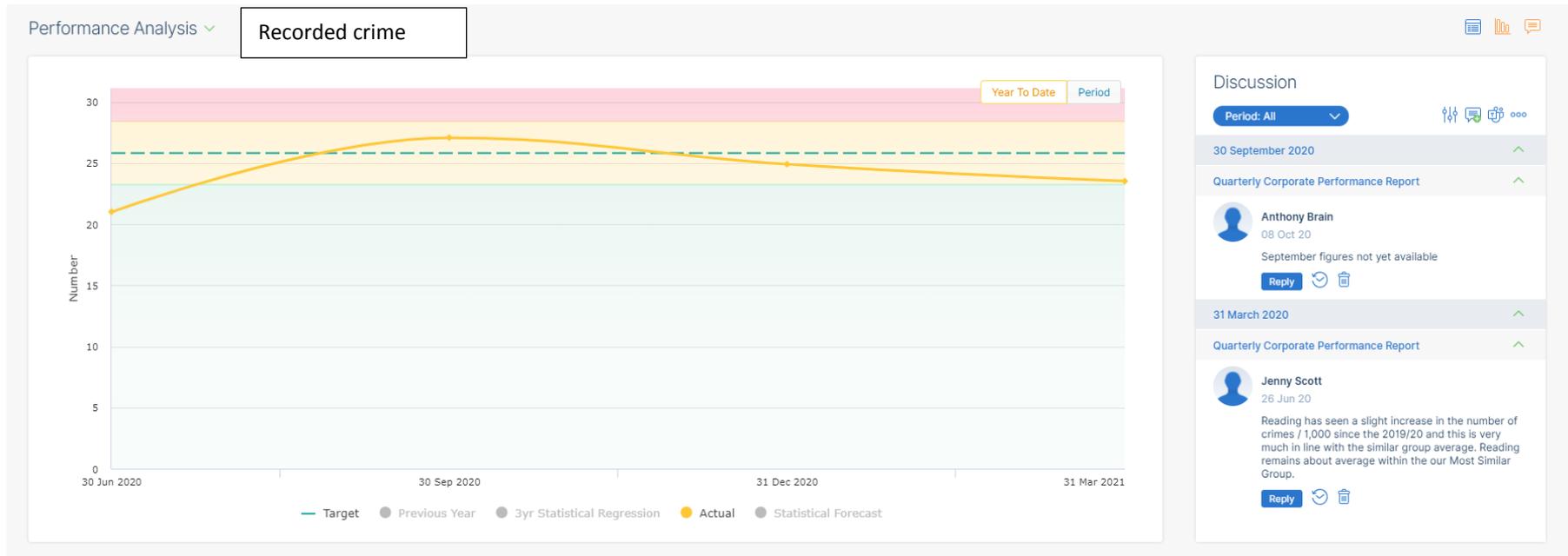
Direction of Travel



Planning Pattern

Annual Quarterly

Corporate Priority	Measure of Success	March 2021						
		Type of Measurement	Current Year Actual	Current Year Target	DoT	Baseline 2 Years Ago	Baseline 1 Year Ago	Corporate Performance Report
Cleaner, Greener, Safer	DEGNS - Air quality	Local	30.00	33.00	?	35.00		Air quality benefited during 2020/21 due to the reduced level of traffic on the roads during the lockdowns at various points throughout the year.
	DEGNS - Carbon footprint	National	524	480	?	524		
	DEGNS - Satisfaction with clean streets	Local	67%		?	67%	67%	test
	DEGNS - Satisfaction with local area	Local	77%	78%	👍	70%	65%	





Performance Report

Promoting health, education, culture & wellbeing

Corporate Priority

Promoting health, education, culture & wellbeing ▼

BfC data to follow
 Participation at cultural venues has increased
 Levels of physical activity have decreased

Performance Headlines

Planning Pattern

Annual Quarterly

Direction of Travel



2

Count of Red Performance Measures

1

Count of Amber Performance Measures

0

Count of Green Performance Measures

Planning Pattern

Annual Quarterly

Corporate Priority	Measure of Success	March 2021						
		Type of Measurement	Current Year Actual	Current Year Target	DoT	Baseline 2 Years Ago	Baseline 1 Year Ago	Corporate Performance Report
Promoting health, education, culture & wellbeing	BfC - Secondary school fixed term exclusions	National	410.00	670.00	?		723.00	
	DEGNS - Participation at council cultural venues	Local	20,161	355,000	✓		340,394	Limited opportunity for attendance due to covid lockdown

Planning Pattern

Annual Quarterly

Direction of Travel

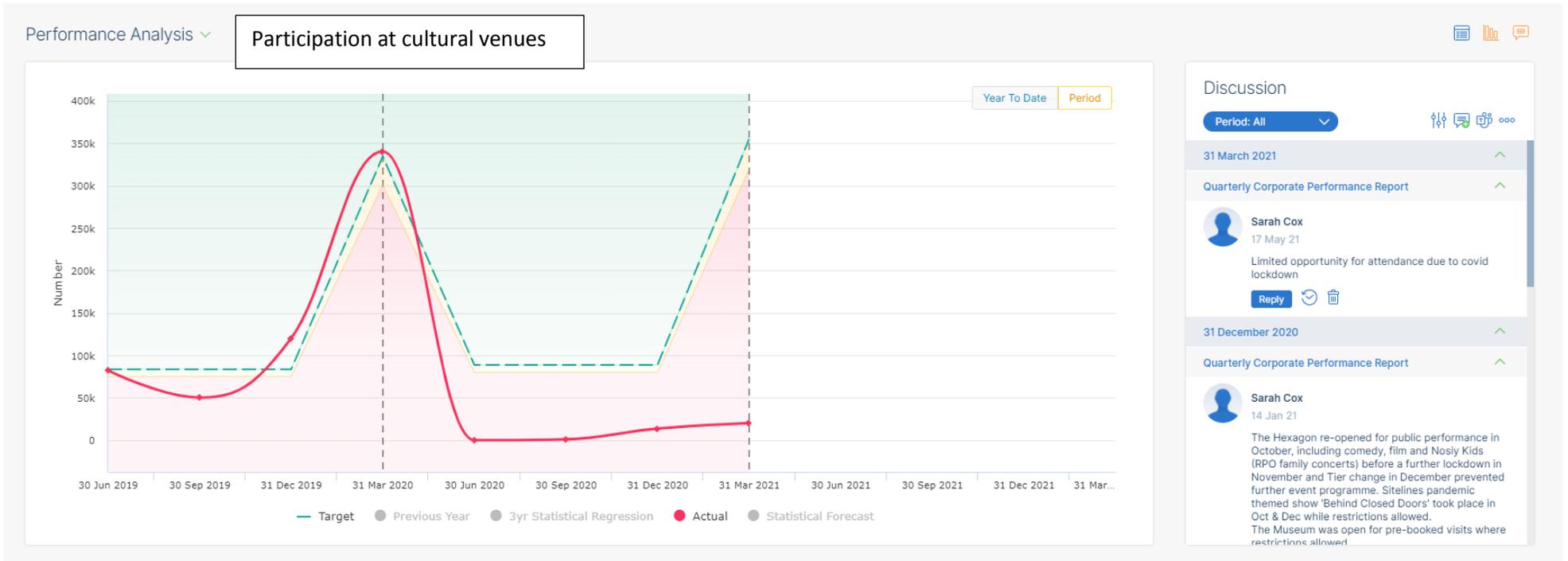


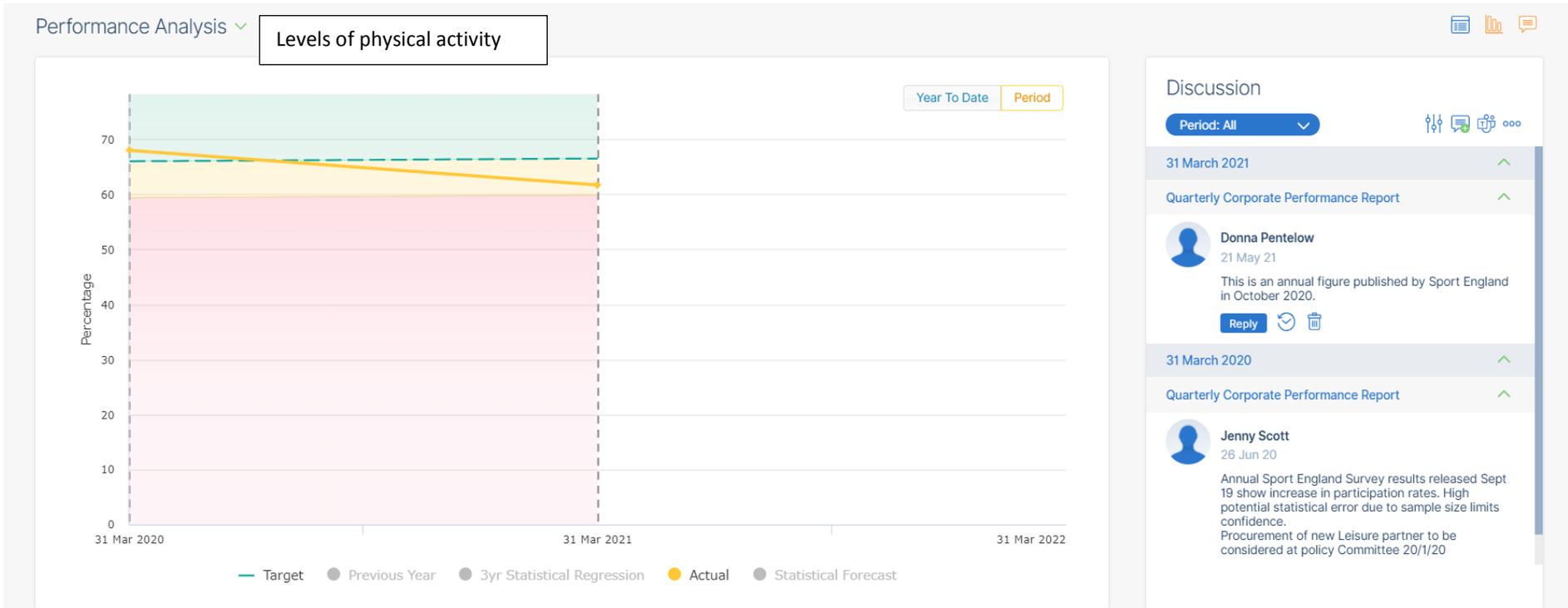
Planning Pattern

Annual Quarterly

Corporate Priority	Measure of Success	March 2021						Corporate Performance Report
		Type of Measurement	Current Year Actual	Current Year Target	DoT	Baseline 2 Years Ago	Baseline 1 Year Ago	
	BFFC - Key stage 2 results - gap in attainment	National		8.00	?			
	BFFC - Key stage 4 results - gap in attainment	National		14.00	?			
	DACHS - Overweight Adults	National	62.00	54.00	✖	55.70	58.60	The delivery of an adult weight management service has been affected by COVID-19 because of reduced opportunity for face to face interventions Once the provider mobilised and COVID restrictions allow, the plan is to deliver this service via the new leisure contract in Reading. Options for an interim or complementary service are being explored by Officers and one off funding may be available for 21/22 to support this.

Promoting health, education, culture & wellbeing	DACHS - Smoking prevalence: Current smokers - adults in routine and manual occupations	National	29.30	26.00	?	28.30	29.30	<p>After an initial drop in referrals to smoke free life Berkshire in lockdown 1 numbers are now back up to pre-covid levels as residents and professionals become more familiar with COVID secure ways of working. A good proportion of self referrals are from our target cohort of routine and manual worker (RMW). We also supported the national Quit4Covid campaign as part of this effort to increase referrals.</p> <p>We have now awarded a new contract for this service to start 1 Oct 2021. The specification aims to direct resource for supporting RMW and other targeted cohorts, whilst providing digital support for other who would otherwise likely to experience an unsuccessful quit attempt independently of any support.</p>
	DEGNS - Levels of physical activity	Local	61.7%	66.5%	✖	65.5%	68.0%	This is an annual figure published by Sport England in October 2020.







Performance Report

Fit for the Future

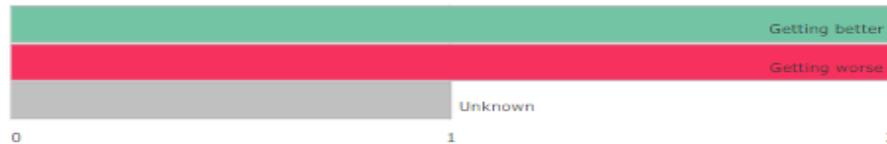
Corporate Priority
Fit for the Future

Customer satisfaction with front of house has dipped very slightly since previous month
Agency spend has increased though lower than March 20
Business rates collection has increase since previous month but CT collection decreased
Take up of online services has increased

Planning Pattern

Annual Monthly Quarterly

Direction of Travel



Planning Pattern

Annual Monthly Quarterly

1 Count of Red Performance Measures

2 Count of Amber Performance Measures

2 Count of Green Performance Measures

Red = Agency spend
Amber = Business rates and Council Tax collected
Green = Satisfaction with front of house; take up of online services

Corporate Priority	Measure of Success	March 2021						
		Type of Measurement	Current Year Actual	Current Year Target	DoT	Baseline 2 Years Ago	Baseline 1 Year Ago	Corporate Performance Report
Fit for the Future	ALL - Delivery of medium term financial strategy	Local	145,939	150,920	?	142,900	117,865	
	DOR - Business rates collected	National	94%	98%	✓	98%	98%	Final collection is 0.74% behind position last year, which is an improvement on prior month by 0.26%. Final collection 2.07% behind in target set to achieve 97.50%. We anticipated a reduced collection as a result of Covid-19 and the inability to undertake recovery. Bench marking with neighboring boroughs demonstrates one of the lower reductions in comparison to our own previous position
	DoR - Council Agency spend	Local	4,048,365	3,900,000	✗		4,928,740	
	DoR - Council tax collected	National	95	98	✓	96	96	
	DoR - Customer satisfaction with front of house	Local	91%	86%	✗	85%	86%	

Planning Pattern

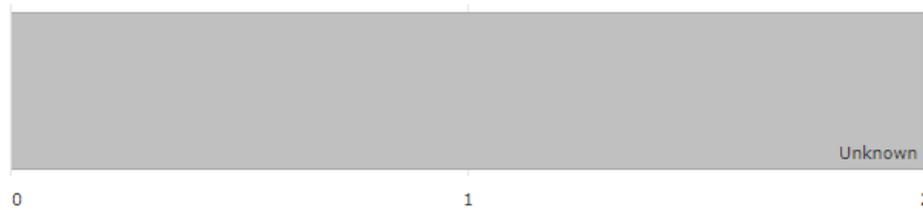
Annual Monthly **Quarterly**

Corporate Priority	Measure of Success	March 2021						
		Type of Measurement	Current Year Actual	Current Year Target	DoT	Baseline 2 Years Ago	Baseline 1 Year Ago	Corporate Performance Report
Fit for the Future	DoR - Take up of online services	Local	122,653	88,468	✔		95,338	

Planning Pattern

Annual Monthly Quarterly

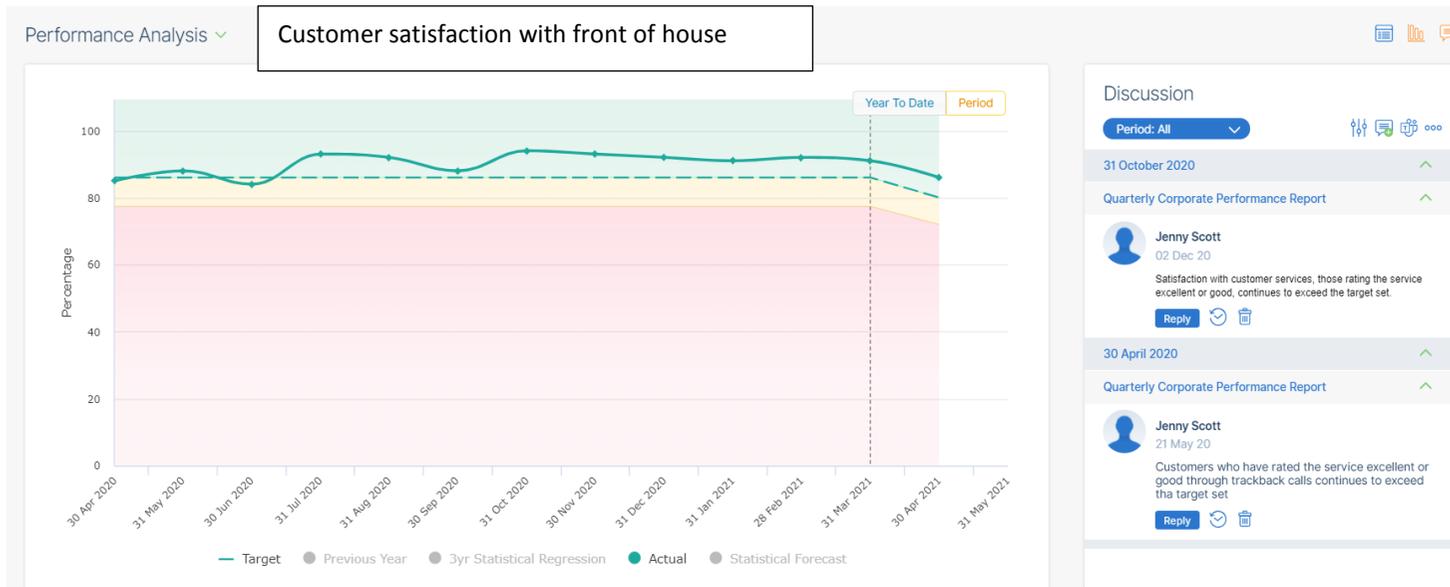
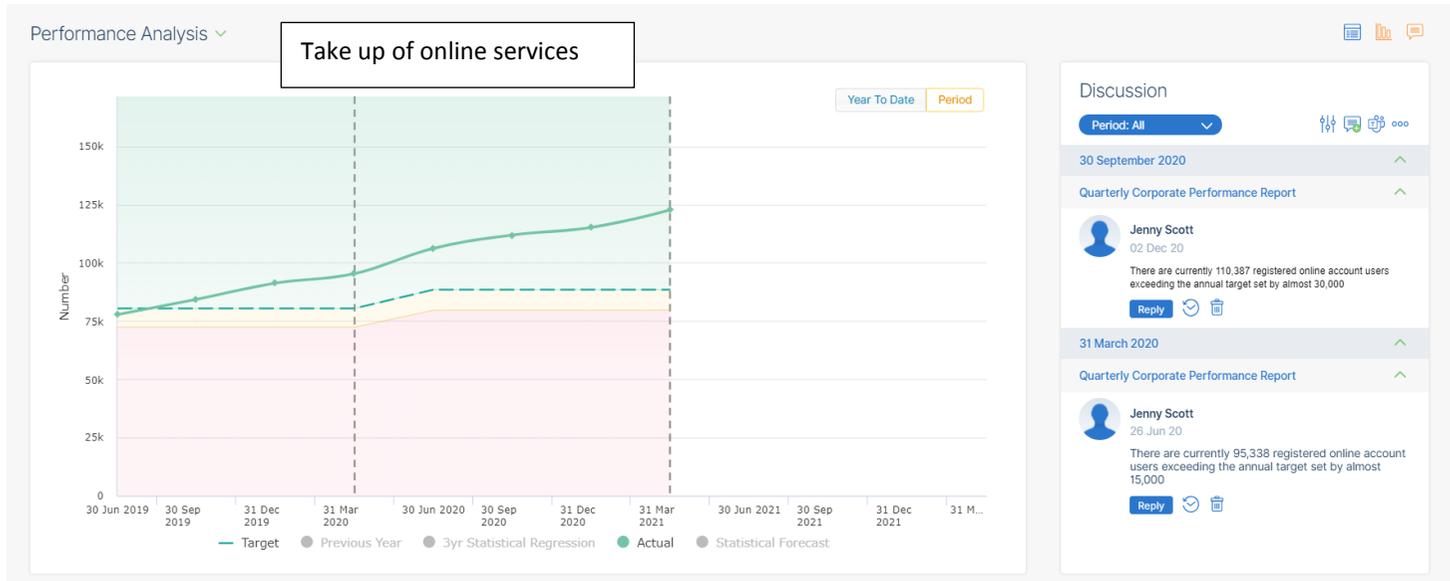
Direction of Travel

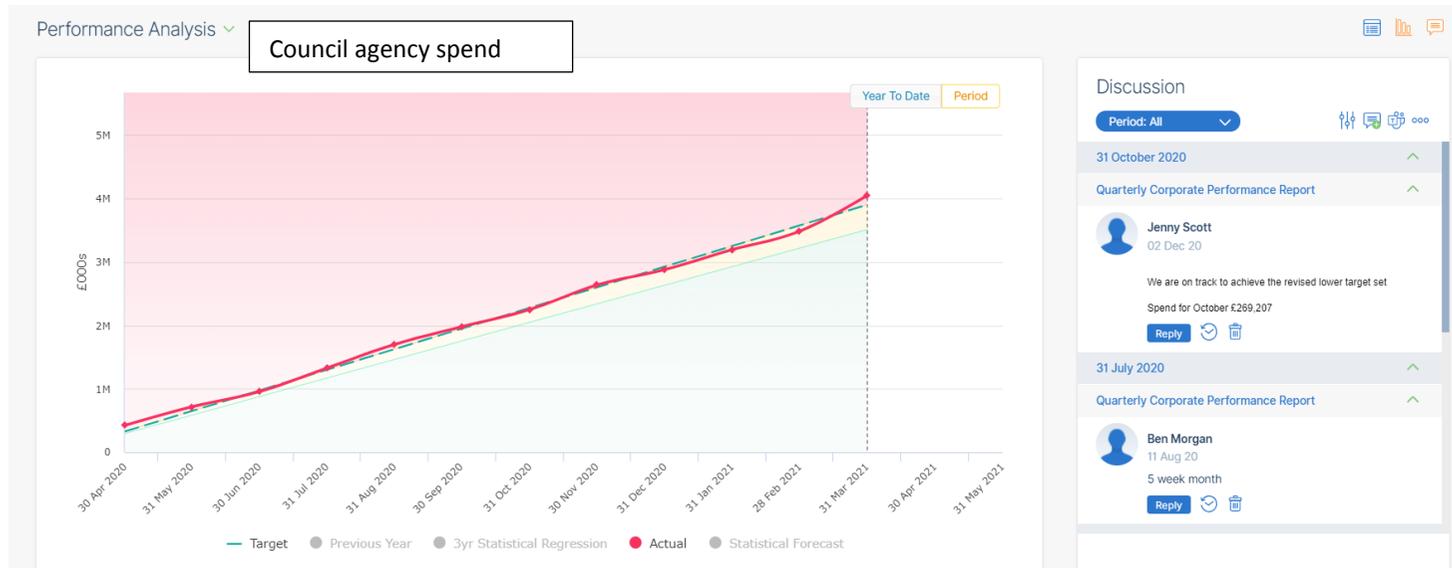


Planning Pattern

Annual Monthly Quarterly

Corporate Priority	Measure of Success	March 2021						
		Type of Measurement	Current Year Actual	Current Year Target	DoT	Baseline 2 Years Ago	Baseline 1 Year Ago	Corporate Performance Report
Fit for the Future	DEGNS - Carbon footprint	National	524	480	?	524		
	DoR - Growth in business rates tax base	National	2%	2%	?	3%	2%	





READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	12 JULY 2021		
TITLE:	CEMETERY ARCH, LONDON ROAD		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR BROCK CLLR McEWAN	PORTFOLIO:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL LEAD CLLR FOR COPORATE & COMSUMER SERVICES
SERVICE:	PROPERTY, ESTATES & VALUATION	WARDS:	PARK
LEAD OFFICER:	CHARAN DHILLON	TEL:	01189 373928
JOB TITLE:	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PROPERTY & ASSET MANAGEMENT	E-MAIL:	Charan.Dhillon@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To seek Policy Committee approval on the proposal to dispose of Cemetery Arch (“the Property”) on a 250-year Lease on the terms set out in this report.
- 1.2 The Property is shown edged red on the attached plan (Appendix A).
- 1.3 Appendix A - Site Plan
Appendix B - Confidential Bid Application Summary Table
Appendix C - Confidential JAHA Third Sector Bid
Appendix D - Confidential Financial Implication Summary
Appendix E - Confidential Valuer’s Report

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That in the context of the information provided in the closed session Committee agrees to grant a long leasehold interest in the Property to JAHA (Junction Arch Heritage & Arts) subject to planning permission and securing the necessary funding
- 2.2 That the Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services are authorised to deal with any objections to the Open Space disposal
- 2.3 In the event that the bid proposal or offer price is subsequently reduced or the purchaser does not perform to an acceptable timescale the Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services be given delegated authority in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services and the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services to:
 - a) agree a revised bid proposal or offer price

b) re-engage with other bidders as appropriate or remarket the property for disposal at best consideration.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Cemetery Arch is a Grade II Listed property at the entrance to Reading Cemetery and was built circa 1840.
- 3.2 Because the main access to the Cemetery is through the Archway the Council are selling a 250 year long leasehold rather than freehold interest in the Property in order to retain better control over ensuring the cemetery access.
- 3.3 A visual structural inspection of relevant accessible areas was carried out in 2016. The Property is in poor condition and the structural engineer assessed the cost of the remedial works at approximately £100,000.
- 3.4 The empty property revenue costs connected with the Property are circa £2,000 per annum.
- 3.5 The Cemetery is classed as public open space and as an area of land to the immediate rear of the building will be included in the long lease, the disposal will amount to loss of public open space. As such, the disposal must be advertised for 2 consecutive weeks in a local newspaper and the public then has a further 2 weeks in which to lodge any objections. The land in question does not contain any burial plots.
- 3.6 On 28th June a public consultation was launched on the draft proposals for the new rules and regulations regarding the management and use of the cemetery. Any changes as a result of this proposal will need to be considered in light of the new regulations that will return to Policy Committee for adoption in September 2021.
- 3.7 The Bereavement Service will work with the preferred bidder on the full details of their proposals and further consultation with grave owners will take place to ensure the proposals are appropriate and befitting of a cemetery

4 THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position:

- 4.1.1 The Property was leased to Thames Valley Police in 1998 as a community office at nil rent. When the Lease expired TVP returned the Property to the Council with vacant possession in December 2015.
- 4.1.2 In September 2015, the Property was marketed on a 125-year Lease by way of informal tender on the open market and in accordance with the Third Sector Lettings Policy. Despite several viewings, no offers were received through either process.
- 4.1.3 In June 2018, the Property was to be sold at auction, and received interest and viewing from various parties but it was withdrawn when a local artists' community Junction Arch Heritage & Arts (JAHA) indicated that it wanted to convert the building into an arts venue.
- 4.1.4 Discussions between JAHA and the Council continued but were not concluded. In order to bring matters to a close and ensure the best option for the Council the Property was remarketed with an opportunity for JAHA to submit a detailed bid.

- 4.1.5 In November 2020, the Council remarketed the Property seeking community interest through the Third Sector Policy with Reading Voluntary Action (RVA) and commercially through Romans.
- 4.1.6 Three bids were received comprising one Third Sector bid, and two private bids as set out below and with a summary table of the bids at Appendix B.
- 4.1.7 **Offer 1: Junction Arch Heritage & Arts JAHA - £40,000**
- 4.1.8 This is a Third Sector bid made by JAHA, a Community Interest Company (CIC) based in East Reading, to acquire the Property for use as a Heritage and Arts Hub.
- 4.1.9 JAHA was formed for the sole purpose of purchasing the Arch and repurposing it as a Heritage and Arts and community co-working Hub.
- 4.1.10 They have carried out extensive consultation with Reading Borough Council and the Directors of the group have some project management and Grade II listed building management experience.
- 4.1.11 JAHA aims and objectives are set out below

Short Term:

- To create a community space for both work and leisure, with affordable office space for social enterprise and a street food area.
- To introduce a wider range of people including the younger generation to the Cemetery to form a connection with the space and make it relevant to them.
- To work with Reading Borough Council to create a volunteer initiative to work with the Bereavement Service to restore and look after Reading Old Cemetery.
- To work with Reading Borough Council and local businesses on a Strategic Action Plan to regenerate Cemetery Junction being The Cemetery Junction Strategic Action Plan (CJSAP).

Longer Term

- To increase the offer with the construction of an exhibition space and meeting room on the south side of the site.
- To hold exhibitions showcasing local art and heritage.
- To encourage a wider range of people to become interested in heritage and art

- 4.1.12 The development is proposed in two phases with office and community uses and is subject to funding:

Phase 1 is to focus on the conservation of the Archway building.

As well as addressing existing building issues, the rooms in the arch would be restored and utilised as affordable office space or dedicated office space for social enterprises together with the creation of a food court area using shipping containers to be run by Blue Collar.

This would be funded by a Heritage Impact Loan of £165k from the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) sustained by income from the food court and office lettings.

The purchase price of £40,000 would be funded from the Phase 1 business plan.

JAHA would only be granted a Lease of the property and allowed to take possession if delivery of Phase 1 is guaranteed and this will be contracted in the form of an Agreement for Lease.

- Phase 2 would create an exhibition space of Heritage and Art along with a single storey building and gardens to the south of the site for local businesses and community groups.

This would be funded by A Project Development Grant from either a Heritage Fund or the Architectural Heritage Fund of £56,538 and an NLHF Heritage Grant, a Heritage Enterprise Scheme Grant or an AHF Transforming Places Grant of £498,000.

If a Phase 2 grant monies are not secured then JAHA would remain in possession managing the Phase 1 element of the project as well as delivering other elements of their business plan both onsite where feasible and in forging wider arts, cultural and community links.

4.1.13 The AHF is very supportive of the project and keen to support it through its Heritage Impact Fund Loan program and officers would support JAHA to submit the necessary bids.

4.1.14 JAHA have aspirations to work with Reading Borough Council and local businesses on a Strategic Action Plan to regenerate Cemetery Junction and create a volunteer led initiative to restore and look after the Cemetery.

4.1.15 JAHA also have a planned partnership working approach with other Third Sector groups such as Reading Voluntary Action, Nature Nurture and Reading Rep.

4.1.16 The JAHA submission is very detailed with a range of supporting surveys and documents from several consultants but JAHA are a new organisation created in March 2019 and their proposal does ultimately rely on external grants and income forecasts.

4.1.17 Their Third Sector bid is enclosed at Appendix C.

4.1.18 Although not the top offer financially, it provides local economic, community and social wellbeing opportunities.

4.1.19 Offer 2: 100,000

A property company, who want to renovate and convert the Arch for residential use and construct two new single storey buildings at the rear of the site. A conditional offer subject to survey and planning for conversion and two additional dwellings. Some headline information on architectural design and costings has been provided with an estimated project total cost in the region of £400-450k (including the £100k purchase price).

4.1.20 Offer 3: - £110,000

Private purchaser, looking to convert the Arch for residential use providing two residential properties within the Arch. A conditional offer subject to planning funded from equity and with some listed building conversion experience.

It should be noted that this offer was received 18 days after the deadline and therefore the offer is invalid.

4.2 Options Proposed

- 4.2.1 That the Council and JAHA enter into an Agreement for Lease with a 250-year Lease of the Property together with any necessary rights of way as required under the archway then being granted subject to JAHA securing planning permission and a Heritage Impact Loan of £165k from the Architectural Heritage Fund to deliver the Phase 1 works. The grant will also be subject to the Councils S123 disposal of open space process.
- 4.2.2 The Agreement for Lease would be for a maximum of 18 months and if these obligations are not met within that timeframe then the Agreement for Lease will end and the Council will remarket the Property. Officers will have authority to proceed with remarketing the asset.
- 4.2.3 JAHA will also seek to secure a further £498k Transforming Places Grant for Phase 2 of the business plan. This is not a condition of the grant of the Lease and if not successful JAHA would be required to otherwise seek alternative funding and use reasonable endeavours to deliver elements of Phase 2 where feasible and also to deliver the wider arts, culture and community elements of their Business Plan and Third Sector Policy submission.
- 4.2.4 The property would remain the Councils responsibility for the 18 mth Agreement for Lease period and upon grant of the 250 year Lease JAHA will be responsible for all associated building improvement, repair and maintenance costs together with occupier costs.
- 4.2.5 The £40,000 purchase price is contingent upon JAHA securing the HIF Loan.
- 4.2.6 The Councils Conservation & Urban Design Officer advises:
- The JAHA group have been liaising with Council officers and have amended their proposal so it be more likely to gain Listed Building Consent;
 - The current design has evolved and been amended as a result of a pre-application consultation with Council's Conservation and Urban Design Officer. It would create a usable public space as well as be an enhancement to the listed building entrance lodge.
 - The previous office use of the lodges will be retained, and the facilities associated with this proposal would allow community access. It would allow for the listed heritage buildings to be restored, and have an on-going use.

4.3 Other Options Considered

Sell the property for residential conversion/development

- 4.3.1 To sell the Property to Bidder 2 for £100k or to Bidder 3 for a sum of £110k both conditional on planning permission. Bidder 3's offer was received 18 days after the deadline and therefore invalid.
- 4.3.2 The Councils Conservation & Urban Design Officer advises the following concerns in relation to the residential conversion offers:
- Listed building consent issues;

- Conservation & renovation - limited information provided by both offers on the scope works required and the costing of these works;
- Environmental issues - there is an air monitoring station close to the Cemetery that indicates the location has high air pollution levels that raise concerns for residential use on public health grounds.

Remarket the Property.

- 4.3.3 There is no immediate reason to remarket the property with the current bids received for both community and residential uses.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The disposal supports the Medium-Term Financial Strategy targets to remain financially sustainable and supports the Corporate Plan priorities in securing the economic success of Reading and provision of job opportunities.
- 5.2 A disposal will bring an empty property back into beneficial use.
- 5.3 The proposed development will conserve and renovate a landmark building.
- 5.4 Phase 2 of the JAHA bid will provide a space for exhibitions of heritage and art along with a meeting room for local businesses and community groups. This contributes towards the Reading Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015 - 2030 aim that *“by 2030, Reading will be recognised as a centre of creativity with a reputation for cultural and heritage excellence at a regional, national and international level with increased engagement across the town.”*
- 5.5 From a cultural perspective, the proposal aims to deliver activities that encourage people to be outdoors tied in with health and wellbeing, to support growth and infrastructure of the cultural sector and to engage with diverse communities.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This decision being recommended will not have an impact on the Council’s ability to respond to the Climate Emergency and achieve a carbon neutral Reading by 2030 and officers will encourage and support the leaseholder to ensure that their plans for the building minimise energy use and carbon emissions in line with the Council’s wider ambitions for a net zero carbon Reading by 2030.
- 6.2 The Councils Planning Conservation Officer considers the JAHA submission as the best choice for the ongoing conservation and repair of the listed building. It has a well thought out plan for milestones and budgeting.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 The Property was marketed through the Third Sector Policy Process in November 2020.
- 7.2 Whilst the Councils Arts & Culture Team considers there is not enough information in the business plan to conclude whether the ambitions set out by JAHA would be successful there are potential benefits to the cultural sector.

Whilst the partners outlined in the document, (i.e. Reading Rep, Nature Nurture, RVA) are of high quality and ample experience, there is no clarity around how the core cultural programme would be delivered, or who would do the community engagement. Both elements potentially take investment of time and money to be

successful and this is not reflected in the budgeting, requiring a dedicated resource and a community engagement plan.

- 7.3 The benefits to the cultural sector of the JAHA proposal would equate to part time support of a culture professional as well as other cultural organisations possibly being able to leverage funding as a result of being involved with JAHA and delivering projects on their behalf
- 7.4 JAHA's proposal has potential to deliver cultural development and social value. In addition, office and exhibition space is allocated to the cultural sector. Whilst the exhibition space will benefit the cultural sector it is not yet clear the extent to which the space will support the sector.
- 7.5 JAHA will need to work with the Councils Arts & Cultures team to properly embed social value, community engagement and cultural development within their proposal, working on the desired outcomes and how the cultural programmes and community engagement are going to be delivered.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 We have assessed that an Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant to the decision.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Best Consideration

- 9.1 This disposal of the Property is covered by Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 which says that a council cannot dispose of its land for a consideration less than the best that can be reasonably obtained in the market, except with the express consent of the Secretary of State.
- 9.2 The overriding consideration of what constitutes consideration less than the best that can reasonably be obtained is the commercial value of the disposition to the local authority that is capable of being assessed by a valuer. In determining "best consideration reasonably obtainable", the only considerations that can be taken into account are those which have commercial or monetary value to the local authority.
- 9.3 In relation to the commercial value of the disposal, the following principles have emerged from case law:
 - What is reasonable in any particular case depends entirely on the facts of the transaction.
 - The duty to obtain the best price does not require the highest offer to be accepted, regardless of who makes it and when it is made. The court has recognised that there may be cases where trustees could properly refuse a higher price and proceed with a lower offer. Each case will depend on its facts.
- 9.4 Local authorities cannot justify a disposal on the sole ground that non-monetary consideration is being provided.
- 9.5 However, the government recognises that there may be circumstances where a local authority considers it is appropriate to dispose of land at an undervalue.
- 9.6 Under the Secretary of State's General Consent, a specific consent is not required for the disposal of any interest in land that the authority considers will help it to secure the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-

being of its area. In this instance, JAHA's proposals at section 4.1 of this report will meet these criteria.

- 9.7 Even where a specific proposal to dispose of land for less than the best consideration falls within the terms of the general consent, a local authority should comply with usual and prudent commercial practices, including obtaining the view of a professionally qualified valuer as to the likely amount of the undervalue.
- 9.8 So in this instance, although the transaction appears to be at an undervalue it is still within the Council's powers to accept it because it can take into account the financial value of the social, cultural and environmental benefits to be gained including any revenue savings. It would also fall within the General Consent as a disposal for the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area which is the regeneration of the Property by creating a heritage, arts and community co-working hub.

Subsidy Control regime

- 9.9 If publicly owned land is disposed of at less than best consideration, the local authority is potentially providing a subsidy to the purchaser. To engage the new rules, assistance would need to fulfil the condition that is "has or could have, an effect on trade or investment between the UK and the EU. This looks unlikely in these circumstances.

Open Space

- 9.14 Since there is an area of land within the Property that is classed as public open space, the Council must comply with the procedures for disposing of open space set out in section 123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972. Under this provision, the Council must advertise the disposal in a local newspaper for two consecutive weeks. The public then has a further two weeks in which to lodge any objections. Due regard must be given to any objections received as a result of this advert. A delegation has been recommended to provide for this eventuality. Any objections will be considered by officers. If substantial issues arise, then officers will refer the matter back to Policy Committee

Asset of Community Value

- 9.15 On 22nd March 2021 (after the property had been marketed) Reading Civic Society launched a nomination for the Cemetery which requests that the Property be listed as an Asset of Community Value. The aim stated in the Society's ACV nomination is to encourage the whole Cemetery to be better cared for by the local community, working in partnership with the Council, and thus for it to deliver a wider community benefit.
- 9.16 No restrictions on disposing of the Property arise from nominations and therefore the Council as landowner, having commenced the disposal process by the date the nomination application was received, can proceed with the disposal process notwithstanding the need to consider and make a determination on the Society's application.
- 9.17 The sale of the Arch does not prohibit the Cemetery and Arch being listed as an ACV and the application will be considered in line with the Council's process and governance and relevant regulations.

- 9.18 The effect of a listing as an ACV is that it allows a community organisation the opportunity to develop a business case and find funding to purchase the site and hold it for community purposes. Members will note that if they proceed with the recommended action in this report, then that objective will be achieved as the purchaser is a Community Interest Company.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

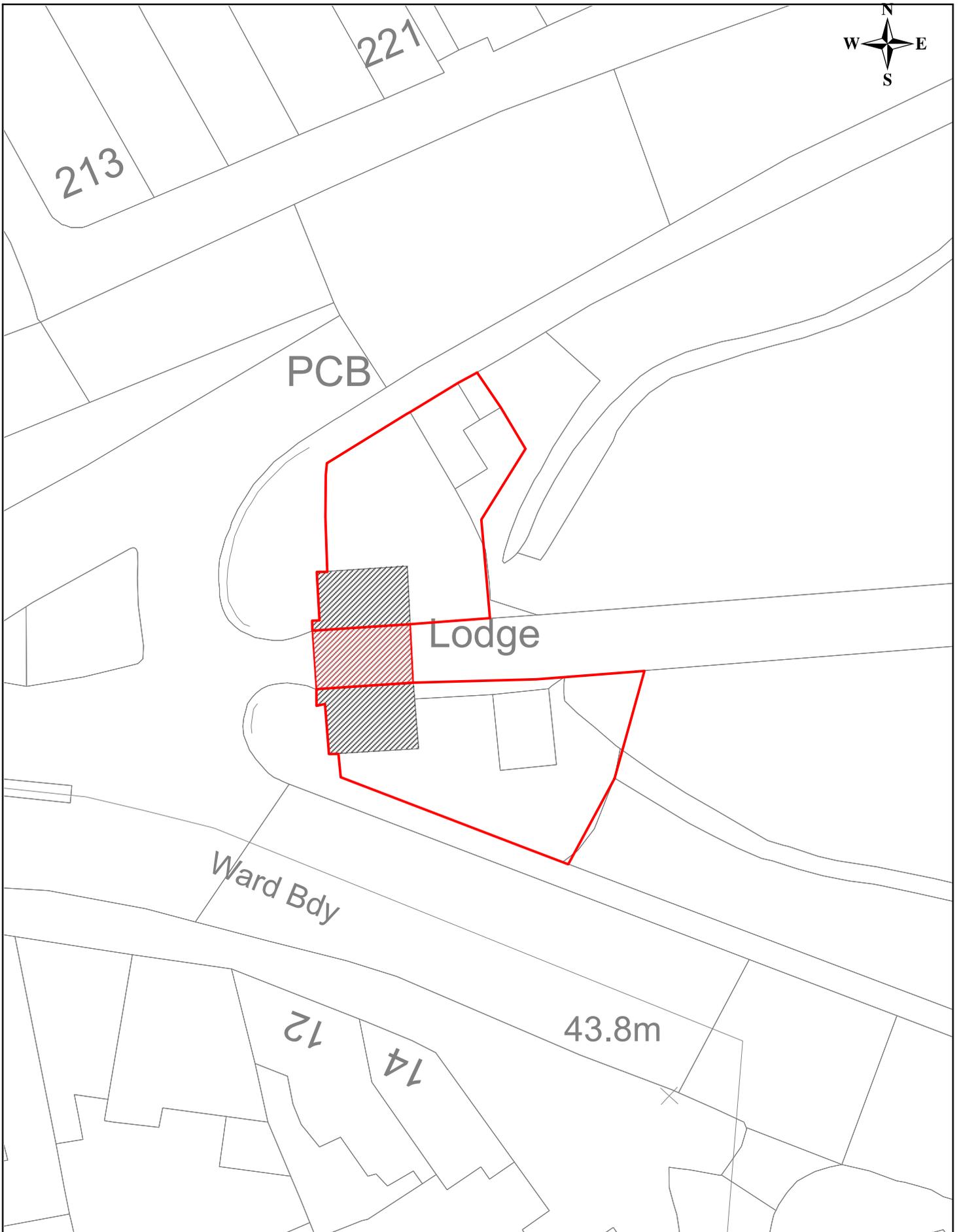
- 10.1 Each potential purchaser brings some risk, see Appendix D for summary of financial implications.
- 10.2 The offer from Bidder 3 is the highest but was received 18 days after the deadline, therefore this is invalid.
- 10.3 Although JAHA's bid is not the top offer financially, it provides the best social return supporting the local economic, community and social wellbeing opportunities.
- 10.4 The Councils Conservation & Urban Design Officer advises the following concerns in relation to the residential conversion offers:
- Listed building consent issues;
 - Conservation & renovation - limited information provided by both offers on the scope of works required and the costing of these works;
 - Environmental issues - there is an air monitoring station close to the Cemetery that indicates the location has high air pollution levels that raise concerns for residential use on public health grounds.

Therefore although the only other valid offer is £60k more than the recommended bid (JAHA), it is unlikely to receive approval to develop the site for a residential conversion and as the offer is conditional on planning, this increases the risk for the council.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None relevant to the report

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Title: Cemetery Arch, Reading Cemetery, London Road, Reading, RG1 3AQ

File:
Produced by Valuation Section

Date: 25/06/2021 Scale at A4: 1:500
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