

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 22 MARCH 2022

Present: Councillor Eden (Mayor);

Councillors Edwards, Woodward, Debs Absolom, David Absolom, Ayub, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Carnell, Davies, Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Hacker, Hoskin, James, Khan, McElroy, McEwan, Mitchell, Mpofu-Coles, O'Connell, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, R Singh, Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Stevens, Terry, White, J Williams, R Williams, Sokale (Deputy Mayor), Leng and Whitham

Apologies: Councillors Ballsdon, Challenger, Lovelock, Manghnani, Maskell, McGonigle, Rynn, DP Singh and Duveen

45. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Order of Business

The Mayor used her discretion under Council Procedure Rule 5(3)(a) to change the order of business and took Agenda item 10, 'Council Response to the Ukraine Crisis', as Agenda item 6A, immediately after Agenda item 6, 'Questions from Councillors'.

(b) Reading's response to the invasion of Ukraine and Minute's Silence

The Mayor thanked everyone who had donated to the various appeals being run by those in Reading whether in kind or financially, including her appeal to raise funds for Reading Ukrainian Community Centre. She expressed the Council's distress at the devastation caused by the war in Ukraine and the victims who had become refugees, internally displaced, or trapped in cities like Mariupol, and those who had been injured and killed. The Mayor invited Councillors and other attendees at the meeting to join her in a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

(c) Retiring Councillors

As this was the last meeting prior to the Council elections on 5th May 2022, the Mayor invited the Group Leaders to pay tribute to Councillors who would not be standing for re-election. Councillor Brock spoke about Councillor David Absolom, Debs Absolom, James, Pearce, D Singh, Sokale and R Williams; Councillor Mitchell spoke about Councillors Manghnani, Skeats and Stanford-Beale; and Councillor O'Connell spoke about Councillor Duveen. Additionally, Councillor Hacker spoke about Councillor Maskell. The Mayor added her thanks to Councillor Sokale for the support she had given as her Deputy Mayor since November 2021.

46. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

47. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

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	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Cllr R Singh	Kentwood Hill Allotments	Cllr Brock
2.	Cllr Rynn	Readybike	Cllr Page
3.	Cllr R Singh	Fly Tipping	Cllr Barnett-Ward
4.	Cllr White	Solar Panels on Schools	Cllr Pearce
5.	Cllr White	Central Club Update	Cllr Brock

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

48. COUNCIL RESPONSE TO UKRAINE CRISIS

In accordance with Standing Order 14(10)(a), Councillor Brock received the consent of the Council to alter his motion, as follows:

‘Following the sixth bullet point of the section which starts: “Consequently, this Council resolves to:” include three additional bullet points, as set out below, after the words “Reaffirm our commitment as a City of Sanctuary through beginning the application process for ‘Council of Sanctuary’ status:

- Work with local specialists to provide trauma-informed training to all appropriate staff at the Council and in the voluntary sector who will be directly supporting these families.
- Work with Reading’s schools to support the families, as our schools have such an important role in safeguarding our children.
- Thank the people of Reading for their immense compassion and generosity of spirit shown towards all Ukrainians and, specifically, to also support Reading’s Polish and Eastern European communities who are already doing so much to support their Ukrainian neighbours.”’

Pursuant to Notice, the following ‘altered’ motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor Mpofu-Coles and CARRIED:

Resolved -

That this Council notes that:

- The invasion of Ukraine by Russian military forces has precipitated a humanitarian crisis.
- The United Nations General Assembly has condemned Russia’s aggression, calling for both the full withdrawal of Russian military forces and respect for the sovereignty, independence, and internationally recognised borders of Ukraine.

This Council believes that:

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- Reading's Ukrainian community requires support that is both expressed and material, and that the Reading Ukrainian Community Centre has shown leadership in providing such support.
- Reading, as a recognised City of Sanctuary, has a duty and a moral obligation to provide support to those seeking refuge from conflict.

Consequently, this Council resolves to:

- Formally condemn the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, in line with United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-11/1.
- Work with the Reading Ukrainian Community Centre and other partners to provide support for those seeking refuge.
- Immediately earmark provision of £25,000 to support voluntary and community organisations working with, and additional Council service requirements for, refugees from the conflict.
- Proactively approach the Government and indicate the Council's willingness to play a full role in all appropriate schemes for resettling refugees from Ukraine.
- Prepare to support, in addition to national schemes, up to ten families via the Local Sponsorship Scheme, acknowledging that details of the scheme are still forthcoming at the time of writing.
- Reaffirm our commitment as a City of Sanctuary through beginning the application process for 'Council of Sanctuary' status.
- Work with local specialists to provide trauma-informed training to all appropriate staff at the Council and in the voluntary sector who will be directly supporting these families.
- Work with Reading's schools to support the families, as our schools have such an important role in safeguarding our children.
- Thank the people of Reading for their immense compassion and generosity of spirit shown towards all Ukrainians and, specifically, to also support Reading's Polish and Eastern European communities who are already doing so much to support their Ukrainian neighbours.

The implementation of the above to be achieved by delegating authority to the Chief Executive, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, and the Director of Finance. Council further delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to vary the above as additional requirements manifest.

49. INVESTING IN READING'S FUTURE: READING BOROUGH COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2022-25

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The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report on the Council's new Corporate Plan 'Investing in Reading's Future: Reading Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2022-25'. The report explained that the Council had adopted a one-year plan in March 2021, due to the level of uncertainty associated with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. In contrast, the new Corporate Plan set out a three-year plan for the period 2022-25, it would take forward and build on the themes and priorities set out in last year's Plan.

The Plan described the major achievements and progress made over the last year and set out the Council's priorities and future work programme to deliver against the three themes of: Healthy Environment, Thriving Communities and Inclusive Economy, which would be underpinned by the foundational activity of an efficient and effective organisation. The Appendix to the Corporate Plan detailed the projects, initiatives, and measures that would be monitored to track progress against the Council's goals. The progress made against the measures would continue to be reported to Councillors and published in the quarterly Performance Report to Policy Committee. This would ensure focus was maintained on the Council's vision: 'to ensure that Reading realises its potential - and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success'.

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

Resolved -

That the Council's Corporate Plan, titled 'Investing in Reading's Future: Reading Borough Council Corporate Plan 2022-25' be approved as included at Appendix 1 to the report.

50. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/23

Further to Minute 15 of the Personnel Committee held on 16 March 2022, the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report outlining the draft Pay Policy Statement, which was appended to the report. The report stated that Local Authorities were required under Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 (the Act) to prepare a Pay Policy Statement that articulated the Council's policy towards the pay of the workforce, particularly senior staff and the lowest paid employees.

The report explained that each local authority was an individual employer and had the autonomy to make decisions on pay that were appropriate to local circumstances and which delivered value for money for local taxpayers. Section 40 of the Act required authorities, in developing their Pay Policy Statement, to have regard to any guidance that had been published by the Secretary of State. This included Communities and Local Government guidance on Openness and Accountability in Local Pay and the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency (as amended). The Act basically required Councils to produce a Pay Policy Statement annually that was accessible for council tax payers to be able to take an informed view of whether local decisions on all aspects of remuneration were fair.

The Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 had been updated as follows:

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- Paragraph 5.2 had been updated to reflect the current status of the national pay negotiations for 2021;
- Section 7 had been updated to reflect the new Living Wage Foundation hourly rate which had increased to £9.90. It would be implemented at the Council from 1 April 2022. It might be necessary to pay a Living Wage supplement to staff below this rate, depending on the outcome of the national pay negotiations for 2021/22 and 2022/23;
- New pay multiples in Section 8;
- Annex D (Council employees in salary bands) had been updated with data from 1 April 2021 and Section 10 (Pay Profile) had been updated to reflect the changes.

The report stated that further updates might be required to the Pay Policy Statement and delegated authority was sought for the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services, to make any necessary changes.

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

Resolved -

- (1) That the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved;
- (2) That the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services, be authorised to update the Pay Policy Statement with new pay scales and pay ratios, when the pay discussions between the national employers and joint trade unions for 2021/22 and 2022/23 had been concluded.

51. THE GLOBAL COVENANT OF MAYORS FOR ENERGY AND CLIMATE

The Executive Director for Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the Global Covenant of Mayors for Energy and Climate (GCoM), which was the largest global alliance for city climate leadership, built upon the commitment of over 11,500 cities and local governments around the world. These cities, drawn from six continents and 142 countries, collectively represented more than 1 billion people and were united by a shared long-term vision to support voluntary action to combat climate change. The stated mission of GCoM was as follows:

‘We envision a world where committed mayors and local governments - in alliance with partners - accelerate, ambitious, measurable climate and energy initiatives that lead to a low-emission and climate-resilient future’.

The report proposed that Reading Borough Council should join GCoM as a further expression of its commitment to ambitious climate action, and to access the practical associated benefits. The GCoM would require a letter of commitment, which was

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attached at Appendix 1 to the report, to be 'signed by an appropriately mandated official according to local governmental procedure'.

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

Resolved -

- (1) That the achievements of the Council and its partners in the Reading Climate Change Partnership in taking forward successive climate change strategies for Reading, as summarised in paragraphs 3.5-3.6 of the report, be noted;
- (2) That the Leader of the Council be authorised to sign the letter of commitment, attached at Appendix 1 of the report, to enable the Council to join the Global Covenant of Mayors for Energy and Climate.

52. SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING - 25 MAY 2022

Pursuant to Notice, the following motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor James and CARRIED:

Resolved -

That the Council resolves to convene, on 25th May 2022, a special meeting for the purpose of considering nominations for conferring the title of Honorary Alderman or Honorary Alderwoman, in accordance with section 249 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the criteria approved by the Council on 23rd February 2022, on the following persons:

- (1) Tony Jones, for having rendered eminent service on Reading Borough Council as a member for the Redlands, Battle, and Whitley wards, including two terms as Mayor of Reading and having held senior political office.
- (2) Jeanette Skeats, for having rendered eminent service on Reading Borough Council as a member for the Thames ward, including a term as Mayor of Reading and having held senior political office.
- (3) Joe Williams, for having rendered eminent service on the former Berkshire County Council as a member for the Katesgrove ward and having an exceptional record of community service and leadership.

(Councillors Skeats and Terry declared non-pecuniary interests in this item, by virtue of being nominated and having a partner who had been nominated to receive the title of Honorary Alderman or Honorary Alderwoman respectively. Councillors Skeats and Terry remained in the meeting while the item was debated).

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(The meeting closed at 8.38 pm)