

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 4 APRIL 2022

Present: Councillors Page (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Ennis, Hoskin, McElroy, McEwan, Mitchell, O'Connell, Pearce, Robinson, Skeats, Terry, Challenger (substitute) and Leng (substitute)

Remote attendance: (non-voting) Councillors Brock (Chair), Barnett-Ward, Emberson, Rowland and White

89. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair invited Councillor Skeats to address the Committee on the occasion of her last meeting after serving as a Councillor since 1996.

90. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

91. QUESTIONS

Questions on the following matters were submitted by members of the public:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Will Cross	Road Repairs in Redlands	Cllr Page

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr Singh	Environmental Impact of Development of Land Surrounding Tilehurst Allotments	Cllr Page
2.	Cllr White	Tackling Fly-tipping of Bulky Waste	Cllr Barnett-Ward

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

92. CAVERSHAM COURT STABLES

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval for the disposal of Caversham Court Stables (the Property) on a 10-year lease. The Property was shown on a plan attached to the report at Appendix A. Confidential information relating to the disposal was also set out in Appendices B-F which had been submitted to the Committee in closed session (Minute 98 below refers).

The report explained that the Property, a Grade II listed building, was currently vacant and had been declared surplus. In 2015/16 it had been marketed for short-term

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commercial leases, but the preferred letting had not progressed due to parking issues raised during the planning application process. In February 2018, the Property had been re-marketed but issues had been raised with the presence of the gardener's office within the building complex. The gardening service was a requirement of the capital and revenue lottery grant for the upgrade of Caversham Court Gardens and a range of options had been considered, with the only viable option being to relocate to a new purpose-built office within the adjacent allotment. A detailed design feasibility had been carried out including costings, but issues raised during the Listed Building application process meant the proposed site building had not been suitable. As a condition of any lease the gardener's office would remain in situ either using the current separate welfare facilities or with a reconfigured layout at an estimated one-off cost to the Council of circa £10,000.

The report explained that the Property had been remarketed in 2021 on the open market and in accordance with the Third Sector Policy, and that a total of nine offers had been received: three from the third sector and six from private individuals/developers. The offers included retaining the Property for office use as well as a change of use to educational and residential uses. All offers had been on the basis of a leasehold disposal with the Council retaining the freehold and a landlord role to enable better control on enforcing future uses and obligations in the context of the listed gardens. Further information on the bids was provided in the Confidential Summary Information Appendix B and Confidential Bid Application Summary Table Appendix C considered in closed session.

The report explained that the top Third Sector offer had been made by Rabble Theatre Group and was an unconditional offer, subject to survey, to lease the Property for 10 years with an option to purchase on a 999-year leasehold. They had submitted a detailed Business Plan and Third Sector Bid and had undertaken a range of building, financial and professional due diligence as part of the submission. The offer did not require the reconfiguration of the gardener's office. The full bid was set out at Appendix D (submitted in closed session) and was supported by Cultural Services, whose comments were set out in Appendix E (considered in closed session), and by the Council's Conservation and Urban Design Officer in the context of the proposed use of the listed building.

The report stated that the highest commercial offer was a leasehold, unconditional, owner-occupier's offer subject to surveys. The proposal was to keep the building as offices and potentially subdivide them into separate units. This was an unconditional offer and represented Best Consideration in accordance with section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The report explained, although the offer from Rabble did not represent Best Consideration under the requirements of S.123 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council could dispose of the Property to Rabble under the General Disposal Consent (England) 2003 (General Consents) if it considered that in doing so, the disposal would help secure the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of its area. In this instance, Rabble's proposals would meet these criteria and it was therefore proposed to grant Rabble Theatre Group a lease of the Property for a

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period of 10 years with an option to purchase after 10 years on a 999-year basis. The detailed terms were set out in the Confidential Summary information Appendix B considered in closed session. Rabble would work with the Council and partners, including grant organisations to deliver the key outputs of their business plan, summarised in Appendices D and E, and to support the Council's 'Made in Reading' identity, create opportunities through collaboration and support key elements of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Resolved -

- (1) That, taking into account the information provided in closed session, it be agreed to grant Rabble Theatre Group a 10-year lease at the Caversham Court Stables together with an option to purchase a 999-year leasehold interest;**
- (2) That, in the event that the bid proposal or offer price was subsequently reduced or altered or the purchaser did not perform to an acceptable timescale, the Executive Director for Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Director of Finance, Leader of the Council, the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised 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.**

93. CONTRACTS FOR GRANT FUNDED SERVICES FOR THOSE ROUGH SLEEPING / AT RISK OF ROUGH SLEEPING

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report outlining funding applications to the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (DLUHC) for the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) 2022-25 and Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) 2021-2024 to relieve and prevent rough sleeping in Reading. Subject to approval and award from DLUHC the report sought authority to procure and award contracts utilising the grant funds and authorisation to enter into new contract arrangements from 1 October 2022.

The report explained that the Council had applied for DLUHC grant funding of a maximum sum of £1.8m to fund Housing First and tailored off the streets support under RSI 2022-25, for which allocation announcements were due in April 2022. This three-year funding award from RSI 2022-25 would provide the opportunity for longer contracts than had been possible through previous iterations of RSI. The full application for RSI 2022-25 grant also included funds of circa £1m for extending existing interventions until new contract start dates in October 2022 to ensure smooth implementation and that no vulnerable people

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were disadvantaged, increasing FTE internal operational and strategic capacity and seasonal demand/surge funding for emergency accommodation.

The report proposed that, subject to grant funds being allocated and awarded to Reading under RSI 2022-25, an open tender exercise be carried out and 30-month contracts of a maximum sum of £1.8m awarded to the successful tenderer(s) for Housing First and tailored off the street support functions with contract start dates of 1 October 2022.

The report also stated that grant funds had been applied for and awarded to the value of £220k under DLUHC's Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) 2021-24 to deliver "Move-on Homes". Funds would support couples with multiple needs to move on from supported housing into settled accommodation with intensive tenancy sustainment support. It was proposed that, an open tender exercise be carried out and a 24-month contract awarded, with an overall contract value of £220k, to the successful tenderer for support to couples in "Move-on Homes" with a contract start date of 1 October 2022.

Resolved -

- (1) That the following be noted:**
 - (a) the application to the DLUHC for Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) 2022-25 funding in the maximum sum of £1.8m to commission (a) Housing First and (b) tailored support from the streets into settled accommodation including navigators, outreach/in-reach & out of hours tenancy sustainment;**
 - (b) the DLUHC award of funding in the sum of £220k from the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) 2021-24 to deliver "Move-on Homes";**
- (2) That, subject to the successful outcome of the application in 1(a) above, the Assistant Director of Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, be authorised to:**
 - (i) enter into a grant agreement with DLUHC for it to provide Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) 2022-25 funding of a maximum sum of £1.8m; and**
 - (ii) procure the necessary contracts to implement the RSI 2022-25 funding conditions and enter into contracts with the successful tenderers in respect of the services referred to 1(a) above;**
- (3) That the Assistant Director of Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, be authorised to procure the necessary contracts to implement RSAP 2021-24 funding conditions and enter into contracts with the successful tenderers in respect of services to deliver "Move-on Homes" referred to in 1(b) above.**

94. ANNUAL PARKING SERVICES REPORT 2020-2021

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report presenting the Annual Report on Civil Parking Enforcement, as required by the Traffic Management Act. The Parking Services Annual Report 2020 - 2021 was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and a Climate Impact Assessment was attached at Appendix 2.

The report noted that the 202-2021 annual report set out financial details relating to total income and expenditure on the parking account and statistical information relating to the number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued, paid, cancelled, and challenged, as required by the Statutory Guidance. It also included information on Residents Parking Permits, Bus Lane Enforcement, Blue Badge Issues and Enforcement, Car Parks, Pay and Display and Freedom of Information requests.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Parking Services Annual Report 2020-21 be noted;**
- (2) That it be noted that the annual reports for 2015-2020 were available on the Council's website and that the 2020/21 annual report would be published in April 2022.**

95. STRATEGIC HR & PAYROLL SYSTEM - CONTRACT PROCUREMENT

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report seeking authority to procure and award a contract for the provision of a third party hosted, strategic HR & Payroll system for a period of two years, with a possible extension period of a further two years.

The report noted that the Council required an HR & Payroll system to effectively manage and pay employees in compliance with relevant legislation, and to meet its obligations in respect of statutory reporting. Midland HR's iTrent software had been used for a number of years, primarily for payroll and pensions provision, the most recent contract extension being for five years from 2017 with the contract due to expire in May 2022. The system was hosted by Midland HR who also provided helpdesk support and upgrades funded as part of the ongoing annual system costs.

The report explained that since 2019 the Council had transformed its HR service and the development and utilisation of iTrent had increased significantly with additional modules and functionality now including: Recruitment & Onboarding, Performance Management, Absence Management, Annual Leave, HR Case Management and Employee and Manager Self Service. The implementation costs of £280,318 had been met from the Council's Delivery Fund due to their transformational nature.

The report proposed that, due to the investment in the use of iTrent since 2019, its integral position in the Council's processes, and the results of benchmarking showing that this solution was approximately 20% less expensive than the next best priced alternative, the Council retain the iTrent system for a further period with a proposed procurement route to award via the G-Cloud Framework. The new agreement would see all existing

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functionality retained with new provision added, including E-signatures, interactive payslips and Chatbot providing an enhanced user experience. A reciprocal clause would be included to ensure that significant changes in staffing numbers were reflected in the annual charges. The contract would be structured over two years, with the option to extend by two further years.

Resolved -

That the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services, be authorised to procure and award a contract for provision of a third party hosted, strategic HR & Payroll system for a period of two years, with a possible extension period of a further two years.

96. 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 item 97 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.

97. EDUCATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM REPLACEMENT

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report seeking authority to enter a contract for the replacement of the Education Management System currently used by Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC). The provision and maintenance of the system were delivered to BFfC through the ICT Service Level Agreement, with the system contract being the responsibility of the Council. The new system contract was required to deliver both service improvements and efficiencies which were detailed in the report.

Resolved -

That the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Digital and Information Officer and the Assistant Director of Procurement & Contracts, be authorised to award the contract for a replacement Education Management System.

(Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3).

98. CAVERSHAM COURT STABLES - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Further to the report submitted to the Committee on a proposal to dispose of Caversham Court Stables (Minute 92 above refers), the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out additional confidential information which the Committee were asked to take into account in making a decision on the proposed disposal. The following documents were attached to the report:

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- Appendix B - Confidential Summary information
- Appendix C - Confidential Bid Application Summary Table
- Appendix D - Confidential RABBLE Theatre Group Third Sector Bid
- Appendix E - Confidential Culture Development Officer Comments
- Appendix F - Confidential Valuer's Report - Section 123 Under Value Report

Resolved -

That the information set out in Appendices B-F be noted and taken into account in the Committee's consideration of the proposal to dispose of Caversham Court Stables.

(Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3).

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.20 pm)