

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 21 SEPTEMBER 2022

Present: Councillor Brock (Chair);

Councillors Page (Vice-Chair), Barnett-Ward, Emberson, Ennis, Hoskin, Leng, McEwan, Mitchell, Robinson, Rowland, Thompson and White

Apologies: Councillors McElroy and Terry

21. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22. QUESTIONS

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

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	J Wellum	GLL - Targeted work in the community	Cllr Barnett-Ward
2.	J Wellum	GLL - Community Benefit	Cllr Barnett-Ward
3.	J Wellum	GLL - Financing	Cllr Barnett-Ward

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr White	When will Palmer Park swimming pool open?	Cllr Barnett-Ward
2.	Cllr White	Cleaning Graffiti Tags On Phone Cabinets	Cllr Rowland
3.	Cllr White	Providing Warm Spaces This Winter	Cllr Brock

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

23. CONTRACTS FOR GRANT FUNDED 'MOVE-ON HOMES' WITH 24/7 INTENSIVE SUPPORT FOR THOSE ROUGH SLEEPING / AT RISK OF ROUGH SLEEPING

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking authority to procure and enter new contract arrangements from 1 April 2023 for the provision of support for 50 units of 'Move-On Homes' at The Nova Project and 57 Caversham Road to relieve and prevent rough sleeping in Reading. An Equality Impact Assessment was attached to the report at Appendix A. The value of grant funding for the schemes contained exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and had been provided separately to members of the Committee.

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The report noted that the contracts would be funded utilising Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) grant funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (DLUHC). Under DLUHC's RSAP Round 1 Reading had been awarded three years revenue funding to deliver 50 units of "Move-on Homes" between 2021 and 2024. These units provided an off the streets offer to those rough sleeping, or those who were at risk of rough sleeping having previously and repeatedly been verified. The units had a specific focus on supporting with mental ill-health, substance misuse and preventing re-offending and returns to the streets. Support to ten "Move-on Homes" at The Nova Project for females with complex needs requiring a 24/7 supportive environment had been delivered under contract with St Mungo's since 21 December 2020. 40 units of "Move-on Homes" at 57 Caversham Road had been completed in November 2021 and all clients had moved into their self-contained studio with 24/7 on-site staffing presence by January 2022, with support to clients also delivered by St Mungo's.

The report explained both projects were specifically commissioned to enable a longer period of support with mental ill-health, substance misuse and re-offending than traditional supported accommodation models and that clients could be accommodated for up to 2-3 years before moving on. Multi-agency work to progress move-on from these units was ongoing with outreach and in-reach support provided by the NHS and Public Health, who commissioned a Health Outreach Liaison Team and Multiple Disadvantage Outreach Team respectively. These specialist services provided wrap-around health and substance misuse support, aiming to transition clients into core/mainstream support services and independent living.

The report summarised the history of contract arrangements for both sites, which would expire on 31 March 2023, and proposed that an open tender exercise be undertaken and a 12-month contract awarded from 1 April 2023 for a 24/7 staffed environment of accommodation with support at the 50 units of "Move-on Homes" across The Nova Project and 57 Caversham Road. There was no option to include a contract extension at this stage as the conditions under which RSAP were bid for, and awarded, were for grant to be spent by March 2024.

Resolved -

- (1) That the award of funding from the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) 2021-24 to deliver 50 units of "Move-on Homes" in 2023/24 comprising 10 units at The Nova Project and 40 units at 57 Caversham Road be noted;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, Director of Finance and Director of Procurement and Commissioning be authorised to:**
 - (a) undertake the necessary procurement exercise to adhere to RSAP 2021-24 grant funding conditions and**

- (b) enter into a contract with the successful tenderer in respect of services to deliver the “Move-on Homes schemes referred to in (1) above, for 12 months from 1 April 2023.

24. SPEND AND FUNDING APPROVAL FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO LEISURE FACILITIES

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out proposals to make improvements to South Reading Leisure Centre’s Pool Tank and install a waymarked paving route for vision impaired users from Wokingham Road to the new swimming pool at Palmer Park Sports Stadium. The report also sought authority to agree and sign a Sport England Strategic Facilities Funding agreement, subject to agreeable terms and conditions, of £1.5m towards the costs of the new leisure facilities at Rivermead and Palmer Park.

The report explained that the concrete and reinforcing within the South Reading Leisure Centre pool tank structure was corroding and sought spend approval for £295,000 to make repairs to extend the life of the swimming pool. The repair of this structure was the responsibility of the Council as set out within the Leisure Contract with Greenwich Leisure Limited. Spend approval was also sought for £36,000 to provide a waymarked pedestrian route for vision impaired users from the bus stop on Wokingham Road to the new swimming pool at Palmer Park Sports Stadium. Both schemes would be funded from the Small Leisure Schemes in the capital programme.

The report explained that throughout the procurement, planning and build process of new leisure facilities the Council had been working closely with Sport England, and had been invited to submit an expression of interest to their Strategic Facilities Investment Fund in 2021. A bid for £1m for Rivermead and £500k for Palmer Park had been successful and approval was sought to enter into the funding agreements.

Resolved -

- (1) That spend approval be given of £295,000 for the repair to the structure of the South Reading Leisure Centre Pool Tank and £36,000 to install a waymarked paving route for vision impaired users from Wokingham Road to the new swimming pool at Palmer Park Sports Stadium, funded from the Small Leisure Schemes in the capital programme;
- (2) That the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Lead Councillor for Leisure and Culture be authorised to procure and enter contracts for the works to the vision impaired paving route (£36,000) from Wokingham Road to the new swimming pool at Palmer Park Sports Stadium, funded from the Small Leisure Schemes in the capital programme;
- (3) That the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Director of Finance, the Assistant

Director for Legal and Democratic Services and the Lead Councillor for Leisure and Culture, be authorised to enter into Sport England funding agreements for Rivermead (£1m) and Palmer Park (£500k) in line with Standing Orders, subject to acceptable terms and conditions.

25. READING LIBRARIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME: WITHDRAWAL OF LIBRARY FINES

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on a proposal to remove library fines for overdue items and other fees.

The report noted that when library services had been made fully digital during the first Covid lockdown in spring 2020 fines had been, by necessity, suspended. Whilst in-person library services had now resumed, the fine suspension had been retained to encourage use and support people returning to the library. Fines previously had been levied per item per day, and in the last full year of charging had raised £22,000. The absence of income from fines had been covered by increased income elsewhere in the library service.

The report explained that the proposal to remove fines for late return of books was intended to remove a barrier to people accessing the library, given that there was evidence that library use was lowest in areas of multiple deprivation. It would enable more people to benefit from the opportunities arising from library use without any fear of future financial penalties from late return, as well as encourage a return to the service for those who felt they could not use library services as they owed money. For the same reason it was proposed to remove reservation fees to make all stock freely available to all.

The report stated that the proposal was a part of the Council's response to the current cost of living crisis and would relieve a financial pressure on residents without impacting on the Council's budget. The library service had in recent years concentrated on letting space and the provision of services such as a visa verification service to provide a diversified income base. These services offered good returns and were complementary to the core provision. The success of this diversification meant that total income recorded now ran at levels around 150% higher than five years ago, despite a reduction in income from fines and charges.

Resolved -

- (1) That the work undertaken to improve the income position of the Reading library service, increasing the library service's income to its highest ever level, be noted;**
- (2) That the proposal to remove library fines for overdue items and other fees, in line with other local authorities where fines for late return of items on library users had been removed to encourage greater library use, be approved;**

- (3) That it be noted that the changes were a measure of support for residents in a time of a cost of living crisis, which had no overall impact on Council financial position, and would also support marketing, developing and increasing use of the service.

26. BUILDING SERVICES MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL CONTRACT AWARD

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval to procure, award and enter into several new mechanical and electrical (M&E) contracts for planned preventative maintenance and reactive repairs for water treatment (legionella), lift servicing and maintenance, and maintenance of the Trend Building Monitoring System.

The report noted that these contracts were critical for the Council and necessary to maintain statutory compliance and to ensure that services such as heating, lifts, water systems and automated equipment were kept safe, functional and running at maximum efficiency. Services supplied by these various contracts were of a specialist nature for which the Council did not directly employ appropriately trained staff and it was custom and practise for organisations the size of local authorities to purchase them via specialist contractors or through a multi-disciplined Facilities Management contractor. It was therefore proposed to go to market and procure a contract offering best value for each work area via the Westworks Dynamic Purchasing System. Each contract would be for a term of five years.

Resolved -

That the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets, the Director of Finance and Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services, be authorised to procure, award and enter into the M&E Contracts for planned preventative maintenance and reactive repairs, through the Westworks Dynamic Purchasing System and be given approval to delegate any subsequent contract extension or variation in line with the contract terms for:

- (i) Water Treatment (legionella) for the period 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2027;**
- (ii) Lift Servicing and Maintenance for the period 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2027; and**
- (iii) Maintenance of the Trend Building Monitoring System for the period 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2027.**

27. ADULT SOCIAL CARE REFORM - MEETING THE FAIR COST OF CARE AND MARKET SUSTAINABILITY FUND REQUIREMENTS FOR READING

The Executive Director of Social Care and Health submitted a report outlining the requirements of the Fair Cost of Care and Market Sustainability Fund and providing an overview of the actions to date alongside the planned next steps including submission of a Draft Market Sustainability Plan to the Department of Health & Social Care.

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The report noted that the government had committed to a national programme of Adult Social Care reforms which would significantly impact on the 'cost' of Adult Social Care. The 'Fair Cost of Care' element of the reforms required local authorities to undertake a collaborative exercise with Adult Social Care Providers of Home Care (for people aged over 18) and Providers of Nursing and Residential services (for people aged over 65) to determine a 'Fair Cost of Care' and to develop a 3-year Market Sustainability Plan.

The report explained that the current care market was such that people who funded their own care often needed to pay much higher rates for their care than people whose care was commissioned by local authorities. This had long been considered unfair and the government was keen to create a system whereby comparable rates were paid for care, no matter whether the care was funded by the local authority or directly by the person receiving care. As a consequence of the government's social care reforms therefore, any care provider currently charging a higher rate to self-funders and/or using self-funder income for the same service to subsidise the true cost of care, might be at financial risk as this was unlikely to be a viable business model.

The report explained that the government had made available a three-year Fair Cost of Care and Market Sustainability Fund - "the Fund" - to support local authorities in ensuring the ongoing sustainability of their local care markets. A sum of £384k (of which 25% could be spent on implementation) had been made available to the Council this financial year, with future allocations to be confirmed, noting that current projections suggested that the cost of achieving the fair cost of care was likely to exceed the total amount of funding allocated to Reading.

This report outlined the requirements of the Fund, which included a fair cost of care exercise, and a market sustainability plan, and provided an overview of the actions to date alongside the planned next steps notably a requirement to publish a 'Fair Cost of Care' on the Council's website and submit a Draft Market Sustainability Plan to the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) by 14 October 2022. Failure to submit the requirements of the Fund might mean that a local authority would not have access to future Fund resource.

Resolved -

- (1) That the requirements of the Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund 2022/23 and the actions of officers to date to meet the requirements of the Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund in its first year (2022/23) be noted;**
- (2) That the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, be authorised to approve the submission of both the cost of care exercise and the provisional Market Sustainability Plan to the Department of Health & Social Care by 14 October 2022, and to publish the cost of care exercise outcome on the Council's website;**

- (3) That it be noted that the final Market Sustainability Plan outlining how the Market Sustainability & Fair Cost of Care Funds would be spent in Reading would be submitted and published in February 2023, after local government budgets had been finalised.

28. DACHS - BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY EQUIPMENT SERVICE JOINT PROCUREMENT

The Executive Director of Social Care and Health submitted a report seeking approval to join the Berkshire Community Equipment Service (BCES) Partnership commissioning process to commission a new service for provision of equipment and technological products to support people to live as independently as possible at home.

The report noted that the current contract was held between Nottingham Rehabilitation Service Healthcare (now known as Healthcare Pro) and the lead authority (West Berkshire Council) who acted on behalf of the BCES Partnership made up of all six Berkshire Unitary Authorities and the NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board, and NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board. The current 5-year contract had commenced on 1 April 2017 and been extended for a further two years to 31 March 2024 with no further contract extension available.

The report proposed that the Council join the Berkshire Community Equipment Service (BCES) Partnership commissioning process to commission a new service in line with the end of the current contract. It was proposed that the partnership enter into a new contract for an initial term of five years from 1 April 2024 with the ability to extend for another two years.

The report noted that the Berkshire Community Equipment service had been provided for over seven years and was well embedded in professional practice across Berkshire in both health and social care partners. The service and the provision of equipment played a significant role in keeping people safe and provided assurance to carers thus enabling independent living in people's own homes and reducing the impact on other more costly care services such as hospital admission, care home or domiciliary care provision.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Council enter into a joint procurement, led by West Berkshire for the provision of a County wide Community Equipment service on behalf of the Berkshire Community Equipment Partnership to go live on 1 April 2024, with a maximum total cost to the Council of £6.486m for a maximum term of 7 years (5 years with the option to extend for up to 2 years);
- (2) That the Executive Director of Social Care and Health, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, Director of Finance and Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services, be authorised to enter into a contract with West Berkshire Council for the provision of Equipment services post Procurement.

29. RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report setting out at Appendix 1 the updated Risk Management Policy and Procedure for approval.

The report summarised the changes to the Policy which had been updated to reflect best practice and to incorporate a formal Risk Management Procedure. Under the revised Policy the Council would be operating a more comprehensive risk management system, which will provide more robust governance and hence increased reassurance, and the report set out how this would be achieved. The revised Policy and Procedure had been endorsed by the Audit & Governance Committee at its meeting on 19 July 2022 (Minute 6 refers) for onward submission to Policy Committee.

Resolved -

That the updated Risk Management Policy and Procedure attached at Appendix 1 be approved.

30. 2022/23 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE AND MONITORING REPORT

This report sets out the projected revenue and capital outturn positions for 2022/23 for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Accounts as at the end of Quarter 1 (June 2022), as well as the performance against the measures of success published in the Council's Corporate Plan. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 - Financial Monitoring for Quarter 1
- Appendix 2 - Capital Programme for Quarter 1
- Appendix 3 - Corporate Plan Measures for Quarter 1
- Appendix 4 - Corporate Plan Projects for Quarter 1
- Appendix 5 - Debt Write-Offs (exempt information)

The report noted that the forecast General Fund (GF) revenue outturn position at the end of Quarter 1 included a projected adverse net variance on service expenditure of £4.058m. This variance was offset by a projected £4.616m positive net variance on Corporate budgets, of which £3.627m related to the unallocated Corporate Contingency, resulting in a projected overall positive net variance of £0.558m. The forecast adverse variance on services included net pressures totalling £0.564m within Adult Care and Health Services relating to care cost pressures; £1.669m within Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, primarily relating to ongoing income shortfalls in Car Parking and Planning as an ongoing impact of Covid-19; £1.761m within Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC), relating to pay, inflation and demand pressures; and a total £0.064m across Resources and Chief Executive Services relating to income pressures. Detailed explanations for these variances were set out in the report.

The report explained that the service budget pressures were offset by positive net variances within Corporate Budgets, specifically £1.713m on Capital Financing Costs as a result of the 2021/22 Capital Programme outturn position and £3.627m on Corporate Contingencies. Other Corporate Budgets were forecasting an adverse net variance of

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£0.724m. This was primarily due to a current forecast pressure of £0.934m relating to the 2022/23 pay award. A pay award of 2% was assumed as part of 2022/23 budget setting with additional contingency retained corporately to fund a pay award up to 4%. The pay offer made in July 2022 was estimated to cost an additional £1.434m above the amount budgeted (including the contingency) across the Council and BfC. BfC had included a forecast pressure of £0.500m in their forecast which was prior to the pay award offer announced in July, therefore the difference of £0.934m was included within the Corporate forecast.

The report stated that £1.570m (15%) of budgeted savings had been delivered to date in this financial year, with a further £5.415m (53%) of savings on track to be delivered by March 2023. £2.061m (20%) of savings were currently categorised as non-deliverable (red) and £1.178m (12%) categorised as at risk of delivery. There was therefore a potential impact on the 2023/24 budget should these savings not be deliverable on a recurring basis. These savings would be reviewed as part of the 2023/24 budget setting and 2023/24-2025/26 Medium Term Financial Strategy processes.

The report also explained that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was projecting a positive net variance of £2.505m as at the end of Quarter 1, which resulted in a forecast contribution to HRA reserves of £0.422m. The General Fund Capital Programme was forecast to spend to budget against a revised budget of £115.980m in 2022/23, and the HRA Capital Programme was forecast to spend to budget against a revised budget of £30.502m 2022/23. The report sought approval for the revisions to the General Fund and HRA capital programmes and spend approval for a number of schemes.

Resolved -

- (1) That it be noted that:
 - (a) The forecast General Fund revenue outturn position as at the end of Quarter 1 was a positive net variance of £0.558m;
 - (b) The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was projecting a positive net variance of £2.505m as at the end of Quarter 1, which resulted in a forecast contribution to HRA reserves of £0.422m;
 - (c) £1.570m (15%) of savings had been delivered (blue) to date in this financial year, with a further £5.415m (53%) of savings on track to be delivered (green) by March 2022; £2.061m (20%) of savings were currently categorised as non-deliverable (red) and £1.178m (12%) categorised as at risk of delivery (amber);
 - (d) There was a total £4.065m Delivery Fund available for 2022/23 (inclusive of 2021/22 approved carry forwards), at Quarter 1, £2.051m of this funding had been allocated out to approved schemes;
 - (e) The General Fund Capital Programme was forecast to spend to budget against a revised budget of £115.980m;
 - (f) The HRA Capital Programme was forecast to spend to budget against a revised budget of £30.502m;

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- (g) The performance achieved against the Corporate Plan success measures was set out in the report and Appendices 3 and 4;**
- (2) That the write-off of debts as set out in Section 8 and Appendix 5 relating to Non-Domestic Rates (£58,562.68) and Housing Benefit Overpayments (£25,944.98) be approved;**
- (3) That the amendments to the General Fund Capital Programme (as set out in further detail in Section 12 of the report and Appendix 2), resulting in a revised budget of £124.480m, be approved:**
- (3) That the amendments to the HRA Capital Programme (as set out in further detail in Section 12 of the report and Appendix 2), resulting in a revised budget of £30.502m, be approved;**
- (4) That spend approval be given for the following Capital Programme Schemes totalling £3.650m: 1 Dunsfold fit out for family contact centre, Katesgrove Community & YOS Refurbishment, Town Hall Equipment, Berkshire Record Office, Digitised TROs, Replacement Vehicles, Bennet Road EV Chargers, Hexagon Lighting and Prospect Park.**

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.54 pm)