

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 31 OCTOBER 2022

Present: Councillor Brock (Chair);

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

31. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

32. QUESTIONS

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr White	Tackling Fly Tipping with Free Bulky Waste Collection	Cllr Rowland
2.	Cllr White	Supporting our Schools through Education Crisis	Cllr McEwan

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

33. CONFIRMATION OF ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION TO REMOVE PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS THAT WOULD RESULT IN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Further to Minute 35 of the meeting held on 23 September 2021, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval to confirm an Article 4 Direction that would remove certain permitted development rights that would result in new residential dwellings across the town centre, district and local centres, core employment areas and a number of other commercial areas. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2: Summary of representations received and proposed response
- Appendix 3: Made Article 4 direction
- Appendix 4: Climate Impact Assessment Tool

The report noted that there had been significant concerns around the impact of permitted development rights within Reading, and that the Committee had agreed, at its meeting held on 23 September 2021 (Minute 35 refers) to make an Article 4 direction to remove the permitted development rights of greatest concern within a number of areas of Reading.

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The report explained that the proposed direction had been made on 10 November 2021, specifying that it would come into force on 15 November 2022, after a 12-month lead-in required to avoid the need for compensation. A period of consultation had been held in November-December 2021 and the representations received were summarised in Appendix 2 with detailed responses. The direction could not come into force unless it was confirmed by the Council taking the representations to the consultation into account. It was not considered that the representations received formed grounds not to proceed to confirmation. The report therefore recommended that the responses to the representations received to the consultation be agreed, and that the Direction as originally made, which was attached to the report at Appendix 3, be confirmed.

The report stated that national policy set a high bar for Article 4 directions that impacted on changes of use to residential, and that officials at the Department of Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) had expressed concerns that the evidence provided did not show that the smallest possible geographical area had been covered. Discussions between Council officers and DLUHC were ongoing and there was not expected to be a resolution of the issue before the direction was due to come into force on 15 November 2022. The advice from DLUHC had been to proceed with confirming the direction given the approaching date of coming into force and the fact that the Council did not have powers to amend the direction once it had been made. There remained a strong likelihood that the Secretary of State would use modification or cancellation powers; officers' understanding was that the power to modify the direction would be used based on an agreed approach with the Council, albeit that this was not required. The power to modify could be used after the direction came into force. Until such time as the Secretary of State modified or cancelled the direction, it would be in force as originally intended.

The report explained that confirmation of the direction at this point therefore represented a pragmatic approach that would allow discussions to continue and avoid the significant further delay of making a new direction. Notices of confirmation of the direction would need to be served, including by site notice, local advertisement, notification of statutory undertakers that owned land within the area, local businesses and the Secretary of State. The direction would come into force on 15 November 2022, and from that date any proposal for development specified in the direction, within the specified area, would require planning permission.

Resolved -

- (1) That the responses to the representations to the consultation on the Article 4 Direction, as set out in Appendix 2, be agreed;**
- (2) That the non-immediate Article 4 Direction made on 10 November 2021 covering the area shown in Appendix 3 be confirmed, to remove the following permitted development rights within Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended):**

- Part 3 class MA;

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- Part 3 class M;
- Part 3 class N;
- Part 20 class ZA;
- Part 20 class AA;
- Part 20 class AB.

34. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY - DELIVERY UPDATE

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report providing an update on work to realise the Connected Reading Digital Transformation Strategy that had been agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 12 July 2021 (Minute 21 refers). The report set out the progress made since the update report submitted to the meeting on 17 January 2022 (Minute 70 refers) and sought endorsement of the next steps planned. An Appendix to the report set out commercially sensitive financial detail that was defined as exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The report explained that, as had been anticipated in the original Connected Reading strategy, further development of digital delivery capability would be required to support current and planned delivery and it was clear that a level of external support would be needed. It was therefore proposed that a contract with a digital delivery partner was put in place for a two-year period, with two optional one-year extensions. Over that period, it was to be expected that there would be changes in requirements and priorities, and it was therefore proposed that the contract should be let as a framework, under which individual projects would be contracted as call-off orders. Each project would be subject to a business case and scrutinised to ensure value for money and affordability within the budget allocated.

Resolved:

- (1) That the progress made to date be noted;**
- (2) That continuation of the current workstreams be endorsed;**
- (3) That the Executive Director of Resources, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate Services and Resources and the Chief Digital & Information Officer, be authorised to award a framework contract for a Digital Transformation Partner, with the maximum contract value set out in the Appendix to the report, noting that each work package called off would be subject to individual approval to confirm affordability and value for money;**
- (4) That a further update on progress on implementation of the Digital Transformation Strategy be submitted to the Committee in Q1 2023/24.**

(Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3).

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(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 6.54 pm)