



**Reading**  
Borough Council  

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Working better with you

# **Summons and Agenda 30 January 2024**

**Chief Executive  
Reading Borough Council  
Civic Offices, Bridge Street,  
Reading, RG1 2LU**





**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

Jackie Yates  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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To: All Members of the Council

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22 January 2024

Your contact is: Michael Popham - Democratic Services Manager

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Reading Borough Council to be held at **Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Reading, on Tuesday, 30 January 2024 at 6.30 pm**, when it is proposed to transact the business specified in the Agenda enclosed herewith.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Yates', written over a light grey circular stamp.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE



## A G E N D A

1. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**  
To receive Mayor's Announcements.
  2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
To receive any declarations of interest.
  3. **MINUTES** 9 - 14  
The Mayor to sign the Minutes of the proceedings of the previous Council Meeting.
  4. **PETITIONS**  
To receive petitions in accordance with Standing Order 8.
  5. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**  
Questions in accordance with Standing Order 9.
  6. **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**  
Questions in accordance with Standing Order 10.
- Reports and Recommendations from Committees**
7. **COUNCIL TAX EMPTY & SECOND HOMES PREMIUMS** 15 - 24  
Report by Executive Director of Resources
  8. **APPROVAL OF THE LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME AND THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2024/25** 25 - 32  
Report by Executive Director of Resources
  9. **REVIEW OF THE STATEMENT OF GAMBLING LICENSING PRINCIPLES** 33 - 64  
Report by Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services
  10. **READING YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2023-2024** 65 - 124  
Report by Executive Director Children's Services
  11. **PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023/24** 125 - 154  
Report by Executive Director of Resources
  12. **COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2024/25** 155 - 164  
Report by Monitoring Officer

## **Motions**

### **13. READING FOOTBALL CLUB**

Councillor Ennis to move:

That this Council expresses its concern and indignation at the ongoing failure of the owner of Reading FC, founded in 1871, to run the club in a sustainable and proper way, as evidenced by ongoing and repetitive English Football League sanctions against both the club and the owner.

This Council also puts on record its support for the fan-led campaign, including 'Sell Before we Dai', and calls on the EFL and the future Independent Regulator to take the necessary action to end Dai Yongge's ownership of Reading FC, obliging him to sell the club to new owners with a long term interest in the club and the town.

This Council asks that the Chief Executive writes to the EFL to convey this motion and asking them further to take all possible actions towards developing a sustainable future for Reading FC and delivering a more robust model of football governance. The Chief Executive is also asked to make Berkshire's MPs aware of the same so that they may be encouraged to lobby on behalf of the club.

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**Present:** Councillor Page (Mayor);

Councillors Asare, Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Challenger, Cresswell, Cross, Davies, G Dennis, Eden, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gavin, Gittings, Goss, Griffith, Hornsby-Smith, Hoskin, Juthani, Keane, Keeping, Kitchingham, Lanzoni, Leng, Lovelock, Magon, McCann, McElroy, McEwan, McGoldrick, Moore, Mpofu-Coles, O'Connell, Robinson, Rowland, Singh, Tarar, Terry, Thompson, White, Williams, Woodward and Yeo.

**Apologies:** Councillors Hacker and Mitchell.

### **20. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **(a) Councillor McGoldrick**

The Mayor welcomed Councillor McGoldrick to her first Council meeting since being elected to represent Norcot Ward on 3 August 2023.

#### **(b) Changes to Committee & Working Group Memberships**

The Mayor reported that the Monitoring Officer had exercised his delegation on the recommendation of the Labour Group Leader to make the following changes to the membership of Committees and Working Groups:

- Councillor Finn McGoldrick had been appointed to the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee and Audit & Governance Committee. Councillor McGoldrick had replaced Councillor Edwards on the Audit & Governance Committee.
- Councillor Amjad Tarar had been appointed to the Older People's Working Group and Councillor Paul Gittings had been made the acting Chair of the Working Group.

#### **(c) Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation Award – Benefits Team**

The Mayor reported that the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Service had entered the 'Benefits Team of the year' and 'most improved team' categories at the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation Awards. The Council's team was highly commended in the most improved team category and won the Benefits Team of the Year in a very competitive field. The Council added its congratulations to those of the Mayor and Leader to the Team for their outstanding success.

#### **(d) Mayoral Visit to Düsseldorf**

The Mayor passed on greetings from the City of Düsseldorf and the Oberbürgermeister, Stephan Kellar, from his visit to the City in September when it had been hosting the Invictus Games. During the visit, the Mayor also had the privilege of meeting the founder of the Games, Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex.

#### **(e) Toys & Teens Appeal**

The Mayor promoted the Reading Family Aid Group's 'Toys & Teens' Appeal, which would be launched on 19 October 2023. Last year, the Appeal had provided over 3,000 gifts to children in the Borough. The Mayor would be writing to all councillors with further details and encouraged everyone to donate to the Appeal.

## COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 17 OCTOBER 2023

### 21. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

### 22. PETITION

Kate Nikulina presented a petition in the following terms:

#### **We Need More NHS Dentists in Reading**

Reading is a dental desert. Too many Reading residents can't get an NHS dentist.

People are left in pain or if they can afford it having to pay a large private dental bill in a cost of living crisis. Children and others entitled to free dental care aren't able to get it.

This Conservative government has been asleep at the wheel over NHS dentistry.

We want Reading Council to lobby the Integrated Care Board, government and come up with a plan to tackle the dental desert that Reading has become.

**RESPONSE** by Councillor McEwan (Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health):

The subject of dentistry is of real concern to councillors and officers. The available data shows that there is indeed a clear need for the prevention of poor oral health and improved access to dental care in Reading. We all understand the importance of easy access to treatment when we need it especially if we are in pain. We also recognise there are many people in Reading who have trouble in gaining access to a dentist.

It is important to recognise the role of the council and our relation to the commissioning of dentalcare services.

As part of the integrated care system the council has a prevention role in the promotion of good oral health which prevents the need for emergency dental care. We do this through our public health offer to the system which ensures that the commissioning of dental services is informed by oral health needs assessment and meets the needs of local people. Production of a refreshed oral health strategy commenced in 2019 and this work will be resumed as the local public health system is restructured.

Meanwhile we continue to collaborate with our NHS commissioning partners and to carry out our preventative work by using the ring-fenced public health grant mandate services to promote good oral health through the health visitors and schools nursing contract and through tooth brushing packs for children centres and nurseries.

We have recently received a report from the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board commissioners that set out the current challenges facing the commissioners of dentalcare and dental practitioners as they manage the recovery from the pandemic, the surging demand for their services and a complex payment system which is discouraging to those considering entering as a dentist into the national health service. Much of this is beyond the powers of the council to affect directly. The Council will continue to work with the Integrated Care Board to ensure dentistry provision is targeted based on the needs of our residents within the remit of our role.

## COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 17 OCTOBER 2023

### 23. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER NO 9

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Richard Tredgett & Ann Dally	Legacy Benefits	Cllr Terry

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

### 24. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER NO 10

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Cllr Singh	Fly Tipping	Cllr Rowland
2.	Cllr White	Council Overspend	Cllr Brock

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

### 25. CORPORATE PARENTING

The Executive Director of Children’s Services submitted a report responding to a review of services to care leavers by Mark Riddell MBE, National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, which took place in March 2023. The report recommendations were aligned with the outcome of the review of care leavers and had been endorsed by the Parenting Panel at its meeting on 13 July 2023. The Panel’s terms of reference had been updated in partnership with panel members and children in care and were appended to the report for adoption. This included a rewritten version of the Promise, which was attached to the report at Appendix 2 and stated the corporate parenting commitment to children in care and care leavers. Additionally, the Care Leaver Review had recommended that the sliding scale of Council Tax exemption that was in place for care leavers up to the age of 21 years should be extended to 25 years to reflect the corporate parenting duties continued to this age. The financial impact of this proposal would be included in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) planning for the 2024/25 budget.

The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care in England (May 2022) had recognised the negative outcomes for care experienced young people and adults and had recommended that the Government should make ‘care experienced’ a protected characteristic. The report recommended that the Council should adopt this approach to tackle the inequalities that care experienced young people faced and, in doing so, support them to improve outcomes, including accessing work readiness and employability skills; building future careers and gaining experience; and championing access to apprenticeships and support through recruitment processes.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Hoskin and seconded by Councillor Gavin and CARRIED:

#### Resolved –

- (1) That the revised Terms of Reference for Corporate Parenting Panel, as attached to the report at Appendix 1, be approved.

## COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 17 OCTOBER 2023

- (2) **That the proposal to include the revised sliding scale of Council Tax dispensation for Children Looked After and Care Leavers in the Council's MTFS planning be noted.**
- (3) **That the proposal for Care Experience to become a Protected Characteristic be approved.**

### 26. RENEWAL OF STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Further to Minute 8 of the Licensing Applications Committee held on 28 September 2023, the Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhoods submitted a draft report on the renewal of the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy. The Policy was a key document concerning the regulation of licenced premises (pub and clubs), late night refreshment, and regulated entertainment venues within Reading. The Licencing Policy set out the Council's aims, objectives and policies for applicants and licence holders and clearly outlined what the Council expected of them. The key aim of the Licensing Policy was to ensure that the four licensing objectives, as prescribed in the Licensing Act 2003, were actively promoted. The updated Policy had remained largely unchanged from the previous version, but the opportunity had been taken to update it and add in some additional information where legislation and guidelines had changed. The following documents were appended to the report:

- Appendix RS-1 - Draft Licensing Policy 2023-2028
- Appendix RS-2 - Summary of Changes to Existing Policy
- Appendix RS-3 - Climate Impact Assessment
- Appendix RS-4 - Responses to Consultation

The report explained that, under the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003, the Council, as the named Licensing Authority for Reading, was required to review its Licensing Policy every five years. The current policy was due to expire in October 2023 and so was due for renewal. The new Statement of Licensing Policy would come into effect on 22 October 2023.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Rowland and seconded by Councillor Woodward and CARRIED:

#### **Resolved –**

**That the Statement of Licensing Policy 8, as attached to the report at Appendix RS1, be adopted.**

### 27. REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

Further to Minute 25 of the Policy Committee held on 25 September 2023, the Monitoring Officer submitted a report on a review of the Constitution, which had been adopted on 18 October 2022 (Minute 21 refers). The revised Constitution had introduced a new way of working to simplify the Key Decision definition and directing other decisions not captured by the Key Decision criteria to be within the remit of officers. The Financial Regulations and the Contract Procedure Rules were being revised as part of the review. The Financial Regulations because, they had not been reviewed for some time and it was not possible to update them for inclusion in the Constitution agreed in October 2022. The Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs) had further refinement because of the introduction of new procurement legislation, and the expected further roll-out of the hub and spoke model of procurement which may impact them. A separate report on the CPRs had been considered by the Audit & Governance Committee on 27 September 2023 (Minute 18 refers) and the recommendations had been incorporated into this report for approval. It was anticipated that the Financial Regulations would be presented to a forthcoming Policy Committee and then to Council for formal adoption.

## COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 17 OCTOBER 2023

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

### **Resolved –**

- (1) That the progress to simplify decision making since October 2022 be noted.**
- (2) That progress towards revised Financial Regulations be noted.**
- (3) That, in respect of the Contract Procedure Rules (as set out in Appendix 1):**
  - (a) the revised CPRs be adopted;**
  - (b) the further development and implementation of a Procurement Manual for staff, containing the procedural and practical details and guidance to support the processes outlined within the updated CPRs be supported;**
  - (c) the Assistant Director of Procurement and Contracts, in consultation with the Chief Executive and Executive Director of Resources, be authorised to make appropriate amendments to ensure that the proposed Contract Procedure Rules aligned with terminology included within the new Procurement Bill due to be introduced in autumn 2024;**
- (4) That Article 12 of the Constitution be revised in accordance with the recommendations of this report (as set out in Appendix 2);**
- (5) That references to the School Admission Forum and the Cultural Partnership Board be removed from Article 10 (Consultative Committees and Forums);**
- (6) That the revised wording for Sealing of Documents be adopted as set out in paragraph 3.39;**
- (7) That the existing power of the Monitoring Officer to make changes to Committees etc during the municipal year be added, to Part 3 (Officer Delegations) of the Constitution.**

### **28. CIPFA PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES ON AUDIT COMMITTEES**

Further to Minute 14 of the Policy Committee held on 10 July 2023, the Executive Director of Resources submitted a report on the CIPFA Practical Guidance for Local Authorities on Audit Committees. Attached to the report at Appendix 1 were proposed revised terms of reference for the Committee and at Appendix 2 a self-assessment of good practice against the CIPFA Practical Guidance for Local Authorities on Audit Committees. The report noted that the Guidance updated previous CIPFA guidance from 2018 and complemented the CIPFA Position Statement on Audit Committees; it also incorporated recent legislative changes and professional developments following the Redmond Review into the effectiveness of external audit and transparency of financial reporting in local authorities.

The report explained that a self-assessment using the CIPFA self-assessment tool had been conducted by Internal Audit in January 2023. This had concluded that current arrangements partially complied with the guidance, with 'moderate' improvement required. One of the outcomes from the self-assessment review was to propose that the Committee's terms of reference should be updated to those suggested by CIPFA for local authorities.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Terry and seconded by Councillor Williams and CARRIED:

## COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 17 OCTOBER 2023

### Resolved –

- (1) That the revised Audit & Governance Committee's terms of reference, as attached at Appendix 1, and the removal of its decision-making powers in relation to the approval of the annual financial statements, returning the latter to Council, as recommended by Policy Committee, be approved.
- (2) That the recommendations of the Redmond Review and Policy Committee that the external audit annual report should be submitted to Council by the external auditor be endorsed.
- (3) That, in accordance with Policy Committee's recommendation, the Audit & Governance Committee be required to submit a public report annually to Council on an assessment of its performance, which would include how it had complied with the CIPFA position statement and discharged its responsibilities.

(The meeting closed at 7.36pm).

**Council**

**30 January 2024**



**Reading**  
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<b>Title</b>	Council Tax Empty & Second Homes Premiums
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a key decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Samantha Wills, Revenues and Benefits Manager
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Brock, Leader of the Council and Councillor Terry, Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Corporate Services & Resources
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Not applicable, but still requires a decision
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p><b>That Council approve:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. From 1 April 2024, levying the maximum level of Empty Homes premium i.e.:                     <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1.1. 100% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than 12 months and up to 5 years;</li> <li>1.1.2. 200% for dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for between 5 and 10 years; and</li> <li>1.1.3. 300% for dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for 10 years or more.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. From 1 April 2025:                     <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1.1. The continued application of Empty Homes premiums as set out above; and</li> <li>2.1.2. The application of a Second Homes Premium of 100% for all dwellings the are no one's sole or main residence and which is substantially furnished.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Exception to premiums                     <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1.1. The Council is mindful of the current consultation by Government which recommends exceptions in certain circumstances (outlined in 1.28 – 1.30). Subject to the outcome of that consultation, it is recommended that the Section 151 Officer is given delegated authority to implement the Council's policy on premiums in line with statute, the Council's requirements and any guidance given by the Secretary of State.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report identifies decisions required by full Council and makes recommendations to change the Council's approach in respect of certain discretionary areas within Council Tax legislation. In the main, the changes will take effect from 1 April 2024. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act allows the Council to make further amendments to the levying of Council Tax premiums within the Borough with effect from both 1 April 2024 and 1 April 2025.
- 1.2. A large part of the Council Tax legislation is mandatory on all billing authorities within England. Discounts (such as Single Person Discounts), disregards and exemptions are set by statute with very little discretion allowed. However, there are a number of areas where each Council may determine the type and levels of charge to be made.
- 1.3. The main discretionary areas in place currently are as follows:
- (a) Second homes (premises which are no-one's sole or main residence but are furnished)
  - (b) Unoccupied and substantially unfurnished premises
  - (c) Unoccupied and substantially unfurnished premises which require or are undergoing structural repairs; and
  - (d) Currently, premiums where premises have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a period exceeding 2 years.
- 1.4. When determining its policy, each billing authority has to decide the level of discount (if any) to be granted and the amounts (percentage) of any premium by the 31 March prior to the financial year in which it wants to introduce the changes.
- 1.5. Where a change is proposed, there is a requirement to determine the level of any discount or premium and a decision is now required to be made by full Council under Section 11A, 11B and the new 11C of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- 1.6. Once determined, any resolution of the Council will be published in a local newspaper(s) within 21 days of the decision.

### The Current Situation

- 1.7. Currently there are 1,502 empty and substantially unfurnished properties, of which 690 are considered long term empty as exceed 6 months. There are 1,084 second homes (Class B), of which 694 exceed 6 months. The Council has adopted the following level of discounts and premiums.

	<b>Current policy</b>
Second Homes No one's sole or main residence and which is substantially furnished. 28-day planning restriction <sup>1</sup> (Class A)	0% discount
Second Homes No one's sole or main residence and which is substantially furnished. No planning restriction <sup>2</sup> (Class B)	0% discount
Class C (Unoccupied dwelling with is substantially unfurnished)	0% discount
Class D Structural repairs (Unoccupied and substantially unfurnished) (Maximum 12 months)	0% discount



Premium - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes premium) After 2 years and up to 5 years of becoming empty.	100% premium
Premium - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) Dwellings empty between 5 years and up to 10 years	200% premium
Premium - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) Dwellings empty for 10 years or more	300% premium

<sup>1</sup> restricted by a planning condition preventing occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days

<sup>2</sup> the occupation of which is **not restricted** by a planning condition preventing occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days in the relevant

- 1.8. Government, together with local authorities have unfortunately seen a rise in the number of empty homes together with a growth in second homes. Inconsistencies in the legislation have also been identified whereby a premium can be avoided by the taxpayer merely furnishing an empty property, when it would become a 'second home' which currently has a maximum charge of 100%. The Council has previously identified this and, for a number of years, has proposed changes in the legislation to avoid this 'loophole'.
- 1.9. By amending the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the recently enacted Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 ('the 2023 Act') addresses these inconsistencies and also brings more dwellings into use. This report makes recommendations to change the discounts currently being granted by the Council and also to introduce changes to the regimes for charging premiums as allowed within the legislation.

### **Changes to Empty Homes Premiums (From 1 April 2024)**

- 1.10. Section 80(1)(b) of the 2023 Act will permit billing authorities in England to impose an empty homes premium after one year instead of two. This gives effect to a commitment made by Government in the Levelling Up White Paper .
- 1.11. Section 80(1)(a) provides that billing authorities must have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State when deciding whether to implement an empty homes premium and it is expected that the current guidance drafted in 2013 will be updated. Any change to guidance is likely to come into effect from the 2024/25 financial year.
- 1.12. Sections 81(2) and 81(4) provide that from 1 April 2024, a property can be charged an empty homes premium at 100% after one year, even if it became empty before 1 April 2024.

### **Introduction of Premiums for Second Homes (From 1 April 2025)**

- 1.13. At present, English billing authorities may only impose an empty homes premium on properties that are 'unoccupied and substantially unfurnished'. This term is defined via case law, not in legislation. However, it does not cover dwellings that are no one's sole or main residence but are furnished. An empty homes premium could, therefore, not be imposed on properties that are maintained as second homes for regular use by their owners.
- 1.14. Clause 73 of the Bill inserts a new section 11C into the Local Government Finance Act 1992. This permits billing authorities to apply a premium to properties that have no resident and are "substantially furnished". The maximum Council Tax charge in these cases will be a standard 100% charge plus, if the recommendations are accepted by Council, a premium of 100% making a total Council Tax charge of 200%.

- 1.15. There will be no requirement for a property to have been used as a second home for a fixed period of time before the premium can apply.
- 1.16. As with other changes introduced by the Bill, section 11C (3) requires that the first decision to impose this class of premium must be taken at least 12 months before the financial year to which it would apply. In effect this means that premiums for second homes will not take effect until the 2025/26 financial year at the earliest. However, it is essential that a decision is made by Council before 31 March 2024 to give the required one year notice.
- 1.17. The Bill provides that a dwelling cannot be subject to both a second homes premium and an empty homes premium imposed under section 11B of the 1992 Act, and that an existing empty homes premium would cease to apply to a property which became subject to a second homes premium.

### **Premiums – Generally**

- 1.18. In line with all similar legislation, any decision made by the Council must be publicised in at least one local newspaper, within 21 days of its being taken.
- 1.19. Should the Council at any time wish to vary or revoke a decision to impose any type of premium, this can be done at any time before the beginning of the financial year to which it would apply.
- 1.20. The Secretary of State has the power to prescribe certain classes of property that will not be subject to an empty homes premium. Currently these are homes that are empty due to the occupant living in armed forces accommodation for job- related purposes, or annexes being used as part of a main property.
- 1.21. In line with that, a consultation has also been issued by government on proposals to delay the application of premiums and it is expected that the areas included in the consultation will form either guidance or regulations which authorities will be required to adhere to.

### **Changes Proposed from 1 April 2024**

- 1.22. The continued pressure on local authority finances (both the Council and other Major Preceptors) together with the need to encourage all owners of domestic premises to bring them back into use due to the severe shortage of homes, makes it essential that the Council changes its approach to empty properties.
- 1.23. From 1 April 2024, the Council has the opportunity to make changes to both its discretionary discounts and also to the current premium regime in order to incentivise change. In view of this, it is recommended that the Council adopt the following changes with effect from 1 April 2024 as follows:

	<b>Current policy</b>	<b>Proposed policy</b>
Second Homes No one's sole or main residence and which is substantially furnished. 28-day planning restriction <sup>3</sup> (Class A)	0% discount	0% discount (no change)
Second Homes No one's sole or main residence and which is substantially furnished. No planning restriction <sup>4</sup> (Class B)	0% discount	0% discount (no change)

Class C (Unoccupied dwelling with is substantially unfurnished)	0% discount	0% discount (no change)
Class D Structural repairs (Unoccupied and substantially unfurnished) (Maximum 12 months)	0% discount	0% discount (no change)
Premium - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty homes premium) After 1 year up to 5 years of becoming empty.	100% premium	100% premium after 1 year (current policy after 2 years)
Premium - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty homes Premium) Dwellings empty between 5 years and up to 10 years	200% premium	200% premium (no change)
Premium - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty homes Premium) Dwellings empty for 10 years or more	300% premium	300% premium (no change)

<sup>3</sup> **restricted** by a planning condition preventing occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days

<sup>4</sup> the occupation of which is **not restricted** by a planning condition preventing occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days in the relevant year.

### **Changes Proposed from 1 April 2025**

- 1.24. From 1 April 2025, the new legislation will allow all English billing authorities to charge a premium of up to 100% on second homes (no one's sole or main residence and which is substantially furnished).
- 1.25. The intention of the legislation change is to close the current loophole in relation of empty homes premium and also encourage the use of second homes as a primary residence.
- 1.26. It is recommended that the Council resolves to apply a premium of 100% on second homes with effect from 1 April 2025. The legislation requires that the authority gives at least one year's notice from the date of a full Council resolution and the change can only be effective from the commencement of a financial year, the earliest being 1 April 2025.
- 1.27. In line with the legislation, the Council must be mindful of guidance issued by the Secretary of State and any application of the premiums must take accounts of any exceptions laid down within regulation.

### **Exceptions from the Premiums (Empty Homes Premiums and Second Homes Premium)**

- 1.28. Government released a consultation paper entitled Consultation on proposals to exempt categories of dwellings from the council tax premiums in England. The consultation (which has now ended), sought views on possible categories of dwellings which should be dealt with as exceptions to the council tax premiums. It covers the empty homes premium, and also the second homes premium, provisions which are included within the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.
- 1.29. The consultation proposes that there will be circumstances where either the premiums will either not apply or be deferred for a defined period of time. These are as follows:

- Properties undergoing probate - the government proposes that these properties should be exceptions to both the second homes and empty homes premiums for 12 months. The exception would start once probate or letters of administration is granted. This does not affect the Class F exemption or the ability for billing authorities to charge the normal rate of council tax following the expiry of the Class F exemption;
- Properties that are being actively marketed for sale or rent - the government proposes that this exception would apply for up to a maximum of 6 months from the date that active marketing commenced, or until the property has been sold or rented, whichever is the sooner.
- Empty properties undergoing major repairs - time limited to 6 months - the government proposes that empty properties undergoing major repair works or structural alternations should be an exception to the premium for up to 6 months once the exception has been applied or when the work has been completed, whichever is the sooner. The exception could be applied at any time after the property has been empty for at least 12 months, so long as the Council is satisfied that the necessary repair work is being undertaken;
- Annexes forming part of, or being treated as, part of the main dwelling - the government proposes that such annexes should be an exception to the council tax premium on second homes;
- Job related dwellings - currently, there is a council tax discount of up to 50% for properties which are unoccupied because the owner is required to live elsewhere for employment purposes. The discount applies where the dwelling is provided for the better performance of the duties of the employment, and it is one of the kinds of employment in the case of which it is customary for employers to provide dwellings for employees. The government proposes that the dwelling should also be an exception to the second homes premium. The exception will not apply to cases where someone chooses to have an additional property to be closer to work while having a family home elsewhere or where an individual is posted to a new location but maintain their previous address;
- Occupied caravan pitches and houseboat moorings - the government proposes that these caravans and boats should be an exception to the council tax premium on second homes; and
- Seasonal homes where year-round or permanent occupation is prohibited or has been specified for use as holiday accommodation or prevents occupancy as a person's sole or main residence - the government proposes that properties that have restrictions or conditions preventing occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days in any 12-month period, or specifies its use as a holiday let, or prevents occupancy as a person's sole or main residence, should be an exception to the second homes premium.

1.30. It is understood that regulations or guidance (which has to be followed in accordance with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill) will be in line with government's proposal. In view of this, the Council will need to ensure that any charging policy is in line with legislation and will need to determine what evidence will be required to support any exception. It is therefore recommended that the Council's Section 151 Officer is granted delegated

powers to amend the Council's policy of premiums in line with legislative or government requirements.

### **'Safety Net'**

- 1.31. There may be circumstances where the implementation of these changes (percentage increase in the level of premiums) may cause exceptional hardship to a taxpayer. In such cases, the Council will consider applications for a reduction in liability under its Section 13A (1)(C) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 - Reduction in Council Tax liability policy.
- 1.32. Where such an application is received, it will be considered on an individual case basis taking into account the circumstances of the taxpayer and the situation regarding the level of Council Tax charged. Should the taxpayer be aggrieved by any decision of the Council a further right of appeal will be with the independent Valuation Tribunal.

### **Risk**

- 1.33. The main risk associated with the implication of the recommendations (both the changes to discounts and premiums) will be the increase in non-compliance, with some taxpayers actively trying to avoid the new charges by providing incorrect information to the Council.
- 1.34. The Council already has processes and procedures in place in order to ensure that all charges are applied correctly. Further compliance procedures will be established to ensure that the new second homes premium is applied in accordance with the legislation and the Council's requirement.

## **2. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 2.1. Maximising the Council's budget is essential to ensuring the Council meets its strategic aims and remains financially sustainable going forward.
- 2.2. Incentivising change through the application of a premium will support properties being brought back into use, reducing the housing need in the borough.

## **3. Environmental and Climate Implications**

- 3.1. There are no specific environmental and climate implications to report in relation to the recommendations set out in this report.

## **4. Community Engagement**

- 4.1. There is no statutory requirement to consult on any matters contained within this report. However, a resolution must be passed by full Council on or before the 31 March 2024 in order for the changes to be implemented with effect from 1 April 2024. In the case of second homes premium, a resolution made on or before 31 March 2024 will allow the premium to come into force from 1 April 2025 (its earliest commencement date).

## **5. Equality Implications**

- 5.1. There are no anticipated impacts on protected characteristics associated with this report. The proposals do, however, include the potential generating of positive outcomes for local people who are struggling to secure sustainable accommodation in the borough, and may subsequently ease current inequalities around access to local homes.

## **6. Other Relevant Considerations**

- 6.1. There are none.

## 7. Legal Implications

7.1. The legislation relevant to this report is as follows:

- section 11A (discounts: special provision for England) and section 11B (higher amount for long-term empty dwellings: England) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 ('the 1992 Act');
- section 11C (higher amount for dwellings occupied periodically) of the 1992 Act (an amendment made by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 ); and
- section 13A(1)(c) (reductions by billing authority) of the 1992 Act.

7.2. Where a resolution is to be made by full Council, the decision needs to be published in at least one local newspaper.

7.3. Due to the changes in the legislation, the Council will be required by statute to be mindful of any regulations under section 11D of the 1992 Act and guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

## 8. Financial Implications

8.1. These proposals are designed to incentivise properties being brought back into use. The current modelling is based on the existing number of empty properties and assumed that they will remain empty for a full financial year. The indicative values in the following tables are the maximum that may be charged. We anticipate the actual increase to the collection fund to be significantly less, providing these proposals work as intended. As a result, these estimates have not been included in the current tax base calculations.

8.2. Should the recommendations be accepted; any additional income would be shared between the Council and the other major preceptors in proportion to their share of the Collection Fund. Based on current modelling, the maximum increase in Council Tax is estimated to be as follows:

**2024/25**

	<b>Current policy</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Estimated income per annum (£)</b>
<b>Second Homes</b> No one's sole or main residence and which is substantially furnished. 28- day planning restriction (Class A)	0% discount	0% discount (no change)	N/A
<b>Second Homes</b> No one's sole or main residence and which is substantially furnished. No planning restriction (Class B)	0% discount	0% discount (no change)	N/A
<b>Class C</b> (Unoccupied dwelling which is substantially unfurnished)	0% discount	0% discount (no change)	N/A
<b>Class D</b> Structural repairs (Unoccupied and substantially unfurnished) (Maximum 12 months)	0% discount	0% discount (no change)	N/A

<b>Premium</b> - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty homes premium) After 1 years up to 5 years of becoming empty.	100% premium	100% premium from 1 year	344,955
<b>Premium</b> - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty homes premium) Dwellings empty between 5 years and up to 10 years	200% premium	200% premium (no change)	N/A
<b>Premium</b> - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty homes premium) Dwellings empty for 10 years or more	300% premium	300% premium (no change)	N/A

## 2025/26

	Current policy	Recommendation	Estimated income per annum (£)
<b>Second Homes Premium</b> No one's sole or main residence and which is substantially furnished. Premium of 100% is charged in addition to the second home Council Tax charge of 100%	N/A	100% premium	1,391,470

- 8.3. It should be noted that, should the recommendations be accepted, any additional income detailed above, the Council and preceptor shares would be:

	2024/25 (£)	2025/26 (£)	Share (%)
<b>Total Additional Council Tax Raised</b>	<b>344,955</b>	<b>1,391,470</b>	
Reading Borough Council	293,702	1,184,728	85.14
Police	39,182	158,052	11.36
Fire	12,071	48,690	3.50

- 8.4. The award of any S13A(1)(C) (reduction in liability) is a General Fund expense and would normally be met in full by the Council. In view of the fact that the additional funds from the changes in discounts and premiums proposed in this report are shared with major preceptors, it is proposed that the cost of any award are met from the Collection Fund.
- 8.5. It is recommended that the Council's Section 151 Officer is authorised to agree with the major preceptors the funding of any award under S13A(1)(C) (reduction in liability) from the Collection Fund as outlined within 1.35.

## 9. Timetable for Implementation

- 9.1. This is set out in the main body of the report.

## 10. Background Papers

- 10.1. There are none.

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**Council**

**30 January 2024**



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<b>Title</b>	Approval of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and the Council Tax Base for 2024/25
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a key decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Stuart Donnelly, Financial Planning & Strategy Manager
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Brock, Leader of the Council and Councillor Terry, Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Corporate Services & Resources
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Not applicable, but still requires a decision
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p><b>That Council approve:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme is retained for 2024/25;</li> <li>2. The Tax Base calculation for 2024/25 of 58,944.73 band D equivalent properties.</li> </ol> <p><b>That Council notes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. The assumed Council Tax collection rate of 98.75% for 2024/25;</li> <li>4. That the 2024/25 Council Tax Reduction Scheme will be updated in line with the Scheme's regulations;</li> <li>5. That the estimated balance of the Council Tax Collection Fund as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 is an overall net deficit of £1.998m. The Council's overall share of this deficit is £1.701m.</li> </ol>

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. The Council is required to calculate a Council Tax Base for its area annually in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base (England)) Regulations 2012.
- 1.2. The Council Tax Base 2024/2025 must be calculated and notified to Major Precepting Authorities (the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service) by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024.
- 1.3. The Tax Base for 2024/25 is calculated for the above purposes as being 58,944.73 (band D equivalent) properties – an increase of 1.93% on the 2023/24 Tax Base of 57,826.56.
- 1.4. The declared surplus/deficit on the Council Tax Collection Fund balance is paid out/recoverable by the Collection Fund in full in the following financial year. The estimated balance as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 on the Council Tax Collection Fund is a projected net deficit of £1.998m. The Council's overall share of this deficit is £1.701m. The component parts are set out in Table 4.
- 1.5. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 and Local Government Finance Act 2012 replaced the Council Tax Benefit scheme with a locally determined Council Tax Reduction Scheme (also known as a local Council Tax Support Scheme), which is effectively a type of Council Tax discount. The legislation requires the Council to approve a Scheme, including

amendments to an existing scheme, by the end of January preceding the start of the financial year. The recommended Scheme for 2024/25 is unchanged from the Scheme agreed by Council for 2023/24.

1.6. Each year, the Government amends the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 to ensure that pension-age Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) schemes are updated in line with changes in the wider benefits system. The annual update also provides an opportunity to ensure that the residency requirements for accessing both pension-age and working-age LCTS remain consistent with the UK's immigration policy. These updates will be incorporated into the Council's 2024/25 Scheme in accordance with the principles of the Council's original Local Scheme agreed following consultation in the Summer/Autumn of 2012.

1.7. This report has been prepared with reference to the following documents:

- The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012;
- Approval of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and the Council Tax Base for 2024/25.

## **2. Policy Context**

2.1. Under Government regulations it is necessary for the Council to review its Collection Fund and decide the following:

- The Council Tax Collection Rate for 2024/25;
- The Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25;
- The Council Tax Base to be used for setting its 2024/25 Council Tax; and
- The estimated Council Tax surplus or deficit as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

## **3. The Proposal**

### **Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS)**

3.1. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 replaced the Council Tax Benefit scheme with a new locally determined Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (also known as a Local Council Tax Support Scheme) from April 2013. This is effectively now a Council Tax discount that reduces the Council Tax Base.

3.2. Each local authority is required to annually set a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age claimants. The Government continues to operate a statutory national scheme for pensioners, which provides them with broadly the same level of Council Tax Support as they received under the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme but has been adjusted by the Government since its introduction to incorporate a number of welfare reform initiatives.

3.3. The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme was initially funded through a specific central government grant set at 90% of each local authority's Council Tax Benefit expenditure. Government funding since 2014/15 has been rolled into the Council's overall finance settlement and is no longer specifically identifiable.

3.4. Pension age customers continue to be protected by the Government's default scheme of 100% support based on a financial means test.

3.5. It is recommended that the Council retains the Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 2024/25 as applied in 2023/24.

## Council Tax Base Calculation

- 3.6. The Council Tax Base is an estimate of the number of band D equivalent properties within the Billing Authority's (Reading Borough Council's) area and is used by the Council and Major Precepting Authorities (the Police and Fire authorities) to determine how much Council Tax income is anticipated to be received and budgeted for in 2024/25.
- 3.7. The Tax Base is calculated by taking the list of properties by tax band as supplied to the Council by the external Valuation Office, (an executive agency of HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)) as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023, then adjusting it for various factors to calculate a chargeable number of properties per tax band.
- 3.8. The factors adjusted for include:
- Properties which will be entirely exempt, so no tax is payable e.g. those occupied entirely by students;
  - Properties which will attract a 25% reduction e.g. those with a single adult occupier;
  - Properties which will attract a 50% reduction e.g. those where all the adult residents qualify for a reduction (certain Care Homes for example);
  - Properties which attract a 100% levy because they have been unoccupied for over 2 years;
  - Properties which attract a 200% levy because they have been unoccupied for 5 years or more;
  - Properties which attract a 300% levy because they have been unoccupied for 10 years or more (from April 2021);
  - Properties which will be treated as being in a lower band because they have been adapted for a severely disabled person;
  - Properties which will be on the valuation list, but which attract discounts or disablement relief or are exempt, for only part of the year;
  - Properties which are in receipt of Local Council Tax Support;
  - Properties which are in receipt of a local discount.
- 3.9. The calculated chargeable number of properties per tax band is then converted into "band D equivalents" by applying the factors laid down by legislation. These are set out in Table 1 below:

**Table 1. Council Tax Band Ratios**

<b>Band</b>	<b>AA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
<b>Ratio</b>	<b>5/9</b>	<b>6/9</b>	<b>7/9</b>	<b>8/9</b>	<b>9/9</b>	<b>11/9</b>	<b>13/9</b>	<b>15/9</b>	<b>18/9</b>

- 3.10. For example, a band A property is multiplied by 6 and divided by 9 to arrive at the "band D equivalent" figure, whilst a band H property is multiplied by 18 and divided by 9 (equal to multiplying by 2). All these are then added together to give a total of "band D equivalent" for the billing area.
- 3.11. Additions are then made to the tax base for estimates of newly built and occupied properties in 2024/2025 and the final quarter of 2023/2024. This estimate is based on past trends, properties that haven't yet appeared on the valuation list, and planning estimates of housing growth. For 2024/25 we have assumed 0.92% average growth for the year. This is a prudent estimate, which has been calculated using actual growth realised in 2023/24 alongside planned projections of new build that are expected to be realised between December 2023 and March 2025.
- 3.12. The Council is then required to decide what its collection rate is likely to be and multiply its tax base by this percentage to give its Council Tax Base. A collection rate of 100% would assume 100% collection and thus a zero adjustment, whereas a collection rate of

less than 100% allows for an element of non-collection and results in a reduction to the Council Tax Base.

- 3.13. The overall collection rate takes account of current and future anticipated collection rates and was previously set at 99.00%. This was however reduced to 98.50% from 2021/22 as an impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The overall collection rate for 2024/25 has been increased to 98.75%, based on gradual recovery of collection performance through 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- 3.14. The total number of properties per Council Tax band as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023 is summarised in the following table:

**Table 2. Properties per Council Tax Band as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

Band	% of Properties	Number of Properties	Adjustments (Discounts, Exemptions, LCTRS etc)	Net Properties	Ratio	Band D Equivalents (rounded to 1dp)
AA*	0.0	0	2.73	2.73	5/9	1.5
A	10.1	7,782	(2,951.62)	4,830.38	6/9	3,220.3
B	19.4	14,894	(3,668.15)	11,225.85	7/9	8,731.2
C	40.3	30,862	(5,221.94)	25,640.06	8/9	22,791.2
D	15.5	11,918	(1,689.66)	10,228.34	9/9	10,228.3
E	7.7	5,883	(511.28)	5,371.72	11/9	6,565.4
F	4.4	3,356	(256.93)	3,099.07	13/9	4,476.4
G	2.5	1,895	(103.96)	1,791.04	15/9	2,985.1
H	0.1	92	(17.93)	74.07	18/9	148.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>76,682</b>	<b>(14,418.74)</b>	<b>62,263.26</b>		<b>59,147.5</b>

\*Band A entitled to disabled relief reduction. As at 30<sup>th</sup> November, 4 properties in band A are entitled to disabled relief reduction (2.73 net properties after adjustments), which are converted to 1.5 band D equivalents on a ratio of 5/9.

- 3.15. The Council Tax Base calculation is summarised in the following table:

**Table 3. Council Tax Base 2024/25 Calculation**

	Adjustments	Total
Total Number of Properties on the Valuation List as at 30/11/2023		76,682.00
Reductions for Discounts & Exemptions as at 30/11/2023	(9,802.63)	
Reductions for Council Tax Reduction Scheme as at 30/11/2023	(4,616.11)	
Total Number of Net Chargeable Properties as at 30/11/2023		62,263.26
<b>Band D Equivalent Properties as at 30/11/2023</b>		<b>59,147.50</b>
Estimated New Build (band D equivalents) 2024/25	543.37	
Reduction for non-collection of 1.25%	(746.14)	
<b>2024/25 Council Tax Base (band D equivalents)</b>		<b>58,944.73</b>

### Council Tax Collection Fund Surplus/Deficit

- 3.16. Any difference between the estimated Council Tax Base and that actually realised in year has no impact on the in-year General Fund revenue position but is retained within the Collection Fund.
- 3.17. An estimate of the surplus or deficit on the Council Tax Collection Fund must be made, by law, on or before 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Council Tax surplus or deficits must be credited or charged to Reading Borough Council, the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service in proportion to their precepts and will be taken into account in setting the 2024/2025 Revenue Budget and Council Tax levels.
- 3.18. The estimated balance on the Council Tax Collection Fund as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, in January 2024, is a net deficit of £1.998m, comprising:

- a residual deficit balance brought forward from 2022/23 totalling £0.654m which is primarily due to the 2022/23 adjustment to the Allowance for Impairments for Doubtful Debts (Bad Debt Provision) that was required at the end of the financial year being higher than was forecast in January 2023 when the 2022/23 Council Tax Collection Fund Balance estimate was made;
- an in-year net deficit balance totalling £1.344m which primarily relates to the forecast 2023/24 adjustment to the Allowance for Impairments for Doubtful Debts.

3.19. Any declared surplus/deficit is paid out/recoverable by the Collection Fund in full in the following financial year based on the January estimate. The shares of this balance are set out in the following table:

**Table 4. Council Tax Collection Fund Estimated Balance as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

	<b>Share of Overall Estimated Net (Surplus)/Deficit (£m)</b>
Reading Borough Council	1.701
Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley	0.227
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service	0.070
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.998</b>

3.20. The estimated net deficit will be budgeted for as above in 2024/25.

#### **Risk**

- 3.21. There are several key variables in setting the Council Tax Base which have the potential to change; these are set out below.
- 3.22. Eligibility for discounts and exemptions is factored into the calculated Tax Base. These include student discounts, single person discount and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme – the latter being particularly prone to change dependent upon employment status of working age benefit claimants. Although numbers have now returned near to pre-pandemic levels, there remains much uncertainty as to the potential impact of the cost of living crisis on the economy. Therefore, future fluctuations in caseload/claimant levels cannot be ruled out.
- 3.23. The Tax Base includes forecast growth in the number of properties subject to a Council Tax liability. Whilst this is based on historic growth levels achieved and known planned development, it remains an estimate and is sensitive to changes in the economy and house building market. The growth factor is also subject to assumptions regarding the Band of property completed and also the status of the occupier(s) and their eligibility for discounts (e.g. single person), exemptions and Local Council Tax Support.
- 3.24. Any significant variation regarding collection rates has the potential to impact on the level of bad debt provision required and would impact on overall collection levels and any projected surplus or deficit.
- 3.25. In setting the Council Tax Base for 2024/25, statutory regulations prevent the net amount credited to the Council's General Fund from being different in 2024/25 to that originally estimated (and applies to precepting bodies in the same way). Any variance would however impact on future years.
- 3.26. The Collection Fund balance as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 is required to be estimated by 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The assumptions made within this calculation are therefore subject to change by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. This risk is greater this year due to the potential impact of the cost of living crisis on Council Tax collection rates and the increased uncertainty on future projections.

#### **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 4.1. Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective, and economical.
- 4.2. Delivery of the Council's budget is essential to ensuring the Council meets its strategic aims and remains financially sustainable going forward.

#### **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2019, with the intention of achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. The Council endorsed the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 and its vision for a 'net zero, resilient Reading by 2030' in November 2020. At the same time, it adopted a new corporate Carbon Plan for the Council's own operations, including the target of an 85% cut in Council emissions by 2025 enroute to net zero by 2030. The Council's Corporate Plan monitors progress in reducing the carbon footprint of both the Borough and the Council.
- 5.2. There are no specific environmental and climate implications to report in relation to the recommendations set out in this report.

#### **6. Community Engagement**

- 6.1. A consultation exercise was carried out on the proposed amendments to the local Council Tax Support Scheme for the 2022/23 financial year. No amendments have been proposed for 2024/25 therefore any further consultation is not required.

#### **7. Equality Implications**

- 7.1. No implications have been identified as arising directly from this report.

#### **8. Other Relevant Considerations**

- 8.1. There are none.

#### **9. Legal Implications**

- 9.1. The Council, as a Billing Authority, is required to determine the Council Tax Base for the next financial year by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024 and to notify other precepting authorities of the determination.
- 9.2. The Council, as the Billing Authority, is required to formally estimate the balance of the Council Tax Collection Fund as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 and to notify other precepting authorities of this estimate by 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

#### **10. Financial Implications**

- 10.1. The increase in the Council Tax Base of 1,118.17 average Band D properties equates to an increase in Council Tax income of £2.148m based on the 2023/24 Council Tax charge of £1,921.02 for a Band D property.
- 10.2. The Tax Base of 58,944.73 band D equivalents has been updated from the Tax Base of 58,948.93 used in the Medium Term Financial Strategy Update Report considered by Policy Committee and issued for consultation in December 2023 in order to reflect updated figures in respect of the number of chargeable dwellings, discounts, exemptions,

eligible Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme claimants and revised estimates of new build and collection performance.

- 10.3. The collection rate was reduced to 98.50% for 2021/22 following a drop in collection in 2020/21 during the Covid-19 pandemic. Collection performance in 2022/23 and the early part of 2023/24 indicated that the collection rate could be increased back up to 99.0% for 2024/25, however this performance decreased slightly as 2023/24 progressed as a consequence of the cost of living crisis. The latest collection performance data as at the end of December 2023 has however shown a partial improvement compared to previous months. It has therefore been considered prudent to assume a collection rate of 98.75% to recognise the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic but partially tempered by the cost of living crisis.
- 10.4. The draft Budget 2024/25 & Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024/25-2026/27 assumed that the Council's share of the provisional Council Tax Collection Fund balance would be net nil. The Council's share of the net deficit declared in this report is £1.701m for 2024/25 which has been reflected in the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy projections and will be funded from the Collection Fund Smoothing Reserve.

## **11. Timetable for Implementation**

- 11.1. Not applicable.

## **12. Background Papers**

- 12.1. There are none.

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**Council**

**30 January 2024**



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<b>Title</b>	Review of the Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Rob Abell
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Cllr Karen Rowland, Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Thriving Communities
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the updated Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles 2022-25 be approved, as attached to the report at Appendix 1.</li> <li>2. That the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport &amp; Public Protection Services be authorised to make minor amendments to the Statement</li> </ol>

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to agree a slightly revised Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles.
- 1.2. The minor recommended change to the Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles is to refer to the new section about gambling premises in the proposed update to the Local Area Plan. This will help ensure that the Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles and the Local Area Plan remain aligned and cross-reference readers to both policies.
- 1.3. The amendment is being made now as the update to the Local Area Plan had not been made when the latest three-year Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles was approved at Licensing Applications Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022.

## 2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Gambling Act 2005 (the 'Act') requires that the Council review its Gambling Policy every three years. The policy typically runs for a three-year period starting and ending in January with the first appointed day under The Gambling Act 2005 (Licensing Authority Policy Statement) (First Appointed Day) Order 2006 being 31<sup>st</sup> January 2007.
- 2.2. The Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles has been reviewed and updated every three years since January 2007. The latest Statement is set to run until January 2025.

## 3. The Proposal

- 3.1. Under the Gambling Act, Reading Borough Council, as the licensing authority, has responsibility for:
  - Licensing premises for gambling activities (and temporary use) e.g. betting shops & casinos.
  - Regulating gaming and gaming machines in clubs and miners' welfare institutes.
  - Granting permits to family entertainment centres for the use of certain lower stake gaming machines.
  - Regulating gaming and gaming machines on alcohol licensed premises such as pubs.

- Granting permits for prize gaming.
  - Registering small society lotteries.
  - Producing a local area profile for the Borough of Reading and ensuring that applications are consistent with the licensing objectives and policy of the Council.
  - Enforcing the provisions of the Act.
- 3.2. The gambling framework must center around the 3 licensing objectives:
- to protect children and other vulnerable people from harm;
  - to prevent gambling being a source of crime or disorder; and
  - to ensure that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way.
- 3.3. The licensing authority may review and alter its policy statement during the three-year period for example, licensing authorities will need to consider if their policy statement should be reviewed in the event of a change of policy, such as a change in local planning policy.
- 3.4. Therefore, the Policy Statement is being reviewed to coincide with a new section about gambling premises in the proposed update to the Local Area Plan. The changes are set out below:

**Para 11.1.5(d) ADD:** It is strongly advised that Applicants and Licence Holders be aware of the Council's planning policy, particularly the Reading Borough Local Plan which deals with clustering of gambling premises, before making an application under the Gambling Act 2005 to ascertain whether their proposal conflicts with the Local Plan.

**Para 22 AMEND:** to read: There are currently 3 Casinos operating within the Borough. In addition to this there is a further premises currently licensed, but not operating. There are no plans under section 166 of the Act to limit or restrict the number of casinos operating within the Borough.

**Para 28 ADD:** It is strongly advised that Applicants and Licence Holders be aware of the Council's planning policy, particularly the Reading Borough Local Plan which deals with clustering of gambling premises, before making an application under the Gambling Act 2005 to ascertain whether their proposal conflicts with the Local Plan.

- 3.5. The updated version of the Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles is attached for approval at Appendix 1.

#### **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 4.1. This policy and its implementation contribute to the following strategic aims in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-22:
- Protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children.
  - Securing the economic success of Reading.
- 4.2. The aim of the policy is to find a balance between securing the safety and amenity of our residential and business communities and responsibly maintaining and developing Reading's role as a major entertainment and cultural centre.
- 4.3. The policy considers the Gambling Commission's aim to strengthen social responsibility and to ensure that operators of gambling premises are risk assessing their operation in line with the local area profile drawn up by the Licensing Authority. The policy also aims to ensure that all gambling is conducted with a view to promoting the licensing objectives and to encourage operators to promote responsible gambling, in line with the relevant codes of practice and guidance issued by the Gambling Commission.

#### **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

5.1. There are no specific environmental or climate implications to this policy.

## **6. Community Engagement**

6.1. Consultations regarding the review of the Council's Gambling Policy were sent prior to approval of the Policy in February 2022, to various bodies within the gambling industry, groups who deal with the effects of gambling and responsible authorities stated within the Gambling Act.

## **7. Equality Implications**

7.1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to this decision as it won't have a differential impact on people with protected characteristics.

## **8. Other Relevant Considerations**

8.1. There are none.

## **9. Legal Implications**

9.1. The Gambling Act 2005 requires Local Authorities to review, consult and publish a Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles every three years.

9.2. The Statement must be prepared in accordance with [s349 of the Gambling Act 2005](#) and is a matter reserved to Council to determine under s154(2)(c) of the Act.

9.3. Local Authorities may attach such conditions to certain categories of licences as they may consider reasonably necessary, in accordance with the Act. All applications for premises licences will need to demonstrate that their application is reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives; in accordance with any relevant code of practice under s.24 of the Gambling Act 2005; in accordance with any relevant guidance issued by the Commission under s.25 of the Gambling Act 2005 and in accordance with Reading Borough Council's statement of licensing policy.

## **10. Financial Implications**

10.1. There are no financial implications resulting from adopting the amended Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles.

## **11. Timetable for Implementation**

11.1. The amended Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles will come into immediate effect, if approved by Council.

## **12. Background Papers**

12.1. There are none.

## **Appendices**

### **1. Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles 2022-25**

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# Reading Borough Council

## Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles

Effective from 01<sup>st</sup> March 2022

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**Reading Borough Council**  
**Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles**

**CONTENTS**

1. Introduction	3
2. Interpretation Section	4
3. Who may make representations	5
4. Licensing objectives	6
5. Types of Licence	6
6. Licensable Premises and Permits	6
7. Applications	6
8. Determination of Applications	7
9. General Principles	8
10. Application for a Premises Licence and Primary Gambling Activity	9
11. Location Policy	11
12. Prevention of Crime and Disorder Objective	12
13. Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way objective	13
14. Designation of Brighter Futures for Children as responsible authority	13
15. Protection of children and other vulnerable persons objective	14
16. Vulnerable Persons and Harm	14
17. Licensing Reviews	15
18. Enforcement	15
19. Legislation	16
20. Complaints against licensed premises	16
21. Assessment of Need	16
22. Casinos	16
23. Gaming Permits	17
24. Family Entertainment Centres (FECs)	17
25. Track Betting	17
26. Equality	17
27. Information exchange	17
28. Relationship with Planning Policies	18
29. National Strategies	18
30. Local Strategies and Policies	18
31. Integrating Strategies	18
32. Relevant plans and strategies include:-	19
33. Committee Terms of Reference	19
34. Allocation of Decision Making Responsibilities	20
35. Consideration of representations	21
36. Further information	21
Appendix A - Map of Reading Borough	24
Appendix B - Table of delegations of licensing functions	25
Appendix C - Category of gaming machines	26
Appendix D - Local area profile map	27

## STATEMENT OF GAMBLING LICENSING PRINCIPLES

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Section 2 of this Statement is the interpretation section.

1.2 The Council is the Licensing Authority under the Act. The Council is responsible for granting premises licences in the Borough of Reading in respect of:-

Casino premises;  
Bingo premises;  
Betting premises, including tracks;  
Adult Gaming Centres;  
Family Entertainment Centres.

1.3 The Act requires the Council to prepare and publish a Statement of Principles that it proposes to apply in exercising its functions under the Act. The Act requires that the Statement be reviewed every three years. This Statement was last reviewed in 2019.

1.4 This Statement has been prepared having regard to the provisions of the Guidance issued by the Commission and the licensing objectives of the Act and will be available on the Council's website.

1.5 This Statement will come into effect on the date of adoption by the Council and will be reviewed as necessary, and at least every three years from the date of adoption.

### **1.6. The Borough of Reading**

The Borough is some 4040 hectares in size with a current population of 161,780 persons within its boundary and a population of 233,000 persons within the greater Reading urban area. 35% of the population is made up from Black and Minority Ethnic communities. The strategic location of M4 and the proximity to Heathrow Airport and London has permitted Reading to develop into a major employer in computer companies. In the centre of Reading is located a major shopping and leisure area, which also has a thriving evening economy. Unemployment in Reading is generally low. The areas surrounding the town centre are generally residential with some industrial zones, small shopping precincts and leisure facilities.

### **1.7 Consultees**

The following have been consulted in respect of this Statement: -

- (a) Thames Valley Police;
- (b) Representatives of the holders of the various licences for premises within the Borough who will be affected by this Statement;
- (c) Persons/bodies representing the interests of persons likely to be affected by this Statement.

## 2. Interpretation Section

Within this Statement, the following words and terms are defined as stated:

Act:	The Gambling Act 2005
Applications:	Applications for licences and permits as referred to in Section 6 of this Statement
Borough:	The area of Reading administered by Reading Borough Council (Map appended at Appendix A)
Code of Practice:	Means any relevant code of practice under section 24 of the Act
Commission:	The Gambling Commission
Council:	Reading Borough Council
Default Condition:	Means a specified condition provided by regulations to be attached to a licence, unless excluded by the Council
Interested Party:	For the purposes of the Act, a person is an interested party in relation to a premises licence if, in the opinion of the Licensing Authority which issues the licence or to which the application is made, the person: -  (a) Lives sufficiently close to the premises to be likely to be affected by the authorised activities;  (b) Has business interests that might be affected by the authorised activities;  (c) Represents persons who satisfy a) or b) above.
Licences:	As defined in Section 5 of this Statement
Licensing Objectives:	As defined in Section 4 of this Statement
Mandatory Condition:	Means a specified condition provided by regulations to be attached to a licence
Notifications:	Means notification of temporary and occasional use notices
Premises:	Any place, including a vehicle or vessel.
Regulations:	Regulations made under the Act
Responsible Authority:	For the purposes of the Act, the following are responsible authorities in relation to premises:



The Licensing Authority in whose area the premises are wholly or mainly situated;  
The Gambling Commission;  
Thames Valley Police;  
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service;  
Planning Department, Reading Borough Council;  
Health & Safety Team, Reading Borough Council;  
Environmental Protection Team, Reading Borough Council;  
Brighter Futures for Children;  
HM Customs and Excise.  
Any other person prescribed by regulation made by the Secretary of State.

### **3. Who may make representations**

3.1 Responsible authorities and interested parties are entitled to make representations in response to applications for premises licences, provisional statements and applications for review of premises licences.

3.2 The Council will give due consideration to each case in deciding whether a person is an interested party. The factors which the Council shall take into consideration in determining whether a person lives sufficiently close to the premises to be likely to be affected by the authorised activities include: -

- The size of the premises;
- The nature of the premises;
- The distance of the premises from the location of the person making the representation;
- The potential impact of the premises (number of customers, and routes likely to be taken by those visiting the establishment);
- The circumstances of the complainant. This is not the personal characteristics of the complainant, but the interest of the complainant which may be relevant to the distance from the premises. For example, it could be reasonable for an authority to conclude that 'sufficiently close to be likely to be affected' could have a different meaning for (a) a private resident, (b) a residential school for children with truanting problems, and (c) a residential hostel for vulnerable adults.

3.3 In determining whether a person has a business interest that might be affected by the authorised activities, the Council will take a flexible approach. Such persons may include partnerships, charities, churches, medical practices, residents' associations, trade associations, trade unions and landlords.

3.4 In principle, the Council may allow any person to represent an interested party, although it may initially seek written confirmation that the person authentically represents the interested party. Generally, evidence shall be required that a person or body represents someone. However, this will not apply to a person's legal representative. The requirement will also not apply to interested parties' Councillors or Members of Parliament.

#### **4. Licensing objectives**

In carrying out its functions in respect of applications for, and review of, premises licences, and applications for provisional statements, and consideration of temporary use notices, the Act requires that the Council shall aim to permit the use of the premises for gambling insofar as the Council thinks it reasonably consistent with the three licensing objectives which are:-

Preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime;

Ensuring that gambling is carried out in a fair and open way; and

Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

It must be noted that 'aim to permit' does not mean 'will permit'. An applicant must ensure that their application is not in conflict with the legislation and this policy. For more information, please see paragraphs 8.1.2 and 8.1.3 below.

#### **5. Types of Licence**

This Statement sets out the policies that the Council will apply when making decisions upon applications made for: -

Premises Licences;  
Provisional Statements;  
Temporary Use Notices;  
Permits as required under the Act;

#### **6. Licensable Premises and Permits**

This Statement relates to the following:-

- (a) Casinos Premises;
- (b) Bingo Premises;
- (c) Betting Premises;
- (d) Tracks;
- (e) Adult Gaming Centres;
- (f) Family Entertainment Centres (Licensed & Unlicensed)
- (g) Club Gaming Permits;
- (h) Prize Gaming Permits;
- (i) Gaming machines on alcohol licensed premises;

#### **7. Applications**

7.1 An application for a premises licence can only be made by a person who either holds an operating licence authorising him to carry on the activity in respect of which a premises licence is sought, or has made an application for an operating licence which has not yet been determined.

7.2 Applications for the grant, transfer or variation of a premises licence and provisional statement must demonstrate how the applicant will prevent the

licensing objectives being adversely affected. The applicant may ask the Council for advice as to the scope of information to be provided.

7.3 An applicant can apply for a provisional statement in respect of premises:

- (a) That he expects to be constructed,
- (b) That he expects to be altered, or
- (c) That he expects to acquire a right to occupy

## **8.Determination of Applications**

The Council shall take into consideration the following in determining applications for the below:-

(a) Premises Licences, provisional statement and temporary use notices

Codes of Practice issued by the Commission, guidance issued by the Commission, the licensing objectives, this Statement and other relevant factors.

(b) Unlicensed Family entertainment centre gaming machine permit

The licensing objectives, guidance issued by the Commission and this Statement.

(c) Club gaming permit and club machine permit

The licensing objectives, guidance issued by the Commission and this Statement.

(d) Licensed premises gaming machine permit

The licensing objectives, guidance issued by the Commission, other relevant matters and this Statement.

(e) Prize gaming permit

The licensing objectives and guidance issued by the Commission and this Statement.

### **8.1 Determination of Applications for a Gambling Premises Licence**

8.2 Whilst the Licensing Authority shall aim to permit the use of a premises for gambling - as per section 153 of the Gambling Act 2005 - it shall only do so if the applicant can demonstrate how their application is:

- a) In accordance with any relevant code of practice issued under Section 24 of the Gambling Act 2005.
- b) In accordance with any relevant guidance issued by the Gambling Commission under Section 25 of the Gambling Act 2005.
- c) Reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives.

- d) In accordance with the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy issued under Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005.

8.3 If the applicant is able to demonstrate that their application for a premises licence meets the above requirements, then the Licensing Authority shall aim to permit the application. If an application is contrary to the Council's licensing policy or an applicant has not demonstrated that their application is in accordance with points a-c above, then the application is likely to attract representations.

## **9. General Principles**

9.1 Nothing in this Statement shall undermine the rights of any person to apply for any licence under the Act and have the application considered on its individual merits or override the right of any person to make representations on any application for a licence or a review of a licence where they are permitted to do so under the Act.

9.2 On consideration of an application for a premises licence, provisional statement or on consideration of a temporary use notice the presumption shall be to grant the application without conditions. Mandatory and default conditions are the only conditions that are required to be attached to a licence at minimum and, in most cases, will be sufficient to promote the licensing objectives, however, additional conditions will be imposed where there is clear evidence of a risk to the licensing objectives in the circumstances of a particular case which is not already adequately addressed by the policies, procedures and mitigation measures described in an applicant's risk assessment. Conditions may also be considered if the application is contrary to this policy or has not taken into account the Council's Local Area Profile information. It is required for applicants to demonstrate how they will mitigate the risks within their local area and this should be done via a local area risk assessment and the submission of conditions if deemed appropriate. Any conditions applied will not be overly onerous and will be proportionate to the scale of the application and the risks involved. Conditions will generally be considered unnecessary if they are already adequately covered by other legislation.

9.3 No conditions may be attached to permits.

9.4 Licensing is about the control of premises where facilities for gambling are provided. Conditions may be attached to licences that will cover matters that are within the control of individual licensees.

9.5 When considering any conditions to be attached to licences, the Council will primarily focus on the direct impact of the activities taking place at licensed premises on members of the public living, working or engaged in normal activity in the area concerned.

9.6 Conditions will be applied to licences that are proportionate and appropriate to the business, organisation or individual concerned. The Council will draw upon advice and the guidance issued by the Commission and attach conditions relative to the given circumstances of each individual case.

9.7 Conditions attached to licences will, so far as possible, reflect local crime

prevention strategies. For example, closed circuit television cameras may be appropriate in certain premises.

9.8 The Secretary of State may by regulation provide for specified conditions to be attached to a premises licence as either “mandatory” or “default” conditions.

9.9 In determining an application for licences the Licensing Authority may not have regard to the expected demand for the facilities for gambling that it is proposed to provide.

9.10 Responsible authorities and interested parties who make representations must relate their representations to any relevant code of practice and guidance issued by the Commission, the licensing objectives and this Statement.

9.11 The Council recognises that, apart from the licensing function, there are a number of other mechanisms available for addressing issues of unruly behaviour that can occur away from licensed premises, including: -

- (a) Planning controls;
- (b) Ongoing measures to create a safe and clean environment in these areas in partnership with local businesses, transport operators and other Council departments;
- (c) Regular liaison with the police on law enforcement issues regarding disorder and anti-social behaviour;
- (d) The power of the police, other responsible authorities or local residents and businesses to seek to have premises licences reviewed.

9.12 When determining an application, the Council cannot take into account irrelevant matters. In determining an application for a premises licence or a provisional statement, it cannot take into consideration whether the applicant’s application for planning or building control permission in respect of the premises will be successful.

## **10. Application for a Premises Licence and Primary Gambling Activity**

10.1 The primary activity of each premises licence type is specified on the premises licence when it is issued. Section 150 of the Gambling Act 2005 authorises the provision of gambling facilities for the following types of premises licences:

- (a) casino premises
- (b) bingo premises
- (c) betting premises, including tracks and premises used by betting intermediaries
- (d) adult gaming centre premises
- (e) family entertainment centre premises

10.2 In betting premises, gaming machines may be made available for use only where there are also substantive facilities for non-remote betting, as per social responsibility code 9.1.1. The Code of Practice and Guidance set out the requirements on operators to ensure that their premises meet the terms of the Act and the relevant conditions.

### **10.3 Buildings divided into more than one premises**

10.3.1 Part 7, paragraph 7.5 of the Commissions Guidance states that “there is no reason in principle why a single building could not be subject to more than one premises licence provided they are for different parts of the building, and the different parts of the building can be reasonably regarded as being different premises”. Examples are given of multiple unit premises, such as pleasure parks, tracks, or shopping malls. A shopping mall will have multiple self-contained units (premises) which are located within one building. It is also possible for licensed premises to be located next to each other as long as there are no restrictions regarding direct access between these premises imposed on that category of gambling premises from its mandatory conditions. The council will follow this guidance.

10.3.2 In considering whether different areas of a building are genuinely separate premises the council will take into account factors which will include: whether there are separate registrations for business rates in place for the premises, whether the premises are owned or operated by the same person, and whether the premises are operated independently of each other.

### **10.4 Separation of premises within a single building**

10.4.1 When considering proposals to divide a building into genuinely separate premises the council will also need to be satisfied that the form of separation between the premises is appropriate. The separation between one premises and another must be clearly defined. Any barrier used to separate one premises from another must be permanent and constructed so the public cannot go from one premises to another. The council would not, for example, be likely to consider that separation of areas of a building by ropes, or by low level, or moveable partitions to be appropriate.

### **10.5 Access to Premises**

10.5.1 The Gambling Act 2005 (Mandatory and Default Conditions) Regulations 2007 restrict access to different types of licensed gambling premises. In considering proposals to divide a building into different premises the council will have to be satisfied that proposals to divide buildings are compatible with the mandatory conditions which relate to access between premises.

10.5.2 The relevant provisions of the regulations relating to access are set out in paragraph 7.23 of the Commission’s Guidance. In a number of types of licensed premises there are provisions on access that prevent customers from being able to enter the premises directly from other licensed premises.

10.5.3 The Commission Guidance at paragraph 7.22 states “There is no definition of ‘direct access’ in the Act or regulations, but licensing authorities may consider that there should be an area separating the premises concerned, for example a street or café, which the public go to for purposes other than gambling, for there to be no direct access.”

In particular, where premises are not accessed from the street, the council has sought to define the nature of the area which must separate licensed premises and through which the premises are accessed, so as to prevent direct access between

premises in order to comply with the provisions of the Act and regulations. It is the council's opinion that any area which separates licensed premises, and from which those premises can be accessed, must be genuinely separate premises which are habitually and actually used by members of the public other than those using the licensed premises.

## **11. Location Policy**

When determining an application for the grant or review of a premises licence, the grant of a provisional statement or when considering a temporary use notice, regard will be given to the proximity of the premises to schools, vulnerable adult centres or residential areas where there may be a high concentration of families with children. Applicants should consult the Council's Local Area Profile Map - attached at appendix D to this policy - and ensure that any application submitted provides a robust risk assessment to mitigate any potential risks to these groups. It is very important in such circumstances that applicants demonstrate how the licensing objectives will not be adversely affected. The proximity of premises taken into consideration will vary depending on the size and scope of the gambling premises concerned. Each case will, however, be decided on its merits.

### **11.1 Local Area Profile and Local Area Risk Assessments**

11.1.1 The Licensing Authority shall expect all applicant's for grants or variations of a gambling premises licence to include full details of their local risk assessment as part of their applications. This is per the Social Responsibility Code 10.1.1 and Ordinary Code Provision 10.1.2 which both have effect from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

11.1.2 Applicants will be expected to demonstrate how their operation shall not exacerbate issues of anti-social behaviour in the locality or undermine the licensing objectives - particularly in relation to the protection of children and other vulnerable people should the proposed site be located near schools or treatment centres. Applicants shall be expected to demonstrate how their application will be consistent with the licensing objectives during the submission of an application by taking into account the Local Area Map and other sources of readily available information and, if necessary and relevant, propose conditions that may mitigate the potential risks of being granted a licence in their proposed area. Failure to do this could lead to the application attracting representations.

11.1.3 A copy of Reading Borough Council's Local Area Profile Map is attached at Appendix D to this policy. This map shows the location of all gambling premises licences and their proximity to places of worship, schools and treatment centres. Levels of Anti-Social Behaviour are included on the map. Applicants are expected to take cognisance of this information when submitting applications for a gambling premises licence as it will inform any risk assessment that they will be required to submit.

11.1.4 If a licence is granted or varied, applicants are required to revise their local area risk assessments regularly to reflect any significant changes in the local environment, for example, the opening of a new treatment centre. Licensees shall be expected to share and produce a copy of their updated risk assessment to the Licensing Authority upon request.

11.1.5 As well as the Licensing Authority's Local Area Profile Map, applicants as well as current licence holders should take cognisance of the following sources of information when compiling and reviewing their local area risk assessments:

- a) crime statistics from the police.uk website - in particular the type of crime within the relevant locality;
- b) any neighbourhood group website containing information about specific localities;
- c) any relevant online mapping tools;
- d) other policies, initiatives or strategies issued or undertaken by Reading Borough Council concerning public health initiatives or protection of vulnerable groups. Particular attention should also be paid to the Council's policies on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. It is strongly advised that Applicants and Licence Holders be aware of the Council's planning policy, particularly the Reading Borough Local Plan which deals with clustering of gambling premises, before making an application under the Gambling Act 2005 to ascertain whether their proposal conflicts with the Local Plan.

11.1.6 There is publicly available data that shows the prevalence of problem gambling severity in each local authority and ward area as well as usage of, and reported demand for, treatment and support for gambling harms. This resource is provided by GambleAware and can be accessed via: <https://www.begambleaware.org/gambleaware-gb-maps>. We would expect applicants to take cognisance of this resource to assist in the creation of their local area risk assessment.

## **12. Prevention of Crime and Disorder Objective**

12.1 The Council places a considerable importance on the prevention of crime and disorder and will fulfil its duty under s17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in the borough. A high standard of control is, therefore, expected to be exercised over licensed premises.

12.2 The Council will, when determining applications, consider whether the grant of a premises licence will result in an increase in crime and disorder.

12.3 Public nuisance is not specified in the Act as a licensing objective. However, the Council may take cognisance of it, when considering applications for premises licences and a provisional statement and when considering a temporary use notice if it is of the opinion that in the circumstances of the case public nuisance may be tantamount to crime and/or disorder.

12.4 Applicants are encouraged to discuss the crime prevention procedures in their premises with the Council's Licensing Officers and Thames Valley police before making a formal application.

12.5 In considering licence applications, the Council will particularly take into account the following: -

- (a) The design and layout of the premises;



- (b) The training given to staff in crime prevention measures appropriate to those premises;
- (c) Physical security features installed in the premises. This may include matters such as the position of cash registers or the standard of CCTV that is installed;
- (d) Provision of door supervisors;
- (e) Where premises are subject to age restrictions, the procedures in place to conduct age verification checks;
- (f) The likelihood of any violence, public order or policing problem if the licence is granted.

### **13. Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way objective**

13.1 Generally, the Commission would not expect licensing authorities to become concerned with ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way, as this will be a matter for either the management of the gambling business (and, therefore, relevant to the operating licence), or will be in relation to the suitability and actions of an individual (and, therefore, relevant to the personal licence). Both of these options fall under the purview of the Commission. However, if the Council suspects that gambling is not being conducted in a fair and open way, this will be brought to the attention of the Commission so that it may consider the continuing suitability of the operator to hold an operating licence or of an individual to hold a personal licence.

13.2 Without prejudice to paragraph 13.1 above, for the purpose of ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way the Council may take into consideration the following:-

Whether the applicant has been, and is, willing to co-operate with enforcement agencies checking compliance with the licensing objective;

The history of the applicant in complying with advice given by enforcement agencies, in particular, officers of the Council, about compliance with the licensing objectives.

### **14. Designation of Brighter Futures for Children as responsible authority**

14.1 The Council is legally required to specify the principles which it will apply in exercising its powers under section 157(h) of the Act to designate, in writing, a competent body to advise it about the protection of children from harm. The principles are: -

- i. the need for it to be a body in Reading and be responsible for, or interested in, matters relating to the protection of children from harm;
- ii. the Council's desire that the body should act responsibly in performing the function and be such that would be willing to advise the Council if necessary.

14.2 As Brighter Futures for Children is a responsible authority for the purposes of the Licensing Act 2003, the Council hereby designates it as the responsible authority for the purpose of the Act.

### **15. Protection of children and other vulnerable persons objective**

15.1 With limited exceptions, the access of children and young persons to those gambling premises that are adult only environments will not be permitted.

15.2 The Council will seek to limit the advertising for premises so that gambling products are not aimed at children or advertised in such a way that makes them particularly attractive to children.

15.3 The Council will judge the merits of each separate application before deciding whether to impose conditions to protect children on particular categories of premises. This may include such requirements as:-

- (a) Supervision of entrances;
- (b) Segregation of gambling areas from areas frequented by children;
- (c) Supervision of gaming machines in non-adult gambling specific premises.

15.4 The Act provides for the Commission to issue one or more code of practice on access to casino premises by children and young persons and the Council will work closely with the police to ensure the appropriate enforcement of the law, especially relating to the sale and supply of alcohol to children.

15.5 In determining applications the Council shall take into consideration: -

Whether the applicant has been, and is, willing to co-operate with enforcement agencies checking compliance with this licensing objective;

The history of the applicant in complying with this licensing objective;

15.6 The applicant for premises licences, provisional statements and review of premises licences is required to serve a notice of the application on Brighter Futures for Children, which is a responsible authority.

15.7 Public Health are not specified in the Act as a Responsible Authority. However, the Council may have regard for their input particularly in relation to any local or national strategy involving the safeguarding of vulnerable adults or children and their exposure to potential harm, when considering applications for premises licences, provisional statements or temporary use notices.

### **16. Vulnerable Persons and Harm**

16.1 It is noted that the Act and Commission Guidance does not define the term vulnerable persons. The Commission states that “it will for regulatory purposes assume that this group includes people who gamble more than they want to; people who gamble beyond their means; and people who may not be able to make informed or balanced decisions about gambling due to a mental impairment, alcohol or drugs

or other circumstances”. This is the definition of vulnerable persons the council will use in its consideration of applications.

16.2 It is noted that the Act does not contain a definition for the word harm or its context. The Council considers harm to mean anything from the physical and mental which is not confined to an individual. For example, a problem gambler at harm from gambling can have negative effects on their families, friends and communities. This is the broad interpretation of ‘harm’ that the Council proposes to use when assessing applications and local risk assessments and licence holders are expected to put into place measures to identify problem gamblers and any harm they may cause to themselves or people around them and take appropriate steps to promote the licensing objective in this regard.

## **17. Licensing Reviews**

17.1 The Council will carry out a review of a premises licence where it has received a formal application for a review, or of its own volition, in accordance with the Act. The review must be relevant to any relevant code and guidance issued by the Commission, the licensing objectives and this Statement. Representations may include, amongst others, issues relating to the following:-

Use of licensed premises for the sale and distribution of controlled substances and/or the laundering of the proceeds of crimes;

Use of licensed premises for the sale and distribution of illegal firearms;

Use of licensed premises for prostitution or the sale of unlawful pornography;

Use of licensed premises as a base for organised criminal activity;

Use of licensed premises for the organisation of racist, homophobic or sexual abuse or attacks;

Use of licensed premises for the sale of smuggled tobacco or goods;

Use of licensed premises for the sale of stolen goods.

## **18. Enforcement**

18.1 Principles to be applied by the Council in exercising its functions under Part 15 of the Act with respect to the inspection of premises and the powers under Section 346 of the Act to institute criminal proceedings in respect of the offences specified in that Section are as follows: -

18.2 All licensing enforcement will be conducted in accordance with the Enforcement Concordat and the Council’s Corporate Enforcement Policy.

18.3 The Council is a signatory to the Enforcement Concordat and will follow the principles set out in it. The concordat is based around the principles of consistency, transparency and proportionality.

18.4 The Enforcement Concordat (available upon request) proposes that a graduated response is taken where offences against legislation occur. An isolated administrative offence, such as failing to maintain certain records, may be dealt with by way of a written warning. More serious offences may result in a referral to

Sub-Committee for a review of the premises licence or may result in a prosecution. Each case will be considered on its merits.

18.5 In deciding whether to institute criminal proceedings the Council shall take cognisance of the public interest test and the realistic prospect of a conviction test as specified in the Attorney General Guidelines.

18.6 The Council intends to use appropriate enforcement to promote the licensing objectives. Once licensed, it is essential that premises are monitored to ensure that they are run in compliance with the specific requirements of the Act and in compliance with any licence conditions. It will also be important to monitor the Borough for unlicensed premises. The Council shall authorise officers for such purposes.

18.7 The Act provides for the Commission to issue one or more code of practice on access to casino premises by children and young persons and the Council will work closely with the police to ensure the appropriate enforcement of the law, especially relating to the sale and supply of alcohol to children.

## **18. Legislation**

18.1 In undertaking its licensing function under the Act the Council is also bound by other legislation, including:-

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1988; Human Rights Act 1998.

18.2 This Statement is not intended to duplicate existing legislation and regulatory regimes that already place obligations on employers and operators.

## **19. Complaints against licensed premises**

19.1 The Council will investigate complaints against licensed premises in relation to matters relating to the licensing objectives for which it has responsibility, including breach of a licence condition. In the first instance, complainants are encouraged to raise the complaint directly with the licence holder or business concerned to seek a local resolution.

19.2 Where an interested party or reasonable authority has made either a valid representation about licensed premises or a valid application for a licence to be reviewed, the Council may initially arrange a conciliation meeting to address and clarify the issues of concern.

19.3 This process will not override the right of any interested party or responsible authority to ask that the licensing committee consider their valid representations or for any licence holder to decline to participate in a conciliation meeting.

## **20. Assessment of Need**

Unmet demand is not a criterion that will be taken into consideration when determining an application for a premises licence or provisional statement under the Act.

## **21. Casinos**

There are currently 3 Casinos operating within the Borough. In addition to this there is a further premises currently licensed, but not operating. There are no plans under section 166 of the Act to limit or restrict the number of casinos operating within the Borough.

## **22. Gaming Permits**

With regard to the number of gaming machines permitted on premises, the Council will grant permits in accordance with the Act as outlined in Appendix C to this policy. However, should applications be received for extra machines, where permitted, the council will determine each case on its merits giving due regard to the three licensing objectives.

## **23. Family Entertainment Centres (FECs)**

23.1 Children and young persons may enter FECs but are not permitted to play Category C machines. The Council will expect the applicant to ensure that there will be sufficient measures in place to prevent under 18 years olds having access to the adult only gaming machine area.

23.2 Under section 247 of the Act, if premises have only Category D machines, a Family Entertainment Centre Gaming Machine Permit can be issued by the authority without the need to have an operator's Licence. The lack of a requirement to have an operator's licence means that the Commission will not have considered the suitability of the applicant. As a result of this, in these circumstances, the applicant shall be required to provide a criminal record check to enable the licensing authority to check the suitability of the applicant.

23.3 In exercising its functions in respect of Family Entertainment Centre Permits the Council need not, but may have regard to, the licensing objectives and must have regard to any guidance issued by the Commission.

## **24. Track Betting**

24.1 Tracks are horse racecourses, dog tracks, or other premises on any part of which a race or other sporting event takes place or is intended to take place.

24.2 An application can be made for a premises licence for a betting track even though the applicant does not have an operator's licence.

24.3 If a betting premises licence is granted for a track the holder of the licence must ensure that anyone coming on to the track to take benefit of the premises licence must have a betting operator's licence.

24.4 The Council will require a plan to be submitted with an application for a betting premises licence showing the areas of the premises where betting will take place.

## **25. Equality**

The Council, in undertaking its licensing function, will have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality and good relations between persons of different ethnic groups.

## **26. Information exchange**

26.1 In fulfilling its functions under the Act the Council will exchange relevant information with other regulatory bodies, including persons and bodies identified pursuant to section 350 of and schedule 6 to the Act to enable them to perform their statutory functions and will establish protocols in this respect. In exchanging such information, the Council will conform to the requirements of data protection and freedom of information legislation in accordance with the Council's existing policies. The Council will also have regard to any relevant guidance issued by the Commission and regulations made by the Secretary of State.

26.2 Pursuant to section 29 of the Act the Commission may require the Council to provide information that forms part of the Council's register maintained under the Act or information which is in the Council's possession in connection with a provision of the Act. The Council shall endeavour to provide to the Commission such information as it requires, without delay, mindful of the Commission's:-

- Power to request the information.
- Duty to issue codes and guidance.
- Duty to promote the licence objectives.
- Duty to advise the Secretary of State on matters relating to gambling.
- Power to carry out activities for the purpose of assessing compliance with the Act and whether offences have been committed under the Act.
- Duty to determine whether to grant an operating licence, and to enable it to be in possession of such information as it considers necessary about the provision of gambling facilities in licensed premises in the Council's area.
- Enforcement duties pursuant to the Act.

## **27. Relationship with Planning Policies**

The granting of planning permission and or building control approval is a separate process, which is carried out by other departments within the Council. However, applicants should have regard to planning policy when submitting their local area risk assessments and/or application. It is strongly advised that Applicants and Licence Holders be aware of the Council's planning policy, particularly the Reading Borough Local Plan which deals with clustering of gambling premises, before making an application under the Gambling Act 2005 to ascertain whether their proposal conflicts with the Local Plan.

## **28. National Strategies**

The Council will also seek to discharge its responsibilities identified by other Government Strategies, in so far as they impact on the objectives of the licensing function.

## **29. Local Strategies and Policies**

Where appropriate, the Council will consider applications with reference to other adopted local strategies and policies, including the following: -

The Council's Corporate Strategy;  
The Community Safety Strategy;

Enforcement policy.

### **30. Integrating Strategies**

30.1 There are many stakeholders involved in the leisure industry and many are involved in the promotion of the licensing objectives. A number of stakeholders' plans and strategies deal with matters related to the licensing function. Where this is the case, the Council will aim, as far as possible, to co-ordinate them.

30.2 The Council recognises, in particular, the importance of the co-ordination and integration of this Statement with other plans aimed at the management of town centres and the night-time economy.

### **31. Relevant plans and strategies include:-**

31.1 Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy - The Council will fulfil its duty under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in the Borough. As far as possible, licensing decisions will aim to contribute to the targets set in the Crime and Disorder Strategy and conditions attached to licences will reflect local crime prevention strategies.

31.2 Local Transport Plan - the Council will consider ways in which the public can be dispersed from licensed premises and events so as to avoid disturbance, crime and disorder. The police will be encouraged to report on matters related to the swift and safe dispersal of people from licensed premises.

31.3 Racial Equality - The Council is required under race relations legislation to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups. As far as possible, licensing decisions will take account of racial equality.

31.4 Human Rights - The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights and makes it unlawful for a local authority to act in a way which is incompatible with a Convention right. The Council will have particular regard to the following relevant provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights: -

Article 6 that in the determination of civil rights and obligations, everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal established by law;

Article 8 that everyone has the right to respect for his home and private and family life;

Article 1 of the First Protocol that every person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his or her possessions, which may in certain circumstances include a licence.

31.5 Proper integration will be assured by the Council's Licensing Committee providing reports, when appropriate, to its Planning Committee on the situation regarding licensed premises in the area, including the general impact of gambling related crime and disorder, to enable the Planning Committee to have regard to such matters when taking its decisions.

31.6 Tourism and Town Centre Management - The Council aims to promote a high quality, thriving night-time economy.

### **32. Committee Terms of Reference**

32.1 A Licensing Sub-Committee normally made up of three Councillors will sit to hear applications where representations have been received from interested parties and responsible authorities. The quorum of two Councillors may comprise the Sub-Committee. Ward Councillors will not normally sit on a Sub-Committee involving an application within their ward.

32.2 Where a Councillor who is a member of the Licensing Committee is making or has made representations regarding a licence on behalf of an interested party, in the interests of good governance they will disqualify themselves from any involvement in the decision making process affecting the licence in question.

32.3 The Licensing Committee will refer to the Full Council any matter it is unable to deal with because of the number of its members who are unable to take part in the consideration or discussion of any matter or vote on any question with respect to it.

32.4 Every determination of a licensing decision by the Licensing Committee or a Licensing Sub-Committee shall be accompanied by clear, cogent reasons for the decision. The decision and the reasons for that decision will be sent to the applicant and those who have made relevant representations as soon as practicable.

32.5 The Council's Licensing Officers will deal with all other licensing applications where either no representations have been received, or where representations have been received and it is agreed by the parties that a hearing is not necessary.

32.6 Decisions as to whether representations are irrelevant, frivolous or vexatious will be made by Council Officers, who will make the decisions on whether representations or applications for premises licences, provisional statements or review of premises licence should be referred to the Licensing Committee or Sub-Committee. Where representations are rejected, the person making that representation will be given written reasons as to why that is the case. There is no right of appeal against a determination that representations are not admissible save for by way of judicial review to the High Court.

### **33. Allocation of Decision Making Responsibilities**

33.1 The Council will be involved in a wide range of licensing decisions and functions and has established a Licensing Committee to administer them as and when required or necessary.

33.2 Appreciating the need to provide a speedy, efficient and cost-effective service to all parties involved in the licensing process, the Committee has delegated certain decisions and functions and has established Sub-Committees to deal with them.

33.3 Many of the decisions and functions will be purely administrative in nature and the grant of non-contentious applications, including for example those licences



and permits where no representations have been made, will be delegated to Council Officers.

33.4 The table shown at Appendix B sets out the agreed delegation of decisions and functions to Licensing Committee, Sub-Committee and Officers.

33.5 This form of delegation is without prejudice to Officers referring an application to a Sub-Committee or Full Committee if considered appropriate in the circumstances of any particular case.

### **34. Consideration of representations**

34.1 Due consideration will be given to all relevant representations unless they fit the following:-

The grounds are frivolous;

The grounds are vexatious;

The grounds are irrelevant;

The grounds will not cause the Licensing Authority to revoke or suspend a licence or to remove, amend or attach conditions on the premises licence;

The grounds are substantially the same as the grounds cited in a previous application relating to the same premises; or

The grounds are substantially the same as representations made at the time the application for a premises licence was considered.

### **35. Further information**

Further information about the Gambling Act 2005, this Statement of gambling licensing principles or the application process can be obtained from:-

#### **The Licensing Team**

Reading Borough Council  
Civic Offices  
Bridge Street  
Reading  
RG1 2LU

Tel: 0118 937 3762

E-mail: [licensing@reading.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@reading.gov.uk)

Website: [www.reading.gov.uk](http://www.reading.gov.uk)

Information is also available from:-

#### **Gambling Commission**

Victoria Square House  
Victoria Square  
Birmingham  
B2 4BP

Tel: 0121 230 6500

Email: [info@gamblingcommission.gov.uk](mailto:info@gamblingcommission.gov.uk)

Website: [www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk](http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk)

Other Responsible Authorities Contact Details: -

**Noise and Nuisance Team**

Reading Borough Council  
Civic Offices  
Bridge Street  
Reading  
RG1 2LU

Tel: 0118 937 3787

Email: [Environment.ProtectionTeam@reading.gov.uk](mailto:Environment.ProtectionTeam@reading.gov.uk)

**Environmental Health**

(Health and Safety)  
Reading Borough Council  
Civic Offices  
Bridge Street  
Reading  
RG1 2LU

Tel: 0118 937 3787

Email: [consumer.protection@reading.gov.uk](mailto:consumer.protection@reading.gov.uk)

**Thames Valley Police**

Licensing Team Oxford  
Road Kidlington  
Oxon  
OX5 2NX

Email: [Licensing@thamesvalley.police.uk](mailto:Licensing@thamesvalley.police.uk)

**Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service**

Newsham Court  
Pincents Kiln  
Calcot  
Reading  
RG31 7SD

Tel: 0118 945 2888

Email: [westhubfiresafety@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:westhubfiresafety@rbfrs.co.uk)

**Planning Department**

Reading Borough Council  
Civic Offices  
Bridge Street  
Reading  
RG1 2LU

Tel: 0118 937 3787

Email: [plgadmin@reading.gov.uk](mailto:plgadmin@reading.gov.uk)

**Brighter Futures for Children**

Reading Borough Council  
Civic Offices  
Bridge Street  
Reading  
RG1 2LU

Tel: 0118 937 3787

Email: [LADO@brighterfuturesforchildren.org](mailto:LADO@brighterfuturesforchildren.org)

**HM Revenue and Customs**

HM Revenue and Customs  
Excise Processing Teams  
BX9 1GL  
United Kingdom

Phone: 0300 322 7072 Option 7.

Email: [NRUBetting&Gaming@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:NRUBetting&Gaming@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk)

# APPENDIX A - MAP OF READING BOROUGH



Title: Ward Map 2022

Drg.No.: GIS00347

Date: 10/08/2021 Scale at A2: 1:22,900

Produced by GIS & Mapping Services Ref: G:\MapInfo\Data\Master Datasets\Boundary Line\Ward map workspaces\Wards



Reading Borough Council

Working better with you

**APPENDIX B - TABLE OF DELEGATIONS OF LICENSING FUNCTIONS**

MATTER TO BE DEALT WITH	FULL COUNCIL	SUB-COMMITTEE	OFFICERS
Approval of three year licensing policy	X		
Policy not to permit casinos	X		
Fee Setting - when appropriate			X (to be approved by Executive Councillor)
Application for premises licence (new, variation & transfer) and provisional statement		Where representations have been received and not withdrawn	Where no representations received/ representations have been withdrawn
Review of a premises licence		X	
Application for club gaming /club machine permits		Where representations have been received and not withdrawn	Where no representations received/ representations have been withdrawn
Cancellation of club gaming/ club machine permits		X	X (for non-payment of fee)
Applications for other permits			X
Cancellation of licensed premises gaming machine permits			X
Consideration of temporary use notice			X
Decision to give a counter notice to a temporary use notice		X	
Revocation of premises licence due to failure to pay annual fee			X
Registration of small society lotteries			X
Registration of small society lotteries			X

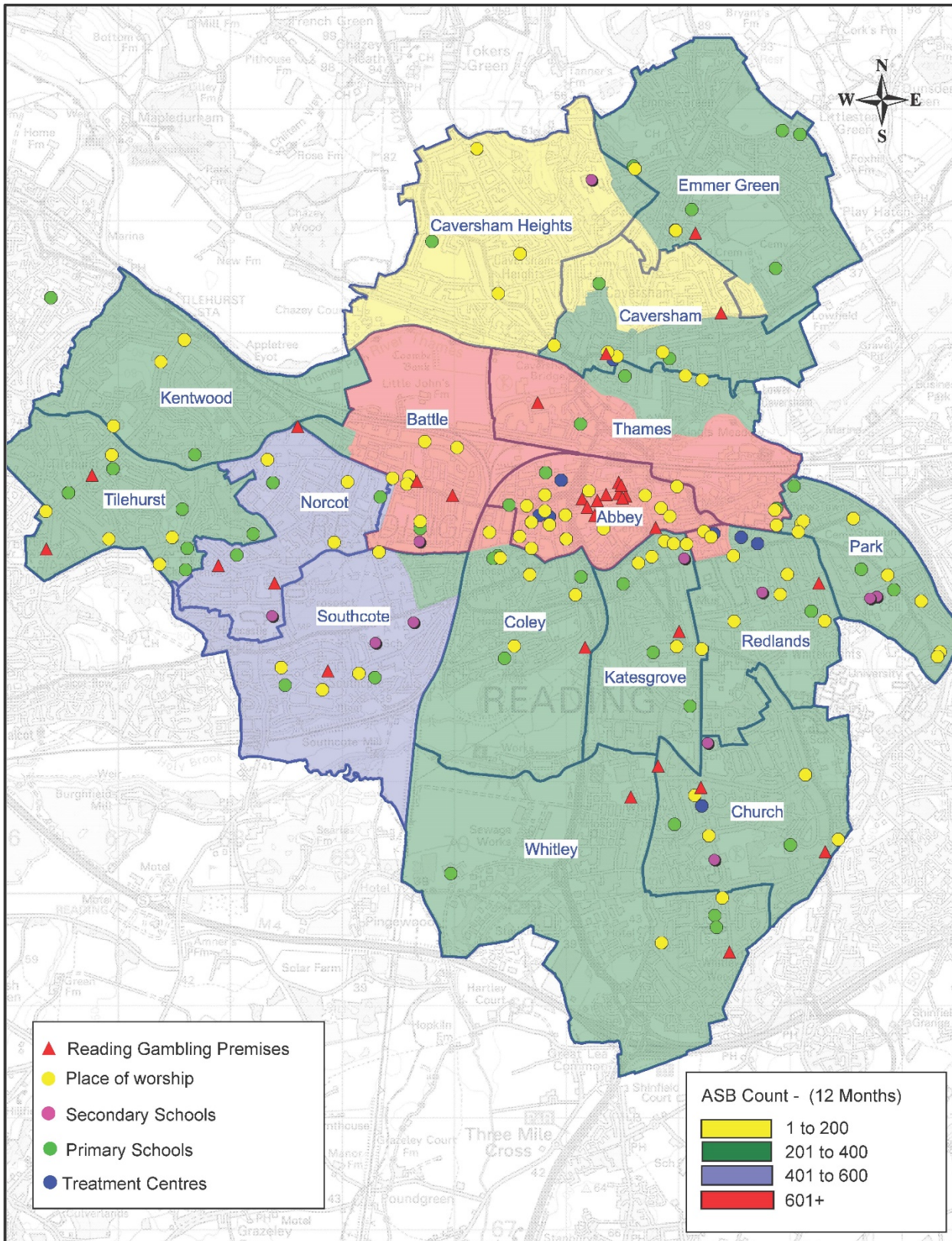
X indicates the lowest level to which decisions can be delegated

## APPENDIX C - CATEGORY OF GAMING MACHINES

Type of Authorisation	Machine Categories Permitted						
	A	B1	B2	B3	B4	C	D
Betting (other) Premises Licence			Maximum of 4 machines Any combination from Categories <b>B2/B3/B4/C/D</b>				
Betting (track) Premises Licence			As Betting (other), but only if the licence-holder also holds a Pool Betting Operating Licence				
Bingo Premises Licence				20% of total gaming machines #		Unlimited	
Adult Gaming Centre Premises Licence				20% of total gaming machines #		Unlimited	
Family Entertainment Centre Premises Licence						Unlimited	
Family Entertainment Centre Gaming Machine Permit							Unlimited
Club Gaming Permit or Club Machine Permit				Maximum of 3 machines Members clubs - from Cat. <b>B3a/B4/C/D</b> Commercial clubs – from Cat. <b>B4/C/D</b>			
Alcohol-licensed premises Automatic entitlement						1-2 machines L.A. must be notified	
Alcohol-licensed premises Gaming Machine Permit						As allowed by permit	
Travelling funfair (no authorisation required)							Unlimited
Regional Casino Premises Licence	Maximum of 1250 machines (subject to a machine/table ratio) Any combination from Categories <b>A/B1/B2/B3/B4/C/D</b>						
Large Casino Premises Licence		Maximum of 150 machines (subject to a machine/table ratio) Any combination from Categories <b>B1/B2/B3/B4/C/D</b>					
Small Casino Premises Licence		Maximum of 80 machines (subject to a machine/table ratio) Any combination from Categories <b>B1/B2/B3/B4/C/D</b>					
Converted Casino Premises Licence		Maximum of 20 machines (no machine/table ratio) Any combination from Categories <b>B1/B2/B3/B4/C/D</b>					

Minimum age of 18 years to use Category A, B and C machines. No age limit on Category D machines.

# APPENDIX D - LOCAL AREA PROFILE MAP



Title: Local Profile Map (Wards 2022)

Plan Ref: GIS00444

Produced by GIS & Mapping Services

Date: 29/09/2021

Scale at A4: 1:44,220

Ref: M:\D\C\Environment\Licensing\Reading Gambling Premises 2022



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**Council**

**30 January 2024**



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
*Working better with you*

<b>Title</b>	Reading Youth Justice Plan 2023-2024
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Lara Patel, Executive Director for Children’s Services
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Cllr Graeme Hoskin
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Thriving Communities
<b>Recommendations</b>	That the Youth Justice Plan 2023-2024 be adopted, as attached to the report at Appendix 1.

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on the Local Authority to produce an annual Youth Justice Plan. The production of a plan is also a condition of the Youth Justice Board Grant. Once agreed the plan will be published on the Reading Borough Council website. The plan is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
- 1.2. The production and sign-off of the plan is overseen by the multi-agency Youth Justice Partnership through the Youth Justice Management Board which is independently chaired. The plan was signed off by the Board in June 2023. The structure of the attached plan complies with the expectations of the Youth Justice Board.
- 1.3. The plan reports the performance of the Youth Justice Service (previously the Youth Offending Service) for 2022/23 against the national and local performance indicators. Overall, the YJS has performed well against national and statistical family comparators in this period, although our figures for First Time Entrants into the criminal justice system remain higher than neighbours. Local analysis has identified areas for improvement that will enable this performance to continue.

## 2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Annual Youth Justice Plan is a statutory requirement of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, requiring the local authority to publish a plan on an annual basis. The plan contributes to the strategic theme of “Thriving Communities” as set out in the Corporate Plan.
- 2.2. The Youth Justice Plan was considered by the Adult Social Care, Children’s Services & Education Committee at its meeting on 18 October 2023 (Minute 16 refers) and is now being presented to Council for formal adoption.

## 3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The 20/23 plan describes the Youth Justice Service and partners’ performance against the national indicators, namely, Reducing First Time Entrants (FTE’s) into the criminal justice system, reducing reoffending, Reducing the numbers of young people going to custody. The plan also provides further analysis about safeguarding, managing the risk of harm to others and other local performance indicators.
- 3.2. The annual report identified the following areas as priorities for 2023/34:

- 3.2.1. Reducing first time entrants into the criminal justice system
- 3.2.2. Addressing disproportionality within the criminal justice system
- 3.2.3. Reducing the impact of serious violence
- 3.2.4. The increased participation and engagement of children, young people and their families in the service.

#### **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 4.1. The Youth Justice Plan makes a major contribution to the theme of “Thriving Communities” as set out in the Corporate Plan. It does this through its work in addressing the three national indicators as well as through the four locally established priorities.

#### **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

- 5.1. There are no environmental or climate implications linked to the Youth Justice Plan as its primary focus is on diverting young people from the criminal justice system and reducing the impact of serious violence in the community.

#### **6. Community Engagement**

- 6.1. Feedback from young people, parents, victims and partner agencies have been used to inform the plan and priorities.

#### **7. Equality Implications**

- 7.1. The annual plan identifies key priorities for Youth Justice for 2023/24. Whilst the priorities cover the whole borough there will be specific individuals and groups for whom the plan will have more relevance. The needs of young people who offend are explicitly addressed by the plan. Many of these young people experience social isolation, poor mental health, deprivation and learning and communication difficulties.
- 7.2. Addressing disproportionality within the criminal justice system is one of the priorities for the coming year and further details of this are set out in the plan.

#### **8. Other Relevant Considerations**

- 8.1. All other relevant considerations are contained within the plan.

#### **9. Legal Implications**

- 9.1. The publication of the plan will fulfil Reading Borough Council’s legal responsibilities in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- 9.2. The provision of a multi-agency Youth Justice Service by Reading Borough Council in partnership with the National Probation Service, Clinical Commissioning Group and Thames Valley Police ensures we are compliant with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- 9.3. Reading’s Constitution requires the Plan to be adopted by the Council, in accordance with section 3(2)(a) of the Local Authorities (Committee System)(England Regulations 2012).

#### **10. Financial Implications**

- 10.1. The plan sets out the financial contributions from the relevant statutory partners, which is determined at a local level and has largely been maintained for 2023/24. The Youth Justice Board contribution (the national contribution) is based on a national funding formula and although at the time of writing, this contribution has yet to be confirmed, we anticipate this being in line with last year’s level.

#### **11. Timetable for Implementation**

- 11.1. The plan sets out a timetable for implementation.

## **12. Background Papers**

12.1. There are none.

### **Appendices**

1. The Youth Justice Plan 2023/24 is attached

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

#### **1. Revenue Implications**

The plan sets out the financial contributions from the relevant statutory partners, which is determined at a local level and has largely been maintained for 2023/24. The Youth Justice Board contribution (the national contribution) is based on a national funding formula and although at the time of writing, this contribution has yet to be confirmed, we anticipate this being in line with last year's level. There are no other financial implications arising from the plan.

#### **2. Capital Implications**

There are no capital implications arising from the plan.

#### **3. Value for Money (VFM)**

There are no VFM implications arising from the plan as it is solely service focused within the exiting budget.

#### **4. Risk Assessment.**

The only significant financial risk relates to the YJB's failure to confirm the amount of the annual settlement. However, they have communicated that we should expect this to be in line with previous years, that this is simply awaiting sign off by ministers and in fact, this type of delay on this specific grant is not unusual.

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# Reading Youth Justice Plan 2023 - 24





## **Contents**

- 1. Introduction, vision and strategy**
  - 2. Child First**
  - 3. Voice of the child and Feedback**
  - 4. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements**
  - 5. Board development**
  - 6. Progress on previous plan**
  - 7. Resources and services**
  - 8. Performance**
  - 9. Local key performance indicators**
  - 10. Profile of Children in Reading YJS**
  - 11. Children from groups which are over-represented**
  - 12. Prevention**
  - 13. Diversion**
  - 14. Education**
  - 15. Restorative approaches and victims**
  - 16. Serious violence and exploitation**
  - 17. Detention in police custody**
  - 18. Remands**
  - 19. Use of custody**
  - 20. Constructive resettlement**
  - 21. Standards for children in the justice system**
  - 22. Workforce Development**
  - 23. Evidence-based practice and innovation**
  - 24. Evaluation**
  - 25. Service development plan**
  - 26. Challenges, risks and issues**
  - 27. Sign off, submission and approval**
- Appendix 1 & 2 BfC and YJS staffing structure**
- Appendix 3: YJS Staffing**
- Appendix 4: Peer Review Action Plan and Progress**



## 1. Introduction, Vision and Strategy

Our vision for the Reading Youth Justice Partnership is:

“To work together to empower and support children to achieve their aspirations and live lives free of crime”

We will:

- Work to prevent young people entering the formal criminal Justice System.
- Ensure our young people are supported and treated fairly, taking into account their background and experiences
- Help and support young people and their families to recognise and build on their strengths and capabilities to fulfil their potential
- Encourage young people to repair the harm to victims and restore relationships within their communities to increase public confidence and safety
- Enable young people to be listened to and their wishes and feelings to be heard and acted upon

It is hoped that this Youth Justice Plan will help to ensure we are working as effectively and cohesively as possible to contribute to the aspirations above.

To succeed in securing the best possible outcomes for children and their families we must commit to sharing information, targeting resources appropriately, listening to the views of the children and their communities and most significantly, identifying, accepting and working to find resolutions to our local youth justice issues. We should also continue to adopt a multi-agency trauma-informed approach to tackling youth crime.

The work and plan of the Youth Justice service is overseen by the Management Board that includes representatives from the voluntary sector as well as leaders in Health, Police, Social Care, Education, Probation and Reading Borough Council. This plan has been developed and agreed by the Board members and will be monitored regularly throughout the year.

**Local Context** - Reading is a thriving and diverse town. It is home to 174,200 people (2021 Census) which is an increase of almost 12% since the census of 2011. This is higher than the overall increase for England (6.6%) and the South East (7.5%). The overall population in Reading is young, diverse and dynamic with 36,439 young people aged 0-18 years of age (ONS 2021 mid-year) and 15,796 aged between 10-17 years old. It is a diverse community with 54% of children from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background. Over a third of children in primary schools speak English as an additional language 38.4% (nationally 21.2%) while at secondary level it is 33.3% (nationally 17.5%). (School Census Oct 2022). There are more than 150 languages spoken at home.

The percentage of children (under 16) living in low-income families was 15.5% in Reading, and 18.5% nationally in 2020. Reading pupils at KS4 continue to perform higher than national although our disadvantaged pupils perform lower than national whilst our children with SEN slightly outperform national. There are limited non-academic and vocational pathways at post 16 and whilst the employment rate in Reading is good, disadvantaged groups including young offenders have more difficulties in accessing employment opportunities.



Although Reading is one of the 3 top crime generating CSP areas in Thames Valley Community Safety Partnership, (Reading had the second highest levels of serious violence in the Thames Valley and the highest levels in Berkshire), the CSP is consistently around average when its crime levels area compared to other similar Community Safety Partnership areas across the country, therefore, crime levels are not importunately higher compared to similar areas.

## 2. Child First

Children who are involved with the Youth Justice Service need, and deserve, the same care, support, attention, and encouragement as all children do. This is seeing them as children first rather than labelling them as offenders. We understand being treated fairly is really important to everyone and we believe that all children are individuals with their own talents and abilities, who with the right support, will do well. Even when things haven't gone well in the past or they have made mistakes, we want to help them move forward positively so that children can live the rest of their lives as well as possible. We want to work with them to help understand why offences happen and work towards reducing further offending, balancing the needs of the children with the protection of the public. We aim to be a service that solves problems with children and their families rather than imposing solutions on them.

The Principles of a Child First approach at Reading YJS include:

- **Seeing children as children:** All work prioritises their interests and is developmentally informed. As a YJS we aim to assess the children we work with holistically in the contexts of their families and environments that they move in. The ongoing Innovate research project (see below) will inform this direction, as will the embedding of the Trauma Recovery Model and trauma informed practice.
- **Developing pro-social identity for positive child outcomes:** All work should be constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society. Whilst we have positive reoffending figures we want to build more on children's individual strengths and capacities as a means of developing their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims.
- **Collaborating with children:** We aim to encourage children's active participation, engagement, and wider social inclusion. We want to build on the participation work we have undertaken for all service users and families. We have partnered with Innovate research and with the University of Surrey to help support some of this work.
- **Promote diversion:** We are committed to a partnership approach that reduces children's contact with the justice system, using wider pre-emptive prevention. We support the Youth Diversion Hub and other Early Help mechanisms to avoid the stigma from contact with the criminal system.

Through this plan we will use the term children rather than young person where we are able. We appreciate that our caseload is predominantly made up of teenagers and, for example in our naming of the service, that the children may themselves rather be called 'young people.' However this plan is





intended for a wide audience and by using the term child we want to emphasise that the service works with children, with their inherent vulnerabilities and the rights and entitlements that are accorded them in legislation and guidance.

### 3. Voice of the child and Feedback

Last year we had a priority to 'Increase opportunities for participation and involvement of young people within YOS'. The contributions that children that we had contact with and surveyed with regard to serious youth violence as part of the BWSCP thematic review were included in the review and are reflected in the findings. In planning the Amnesty Art sculpture the steering group and Board were keen on the participation of young people in the project. As well as the involvement of young people who were receiving support through a local charity, children at the YJS contributed voice notes in the planning stage of the design of the sculpture.

We continue to be involved with Surrey University in an action research project into parenting models and approaches used in Youth Offending Services; the research will incorporate service user feedback and involvement in steering groups. Similarly, the YJS has been involved with Brighter Futures For Children who have been engaged as a research site for the Innovate Project exploring a trauma informed approach in contextual safeguarding.

We undertook a survey around Reading young people's experiences whilst at the local police custodial facility and have fed back findings to the Management Board and the police. We are currently undertaking a Service user survey into young people's experience of the Magistrates court and will be feeding back the results to the Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB) and the courts.

As part of the development of Parent support groups we instigated and led a group that was designed to facilitate the peer support of parents who had children who had experiences of criminal exploitation. The group helped develop group member's resilience. As well as opening up avenues for peer support, the group has been developed to provide a platform for further groups in the future which parents will be involved in facilitating. Some of the parents on the group led a learning session for a small group of newly qualified Social Workers in Brighter Futures for Children, and also led a longer learning session for a wider group of some 80 participants in an event organised through the local Safeguarding Partnership.

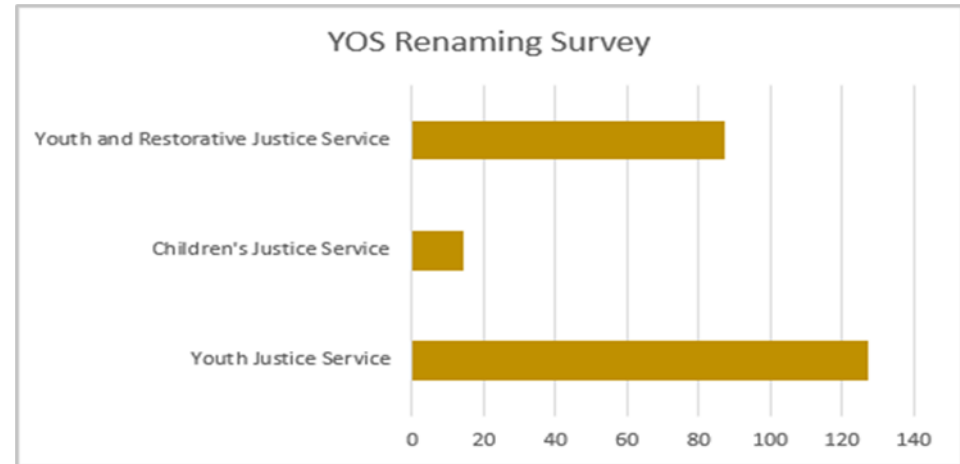
As part of the actions we ensured that young people were involved in the renaming of the service. Young people and family responses to the survey options were weighted heavier than partners and the public in the survey results. The options that were offered reflected the overall thrust of the service and included Child first and victim aware options:



- Youth Justice Service
- Childrens Justice Service
- Youth and Restorative justice Survice

The results are as opposite:

We are in the process of designing a new logo and will involve our children and young people in this process.



As part of ongoing work with cases we provide opportunities for children to feed back on the service that they receive. Here are some positive comments about the YJS provision:



### The Service

- It's relaxed, a lot of the staff are nice. At first it was hard, I didn't want to go, but it's alright now
- Safe Drive Stay Alive - that was good

### The Staff

- Some of the stuff I spoke to Rammy about was helpful too - around my thoughts and feelings.
- I can't remember but I have learned things, things that Sunny and Sukhmit have said
- Sessions with Sunny and the work that did with Catie around victim work
- You guys definitely put me on a good path alongside my family and helped me a lot. I learned a lot. Different perspectives of the victims has been the most helpful.
- Working with my YOS worker he has opened my eyes to things that I have not thought about before.
- The work with Catie helped me to see that what I did was not a good thing to do. When I hurt someone it affects more than one person.
- Definitely the work around my impulsive thoughts and the stuff with Hollie.

### What I learned

- Helped me see why I shouldn't carry a knife.
- Taught me not to do the same thing over and over again.
- Now realise not to commit crimes.
- I liked the YOS session we did on body language. It helped me to see people's body language differently and how see how I come across.
- Work with Chris and Reading FC. I made a CV with Mark (Reading FC) yesterday and we'll be applying for jobs/ apprenticeships next week.
- I need to accept things more instead of being argumentative. I don't like being controlled and I like/want control. But I need to get used to things that aren't in my control.

### How it helped

- Reoffending - stopped doing it everyday
- listen to my mum more. I stopped joining people who get me into trouble. I have cut down on weed. I spend more time at home.
- They got me onto the new meanings course and helped keep me out of trouble
- College help and sessions with George.



Reflections on a Restorative Justice meeting

- Derron\* stated it went quite quick.
  - The victims' grandparent was friendly - 'she was asking about why I did it. In general she is a friendly lady.'
  - 'It is easier for me thinking about it now. I know it helped her overcome the fear of the victim thinking this will happen again.'
  - Catie also asked has it made a difference to Derron: 'I know I helped her heal in a way and why it happened. What I was saying, she already knew. I think she knew I was being truthful. But it is good to know that I helped her heal.'
  - He was asked how do you feel about the offence now? 'I wanted to just get out of there, but when I got home and now I started feeling bad. Glad I had the opportunity to speak to the family.'
- \*name change

Reparation Feedback

Page 76

**Leafleting Reparation**

- I am enormously grateful for the contribution towards the opening of the new Community Centre. What is a seemingly unrewarding and monotonous task has been carried out with resolve and as a result the whole community is now informed about the availability of the Community Centre which will soon become a centre for social activity.
- Thank you. From start to finish, above and beyond.

Comments – (please add any comments you have about how this work has benefited you or others, what worked well, any improvements you think could be made, or any concerns that you have or had):

Barrie + the young people have done some gardening work at two Community Centres for us so far. This has made the centre more welcoming for the centre users.

3. With the overall service provided by the Youth Offending service I feel...

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
✓				

Comments about the overall service:

The service of the YOS has been nothing short of amazing. Looking forward to working with you in the future



#### **4. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements**

Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC) is a not-for-profit company, owned by, but independent of, Reading Borough Council (RBC). The Company took over responsibility for the delivery of children's services in December 2018.

The Reading YJS is part of the Early Help Services within BFFC. The Service Manager of the YJS also has responsibilities within Early Help for Family support, Youth support and Attendance Support Workers. The Service Manager reports to the Director for Early Help and Prevention in BFFC, although at the time of developing this plan the BFFC Senior Leadership Team are developing some restructure proposals re Early Help, but these have not been confirmed yet.

The Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB) is currently chaired by the Senior Probation Officer. The current membership and attendance at the YJMB is outlined in Appendix 1 and the overall structure of the Youth Justice Service is detailed in Appendix 2.

The Board requested a YJS Peer Review to focus on first time entrants as this indicator, whilst having a downward trend was still higher than our neighbours and family of YJS's. It was undertaken in November 2022. A number of recommendations were made and these have been incorporated into an action plan which is reviewed regularly by the Board. The action plan progress can be seen in appendix 4.

This Plan should also be read in conjunction with a range of other partnership documents. These include

- <https://www.reading.gov.uk/crime-and-safety/readings-community-safety-and-serious-violence-strategy-2023-2026>
- [DA-Strategy-2023-2026-V3.pdf \(reading.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Thames Valley Police and Criminal Justice Plan 2021 -2025 \(thamesvalley-pcc.gov.uk\)](#)
- [One Reading Young People and Extra Familial Harm Strategy, 2021-24](#)
- [One Reading Early Help Partnership Strategy 21-23](#)

#### **5. Board development**

The Board Induction and Information pack was reviewed and revised in 22/23. The Board also had a workshop delivered by the YJB South/South East Head of Innovation and Engagement with the aim of ensuring members understood their roles and responsibilities as YJS Board members and to start to develop the priorities for 23/24. The Management Board Information pack was also reviewed and revised this year.

We also added a partnership update agenda item to each Board meeting whereby each partner organisation has space to update Board members on issues/events within their own organisation which may impact on others and in particular youth offending. We have also started to move the Board meetings into physical meetings rather than teams, although these are starting as hybrid meetings in the first instance. We hope this will enable Board



members to have the opportunity to meet YJS staff and to get to know the YJS world more. We have a board/workshop planned for June which will encompass Board business items, but will also have a workshop element re Inspection readiness and ensuring Board members understand their contribution within this.

We will be appointing an independent Chair of the Management Board following the resignation of the current chair in May this year.

**6. Progress on previous plan**

Priority	Success Measure/Impact/Outcome
<b>Reduce First Time Entrants – number and rate remains steady at 30 (Sept 22) same number as June 22 and rate of 209.</b>	
Rise Up Project – aimed at reducing the number of suspensions in a Secondary school	24 x YP supported – None have become a first time entrant. 100% had a decrease in conduct points whilst on the project. 70% increased their attendance at school – some significantly. 67% had no suspensions since the start of the support (100% had received a suspension prior to commencing in the project)
Review of Youth Diversion Hub (YDH)	Review undertaken. Decision taken to cease the YDH as the Turnaround Project identified the same cohort and had the ability to offer support to the YP.
Analysis of community resolutions	We had previously identified that 75% of those who became First time Entrants had not previously been known in any capacity to the YJS. We repeated the exercise with an updated cohort and the results were similar, indicating that 80% of the FTE cohort had not been known to the YJS.
<b>Priority Two: Address Disproportionality/over representation within YJS cohort- YJS Board have agreed to develop a Disproportionality strategy in 23/24 with partner organisations asked to collate and analyse their own data re this area.</b>	
Deliver workshop on ‘girls in criminal spaces’	This was completed in 2022. Actions as a consequence of the workshop include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All girls to be offered the opportunity to work with a female caseworker, an offer we are unable to provide to our boys.</li> <li>• YJS to be involved in a pilot programme led by Alana House targeting prevention work with girls at risk of greater involvement in statutory services</li> <li>• YJS to consider including a girls group as part of the Turnaround Programme</li> </ul>



Review and revise diversity assessment and practice	A team devised template (This is Me) has been trialled and is now part of the work with young people. It has prompted richer and fuller discussions around identity and provided opportunities to explore difficult experiences.
Participate and contribute to CSP task and finish group re disproportionality re YP at risk of extra familial harm.	This group has not been established yet.
<b>Priority Three: Reduce the impact of serious youth violence –</b>	
Participate in Innovate Research project with young people at risk of extra familial harm	Completed. Awaiting publication of report.
Implement recommendations from BWSCP Thematic Child Safeguarding Review: services provided to YP and their families in relation to serious youth violence report	<p>This review is being monitored by the BWSCP Independent Scrutiny Group. Actions completed so far involving YJS include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Learning review shared with YJS staff</li> <li>• An audit into how effectively the YJS and Children’s Social Care ‘working together protocol’ is being implemented is just being completed. It is likely there will be some learning and revisions to the protocol as a result of the audit.</li> <li>• YJS peer review was undertaken and completed with action plan developed. See section 24 and appendix 4.</li> <li>• YJS attended and contributed to the workshop in March 2023.</li> <li>• YJS contributed to the Practitioner Survey around the use of social media and how this information is included within risk assessments. This due to be presented at RARSG and L&amp;D subgroups in June.</li> </ul>
Participation and involvement in multi-agency partnership meetings involving serious violence eg CSP sub group, VRU	<p>Ongoing – YOS Service Manager attended workshop re CSP.</p> <p>The exploitation &amp; missing meetings - CETAR and CEMOG have been reviewed by an Independent consultant with a proposal likely to be agreed by the Adolescent Risk Sub Group in June.</p> <p>YJS have also attended the newly developed ETAC meetings when appropriate.</p>
<b>Priority Four: Increase opportunities for participation and involvement of young people within YJS</b>	
Involve service experienced volunteer in Management Board	There is further work to do in order that the experience of the service experience volunteer is included within discussions and board items.



Participate in Surrey research project around familial support for young people in the service	This project is ongoing and not scheduled for completion for some time – there has been some fieldwork over the year and the researchers have met with our parent engaged support group.
Involve young people in the relocation plans for the YJS	Completed. YJS moved to new venue on 15 <sup>th</sup> May.
Involve young people families and partners in the decision regarding renaming the Service	Completed- see section 3.

## 7. Resources and services

Note: This is assuming the YJB grant 23/24 is the same as last year.

	Cash contribution	Payments in kind	Total	% contribution
<b>PCC</b>	<b>87,434</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>87,434</b>	<b>9.7</b>
<b>Police</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>55,778</b>	<b>55,778</b>	<b>6.2</b>
<b>Probation</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17,000</b>	<b>17,000</b>	<b>1.9</b>
<b>Health</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>69,900</b>	<b>69,900</b>	<b>7.8</b>
<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>399,300</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>399,300</b>	<b>44.3</b>
<b>YJB</b>	<b>271,858</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>271,858</b>	<b>30.2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>758,592</b>	<b>142,678</b>	<b>901,270</b>	<b>100</b>

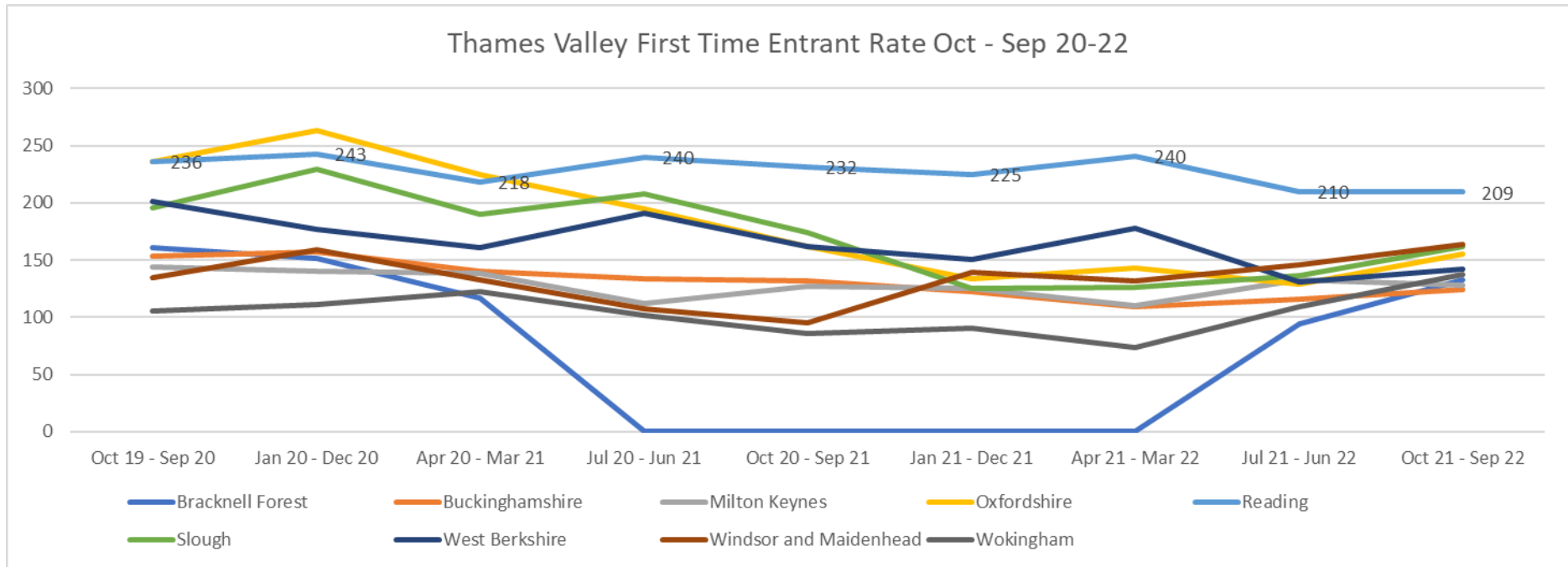
The Grant is used to ensure the effective delivery of Services. Funding supports preventative projects such as some posts in the Reconnect Team, eg the Rise Up Project and YJS commissions Reading FC Community Trust (Kicks) to deliver T1 preventative work in schools re those at risk of suspension (Premier League Inspires programme) and T2 intensive support for those YP at greater risk of offending. It also supports the Literacy support worker and the Elevate worker who assists young people transitioning from school to employment or college/training. Partner contributions from Health include the provision of CAMHS clinical Psychologists, Physical Health Nurse and a Speech and Language Practitioner.





**8. Performance**

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) require data around the pre- existing performance indicators of children entering the criminal Justice System, their reoffending, and those given custodial sentences. We collate this data around these key performance targets, and other related areas of practice. The time periods collected vary across the different data sets. Comparators will include Thames Valley data from other Youth Justice Services (YJS), policed by one force, Regional and National cohorts as well as statistical comparators with other Youth Justice Services tha are considered similar.



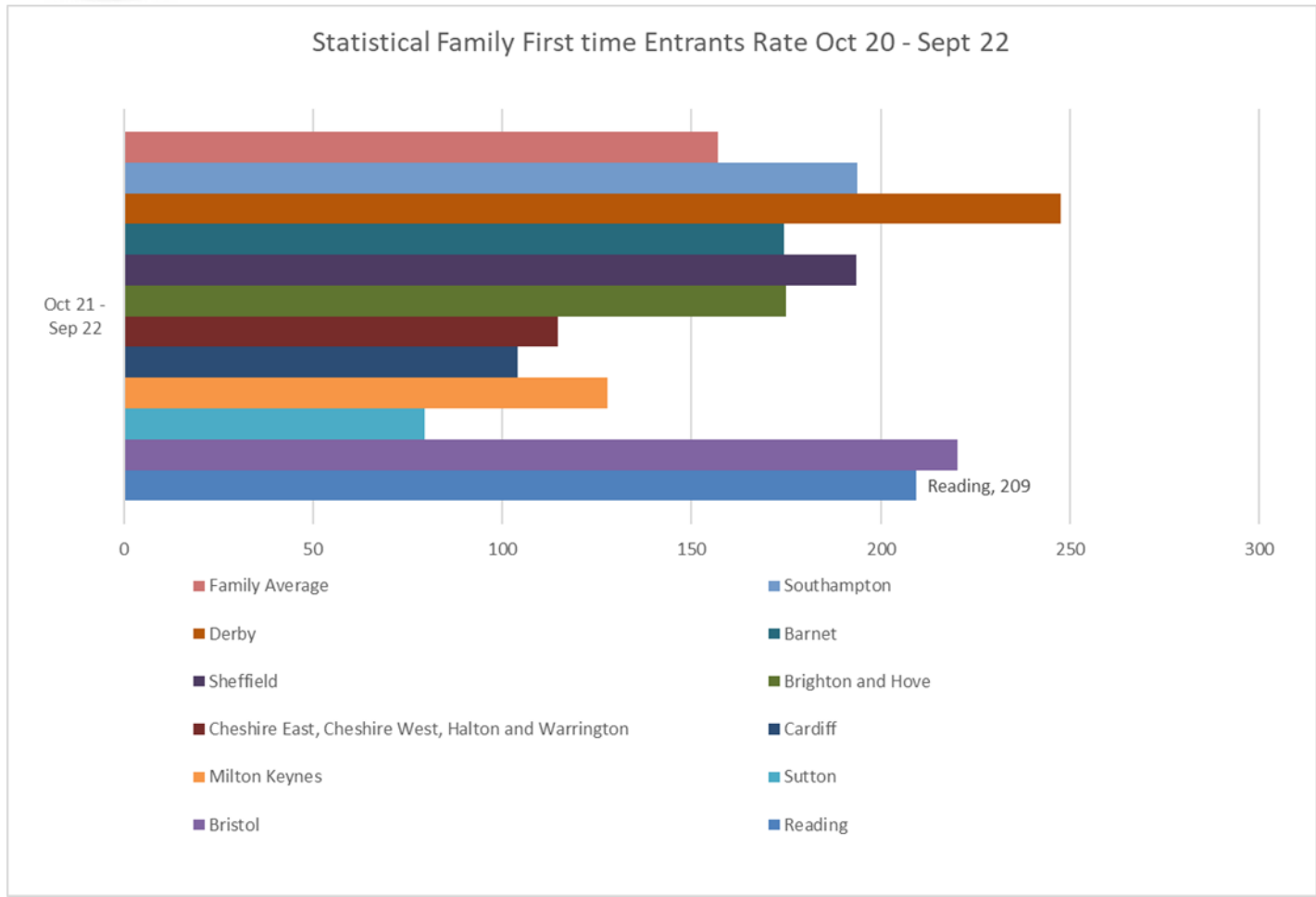
Page 81

First Time Entrants (FTE) are children that enter the Youth Justice System for the first time following receiving a substantive outcome (a Youth Caution or Conditional Caution or a conviction) The rate is measured as a proportion of children per 100,000 children – the actual number of children in Reading who are FTE is less than 40 per year.



Reading's First Time Entrants (FTE) Rate has remained higher than comparators for some time. Whilst there has been some reductions, the pace of this and the amount reduced has not greatly closed the gap with other YJS in Thames Valley. There have been aspects of activity on previous plans that have targeted reducing the rate and some of these activities are more likely to have an impact over the longer term, so positive change may be gradual. The high FTE rate means that this is an area that will be prioritised in this year's YJS development plan. The concern the YJS have had over this area has led to us seeking the additional scrutiny of a peer review from other senior YJS colleagues into this area, as discussed later in the plan.

We were able to swiftly respond to the [Turnaround](#) programme, and appointed project staff by the start of 2023, and were able to exceed the target number of children engaged on this programme in the period til End of March 2023. Given the increasing rates of FTEs [who have committed more serious offences](#), we will target children arrested for serious offences for Turnaround after arrest.

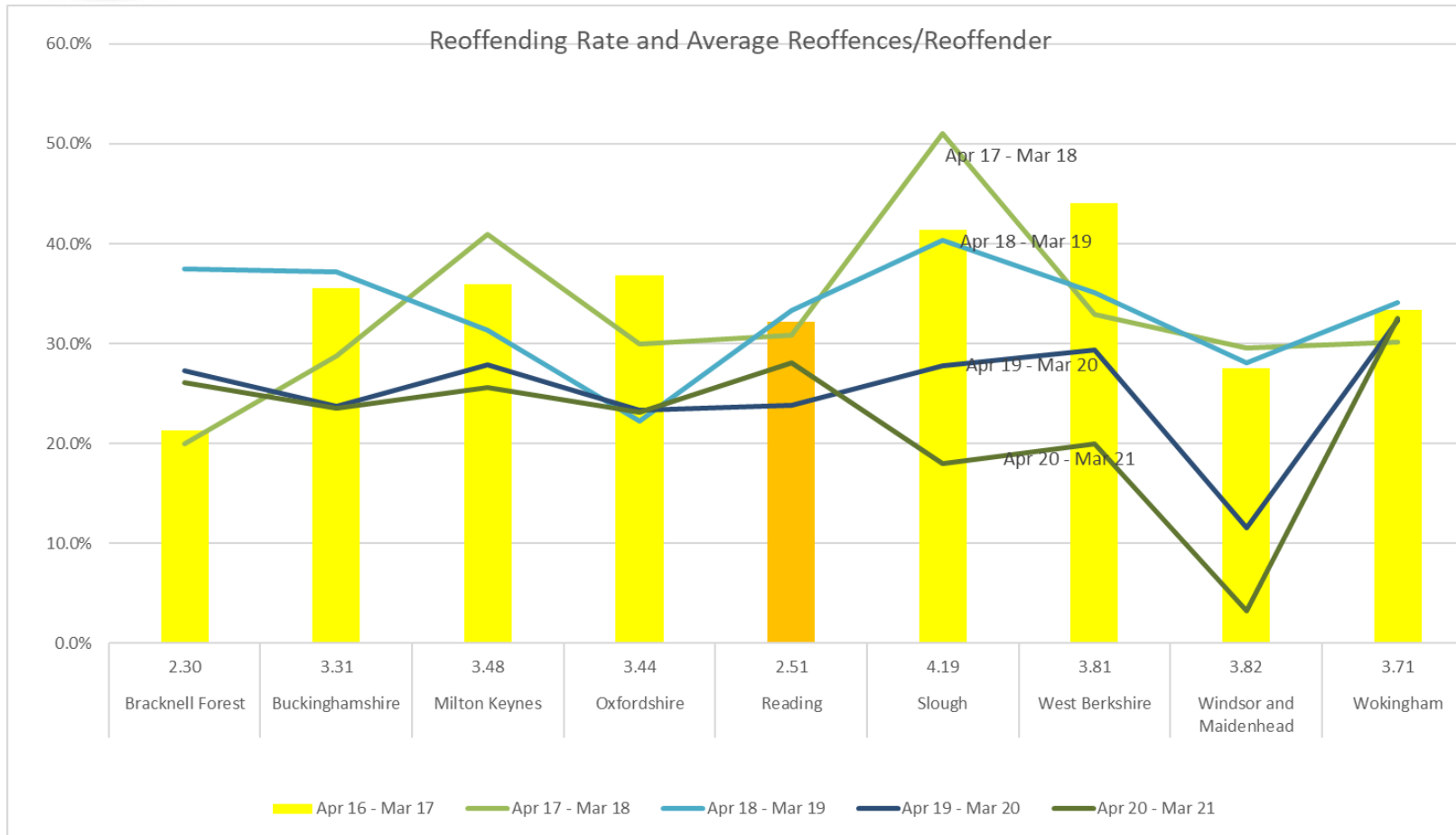


Most of these measures are targeted at supporting the life chances of young people, reducing their offending potential.

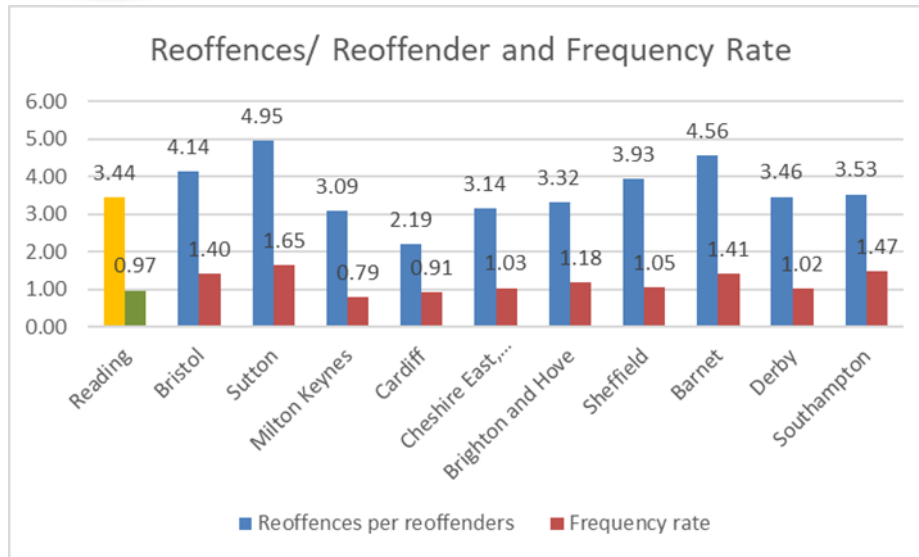
We have audited the histories of the cohorts of FTEs twice in the last two years; our data on offenders indicate that young people who come into the Criminal Justice System also are likely to have difficulties in Education, are more likely to have Special Educational Needs, and are more likely to be known to Social Care Services.

The targeting of support within wider services is considered an appropriate method to tackle the FTE rate.

Whilst in Thames Valley Reading’s FTE rate is an outlier, the rate is closer to some of the statistical comparators.



Across the Thames Valley, Reading has one of the lowest rates of Reoffending (Young people who have committed a substantive offence who then go onto commit another within two years). As the chart demonstrates, the rate has remained around 30% over the last few years and is stable. The other positive with regards to the reoffending is that those who reoffend commit fewer offences than others in Thames Valley. In Reading, work with children who offend seems to be effective in reducing the scale of further offending, and engagement abilities, risk management processes and wider partnership support plays a part in this.

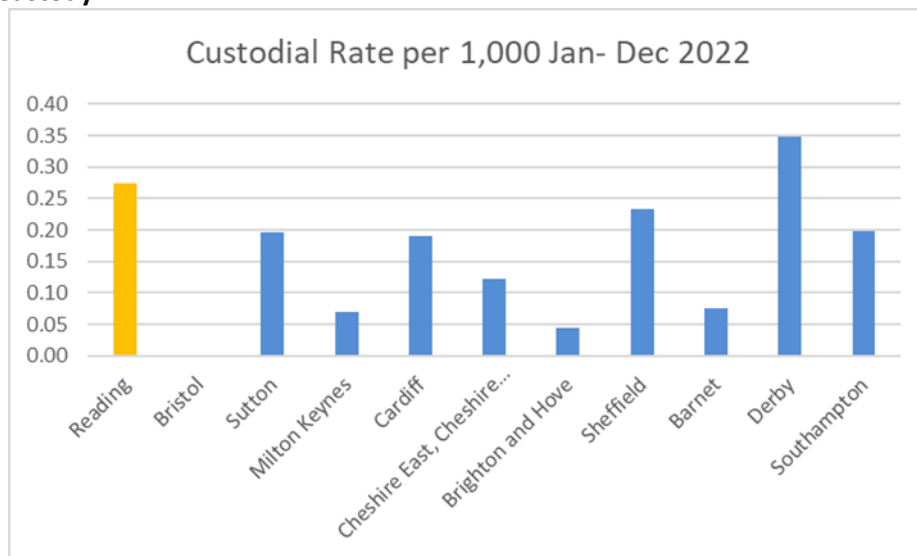


The reoffences per reoffender is the average number of further offences that those who reoffend commit. The frequency rate is the number of offences committed across the who cohort of reoffenders

The comparative rate with other similar YJS is also positive. Reading has a relatively low number of overall reoffences and of those that reoffend, there is not a great deal of spree offending, or occasions where are lot of offences are committed.

Page 85

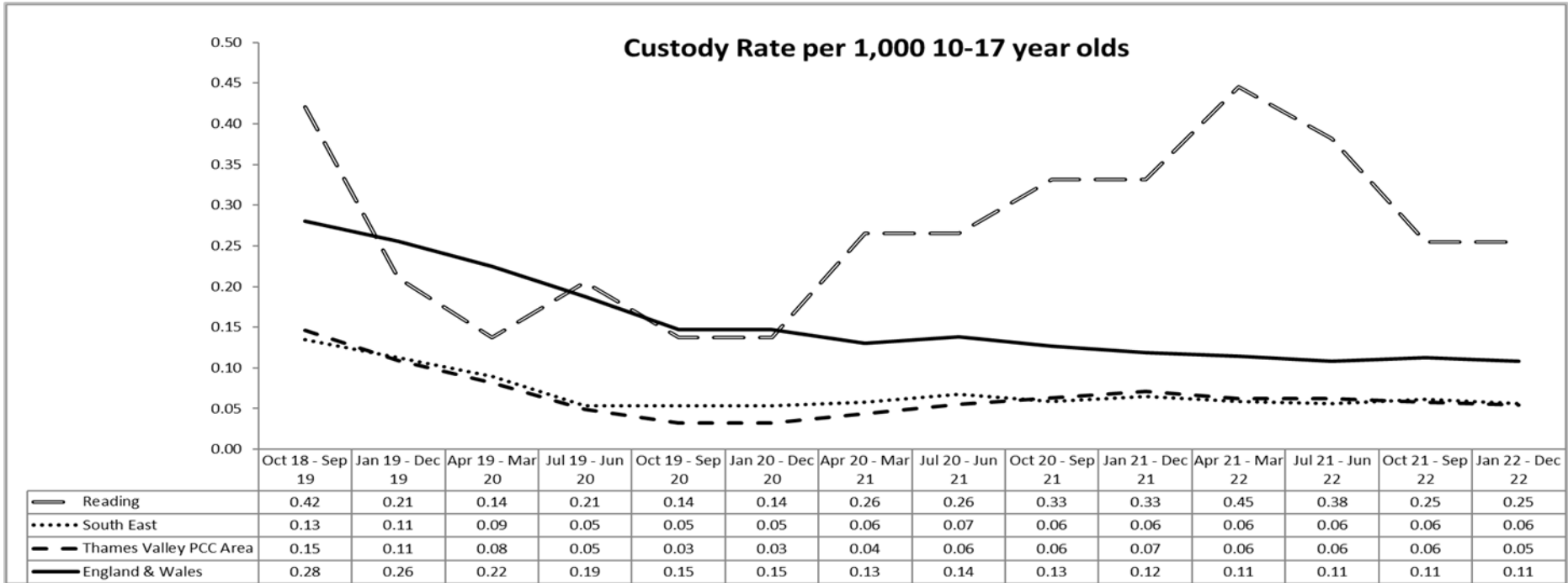
**Custody**



Over 2022, Reading had 5 Custodial sentences. Three were given to young people who were not open to the YJS as children were all involved in a murder. As a Service we did not oppose bail in this instance. Another child had an extensive history of offending, had been breached for failing to comply with a stringent Community Order and been remanded for a large number of offences. The latter was given to a child who had previously been remanded in Custody for faling to comply with the community Order as well as other offences and following the last community sentence had again failed to comply with the requirements. Whilst the rate of custodial sentences is higher than comparators, it is considered that there was little else that could be done in these cases to avoid them.



The rate is high consequently though the chart demonstrates that with a smaller YJS each Custodial episode will have a significant difference to the trajectory of the data. Whilst all of the children sentenced to custody recently will be adult on release, we are working to help make the time spent in the secure estate as effective as possible





## 9. Local key performance indicators

The Youth Justice Board have introduced further Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are being collected and will be reported on in future.

KPI 1 - Accommodation	The proportion of children with suitable accommodation arrangements	Reading YJS had until recently supplied this data to the YJ Management Board- the rate is expected to be high so that there will be a commentary for the board on any unsuitable accommodation rating.
KPI 2 - Education, training and employment (ETE)	The proportion of children attending a suitable ETE arrangement	This data is shared at the YJ Board. It is subject to fluctuations and the last two quarter's data is 25% and 45%, a lower figure than a year previously. This data and that detailed elsewhere in the plan have prompted some consideration of the commissioning of a post that will support ETE engagement.
KPI 3 - Special educational needs or disability (SEND)	The proportion of children who have an identified SEND need, are in suitable ETE and have a formal learning plan in place for the current academic year	As above there is further data on this area elsewhere in the plan, though this is not an area that we have routinely collected information on for the YJ Board.
KPI 4 - Mental healthcare and emotional wellbeing	The proportion of children with a screened, or, identified need for an intervention to improve mental health or emotional wellbeing; and offered interventions; and attending interventions	KP4 and 5 are areas we have not tracked quarterly before. The infographic below indicates that roughly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3/4 of the caseload use substances</li> <li>• 1/3 have experienced bereavement</li> <li>• 1/4 self harm</li> </ul>
KPI 5 - Substance misuse	The proportion of children with a need for specialist treatment intervention to address substance misuse; and offered intervention and attending intervention	
KPI 6 – Out-of-court disposals	The proportion of out-of-court disposal interventions that are completed	Data around Out of Court Disposals is included in the plan. We expect that the number of those offered support will increase through Turnaround and the reporting on completion rates will be a further indication of both appropriate offers of support as well as staff engagement abilities.
KPI 7 - Management Board attendance	Monitoring senior partner representation at management boards, and monitoring if partners contribute data from their individual services that identify areas of racial and ethnic disproportionality.	Attendance is tracked for Board meetings. This plan includes some partner data, and this is an area that will be scrutinised going forward.
KPI 8 - Wider services	The proportion of children who are currently on either an Early Help (EH) plan; on a child protection	We had completed some audits in connection with FTE and involvement with other Services, and key indicators were involvement with Social Care



	(CP) plan or classified as Child in need (CiN) or have looked-after status.	(and/ or Special Educational Needs) rather than previous lower level offending. The tracking of this data will be critical in providing appropriate offers across the partnership for young people at risk of and involved in offending.
KPI 9 - Serious violence	The rates of children convicted for a serious violent offence on the YJS caseload.	We currently receive data around this area in some detail but are not able to publish it. However Reading’s rate of Serious Youth Violence (SYV) is currently the second highest in the Thames Valley. It has increased over the last year; though actual number of offences are less than 25. We have contributed significantly to the Thematic Review around SYV (detailed elsewhere in this plan)
KPI 10 - Victims	The proportion of victims who are offered and engage with Support from the YJS	This is reported on locally and is included in this plan

Once the data has been collected for a period of time the YJ Board will look to have local targets around these areas of performance. Some of the data can be compared with regional, statistical or national figures, though some of the KPIs may be better seen as trends over time in Reading

**10. Profile of YJS service**

Over the year April 22 – March 23, the YOS worked with 82 young people on interventions from prevention cases through to those who were in Secure accommodation. We also worked with 22 parents over the course of the year.

Research indicates the role that multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have on poor long-term health outcomes. Those with a higher number of ACEs are also over represented in the Criminal Justice System. We have tracked relevant data for ACEs on cases we have assessed and can evidence that these young people in Reading have, in general, experienced wider difficulties in their upbringing.









The ongoing data suggests a cohort that consistently have experienced up to 3 times as many ACEs as the general population. Local associated YJS characteristics have also been tracked and highlight the key issues including experience of trauma, background learning needs, problematic coping skills and the involvement of social care. Data over this last year indicate a particular increase in the cohort in terms of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities though a reduction in the cohort that have ever been in care. Demographic information indicates that there are proportionately more service users in the most deprived Lower Super Output Areas which have other associated economic disadvantages.





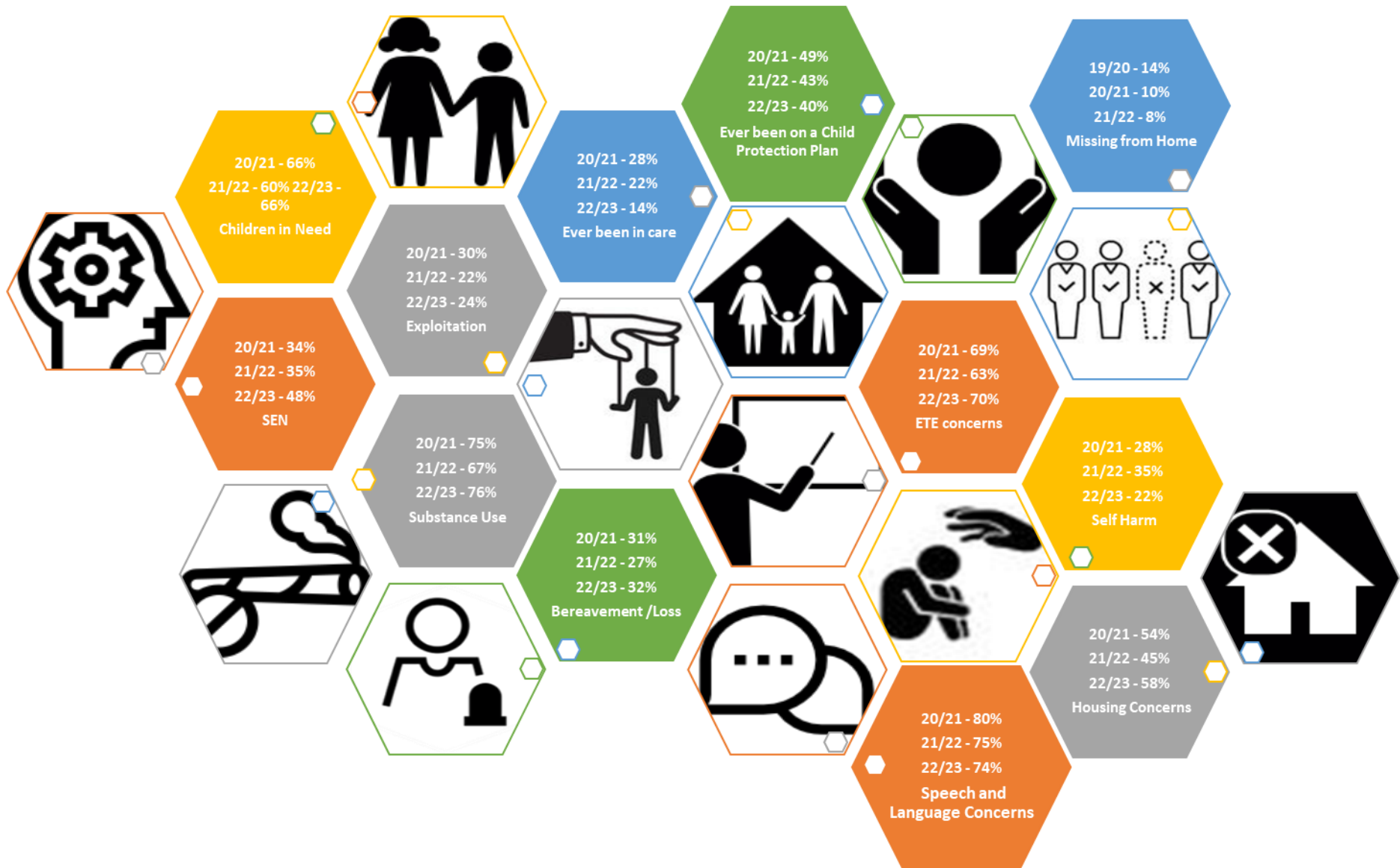
The last year has included work with children who have had both a considerable number of difficult experiences in their lives and also noticeable more so than in other recent years.

**Profile of Reading YJS Population and their own experience of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) or within the family**

	 Physical	 Sexual	 Emotional	 Mental Illness	 Family member Involved in crime	 Parental Separation	 Substance Abuse	 Domestic Abuse
2020/21	0%	1%	10%	76%	30%	69%	13% (parents)	28%
2021/22	0%	0%	7%	58%	27%	57%	18% (parents)	27%
2022/23	2%	0%	4%	80%	38%	22%	20%(parents)	36%

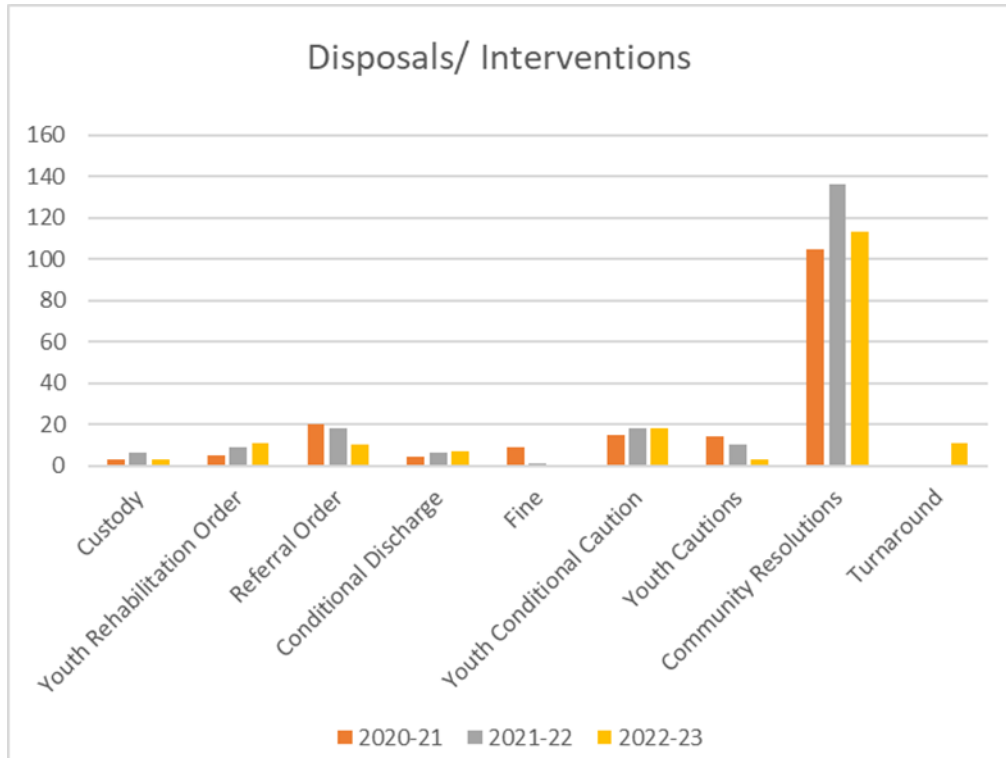
Page 89

	Experienced 0 ACEs	Experienced 1 ACE	Experienced 2-3 ACEs	Experienced 4+ ACEs
<i>Of All Young People</i>	52%	23%	16%	9%
<i>Of Reading YOS Young People 2020/21</i>	20%	23%	46%	11%
<i>Of Reading YOS Young People 2021/22</i>	20%	22%	48%	7%
<i>Of Reading YOS Young People 2022/23</i>	8%	8%	54%	30%





**Local Outcomes profile**



There will be different degrees of intervention with cases.

In operating a child first approach, having wider generic support may be more effective than a Youth Justice approach. Locally a large proportion of children receiving Community Resolutions do not go on to further offend, so we are careful about not involving children in the Youth Justice System unnecessarily.

Overall there has not been a great deal of change in disposals that are given locally; the exception to this is the Turnaround Programme, offering voluntary support for children who are not open to Social Care or Early Help services and who have been interviewed by the police, or received a low level disposal such as a Community Resolution.

Page 91

**Offences committed**

The latest data available from Government statistics is the year 2021 and counts only substantive offences. The YJS data is of a more recent period and includes Community Resolution data in the Out of Court figures. Despite this there are some points that can be made:

- There were a large number of Community Resolutions issued for Cannabis possession which would not count as substantive offences in National Data but feature as Community Resolutions locally.
- Similarly, some of the Public Order offences if given an out of Court outcome would not feature as substantive disposals.



- There seems to be a greater proportion locally of Burglary offences than may be expected, but as the numbers of offences and individuals involved are low, this may change over time but is worth tracking.

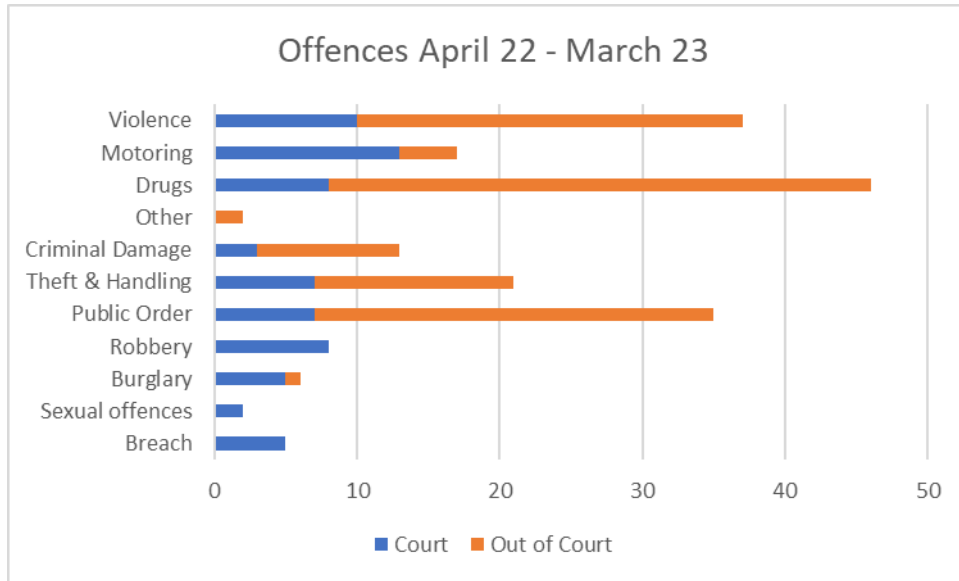
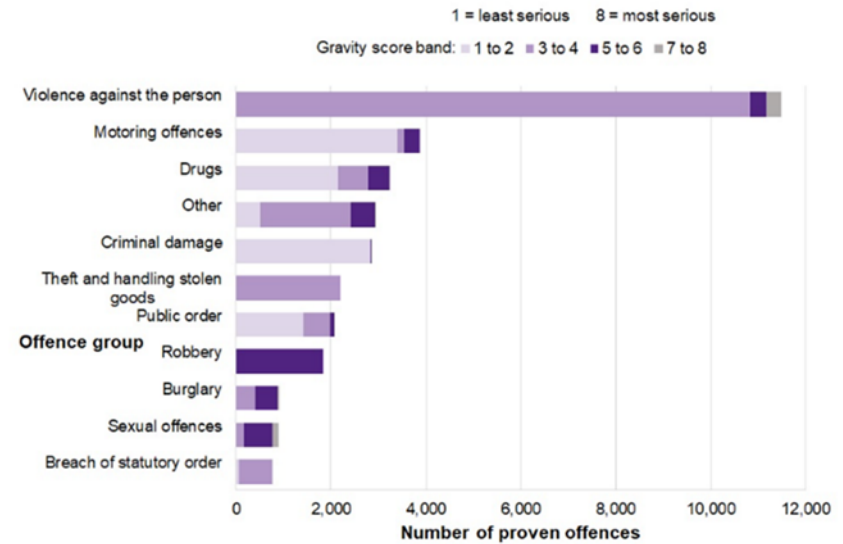


Figure 4.3: Proven offences by children, by offence group and gravity score band, England and Wales, year ending March 2022



**11. Children from groups which are over-represented**

Together we recognise that Reading is a diverse town and some individuals and groups experience inequalities and disproportionate treatment. We want to have a greater understanding of how criminal justice processes affects particular groups and work against unfair treatment in the youth justice system. Reducing children coming into criminal Justice processes is everyone’s responsibility and as a partnership we appreciate that a systemic approach to the work is necessary to both help children not offend and offers appropriate support for those that do. As a Board we recognise that young people who offend may also have had other difficulties in their lives to date and had other obstacles to face. Being trauma informed we want to appreciate the impact that these experiences have had and help young people develop in a way that has a positive impact for them and those around them.



It is important to understand the local profile within Reading and the context, scale and particular areas of disproportionality. As well as the now released 2021 census, data from school census data and partners will assist in understanding how disproportionality affect the children in the YJS cohort.

Overall National Data indicates that disproportionality affects children in the Youth Justice system. Starkly, Black and mixed heritage children are most likely to have the highest likelihood of being sentenced at court, committing more serious offences and having the greatest disproportionality compared with the white cohort (the Relative Rate Index). This a pattern that has been evident for some time as outlined in the Inspection thematic report on the experience of [Black and Mixed heritage boys in the Criminal Justice system](#).

The YJS acknowledges that young people from different backgrounds have different opportunities and outcomes and that these disproportionately affect those from marginalised and discriminated backgrounds. The YJS will continue to prioritise the groups locally that are particularly affected. Our local data has noted the historic disproportionate representation of children of black and mixed heritage background in our population as well as the over representation of girls locally. Work in previous plans had looked at addressing these issues locally and this is a continued focus for our development plan.

It is however noted that in a smaller offending population, particular pockets of disproportionality arise, and it can be helpful to consider trends over time in assessing disproportionately affected groups. Reading has recently had an anomalous year of over representation of females but this has not been sustained. An approach that recognises societal power imbalances, and the particular impacts on particular children as well as targeted work against unfairness should be an approach that characterises Reading YJS.

The current local picture from the Youth Justice Statistics demonstrate that in Reading

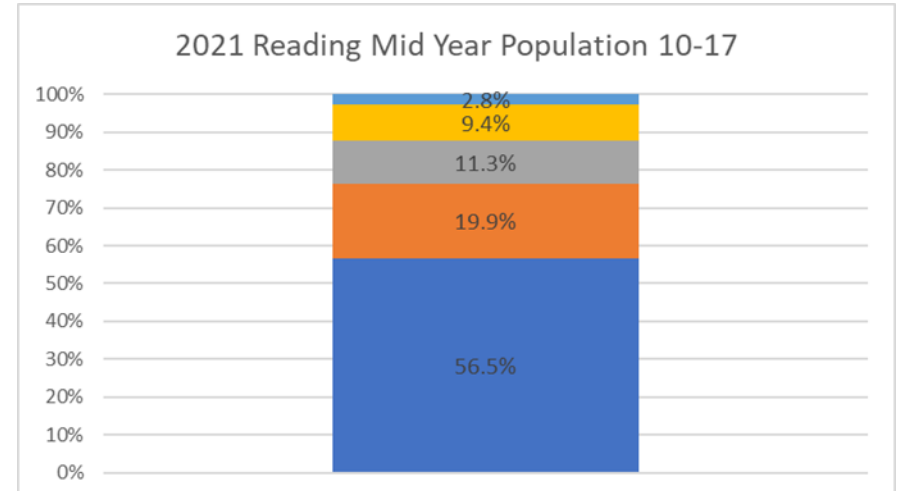
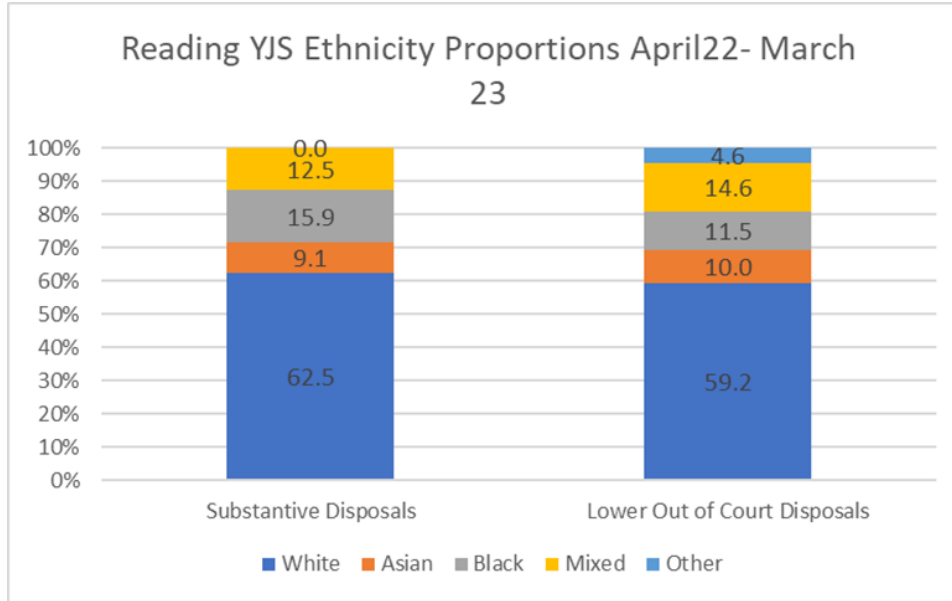


Whilst there will always be areas of disproportionality, some of the areas that are of note in Reading are

- Children of mixed heritage are still disproportionately affected in the cohort of young people who have received substantive disposals
- There is a marked difference in the increased proportion of girls that are dealt with at an out of court level, as opposed to receiving a substantive disposal
- There is an increased number of White Irish and White European offenders (predominantly of Polish background) on the caseload
- The reoffending rates and the seriousness of further offences committed by different groups presents a more mixed picture than previously



The tables below compare the YJS cohort in 21/22 and 22/23 by ethnicity to the 2021 census data



The Black Reading YJS population demonstrate a similar pattern to the Thematic Report referenced above, with a greater proportion receiving substantive outcomes than lower level disposals. There are a greater proportion of Black children in the YJS than are in Reading’s Youth Population.

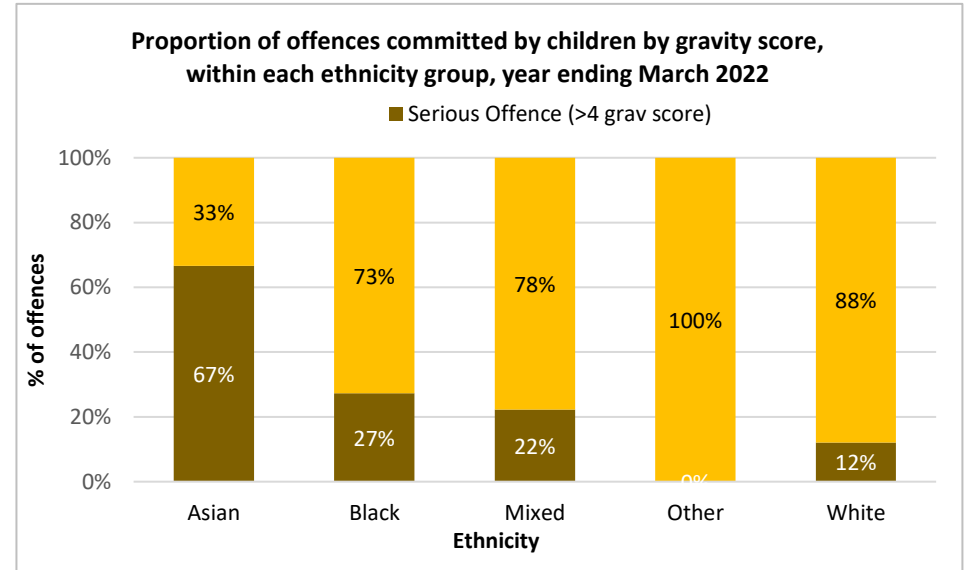
The White YJS population are more likely to experience a court outcome rather than an Out of Court disposal as compared with other groups

There is an over representation of Mixed heritage children in the YJS in Reading – this is statistically significant, indicating disproportionate outcomes for this cohort.

Whilst the proportion of children from an Asian background we are working with is lower than the local population, the relative seriousness of the offending is greater.



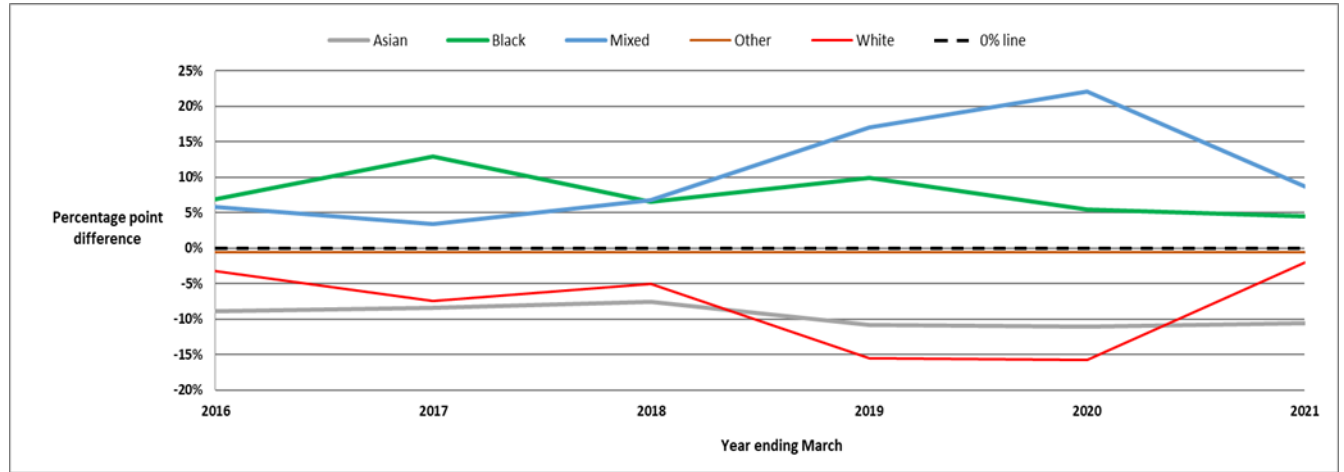
Ethnic group	Share of total 2022 (%)	Share of total 2021 %	% Point Difference	Statistically significant	Over-represented and Significant cohort size
Asian	5.17%	19.93%	-14.76%	Yes	No
Black	6.90%	9.38%	-2.48%	No	No
Mixed	20.69%	11.33%	9.36%	Yes	Yes
Other	1.72%	2.81%	-1.08%	No	No
Ethnic min	34.48%	43.45%	-8.97%	No	No
White	65.52%	56.55%	8.97%	No	No



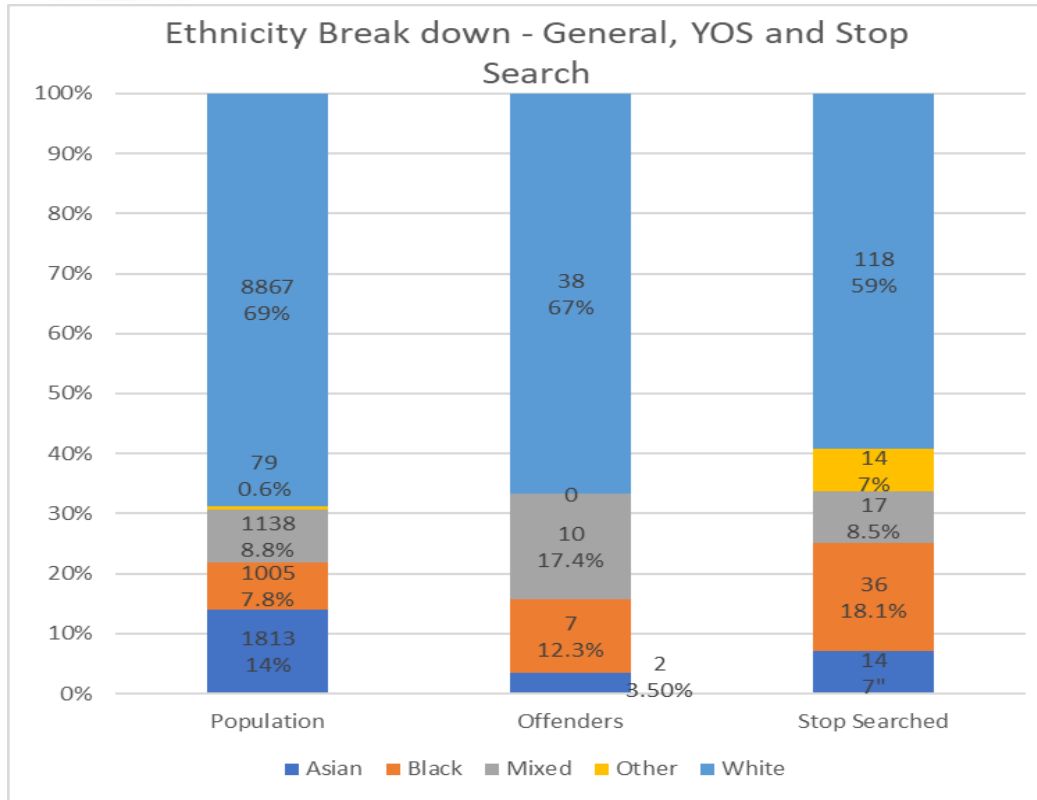


There are always likely to be elements of disproportionality within service user groups in the service, and in a smaller YJS like Reading these patterns may be fluctuating. A response to the previous YJS focus on disproportionality has been to introduce a conversation tool ('This is Me') with the children as part of their induction. This has proved useful in having discussions with children about their experiences and self perceptions on an individual basis.

The current picture around disproportionality is not as extreme as it was in recent history.







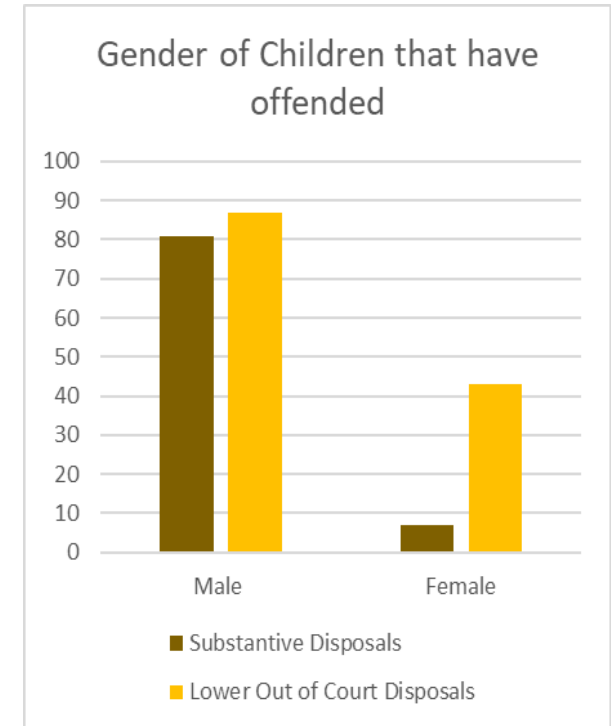
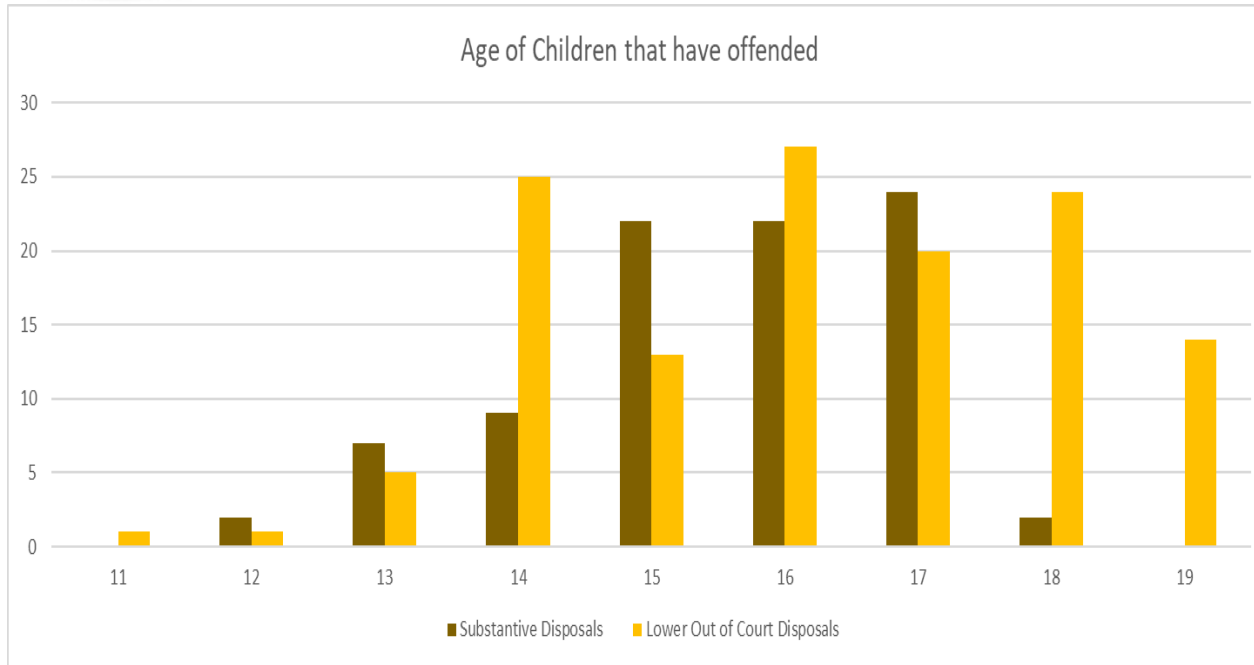
The data indicates:

There are elements of disproportionality that are evidenced in the numbers of Black children that are both open to the Youth Justice Service and that are Stopped/ Searched.

The rate of Stop/ Searches for non white children is disproportionate. There are particular disparities with the rate of Stop/ Searches for Black children.

The increased numbers of children with mixed parentage is stark in the Youth Justice Service

The data that is missing for Stop/ Searches should be explored further.



Lower out of Court Disposals is any out of Court disposal with the exception of a Youth Conditional Caution

The age of children that have committed substantive offences is similar to the national picture. Comparative data on children who have received lesser Out of Court disposals is unavailable but seems to be in line with research. It is noted that children, even those that have previously offended, are still eligible in the future for lesser out of court disposals.

The data does suggest an increase of offending at around Year 8 in school and further local information on that year group may suggest an area of response for the partnership



Some data from the [Education and offending cohorts in Reading](#) highlights some of the differences that Reading has compared with the national picture of children that have offended. The areas of note are:

	National Rate	Reading Rate
Attainment (5+GCSEs A-G)	49%	41%
Permanent Exclusion	11%	28%
Alternative Provision	29%	40%
Social Care Involvement (Children who have been on a Child in Need Plan)	45%	61%

The Measure of offending are those with substantive disposals and the data is based on those in Key stage 4 between 2012 and 2018

These figures demonstrate that work to improve the educational and social care journey of children is likely to have a positive impact on the offending rates of children in Reading.

## 12. Prevention

There are a range of prevention services within Reading. Some of these are delivered by BfFC services and others by voluntary organisations.

- The YJS commission Reading FC Community Trust (Kicks) to deliver the:
  - Tier 1 Premier League Inspires programme to 10 x YP (30 YP in total) in 3 x secondary schools in Reading over a year. These YP are identified by the schools as being at risk of exclusions.
  - Tier 2 targeted programme – see Diversion section.
- Rise Up project – Based in one secondary school working with YP who have had a number of suspensions and who are at risk of permanent exclusion. This support includes the holistic support to the whole family.
- Targeted Youth Support service – deliver 1-1 work with YP identified by organisations needing additional support on a range of issues including those at risk of suspension/exclusion from schools, those who are NEET, have low self confidence, struggling with relationships, on line safety, etc etc.
- Detached and Outreach Youth Work team – Work as an outreach and detached youth work team on the streets, parks and communities of 3 x areas within Reading 5 x days a week delivering a range of street and community based activities outside of school hours focussing on areas with higher levels



of deprivation and supporting YP with access to support and information on a variety of issues eg drug and crime awareness, emotional well-being and healthy relationships. They also work with volunteers supporting them to deliver youth clubs in community settings.

- Starting Point
  - Mentoring service – 1-1 support with a mentor for YP who is at risk of exclusion, becoming involved in crime etc
  - School Navigator project – working in schools across Reading for those at risk of suspensions
- Turnaround Programme – YJS have employed 1.5 FTE Engagement Worker to support children on the cusp of entering the youth justice service eg at arrest stage. They will also work with some children who have received a Community Resolution or where the police are not investigating any offence further. The criteria also includes those who have received anti social behaviour notices. The number of cases eligible for Turnaround support are anticipated to exceed the services that are available. Cases are therefore screened so that those with associated risk factors can be targeted for support. In Reading these associated risk factors include those children with SEND, those known to Social Care, and those who are having difficulties at school.
- While Turnaround is provided through the YOS, staff will work with children outside of the building, in the community. This reduces the risk of labelling and stigmatising the children open to Turnaround.
- The YJS are part of a working group exploring a bespoke programme with girls to develop resilience to support life chances that is being coordinated through Alana House – a local women’s support service.

### 13. Diversion

- Reading FC Community Trust – Kicks - Tier 2 targeted programme – for 5 x YP a year – providing intensive support over a 12 month period for those YP who are already known to services.
- Reconnect - work with young people where there is risk/harm coming from the community such as exploitation, substance misuse, missing, crime and youth violence.

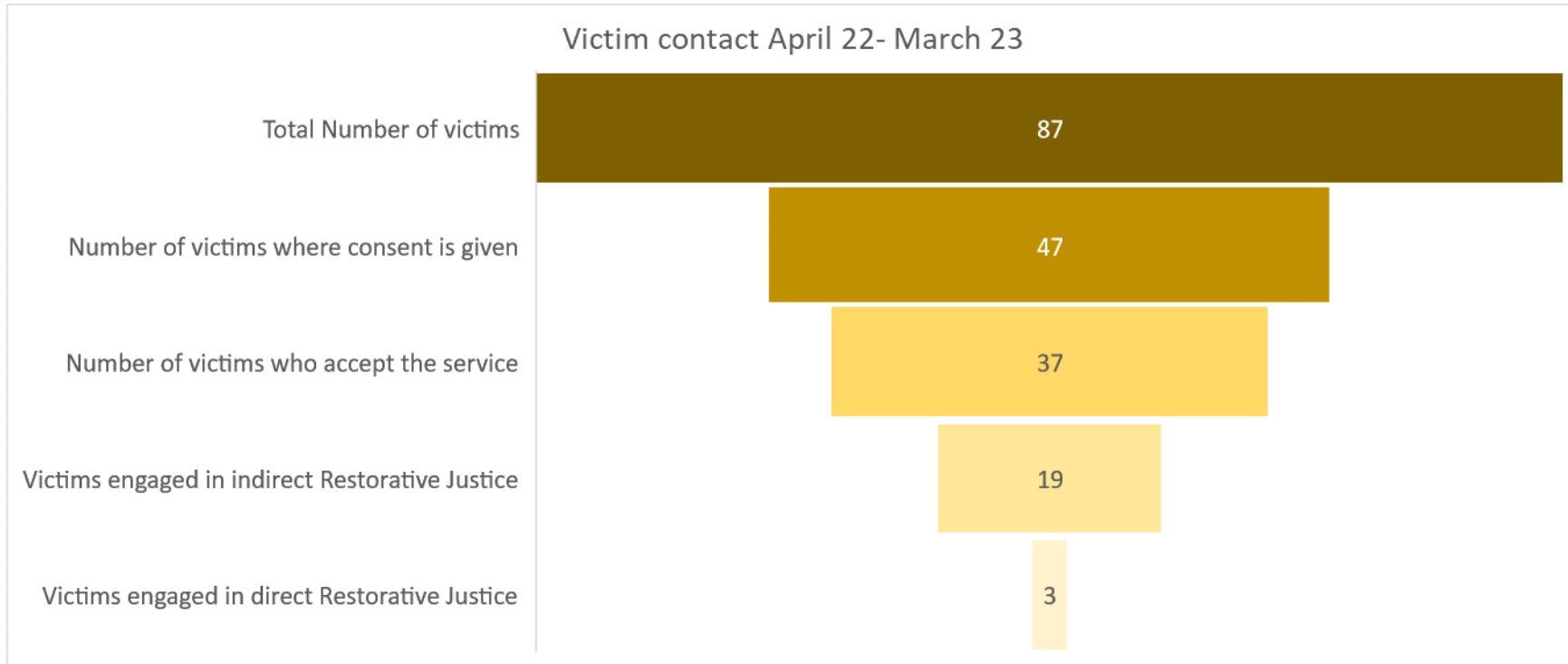
### 14. Education

The YJS have continued to support the Rise Up Project, based in a local secondary school. The project works with children in Year 8 at risk of disengagement and exclusion to help them develop stronger educational journeys.

The YJS led a group work programme over two terms in a local secondary school. Again this work was targeted at children to help develop their confidence and engagement in their schooling.



### 15. Restorative approaches and victims



Some instances of what the direct and indirect Restorative Justice work has included:



A child crashed a vehicle through a fence into a field. After contacting the victim of the field and victim work with the child, he was able to hear about the impact his actions had on the owner and the ripple effect he had caused and was also able to make up for what it had done by completing work at the stables.

A child drove and crashed a car - The victim was contacted at the Pre Sentence Report stage and supported to make a Victim Personal Statement, and wanted to receive a letter of explanation from the child; we were able to share an explanation with the victim from the work that had been completed.

After the theft by a child a member of shop staff left as she had felt intimidated and scared to work anymore. Following victim awareness work with the child he wrote a letter to the store explaining that he was sorry for his behaviour and he never meant for anyone to feel threatened by his actions.

The young victim needed some reassurance the children would leave him alone and the Youth Offender Panel put conditions into their contracts to stay away from the area the incident took place, and were able to feedback to the victim the progress the children had made on the Orders.

After completing some victim awareness work a child was able to appreciate the harm he had caused and when he next saw the victim, he apologised to him. This was verified with the victim who felt the matter was now sorted.

## 16. Serious violence and exploitation

Serious Youth Violence (SYV) offences are those that include more serious violent offences, Class A drug offences and Robberies. There has been an increase in the number of Serious Violence offences in the period April 22-23 compared with the previous year. Part of this has been fuelled by an increase in involvement in Class A drug offences as opposed to Robbery and violent offences. There has also been an increase in the number of knife and offensive weapons offences.

Following the involvement of young people in murders in Reading (2021) there has been an increase focus around SYV. The Community Safety Partnership Serious Youth Violence Duty has involvement from the Adolescent Risk Group. A thematic Child Safeguarding Practice Review has been published in 2022. The review considered a wider cohort of children who had committed Serious Youth Violence offences considering their characteristics and the services that were available to them. The action plan following the thematic review is referenced in the Service Development Plan.



THE YJS regularly attends Exploitation strategic and Operational Meetings with regard to exploitation and Missing children. The oversight and delivery of exploitation approaches has been reviewed over the year and we are expected to continue to be involved in these processes over the coming year.

The recent National Standard audit around Court has been themed specifically to look at SYV cases.



Page 103

### 17. Detention in police custody

The YJS completed some research with a group of young people that had experienced police custody. This spanned the period from November 21 to June 22. 24 young people, some open to the YJS and others who had been arrested were interviewed over the phone to get some feedback of their experiences in the local police Custody Suite.



**Practices that are working well**

1. Young peoples understanding of why they had been brought in to custody.
2. Legal advice being offered by police and letting young people know they were entitled to one.
3. Young people being offered food.
4. Police officers breaking down the caution and going through it slowly so young people could understand.
5. The use of simple language during the interview and good understanding of questions asked.
6. Young people understand why they have an Appropriate Adult (AA) and their role.
7. Young people feeling they had been fairly treated at the custody suite.
8. Those young people that had been arrested before feeling safe.

**Practices that are NOT working well**

1. Young people experience on arrest, the unnecessary use of handcuffs or not being told why they are used.
2. The length of time young people had to wait for a solicitor.
3. The length of time spent in the cells, the cells being cold, exacerbating mental health and experiencing decline in mental well being, feeling traumatised by the experience, not knowing what is going on and feeling bored with too much thinking time.
4. Young people not being kept informed of what is going on and what will be happening.
5. The food not very nutritious, lacking in taste, food not fitting the description and long waits for it.
6. Parents as AA, not being clear on their role.
7. Young people not knowing what would happen after their interview, feeling confused about bail conditions, if they had been released under investigation or no further action being taken.
8. First time arrested young people not feeling safe.
9. Young people from minority ethnic groups feeling they are being treated differently.

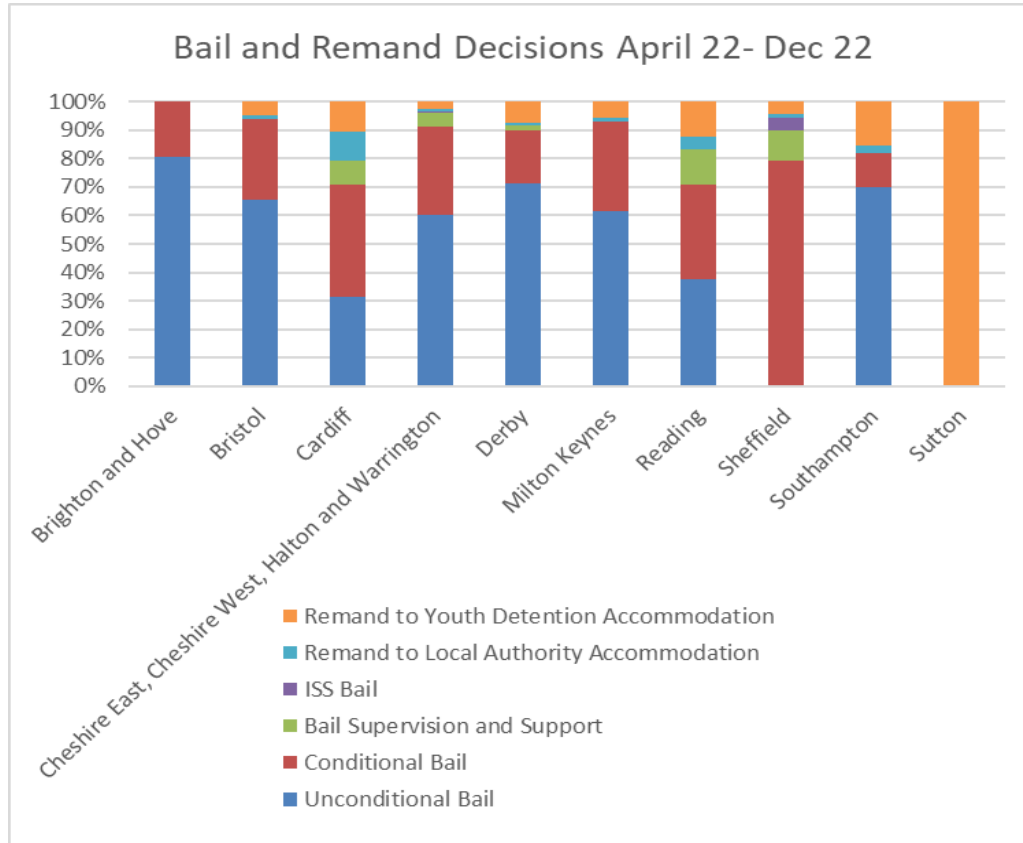
Some recommendations were produced that have been shared with the police. The police themselves over that period had been making some changes in the facilities available at the Custody Suite.





While the Custody Suite is located in a neighbouring Local Authority, Reading YJS will attend if an appropriate adult is needed for a Reading child that has been detained. We are updated with any involvement that Emergency Duty Service have had with children who have been arrested either at evenings or weekends. YJS staff are trained in the role of the Appropriate Adult as part of their induction including shadowing AA provision.

**18. Remands**



Data from the Youth Justice Board indicate a pattern of bail and remand decisions. The data is for a relatively short period and some YOTs may have had few cases in court. Reading's data is based on 24 Bail and remand decisions.

It is noted that the court may be more likely to impose conditional bail on Reading Cases over this period and we have been able to offer bail supervision and support.

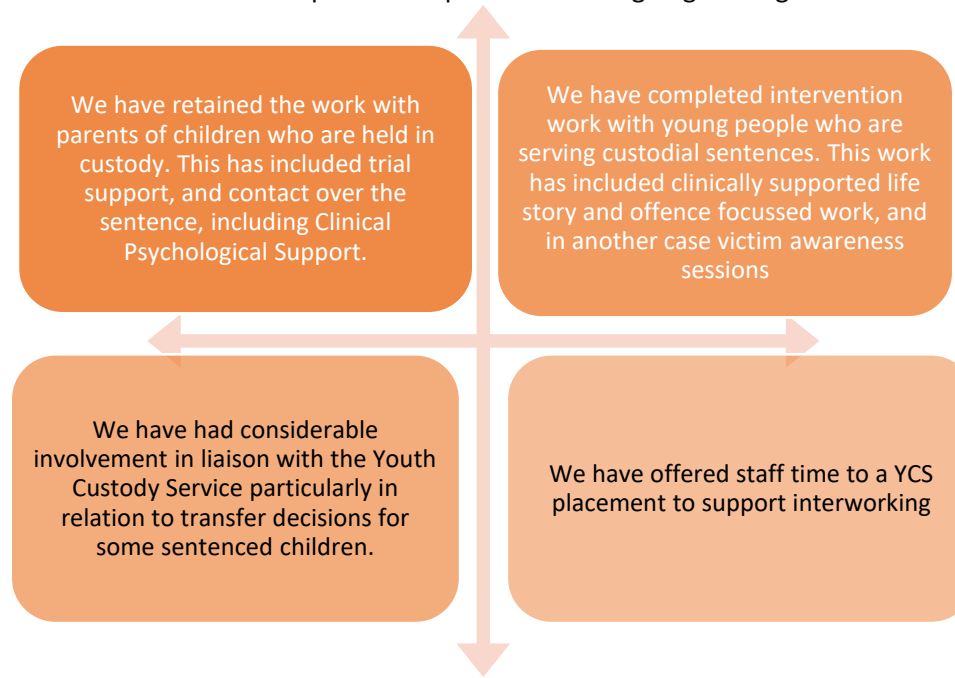
The 3 x remand cases involved two children who had been previously on significant Community Orders and had breached these Orders and been uncontactable and had been arrested on warrant. The other related to a young person, with an offending history who was arrested for a large number of offences, some of them serious. At the next hearing this child pleaded and was given stringent conditional Bail conditions before sentence where they received an intensive Community Order

The Performance report provided for the Management Board includes remand data on a quarterly basis.



### 19. Use of custody

The data on the Custodial Sentences is included on p15 of this plan and the ongoing oversight is detailed in the National Standards section below.



### 20. Constructive resettlement

We have had limited experience of children leaving custody this year. The one case we had was managed by the YJS and transition planning was underway with the Probation Service as the child was nearing 18. The transition took place whilst the child was in a custodial setting and they were effectively managed by Probation at the point of release. We conducted a further closing session with them after their release as our contact with them had been unexpectedly curtailed due to the custodial sentence. Our resettlement approach has been tied in with our transition policy as some of the approaches apply to all transitions including resettlement. The National Standards work this year in these areas will explore the experiences of children transitioning and also those in Secure settings and will be audited against the Resettlement and Transition Policy.



**21. Standards for children in the justice system**



This year we have conducted reviews on National Standards (NS) 1, 2 and 3. Given the plan, we focussed some of the areas of the audit work around themes of Disproportionality and Serious Youth Violence. Each of the reviews involved an audit of cases by the YJS and then a validation meeting with Board members.

NS 1 – Out of Court	<p>At the time of the Audit we had leaned that we were successful in the request for a Peer review and given the longstanding FTE issues we wanted a deeper exploration of this area that the prre review would give us. The audit findings included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75-80% of First Time Entrants are not previously known to the YJS. This duplicated the finding from a previous audit.</li> <li>• There were some actions in relation to the recording of Youth conditional Cautions that needed tightening up.</li> <li>• The involvement of caseworkers in YCC delivery was identified as a practice gap.</li> <li>• The Audit work assisted some of the planning for the Turnaround programme that started over this year.</li> </ul>
NS 2- At Court	<p>This audit concentrated on a small cohort of young people appearing with Serious Youth Violence Offences. Findings included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court processes were sound.</li> <li>• Risk management planning after arrest and before court appearance demonstrated some gaps in YJS and partnership Practice.</li> <li>• Risk Management by the YJS at and after court should be more victim focussed and proactive.</li> <li>• More targeted work addressing SYV risk should be actioned more promptly on interventions.</li> </ul>
NS 3 – 3 Work in the Community	<p>This Audit considered the group of Black and Mixed heritage children that the YJS had worked with. Findings included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of the tool ‘ This is me’ was considered to be a useful tool that should be used routinely with all you ng people to develop an understanding of the individual in their context and assist self expression.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Countersigning and report and review templates have been amended to consider diversity.</li> <li>• There is an identified need for further training in this area</li> </ul>
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Reviews of NS 4 and 5 are scheduled this year

**22. Workforce Development**

There has been a 0.14 reduction in the Caseworker capacity following the change in working hours for a member of staff. The Case worker capacity is expected to increase to 5.0 FTE over the next year. The substantive Speech and Language post is on maternity leave and there is reduced capacity in the cover position. The Health and Justice provision across the YOTs in the West of Berkshire has developed a more peripatetic and responsive approach to their input which should allow for more effective delivery. The principal gap in staffing is the absence of a Probation Officer. Whilst we have arrangements for regular face-face contact with a nominated Probation officer to assist transitions, staffing shortages in the Probation Services are preventing the appointment of this post. Plans for current Probation recruitment should mean the provision of a qualified worker in this financial year.

At a lower level the YJS is represented in local relevant local delivery arrangements that affect the partnership.



**23. Evidence-based practice and innovation**

Surrey University are using Reading as a research site into work with parents of children that are open to the Youth Justice Service. The programme of research is ongoing but researchers have visited the site and interviewed staff, young people and parents as part of the research.



As part of the work with parents we have coordinated a Parent led support group for parents whose children are involved in or at risk of exploitation. The model for the group is similar to the researched Kitchen Table Talks used in the West Midlands and has been positively received by the parents involved in the group. The YJS will continue work with Surrey over the coming year in our work with Parents.

The parents have also been empowered to lead workshop on the experiences they have had with their children. They have delivered these with a small group of newly qualified Social Workers and with a wider learning session coordinated by the Safeguarding Partnership. Some of the feedback from the workshops included:





## 24. Evaluation

A YJS Peer Review was undertaken in November 22 around First Time Entrants. There were 3 key lines of enquiry:

1. Are Out of Court Processes, specifically the early identification of children at risk, well understood by partners and are appropriate interventions available?
2. Is the decision-making process sufficiently robust?
3. Is there a clear strategy regarding the future vision of the service linked to early identification?

There were a number of strengths identified and recommendations which have been developed into an action plan.

### Recommendations

- The YOS Board to satisfy themselves that YOS practice is conversant with effective practice principles and the requirements of HMIP case management expectations;
- Senior YOS management team to develop a clear plan for improving the timeliness of assessments and ensuring that the voice of the child is heard within the assessment and planning process;
- The Early Help partnership to develop a clear strategy and action plan to ensure that they are delivering in diverting children from the criminal justice system as well as improving children's welfare;
- In line with a trauma-informed approach, the YOS Partnership should seek to develop ways of reducing the number of professionals who are involved with children at any one time;
- Partners to review current decision-making processes for OoCD's, to ensure greater multi-agency involvement and oversight of decision-making;
- Thames Valley police to review the use of Outcome 22 as an alternative diversionary option for children, in line with revised national guidance;
- Contextual safeguarding approaches to be fully embedded in prevention work and work with communities
- The Board to develop a Disproportionality strategy and action plan which will hold each partner accountable for their role in preventing further disadvantage to children who are over-represented in the criminal justice system.

An action plan has been developed from the recommendations and can be seen in appendix 4.

Following the peer review, YJS commissioned Cordis Bright to undertake some further audits and to work with the staff team and Managers to strengthen and develop practice.



25. Service development plan

Actions	Measurement of Success	By When
<p><b>Priority One – Reduce First Time Entrants into the Youth justice system</b> –National research linked to criminal exploitation found that the only identifiable common indicator of vulnerability that was present in children’s lives was exclusion from school. Although exclusion is clearly not the cause of the risk, it is seen as a trigger point for significant escalation of risk. Thus one of our priorities is to reduce the number of suspension and permanent exclusions.</p>		
Evaluate school-based Rise Up project	Evaluation report demonstrating impact of project	Oct 23
Develop project to support YP at risk of permanent exclusion following learning from Rise Up Project	Increase in successful managed moves and reduction in permanent exclusions	Sept 23
Continue to develop Turnaround Project	Decrease in number of FTE’s Local evaluation on outcomes	March 24
Peer review action plan delivered	Key services delivering support aimed at reducing suspensions and permanent exclusions evaluated re impact on FTE figures.	March 24
<p><b>Priority Two: Address Disproportionality/over representation within YJS cohort</b> - As part of our vision, we recognise that Reading is a diverse town and some individuals and groups experience inequalities and disproportionate treatment. We want to have a greater understanding of how criminal justice processes affects particular groups and work against unfair treatment in the youth justice system.</p>		
Develop YJS Disproportionality strategy with contributions from all partners	Disproportionality Strategy agreed by Board, enabling increased understanding of disproportionality issues across the partnership	Dec 23
Develop and deliver action plan to address any disproportionality issues within YJS cohort	Agreement how to tackle disproportionality across the partnership Action plan delivered and monitored.	March 24
<p><b>Priority Three: Reduce the impact of serious youth violence</b> - While overall crime continues to fall, serious youth violence across the country has been rising with figures showing that both perpetrators and victims of these offences are getting younger. Furthermore, both perpetrators and victims of SYV are typically vulnerable young people - at increased risk of exploitation and victimisation, often with significant evidence of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). BWSCP undertook a Thematic review into this area following 2 x serious youth violence incidents in Reading.</p>		
<p>Implement recommendations from BWSCP Thematic Child Safeguarding Review: services provided to YP and their families in relation to serious youth violence –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit protocol between YJS and CSC to review how effectively the protocol is working</li> </ul>	<p>Recommendations are implemented.</p> <p>Audit report published.</p>	<p>Dec 23</p> <p>July 23</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise protocol in light of above findings.</li> <li>• Ensure YJS participation and involvement in multi-agency partnership meetings involving serious violence eg CSP sub group, VRU</li> </ul>	<p>YJS and CSC protocol revised and implemented.</p> <p>Improvements to the existing CETAR and CEMOG meeting structures are implemented including the introduction of the new Exploitation Team Around the Child (ETAC) meetings.</p>	<p>Sept 23</p> <p>Sept 23</p>
<p><b>Priority Four: Increase opportunities for participation and involvement of young people within YJS</b> - It is important that we receive feedback from young people around their experiences within the youth justice system so that this can inform the way we change and develop our services appropriately. It will also enable young people to be actively involved in decision-making processes on issues that affect them.</p>		
<p>Develop Community/Peer court</p>	<p>Peer/Community court developed and implemented enabling YP to become part of the solution and not the problem with opportunities for a restorative approach and giving a voice to victims.</p>	<p>March 24</p>
<p>Involve YP in the rebranding of the YJS including logos and new location</p>	<p>New 'brand' and logo developed for Reading Youth Justice Service chosen by YP from Reading.</p>	<p>Sept 23</p>
<p>Undertake regular service user feedback on services provided by YJS as well as court and Police custody experiences. Ensure YP are informed about outcomes from their comments and/or suggestions to improve services.</p>	<p>Changes in youth justice services in Reading are informed by young people's views and comments. YP understand what changes have occurred as a result of their feedback.</p>	<p>March 24</p>

**27. Challenges, risks and issues**





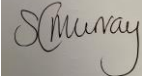

Challenges, risks and issues	Action
<p>The Early Help service, which includes Youth Justice is undergoing a redesign during 2023 and there is currently ongoing discussions re how the strategic management and oversight of YJS will be configured.</p>	<p>Interim management arrangements in place at end June when current Service Manager retires.</p> <p>Consultation document re redesign of Early Help services will be published mid June.</p>
<p>YJS HMIP Inspection is imminent</p>	<p>Preparation is under way re collation of evidence in advance documents, chairs presentation etc. Board members continue to be briefed re role and expectation.</p>






<p>The Youth Justice Service has recently moved to a new venue, which whilst providing more modern facilities is further from the town centre.</p> <p>The enthusiasm of young people in finding the venue will be closely monitored with resolutions being found if there are concerns re this.</p>	<p>Maps have been developed showing the bus routes and walking routes from town.</p> <p>Monitor the attendance of young people for YJS appointments and/or meetings. Implement resolutions if there is an issue.</p>
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## 28. Sign off, submission

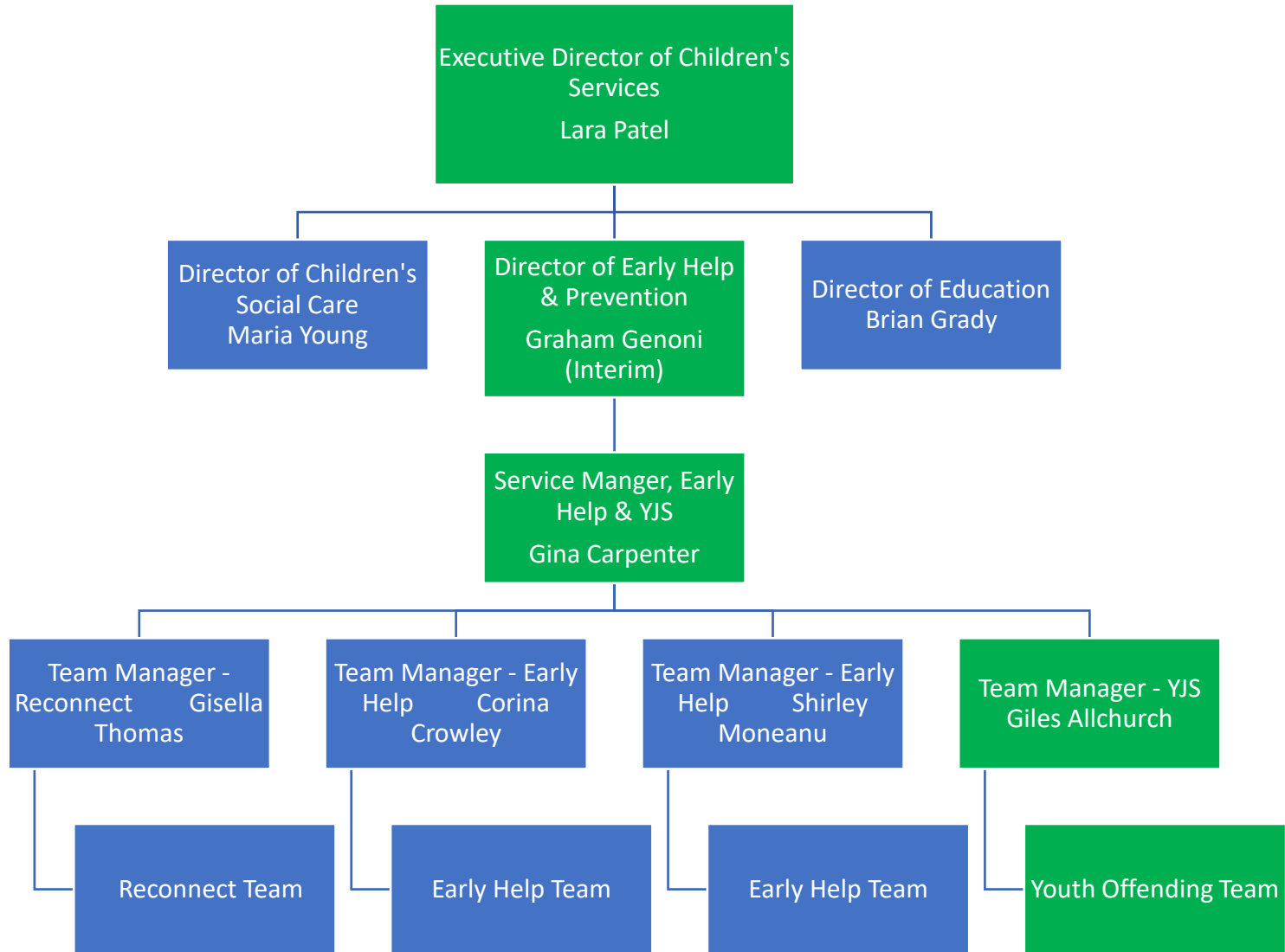
Name	Role	Organisation	Signature
John Ennis	Senior Probation Officer, (Chair)	National Probation Service	
Ceri Burns	Head Teacher	Cranbury College	
Gina Carpenter	Service Manager, Early Help & YJS	Brighter Futures for Children	
Fiona Hostler	Head of Education Access and Support	Brighter Futures for Children	
Emma Tompkins	Chief Inspector, Deputy Commander – Reading LPA.	Thames Valley Police	E Tompkins 4932
Rachel Spencer/ Victor Koroma	Director	Reading Voluntary Action	
Graham Genoni	Director of Early Intervention and Prevention (Interim)	Brighter Futures for Children	
Sally Murray/Miranda Walcott	Head of Children's Commissioning,	NHS	
Maria Young	Director for Children's Social Care	Brighter Futures for Children	
Krista Thompson/Rachel Taylor	Sergeant, Youth Justice Unit/Detective Chief Inspector, Criminal Justice	Thames Valley Police	



Jo Middlemass	Community Partnerships Service Manager	Reading Borough Council	
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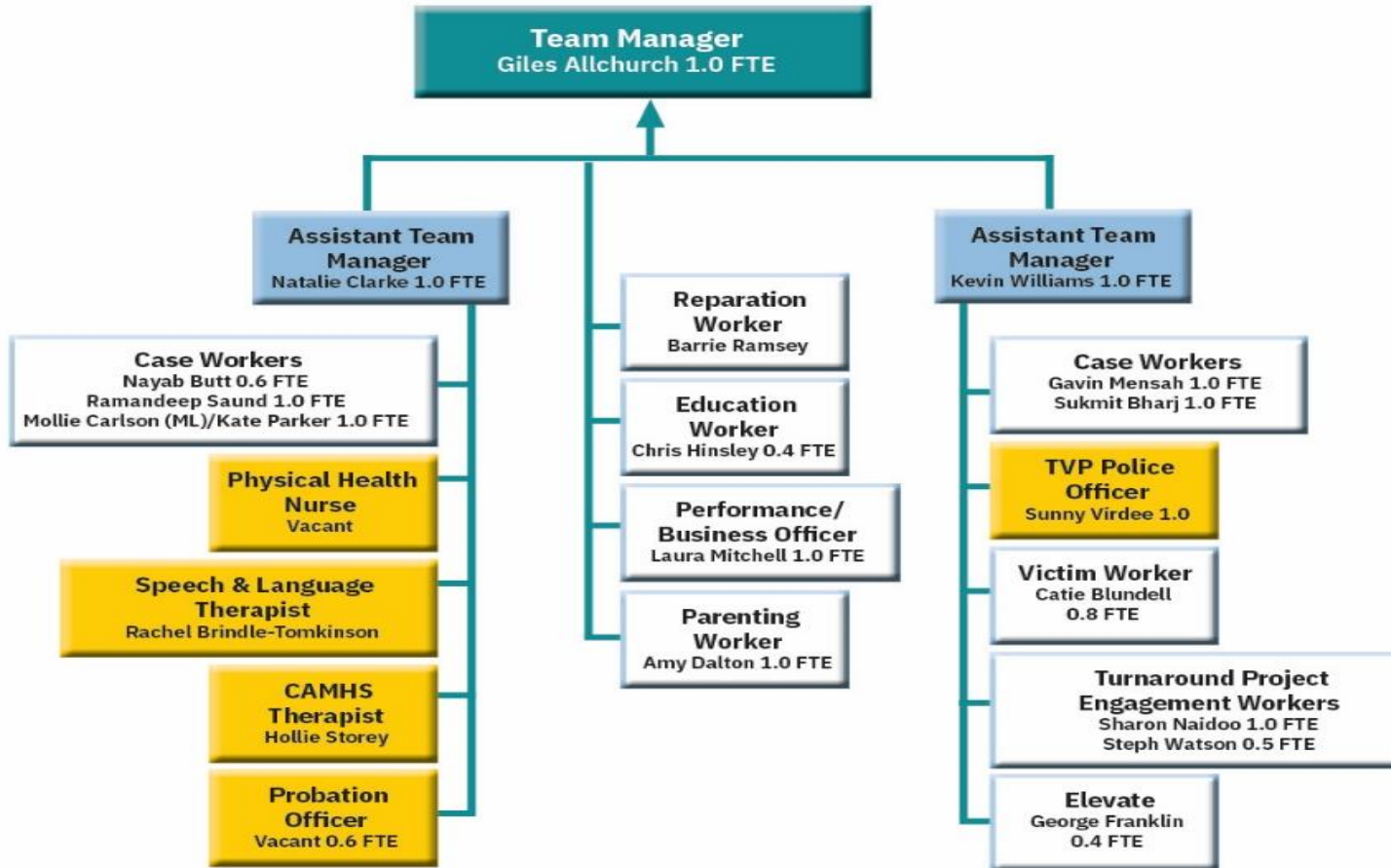


Appendix One -BFFC Structure





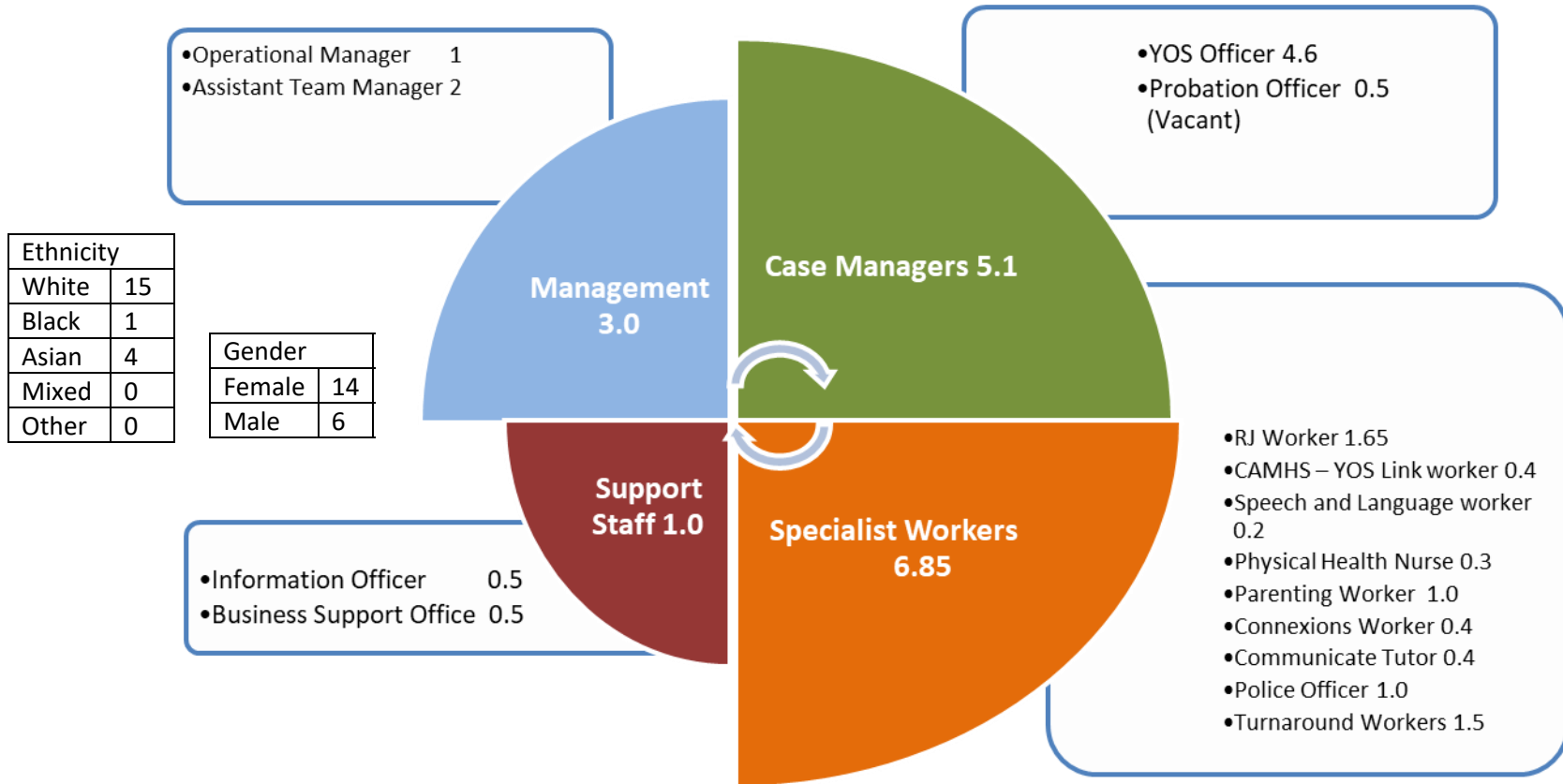
Appendix Two - YJS Structure





Appendix Three - Staffing as at 01.04.23

11.95 Full Time Equivalents





**Appendix Four - Peer Review Action Plan**

YJS Peer Review Actions	Who	By When	Progress
<b>1.The YJS Board to satisfy themselves that YJS practice is conversant with effective practice principles and the requirement of HMIP case management expectations</b>			
Commission external audit and report to ensure YJS practice is compliant with HMIP case management expectations.	GG/GC	<b>Feb 23</b>	<p><b>Update June 23</b></p> <p>Cordis Bright commissioned to review cases and case management oversight and practice.</p> <p>18 statutory cases were audited. The report identified a number of strengths and areas for development. The areas for development included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QA process</li> <li>• Storing of key documents on Childview.</li> <li>• Risk and SWB plans to be more robust with clear actions identified with timescales.</li> <li>• Management oversight and case supervision.</li> <li>• Focus on disproportionality.</li> <li>• Post 16 provision and its offer to children in YJS to be monitored.</li> </ul>
YJS Management Board to review audit report and any action plan.	Cordis Bright	<b>June 23</b>	<p><b>Update June 23</b></p> <p>A number of individual sessions were held between Cordis Bright, Managers and YJS Case Workers, feeding back comments re audited cases and working on improving current 'live' cases eg assessments, plans etc.</p> <p>Training and workshops have been facilitated by Cordis Bright with Managers and staff to review and improve practice – particularly around ensuring evidence is within Child view.</p>



			Cordis Bright will attend Board meeting on 14 <sup>th</sup> June and facilitate a workshop around disproportionality and expectations of Board members re governance.
Review and revise case management processes to ensure aligned with HMIP guidance and effective practice	GA	July 23	<b>Update June 23</b> The audit and support from Cordis Bright as above has ensured our case management processes are aligned with HMIP guidance and effective practice.
<b>2.Senior YJS Management Team to develop a clear plan for improving the timeliness of assessments and ensuring that the voice of the child is heard within the assessment and planning process.</b>			
Review this recommendation following findings from Cordis Bright undertaking full audit of all OoCD and court cases.	GC	April 23	<b>Update June 23</b> Cordis Bright have reviewed all cases and undertaken a full training session with staff and Managers on their findings to build on and develop practice.  They have worked with staff and managers on an individual basis to improve practice.
Meet with staff and Managers to ensure all understand HMIP standards and expectations re case management processes and recordings.	Cordis Bright	March 23	<b>Update June 23</b> As above. There is ongoing support delivered by Cordis Bright with coaching and mentoring for staff and managers.
Undertake a re-audit of sample cases to monitor compliance with recommendations from Cordis Bright report.	GA/GC	May 23	<b>Update June 23</b> As the support of Cordis Bright is currently ongoing, cases are regularly reviewed by them as they discuss cases with staff and Managers.
Report presented to YJS Management Board	GC	June 23	<b>Update June 23</b> Cordis Bright facilitated a workshop for the Board in June re roles and expectation of Board members, readiness for Inspection and agreeing the priorities for the Youth Justice Plan 23/24.  There was not time for a report specifically on their work to date – although the above was informed by this. Regular updates have been given to the Interim Director of Early Help & Prevention.



<b>3.The Early Help Partnership to develop a clear strategy and action plan to ensure that they are delivering in diverting children from the criminal justice system as well as improving children’s welfare.</b>			
Link to BWSCP thematic Review Recommendation 6 – The Reading Adolescent Risk Strategic Group to be responsible for mapping, coordinating and evaluating the diversionary schemes available across organisations in Reading.	<b>ARSG</b>	<b>March 23</b>	<b>Update June 23</b> The BWSCP’s action plan states that a group meets quarterly, and they have mapped what services are on offer. A range of organisations are involved in this. However, the group cannot evaluate all the services/organisations.
Ensure close links with ARSG re Communication strategy to ensure that all staff working with young people are aware of the range of prevention and diversion support available for young people	<b>GC</b>	<b>Sept 23</b>	<b>Update June 23</b> This will be progressed as part of the Adolescent Risk Strategic Group work on the BWSCP thematic action plan.
Develop the work which No5, Starting Point and Kicks have started re mapping support services within Reading to ensure staff are aware and can signpost/refer young people to other support services.	<b>GA</b>	<b>June 23</b>	<b>Update June 23</b> BfFC Early Help have met with No 5, Starting Point and Kicks to discuss the summer activity programme in Reading and to develop a joint promotion offer available for parents, young people and colleagues.  The Extended Youth Diversion Network ToR will also be updated and used to support progressing the mapping work started by No 5, Kicks and Starting Point.
Ensure the range of EH funded prevention projects aimed at reducing the number of first-time entrants:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rise Up – holistic School and Family based Exclusion Project</li> <li>• Kicks ‘Premier League Inspires’ – school based project supporting YP ‘at risk of exclusion’.</li> <li>• Starting Point mentoring scheme</li> </ul>	<b>GC</b>	<b>Sept 23</b>	<b>Update June 23</b>  The Rise Up project ends in July 23 and the evaluation report will be developed after that date.  Kicks Premium League Inspires programme - Worked in 3 x secondary schools this year – Maiden Erlegh Reading, Reading Girls School and The Wren. Worked with approx. 30 young people. Awaiting the evaluation report at the end of the Academic year from Kicks.





are evaluated and impact on FTE figures is monitored.			Starting Point Mentoring scheme – this is managed and monitored by the Strategic Lead, Partnership & Prevention.
Develop and implement Reading Turnaround programme within the YOS to ensure young people on the cusp of offending are offered support and interventions.	GA	Jan 23	<b>Update June 23</b> Staff have been recruited and the programme has been operational since Jan 23. We received 30 x referrals in that period – 11 young people went on to receive an assessment and intervention. Our target for that first year was 9 young people.  We have a target of supporting 26 young people in 23/24 and 25 children in 24/25.
Explore the use of a Youth Peer Court within Reading to support the reduction of first-time entrants.	GA	June 23	<b>Update June 23</b> This is an ongoing piece of work and is in the Youth Justice Plan as a priority for 23/24.
<b>4.The YJS Partnership should seek to develop ways of reducing the number of professionals who are involved with children at any one time.</b>			
Link to BWSCP Thematic Review Recommendation 8 – the Reading Adolescent Risk Strategic Group to hold a learning workshop to discuss this issue further. Workshop to focus on one young person and map touch points and services, including the consideration of wider organisations.	ARSG	March 7th	<b>Update June 23</b> Workshops have been moved to 2023 to allow other ongoing work to be completed. Once the Community Safety and Violence strategy is published, it will feed into one of the workshops.
Await findings from BWSCP workshop and respond to actions.	GC	June 23	<b>Update June 23</b> As above. The timescale for this action will need to be reviewed when the actions from the workshop are known.
<b>5.Partners to review current decision-making processes for OoCD’s to ensure greater multi-agency involvement and oversight of decision making.</b>			



Discussion with Youth Justice Unit – this is a Thames Valley process.  Explore use of ‘teams’ to support a wider multi-agency approach to decision making processes to ensure multi-agency engagement.	<b>GC</b>	<b>March 23</b>	<b>Update June 23</b> Further discussions are required with YJU. However, the evidence of the rationale behind the decisions re OoCD is now much more visible within child view. See below.
Ensure there is clear evidence and recording of Management discussions and rationale which have informed the decisions re OoCD with YJU are within Child View.	<b>Cordis Bright</b>	<b>March 23</b>	<b>Update June 23</b> This has been part of the Cordis Bright support and discussions offered to Managers and staff.
Review involvement of victim voice within decision making process	<b>GA</b>	<b>March 23</b>	<b>Update June 23</b> Working with police to ensure evidence that the victim has been consulted or given consent re involvement re OocD decision.
<b>6.Thames Valley Police to review the use of Outcome 22 as an alternative diversionary option for children in line with revised national guidance</b>			
This is an issue across Thames Valley and directly impacts on FTE rates. YJB are discussing with TVP.  Some agreement reached – yet to be confirmed.	<b>GC</b>	<b>March 23</b>	<b>Update June 23</b> There is a task and finish group across the Thames Valley involving YJS’s and TVP looking at this area.  There has been some agreement re use of deferred outcomes which is essentially very similar to an Outcome 22
<b>7.Contextual safeguarding approaches to be fully embedded in prevention work and work with communities</b>			
Review this recommendation following findings from Cordis Bright full audit and implement agreed actions.	<b>GC</b>	<b>April 23</b>	<b>Update June 23</b> This area has been looked at as part of the full audit and has been discussed with Managers and staff as appropriate.
<b>8.The Board to develop a Disproportionality strategy and action plan which will hold each partner accountable for their role in preventing further disadvantage to children who are over-represented in the criminal justice system</b>			



Analyse YJS data to determine extent of issue re disproportionality within Reading YJS	<b>GA/GC</b>	<b>April 23</b>	<b>Update June 23</b> This has been completed for 22/23 cohort. Some of this data is included within the 23/24 Youth Justice Plan.
Partners agree contribution to strategy re own organisation including data and actions.	<b>Board Members</b>	<b>March 23</b>	<b>Update June 23</b> Board members have agreed to share data. The first discussion re this will be at the June Board meeting.
Develop YJS strategy and action plan. This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The vision for supporting YP with diverse backgrounds</li> <li>• The local picture re data and what it means</li> <li>• Practice support e.g. Re-launch of tools to support the approach in supporting YP from diverse heritages and backgrounds and ensuring their lived in experience is understood and included within assessment, plans and reviews.</li> <li>• Training for staff diversity e.g. cultural competence, unconscious bias etc</li> </ul>	<b>GC</b>	<b>Sept 23</b>	<b>Update June 23</b> Draft Disproportionality strategy developed. June Board meeting will have a focus on this.

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**Council**

**30 January 2024**



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

<b>Title</b>	Pay Policy Statement 2023/24
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Kathryn Cook, Assistant Director HR&OD
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Terry, Deputy Leader
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Our Foundations
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. That the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24 be approved, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report is to confirm the Council’s policy on pay for 2023/24 and includes information about changes to pay scales for the Council’s workforce.

## 2. Policy Context

- 2.1. This Pay Policy Statement meets the statutory duty to provide the Council with a description of the policy on staff remuneration for annual approval. It provides information on remuneration arrangements for staff directly employed by the Council, excluding staff in schools.
- 2.2. The authority appoints its staff and determines the terms and conditions of service on which they hold office, under Section 112 of the Local Government Act 1978. This includes procedures for dismissal. Full Council has delegated this power to the Personnel Committee except for the Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer for whom separate statutory procedures apply.
- 2.3. Sections 38 – 43 of the Localism Act 2011 require that the authority produce a Policy Statement that covers several matters concerning the pay of the Authority’s staff, principally Chief Officers. This Policy Statement meets the requirements of the Localism Act in this regard and meets the requirements of guidance issued in February 2012 and February 2013 by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to which the authority is required to have regard under Section 40 of the Act.

## 3. The Proposal

- 3.1 The statement is broadly unchanged from the previous year’s statement other than it has been updated with the recent nationally agreed pay settlements. The 2023/24 Pay Policy Statement is at Appendix A together with revised pay scales.

## Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 3.1. Our workforce plays an essential role in achieving our ambitions as a Council. The Pay Policy Statement sets out how we remunerate employees in 2023/24.

## 4. Environmental and Climate Implications

4.1. Not applicable to this report.

## **5. Community Engagement**

5.1. Not applicable to this report.

## **6. Equality Implications**

6.1. An equality impact assessment is not required for this report – all pay scales, apart from those for the Head of Paid Service and Chief Officers are nationally negotiated.

## **7. Other Relevant Considerations**

7.1. None for this paper.

## **8. Legal Implications**

8.1. The Council is required to publish its Pay Policy Statement annually. This will be uploaded onto our intranet site.

## **9. Financial Implications**

The financial implications of the pay changes are included within the MTFP reported separately to Council.

## **10. Timetable for Implementation**

10.1. Not applicable for this paper.

## **11. Background Papers**

11.1. There are none.

## **Appendices**

1. **2023/24 Pay Policy statement (with annexes)**

# READING BOROUGH COUNCIL PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023/24

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Reading Borough Council's pay policy aims to ensure value for money whilst enabling the Council to deliver high quality services to the residents of Reading. The Council seeks to set pay rates that are adequate to secure and retain high quality employees but will determine overall pay and benefits at an appropriate level in accordance with equality, affordability, and other relevant factors.
- 1.2. Pay levels will not be unnecessarily generous or otherwise excessive.
- 1.3. Reading Borough Council is committed to equality, transparency, and fairness across all of its activities and particularly in relation to the pay and conditions of its staff.
- 1.4. This document has the following Annexes:
  - Annex A: Requirements and Recommendations to Publish Personal data concerning Staff
  - Annex B: Governance Arrangements for Pay and Conditions of Service
  - Annex C: Summary of Conditions of Service
  - Annex D: Council Employees in Salary Bands as at 1 April 2023
  - Annex E: Pension Discretions Statement
  - Annex F: Pay scales for staff employed on NJC (Green Book) conditions and Senior Managers (JNC).
- 1.5. The following related documents related to pay and remuneration can be accessed through the Council's website:
  - Details and responsibilities of all job roles paid above £50,000
  - Market Supplement Policy
  - Council Senior level organisational chart

## 2. LEGISLATION

- 2.1. The authority appoints its staff and determines the terms and conditions of service on which they hold office, under Section 112 of the Local Government Act 1978. This includes procedures for dismissal. Full Council has delegated this power to the Personnel Committee, with the exception of the Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer for whom separate statutory procedures apply.
- 2.2. Sections 38 – 43 of the Localism Act 2011 require that the authority produce a Policy Statement that covers a number of matters concerning the pay of the authority's staff, principally Chief Officers. This Policy Statement meets the requirements of the Localism Act in this regard and meets the requirements of guidance issued in February 2012 and February 2013 by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to which the authority is required to have regard under Section 40 of the Act.
- 2.3. This policy also has some connection with the data on pay and rewards for staff which the authority publishes under the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency and the data which is published under The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations (2011). A revised Draft Code was

published in December 2013. It should be noted that the requirements to publish data under the Secretary of State's guidance, the Code of Practice and the Regulations do differ, the data requirements of the Code of Practice and the Accounts and Audit Regulations are summarised at **Annex A** to this Policy Statement.

2.4. Any decision under powers delegated in the Council's Constitution / Scheme of Delegation with regard to remuneration to be taken during 2023/24 will be bound by and must comply with this Statement. No decision at variance with this Statement may be taken without the specific agreement of full Council.

2.5. The Head of Paid Service and Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services must be consulted prior to any decision impacting on remuneration where there is any question regarding compliance with the Statement.

### **3. SCOPE OF THIS STATEMENT AND DEFINITION OF TERMS**

3.1. This Pay Policy Statement meets the statutory duty to provide the Council with a description of the policy on staff remuneration for annual approval. It provides information on remuneration arrangements for staff directly employed by the Council, excluding staff in schools.

3.2. This Statement sets out the Council's policy with regard to:

- the remuneration of 'chief officers' (the senior pay group – see below)
- the remuneration of the lowest paid employees
- the relationship between chief officers' remuneration and that of other officers

3.3. In this policy the 'senior pay group' (senior managers) covers posts in the top three tiers of the organisation. These include the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service), Executive Directors, Directors and Deputy/Assistant Directors. Posts in this group in Reading are as follows:

- (a) the Head of the Authority's Paid Service [Chief Executive]
- (b) the Executive Director of Children's Services;
- (c) the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care;
- (d) the Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services
- (e) the Executive Director of Resources
- (f) the Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer)
- (g) the Monitoring Officer (Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services)
- (h) persons who, as respects all or most of their duties, report directly to or are directly accountable to the Head of the Council's Paid Service
- (i) persons who, as respects all or most of their duties, report directly to or are accountable to the posts listed in (b), (c), (d), (e), above (other than staff whose duties are of a clerical or support nature)

3.4. The senior management structure of the organisation can be found in Part 2 of the Council Constitution on the Council's website.

3.5. "Remuneration" for the purposes of this Statement includes these elements:

- basic salary
- pension
- all other allowances arising from employment



#### 4. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND DECISION MAKING

- 4.1. Council has delegated to the Personnel Committee the power to appoint and determine the terms and conditions of employment for all staff, including the application of any discretions under the pension schemes. The terms of reference of the Personnel Committee are set out in section 4 of Part 3 of the Council's constitution.
- 4.2. Council, and the Personnel Committee, have extensive and long-standing arrangements to delegate the exercise of this power to the Chief Executive, Executive Directors, Directors and Deputy/Assistant Directors, in respect of the staff employed in their service areas.
- 4.3. The delegation is subject to the Council's Officer Employment Rules, which are set out in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution.
- 4.4. A summary of the arrangements for determining terms and conditions of service for staff can be found in **Annex B**.
- 4.5. The Council, and the Personnel Committee, have adopted a range of policies which apply to the recruitment and employment of the staff of the authority. Policies which are specifically relevant to this Statement include:
  - Low Pay Policy
  - Recruitment and Selection Policy
  - Employment Stability Agreement and Pay Protection Policy
  - Appraisal Scheme and Performance-Related Progression Scheme
  - Policies relating to Market Supplements; Starting Salary on Appointment; Honorarium and Acting-Up Payments
- 4.6. The Scheme of Delegation provides for the Deputy Chief Executive, Executive Directors, Directors and Deputy/Assistant Directors to manage, review and apply the Council's Human Resources policies, and to determine the appropriate pay and conditions for the appointment of staff within these policies.

#### 5. CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

- 5.1. Reading Borough Council applies terms and conditions of employment that have either been negotiated and agreed through appropriate collective bargaining mechanisms or locally. These are then incorporated into contracts of employment.
- 5.2. The Council is a member of the local government employer's association for national collective bargaining in respect of chief executives, chief officers and other employees. There are separate negotiations and agreements in respect of each of these groups. Changes from national negotiations generally take effect from 1 April each year and are retrospective to 1 April where agreements are made later than 1 April. It is the authority's long-standing policy to implement national agreements. The Head of Paid Service and Chief Officers are under the JNC conditions of service, with locally determined pay. All other employees are under the relevant national agreement on pay and conditions of service applying to the particular service area, with local variations to pay. Pay for staff on all terms and conditions (as set out in Annex C) was last increased nationally ('cost of living' increase) from April 2023. The national pay negotiations for Chief Officers for 2023/24 reached agreement on 5 May 2023 to award an increase of 3.50 per cent, backdated to 1 April 2023. The negotiations for Chief Executives reached agreement on 1 November 2023, also to award an increase of 3.50 per cent, backdated to 1 April 2023. The negotiations for NJC staff reached agreement on 1 November and

agreed an increase of £1,925 backdated to 1 April 2023. Staff covered by Craftworkers terms and conditions reached agreement on 16 November 2023 and agreed an increase of £1,925 backdated to 1 April 2023. The Council will apply any settlement reached nationally in respect of staff covered by national bargaining machinery where this is the locally agreed mechanism for determining cost of living increases.

5.3. A summary of the arrangements for determining terms and conditions of service for staff is set out in **Annex C**.

## **6. POLICY ON REMUNERATING SENIOR MANAGERS**

6.1. **Head of Paid Service:** The Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) is paid on a locally determined salary which is reviewed and approved by Personnel Committee when the post becomes vacant. Independent external consultancy advice on appropriate remuneration levels (taking account of role and responsibilities, recruitment and retention factors and local and regional salary benchmarks) is presented to Personnel Committee to inform their decision-making in this matter.

6.2. The locally determined salary will be within the parameters of the Pay Policy Statement and will be set out in the Minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting which approves the salary, which will be published on the Council's website. The salary range will also be published in the job advertisement to fill the vacant post.

6.3. At the conclusion of the recruitment process, the decision to appoint a person to fill the post of Head of Paid Service will be taken by Council, which will be advised of the local salary, and the point at which the appointment was recommended to be made.

6.4. No other payments or benefits are payable to the Head of Paid Service (e.g., bonus, performance related pay, health insurance, car lease) other than those referred to elsewhere in this Policy Statement as being applicable to all employees.

6.5. Unless otherwise determined on appointment, the salary for the Head of Paid Service is subject to annual review by the Personnel Committee (on the anniversary of the date of appointment), in accordance with the following principles:

- That any salary progression is subject to a satisfactory annual appraisal;
- That the salary / scale is uplifted by the pay award nationally agreed for the JNC for Chief Executives;
- That these principles take effect on the anniversary of the date of appointment without need for Personnel Committee decision, unless an exception report is initiated by the Leader of the Council.

6.6. **Executive Directors, Directors and Deputy/Assistant Directors:** These senior staff are paid on locally determined incremental Reading Senior Management / Corporate Director (RSM / CD) salary scales. These scales were established and approved by Personnel Committee following an independent review of senior salaries carried out by the Hay Group in 2001/2, using relevant regional public sector salary benchmarks. These scales are uplifted by the pay award nationally agreed (if any) for the JNC for Chief Officers. Exceptionally, the JNC pay award is not implemented for the senior pay group in times of severe budget challenge.

6.7. No other payments or benefits are payable to these senior staff (e.g., bonus, performance related pay, health insurance, car lease) other than those referred to elsewhere in this Policy Statement as being applicable to all employees.

## **7. POLICY ON REMUNERATING THE LOWEST PAID IN THE WORKFORCE**

- 7.1. This Policy Statement reconfirms the Council's long-standing Low Pay Policy. The grading structure allows for all staff, including apprentices, to be paid an hourly rate no lower than the Living Wage Foundation rate. The new rate of £10.42 per hour applied at the Council from 1 April 2023 rising to £10.90 from 1 April 2024.
- 7.2. Reading Borough Council is also committed to the development and publication of a local policy to promote and require, to the extent permitted by law, the application of the Council's low pay policy to staff working for the Council's contractors in addition to the application of TUPE. The Council became an accredited Living Wage Employer in 2015.

## **8. PAY MULTIPLES**

- 8.1. The highest paid salary in this authority is £177,942.37 which is the top of the annual salary range paid to the Head of Paid Service. The current ratio between the lowest paid employee (scp 3, £22,737 per annum as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023) and the highest paid employee (using full-time equivalent rates) is 1:7.82. This ratio is with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. The Council will work to maintain a ratio of no more than 1:10 between the lowest paid and the highest paid.
- 8.2. This authority does not have a policy on maintaining or reaching a specific highest / **median** 'pay multiple', however the authority is conscious of the need to ensure that the salary of the highest paid employee is not excessive and is consistent with the needs of the authority as expressed in this Policy Statement. The authority's approach to the payment of other staff is to pay that which the authority needs to pay to recruit and retain staff with the skills, knowledge, experience, abilities, and qualities needed for the post in question at the relevant time, and to ensure that the authority meets any contractual requirements for staff including the application of any local or national collective agreements, or authority decisions regarding pay. The median salary paid by the Council is £33,945. The pay multiple between the highest and median salary is 1: 5.24.
- 8.3. Pay multiples will be monitored each year within the Pay Policy Statement and will be benchmarked against comparable authorities as others' pay policy statements are published.
- 8.4. In terms of overall remuneration packages, the Council's policy is to differentiate by setting different levels of basic pay to reflect differences in responsibilities (job evaluation) but not to differentiate on other allowances, benefits and payments it makes.

## **9. PAY AND GRADING STRUCTURE**

- 9.1. The Council uses established formal job evaluation procedures to identify the relative worth of jobs within the council (including the senior pay group), and to allocate jobs to the appropriate pay grade.
- 9.2. For the senior pay group (RSM / BCD Grades) RBC uses the Hay job evaluation scheme, for other jobs we use the national NJC for Local Government Employees JE scheme.
- 9.3. The NJC Job Evaluation Scheme, which is recognised by employers and trades unions nationally, allows for robust measurement against set criteria resulting in fair and objective evaluations and satisfies equal pay requirements
- 9.4. Pay grades are shown at Annex F.

## **10. PAY PROFILE**

- 10.1. **Annex D** shows employees at 1 April 2023 by salary band and then by gender, ethnic origin and disability.
- 10.2. The numbers of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees and disabled employees are shown as a proportion of employees who have made a positive declaration.
- 10.3. The percentage of women in higher than men across all salary bands except for apprentice. About 61.19% of the Council's workforce are women.
- 10.4. The percentage of employees from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds is highest in apprentices at 45%. The percentage of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees in the workforce is 17.31% (if employees who have not made a positive declaration are excluded). This is an increase from April 2022 when it was 17.25%.
- 10.5. The number of employees who have declared a disability across salary bands ranges between 0% in RG10 and 5.72% in RG4. The percentage of employees who have declared a disability in the workforce is 4.20% (if employees who have not made a positive declaration are excluded). This is a slight increase from April 2022 when it was 3.99%.

## **11. PAY PROGRESSION**

- 11.1. Under the Council's Performance Related Progression Scheme the award of an annual increment is dependent upon an employee's achievement of performance targets and competency objectives. The scheme also links incremental progression with whether performance is improving or declining. No increment can be awarded if an employee is subject to formal disciplinary or capability (poor performance) procedures.
- 11.2. The following principles apply to pay progression for all RBC staff:
  - 'Gateways' will be established 2 or 3 increments from the top of each grade depending on its length. Progression within a grade beyond the gateway will be for wider responsibility which meets agreed competency levels, based on job evaluation (JE) factor levels;
  - Progression up to the gateway within the grade will be subject to a satisfactory assessment of performance and contribution based on management evidence throughout the year;
  - Progression between grades within career grades will be dependent on meeting competencies at the next grade level;
  - On progression matters, there will be one appeal level above the approving manager (i.e., designated officer or Assistant Director);
  - Regular 1-1s and annual reviews are fundamental to employee progression.
- 11.3. Accelerated incremental progression within the evaluated grade is only possible where there is objective evidence of outstanding performance or there is evidence that demonstrates inequality of pay level with comparable peers. Any such increase must be approved by the relevant Executive Director or Deputy Chief Executive and reasons provided to HR.
- 11.4. In addition to 11.3, accelerated increments would be paid for the progression within an existing career grade structure where skills and competencies (including

academic attainment) have been achieved which meet predetermined career grade progression criteria.

- 11.5. The acceleration of an employee through the gateway of their existing grade, needs to be evidenced and certified by the Service Manager as meeting pre-existing and defined career progression criteria and approved by the relevant Executive Director or Deputy Chief Executive. Copies of the evidence to support such a decision need to be placed on the employee's personal file held by HR.
- 11.6. Any career grade progression is conditional upon budget provision being available.
- 11.7. Employees successfully moving posts within the Council will be subject to the principle of annual incremental progression assessment. They will no longer receive an automatic increment 6 months after being in their new post.

## **12. REMUNERATION ON APPOINTMENT AND PROMOTION**

- 12.1. The Council's policy is to not pay any form of "signing on" fee or incentive payment when recruiting, except where there are significant recruitment difficulties that jeopardise service delivery, as identified and approved by CMT.
- 12.2. The starting pay point for all new employees (including internally appointed or promoted employees) should normally be the first point of the appropriate grade. There may be circumstances (e.g., offers from other employers, market forces) where it is necessary to make an offer that is at a higher point within the grade. The authority to make an offer higher than the starting point lies with the relevant Director or Deputy/Assistant Director, who must also consider the equality of such an exception and must inform the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development of the reason for the exception. This policy applies to all staff.
- 12.3. At the point of any assimilation to a new grade, employees moving to a higher grade will be placed at the bottom of that new grade.

## **13. OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE REMUNERATION PACKAGE**

- 13.1. **Pension:** Pension provision is an important part of the remuneration package. All employees may join the local government pension scheme (or the Teachers' Pension Scheme for relevant staff) and are enrolled automatically unless they wish to opt out. The scheme is a statutory scheme with contributions from employees and from employers. The current employer contribution rate for Reading Borough Council is 16.2%. This rate is reviewed and set every three years by the actuary. Reading Borough Council is part of the Berkshire scheme, administered by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. Neither the scheme nor the Council adopt different policies with regard to benefits for any category of employee: the same terms apply to the Chief Executive, chief officers and other staff.
- 13.2. **Election / Returning Officer Fees:** The Returning Officer is an officer of the Borough Council who is appointed under the Representation of the People Act 1983. Whilst appointed by the Borough Council, the role of the Returning Officer is one which involves and incurs personal responsibility and accountability and is statutorily separate from their duties as an employee of the Borough Council. As Returning Officer, they are paid a separate allowance for each election for which they are responsible.
- 13.3. Separate fees will be paid to the Returning Officer for undertaking Returning Officer duties. These fees will be paid in line with the amount recommended by the Government or Electoral Commission for Parliamentary and European elections and referendums, or as set out in the Council's budget estimates for local elections.

13.4. The Returning Officer may appoint one or more Deputy Returning Officers and pay a fee to them for undertaking the duties that the Returning Officer allocates to them.

13.5. **Market Supplements:** The Council may pay a market supplement, in addition to base salary, in order to recruit or retain staff with special skills experience or knowledge. Market supplements are applied, reviewed, and withdrawn in accordance with the Council's market supplement policy, which is published on the Council's website. The Head of Paid Service has delegated authority to determine posts for which salary supplements will be paid, and the amount and duration of the supplement, in consultation with the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development and the relevant Executive Director.

13.6. **Honorarium and other temporary additional payments:**

Under the Council's scheme of delegation to officers,, Executive Directors, Directors and Deputy/Assistant Directors are authorised to approve additional payments in the circumstances described below:

(a) **'Acting-up'** - The employee will either receive the 'rate for the job' that they are covering if they are undertaking the full range of duties and responsibilities. As a minimum, this means that they will be paid at the first spinal column point of the grade of the post that they are acting up into. If the employee is not undertaking the full range of duties of a higher graded post, then an acting up allowance will be paid. The allowance will be a percentage of the difference between the first point on the grade of the post being covered and the employee's current salary equivalent to the percentage proportion of higher responsibility being undertaken.

(b) **Honorarium payments** - Where an employee is undertaking work on a project or discrete piece of work which would fall outside of the normal range of duties expected for their particular post, then the employee shall be eligible for an honorarium payment for the duration of the project.

The level of payment made should be determined with regard to the level of responsibilities being undertaken and this should be determined with regard to the Council's Job Evaluation Scheme. All such payments must be approved by the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development to ensure proper application of the Council's policy.

The employee will be paid an amount appropriate to the proportion of their time being spent working at this higher level on a monthly basis for the duration of the project / programme.

## 14. NON-PAY ELEMENTS AND BENEFITS

14.1. **Annual Leave:** The following annual leave entitlements apply

- The minimum annual leave allowance (on appointment) will be 25 days per year
- There will be an additional 5 days at 5 years continuous local government service (granted from anniversary of start date).
- There will be an additional 3 days at 10 years Reading Borough Council service (granted from following 1 April).
- The minimum annual leave allowance (on appointment) will be 30 days per year for the senior pay group
- The maximum annual leave allowance **for all staff** will be 33 days.

- 14.2. **Salary Sacrifice Schemes / Employee discount schemes:** All employees can access salary sacrifice schemes for childcare vouchers, Kennet Day Nursery, Added Voluntary Contributions (AVCs), bicycle purchase, and lease cars. There are also non-subsidised employee discount schemes.
- 14.3. **Flexible Working:** All employees can access flexible working arrangements from their first day of employment subject always to the needs of the service.
- 14.4. **Car Allowances / Expenses:** The Council will meet or reimburse authorised travel, subsistence and (exceptionally) accommodation costs for attendance at necessary and approved meetings and training events. The Council does not regard such costs as remuneration but as non-pay operational costs. This policy is applied consistently to the Head of Paid Service, chief officers, and other employees. The locally determined car allowance reimbursement rate for necessary and approved work-related travel is 45p per mile for **all authorised car users**. Employees with a salary sacrifice lease car undertaking approved work-related travel receive the relevant HMRC advisory rate depending on the engine size of their vehicle. No other car allowance (e.g., monthly lump sum) is payable to any employee.

## 15. TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

- 15.1. Under the Council's Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the decision to effect dismissal or retirement on the grounds of redundancy or efficiency of the service is a decision of Personnel Committee for posts at Deputy/Assistant Director and above. The decision is delegated to the relevant Executive Director for all posts below this level.
- 15.2. However, the final decision as to the compensation to be paid as a result of such dismissal decisions, **for all posts**, is a decision of Personnel Committee. Personnel Committee also need to approve any employee requests for early retirement which require employer consent and entail a cost to the Council.
- 15.3. Each of the proposals presented to the Committee must first be considered and agreed by an officer panel comprising the Director of Finance (S151 Officer), Monitoring Officer and the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development. This panel is established to monitor applications on the basis of consistency, legality and financial prudence. In terms of financial prudence, each case must demonstrate a 'payback period' within one year, or, exceptionally, two years in 'efficiency of the service' cases if sufficient service and efficiency benefits to the Council can be demonstrated. This Panel also assesses associated questions e.g., exercise of exceptional discretion, reasonableness of alternative employment in redundancy cases etc.
- 15.4. Where the compensation to be paid exceeds £100,000 in total, then Council will be offered an opportunity to vote on the matter prior to approval.
- 15.5. **Discretionary Enhancement of Redundancy Payments:** The policy for the award of any discretionary payments is the same for all staff regardless of their Pay level. Redundancy payments under regulation 5 of the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England & Wales) Regulations 2006 provide discretion to pay up to an overall lump sum of 2 times the statutory redundancy payment formula based on actual weeks' pay, capped at 52 weeks' pay (may be adjusted following consultation). This is payable to employees made redundant with 2 or more years continuous service regardless of their age. Discretionary compensation can be reduced in cases

where an offer of suitable alternative employment is deemed to have been unreasonably refused.

- 15.6 **Special Severance Payments (SSPs):** On 12 May 2022, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) issued statutory guidance, which applies to “best value authorities”, when making Special Severance Payments (SSPs) from that date. The Council is already complying with most elements of the new guidance. The key change is to ensure that in future, SSPs above £20,000 but below £100,000 are personally approved and signed off by the Head of Paid Service, with a clear record of the Leader’s approval and that of any others who have signed off the payment. At the Council, this would always include the relevant Executive Director, the Section 151 Officer, and the Monitoring Officer, who will also continue to sign off SSP business cases below £20,000.
- 15.7 In exceptional circumstances, and specifically to settle a claim or potential dispute, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services can agree payment of a termination settlement sum (subject to a decision of Personnel Committee if outside the normal framework for termination payments as set out in this section)
- 15.8 **Policy on Re-Employment:** The policy for re-employment following redundancy/efficiency termination is the same for all staff regardless of their pay level. Employees in receipt of compensation payment for loss of employment which has had discretionary enhancements applied to it are not permitted to take up employment with Reading Borough Council within 12 months of ending their current employment.
- 15.9 **Flexible Retirement:** in accordance with Superannuation Regulations, employees can, on or after age 55 and with Council consent, reduce their hours of work or the grade in which they are employed and draw (some or all of) their accrued pension benefits whilst continuing in employment and building up further benefits in the scheme – enabling them to ease into retirement. Employees must be 55 or over and have 3 or more months’ membership in the LGPS (including transferred rights) in order to be eligible to make a flexible retirement request following a reduction in hours or grade. Pension benefits will normally be reduced if paid before age 65. This Policy is open to all employees, subject to financial requirements being met (net savings to the Council and a payback period of no more than 2 years).

## 16. PENSION DISCRETIONS

- 16.1 The Council’s current Policy Statement on the use of discretions under the relevant Superannuation Regulations is attached as **Annex E**.

## 17. PAY PROTECTION

- 17.1 The Council’s Pay Protection Policy is approved by the Personnel Committee as part of the Employment Stability Agreement. The Policy provides a mechanism for assisting employees to adjust to a reduction in pay as a result of organisational change.

## 18. PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION ON THE REMUNERATION OF STAFF

- 18.1 This Pay Policy Statement will be published on the Council’s website. In addition, details of all posts paid above £50,000 will be published.



## **19. AMENDMENTS TO THE POLICY**

19.1 As the Policy covers the period April 2023 to the end of March 2024, amendments may need to be made to the Policy throughout the relevant period. As the Localism Act 2011 requires that any amendments are approved by the Council by resolution, proposed amendments will be reported to Personnel Committee for recommendation to the Council.

## **20. POLICY FOR FUTURE YEARS**

20.1 This Policy Statement will be reviewed each year and will be presented to Council each year for consideration in order to ensure that a policy is in place for the authority prior to the start of each financial year.

## PAY POLICY STATEMENT – ANNEX A

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency indicates that local authorities should publish the following data **concerning staff**:

- Salaries, job descriptions, responsibilities, budgets (including overall salary cost of staff reporting), and numbers of staff for all staff in receipt of a salary of more than £50,000
- An organisational chart of the staff structure of the authority including salary bands and details of currently vacant posts
- The 'pay multiple' – the ratio between the highest paid salary and the median average salary of the whole authority workforce

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations (2011) require that the following data is included in the authority's accounts:

- Numbers of employees with a salary above £50k per annum (pro-rata for part-time staff) in multiples of £5k
- Job title, remuneration and employer pension contributions for senior officers. Senior officers are defined as Head of Paid Service, Statutory Chief Officers and Non-Statutory Chief Officers by reference to Section 2 of the 1989 Local Government & Housing Act.
- Names of employees paid over £150k per annum

For the above remuneration is to include:

- Salary, fees or allowances for the current and previous year
- Bonuses paid or receivable for the current and previous year
- Expenses paid in the previous year
- Compensation for loss of employment paid to or receivable, or payments made in connection with loss of employment
- Total estimated value of non-cash benefits that are emoluments of the person

For the above pension contributions to include:

- The amount driven by the authority's set employer contribution rate
- Employer costs incurred relating to any increased membership or award of additional pension

**GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PAY AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

*[Note: these provisions are subject to amendment as the source documents are amended]*

**1.1. Constitution of Reading Borough Council**

**Part 3 Responsibility for Council Functions :**

<b>Power to appoint staff, and to determine the terms and conditions on which they hold office (including procedures for dismissal)</b>	Section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972.	Personnel Committee General Delegation to Deputy Chief Executive, Executive Directors, Directors and Deputy/Assistant Directors
<b>Power to appoint officers for particular purposes (appointment of “proper officers”)</b>	Section 270(3) of the Local Government Act 1972	Personnel Committee
<b>Duty to designate officer as head of the authority’s paid service, and deputy head of paid service and to provide staff, etc</b>	Section 4(1) of the Local Government & Housing At 1989 (c. 42)	Council

1.2. The **Officer Employment Procedure Rules** are in Part 4 of the Constitution.

**SUMMARY OF CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

**Chief Executive**

The terms and conditions for the Head of Paid Service are as set out by the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Chief Executives, and as amended locally. Pay is determined locally.

**Executive Directors**

The terms and conditions for Executive and Executive Directors are in accordance with the Scheme of Conditions of Service agreed by the National Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Officers, and as amended locally. Pay is determined locally.

**Directors and Deputy/Assistant Directors (third tier – i.e. reporting directly to the Head of Paid Service or an Executive Director)**

The terms and conditions for Directors and Deputy/Assistant Directors are as set out by the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Chief Officers, and as amended locally. Pay is determined locally.

**NJC Staff**

The Terms and conditions for NJC staff are determined by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services, and as amended locally.

**Craft Employees**

The Terms and conditions for NJC staff are determined by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Craft and Associated Employees, and as amended locally.

**Teachers**

The terms and conditions for Teachers are as set out in the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document.

**Soulbury Staff**

The Soulbury Committee determines the national salary framework for Soulbury staff and terms and conditions, as amended locally.

**Youth Workers**

The terms and conditions for Youth Workers are as determined by the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Youth and Community Workers, and as amended locally.

**Coroners**

The terms and conditions for Coroners are set by the Joint Negotiating Committee for Coroners, and as amended locally.

PAY POLICY STATEMENT – ANNEX D

Council Employees in Salary Bands as at 01.04.2023

Grade Bandings		Total Staff	Women		BAME			Disability		
			No	%	No	ND	%	No	ND	%
App	Up to 22,737	20	7	35.00%	9	1	45.00%	1	17	5.00%
RG2	23,500	72	50	69.44%	23	7	31.94%	1	27	1.39%
RG3	25,979	209	139	66.51%	32	21	15.31%	11	84	5.26%
RG4	31,364	472	278	58.90%	88	17	18.64%	27	116	5.72%
RG5	36,648	320	198	61.88%	48	9	15.00%	11	65	3.44%
RG6	41,418	200	112	56.00%	33	6	16.50%	10	51	5.00%
RG7	47,420	179	117	65.36%	22	12	12.29%	6	41	3.35%
RG8	53,630	93	58	62.37%	17	6	18.28%	1	29	1.08%
RG9	60,004	67	42	62.69%	9	2	13.43%	3	15	4.48%
RG10	64,333	34	23	67.65%	7	2	20.59%	0	8	0.00%
RSM+		50	26	52.00%	9	7	18.00%	1	18	2.00%
		<b>1716</b>	1050	61.19%	<b>297</b>	<b>90</b>	17.31%	<b>72</b>	<b>475</b>	4.20%

ND = Not Disclosed

Percentages are based on the proportion of employees in each band who have made a positive declaration

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME REGULATIONS 2013  
STATEMENT OF POLICY ABOUT EXERCISE OF DISCRETIONARY FUNCTIONS  
SCHEME EMPLOYER DECLARATION**

The Scheme employer known as **Reading Borough Council** ('the Council') has prepared this written statement of policy in relation to its exercise of certain discretionary functions available under the Local Pension Scheme Regulations 2013. The Scheme employer declares that it will keep this statement under review and publish the statement (and any amendments made thereto) in a place that is easily accessible to all of its eligible Scheme employees and that it will provide to the administering authority the most up to date version of the statement at all times.

**PART A - Formulation of COMPULSORY policy in accordance with Regulation 60 of the  
Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013**

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**Regulation 16 – Additional Pension Contributions**

The Scheme employer may resolve to fund in whole or in part any arrangement entered into by an active scheme member to pay additional pension contributions by way of regular contributions in accordance with **Regulation 16(2)(e)**, or by way of a lump sum in accordance with **Regulation 16(4)(d)**.

The Scheme employer may enter into an APC contract with a Scheme member who is contributing to the MAIN section of the Scheme in order to purchase additional pension of not more than the additional pension limit (£6,500 from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 subject to annual increase in line with the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971).

The amount of additional contribution to be paid is determined by reference to actuarial guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Consideration needs to be given to the circumstances under which the Scheme employer may wish to use their discretion to fund in whole or in part an employee's Additional Pension Contributions.

**Scheme Employer's policy concerning the whole or part funding of an active member's additional pension contributions**

**The Council has resolved not to adopt this discretion at this time.**

**Regulation 30(6) – Flexible Retirement**

An active member who has attained the age of 55 or over and who with the agreement of their employer reduces their working hours or grade of employment may, with the further consent of their employer, elect to receive immediate payment of all or part of the retirement pension to which they would be entitled in respect of that employment as if that member were no longer an employee in local government service on the date of the

reduction in hours or grade (*adjusted by the amount shown as appropriate in actuarial guidance issued by the Secretary of State - separate policy required under Regulation 30(8)*).

As part of the policy making decision the Scheme employer must consider whether, in addition to the benefits the member may have accrued prior to 1 April 2008 (which the member must draw), to permit the member to choose to draw all, part or none of the pension benefits they built up after 31 March 2008 and before 1 April 2014 and all, part or none of the pension benefits they built up after 1 April 2014.

Due consideration must be given to the financial implications of allowing an employee to draw all or part of their pension benefits earlier than their normal retirement age.

### **Scheme Employer's policy concerning flexible retirement**

The Council has resolved that it will give such an opportunity to its employees. Flexible Retirement under this discretion will be subject to an agreed policy framework. The Council has resolved that waiving actuarial reduction in full or in part will only be considered where there will be a sufficient financial or other benefit to the authority. An exception to this requirement is the employee's exceptionally difficult personal or domestic circumstances

### **Regulation 30(8) – Waiving of Actuarial Reduction**

Where a Scheme employer's policy under regulation 30(6) (flexible retirement) is to consent to the immediate release of benefits in respect of an active member who is aged 55 or over, those benefits must be adjusted by an amount shown as appropriate in actuarial guidance issued by the Secretary of State (commonly referred to as actuarial reduction or early payment reduction).

A Scheme employer (or former employer as the case may be) may agree to waive in whole or in part and at their own cost, any actuarial reduction that may be required by the Scheme Regulations.

Due consideration must be given to the financial implications of agreeing to waive in whole or in part any actuarial reduction.

### **Scheme Employer's policy concerning the waiving of actuarial reduction**

That the Council does not consent to waive any actuarial reduction for staff electing to retire at age 55 or over, unless there is a sufficient financial or other benefit to the Council. An exception to this requirement is the employee's exceptionally difficult personal or domestic circumstances.

### **Regulation 31 – Award of Additional Pension**

A Scheme employer may resolve to award

- (a) an active member, or

(b) a member who was an active member but dismissed by reason of redundancy, or business efficiency, or whose employment was terminated by mutual consent on grounds of business efficiency,

additional annual pension of, in total (including any additional pension purchased by the Scheme employer under Regulation 16), not more than the additional pension limit (£6,500 from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 subject to annual increase in line with the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971).

Any additional pension awarded is payable from the same date as any pension payable under other provisions of the Scheme Regulations from the account to which the additional pension is attached.

In the case of a member falling within sub-paragraph (b) above, the resolution to award additional pension must be made within 6 months of the date that the member's employment ended.

### **Scheme Employer's policy concerning the award of additional pension**

**The Council has resolved not to adopt this discretion at this time**

#### **Schedule 2 - paragraphs 2 and 3**

Where a scheme member retires or leaves employment and elects to draw their benefits at or after the age of 55 and before the age of 60 those benefits will be actuarially reduced unless their Scheme employer agrees to meet the full or part cost of those reductions as a result of the member otherwise being protected under the 85-year rule as set out in previous Regulations.

So as to avoid the member suffering the full reduction to their benefits the Scheme employer can 'switch on' the 85-year rule protections thereby allowing the member to receive fully or partly unreduced benefits but subject to the Scheme employer paying a strain (capital) cost to the Pension Fund

### **Scheme Employer's policy concerning the 'switching on of the 85-year rule**

That the Council does not consent to switch on the 85-year rule for staff electing to retire at age 55 unless there is a sufficient financial or other benefit to the Council. An exception to this requirement may be the employee's exceptionally difficult personal or domestic circumstances.

## **PART B - Formulation of RECOMMENDED policy in accordance with the**

### **Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013**

#### **Regulation 9(1) & (3) - Contributions**

Where an active member changes employment or there is a material change which affects the member's pensionable pay during the course of a financial year, the Scheme employer may determine that a contribution rate from a different band (as set out in Regulation 9(2)) should be applied.



Where the Scheme employer makes such a determination it shall inform the member of the revised contribution rate and the date from which it is to be applied.

**Scheme Employer's policy concerning the re-determination of active members' contribution bandings at any date other than 1<sup>st</sup> April**

The Council shall re-determine contribution rates on 1<sup>st</sup> April each year only. Staff joining the scheme shall be placed in a contribution band consistent with their contracted, actual pay in the first instance except for casual staff who shall initially be placed on the lowest contribution band. The banding placement for individual staff shall be re-determined with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April only in subsequent years following initial placement and adjusted as necessary in the light of the pensionable pay actually earned in the previous year (using a '12 month equivalent' calculation for staff who have not worked a full year).

**Regulation 17(1) - Additional Voluntary Contributions**

An active member may enter into arrangements to pay additional voluntary contributions (AVCs) or to contribute to a shared cost additional voluntary contribution arrangement (SCAVCs) in respect of an employment. The arrangement must be a scheme established between the appropriate administering authority and a body approved for the purposes of the Finance Act 2004, registered in accordance with that Act and administered in accordance with the Pensions Act 2004.

The Scheme employer needs to determine whether or not it will make contributions to such an arrangement on behalf of its active members

**Scheme Employer's policy concerning payment of Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contributions**

The Council will pay SCAVC contributions where an employee has elected to pay AVCs by salary sacrifice. The amount of these employer SCAVC contributions will not exceed the amount of salary sacrificed by the employee. This is a Council discretion which is subject to the employee meeting the Council's conditions for acceptance into the salary sacrifice shared cost AVC scheme and may be withdrawn or changed at any time.

**Regulation 22 - Merging of Deferred Member Pension Accounts with Active Member Pension Accounts**

A deferred member's pension account is automatically aggregated with their active member's pension account unless the member elects within the first 12 months of the new active member's pension account being opened to retain their deferred member's pension account.

A Scheme employer can, at their discretion, extend the 12-month election period.

**Scheme Employer's policy concerning merging of Deferred Member Pension Accounts with Active Member Pension Accounts**

**The Council has resolved not to extend the time limit for election beyond 12 months.**

#### **Regulation 100(6) - Inward Transfers of Pension Rights**

A request from an active member to transfer former pension rights from a previous arrangement into the Local Government Pension Scheme as a result of their employment with a Scheme employer must be made in writing to the administering authority and the Scheme employer before the expiry of the period of 12 months beginning with the date on which the employee first became an active member in an employment (or such longer period as the Scheme employer and administering authority may allow).

#### **Scheme Employer's policy concerning the extension of the 12-month transfer application period**

**The Council has resolved not to extend the time limit for election beyond 12 months.**

#### **Regulation 21(5) - Assumed Pensionable Pay**

A Scheme employer needs to determine whether or not to include in the calculation of assumed pensionable pay, any 'regular lump sum payment' received by a Scheme member in the 12 months preceding the date that gave rise to the need for an assumed pensionable pay figure to be calculated.

#### **Scheme Employer's policy concerning inclusion of 'regular lump sum payments' in assumed pensionable pay calculations**

**That the Council does include in such calculations an element for 'regular lump sum payment' where it is fair, equitable and justifiable to do so.**

#### **Regulation 74 - Applications for Adjudication of Disagreements**

Each Scheme employer must appoint a person ("the adjudicator") to consider applications from any person whose rights or liabilities under the Scheme are affected by:

- (a) a decision under regulation 72 (first instance decisions); or
- (b) any other act or omission by a Scheme employer or administering authority,

and to make a decision on such applications.

Responsibility for determinations under this first stage of the Internal Disputes Resolution Procedure (IDRP) rests with "the adjudicator" as named below by the Scheme employer:

**Name:** Michael Graham  
**Job Title:** Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services  
**Address:** Civic Centre, Reading, Tel No:0118 9373470  
**Email:** michael.graham@reading.gov.uk

## **SCHEME EMPLOYER CONFIRMATION**

It is understood that the discretions contained within this statement of policy are applicable to all eligible members of the Scheme. The Scheme rules allow for a revised statement to be issued at least one month in advance of the date that any new policy takes effect. The revised statement must be sent to the administering authority and the employer must publish its statement as revised in a place that is accessible to all of its eligible scheme members.

The policies made above:

Have regard to the extent to which the exercise of the discretions could lead to a serious loss of confidence in the public service;

Will not be used for any ulterior motive;

Will be exercised reasonably;

Will only be used when there is a real and substantial future benefit to the employer for incurring the extra costs that may arise;

Will be duly recorded when applied.

**Name in Block Capitals:** JACQUELINE YATES

**Position:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**Scheme Employer's Name:** READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

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**New NJC Pay Structure - April 2023**

SCP	Per Annum	Per Hour	Current Grades		SCP
53	64333	£ 33.35		RG10	53
52	62831	£ 32.57			52
51	61329	£ 31.79			51
50	60004	£ 31.10	RG9		50
49	58679	£ 30.41			49
48	57354	£ 29.73			48
47	56029	£ 29.04			47
46	54706	£ 28.36			46
45	53630	£ 27.80	RG8		45
44	52579	£ 27.25			44
43	51515	£ 26.70			43
42	50512	£ 26.18			42
41	49498	£ 25.66			41
40	48474	£ 25.13			40
39	47420	£ 24.58	RG7		39
38	46464	£ 24.08			38
37	45441	£ 23.55			37
36	44428	£ 23.03			36
35	43421	£ 22.51			35
34	42403	£ 21.98			34
33	41418	£ 21.47	RG6		33
32	40221	£ 20.85			32
31	39186	£ 20.31			31
30	38223	£ 19.81			30
29	37336	£ 19.35			29
28	36648	£ 19.00	RG5		28
27	35745	£ 18.53			27
26	34834	£ 18.06			26
25	33945	£ 17.59			25
24	33024	£ 17.12			24
23	32076	£ 16.63			23
22	31364	£ 16.26	RG4		22
21		£ -			21
20	30296	£ 15.70			20
19	29777	£ 15.43			19
18		£ -			18
17	28770	£ 14.91			17
16		£ -			16
15	27803	£ 14.41			15
14	27334	£ 14.17			14
13		£ -			13
12	26421	£ 13.69			12
11	25979	£ 13.47	RG3		11
10		£ -			10
9	25119	£ 13.02			9
8	24702	£ 12.80			8
7	24294	£ 12.59			7
6	23893	£ 12.38			6
5	23500	£ 12.18		RG2	5
4	23114	£ 11.98			4
3	22737	£ 11.79	RG1		3
2	22366	£ 11.59			2
1	Deleted from 01/04/23				1

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## Trade Pay Scales 1/4/23

			SCP	ANNUAL	P.H.
	End of Gas & Elec Grade (point 25)	Multi Skilled Plus 5 Years Experience	25	£41,418	£21.47
		Multi Skilled Plus 4 Years Experience	24	£40,221	£20.85
<b>TP4</b> Multi Skilled GRADE (Point 20 to 25 Inclusive)	Continuation of Gas / Elec Trade	BAR Multi Skilled Plus 3 Years Experience	23	£39,186	£20.31
	End of Kitchen Fitter Grade (point 22)	Multi Skilled Plus 2 Years Experience	22	£38,223	£19.81
End of Skilled Trade Grade  (Continuation of Skilled Trade - Points 18 to 20 inclusive)	End of Multi Skilled Trade Grade (point 21) (Exc Gas & Elec)	Proven Multi Skilled can do all that is required over a number of key trades & 1 years experience	21	£37,336	£19.35
		Proven Multi Skilled & Relevant Experience	20	£36,648	£19.00
		Qualification & 5 years - Proven	19	£35,745	£18.53
		Qualification & 4 years - Proven	18	£34,834	£18.06
End of Operative Grade <b>TP3</b> Operatives / Post Apprenticeship  (Points 14 to 17 Inclusive)		BAR General Trade Operative 3 year Experience	17	£33,945	£17.59
		General Trade Operative 2 year Experience	16	£33,024	£17.12
		General Trade Operative 1 year Experience	15	£32,076	£16.63
	Top of Semi Skilled with Ability to Lead	Labourer Semi Skilled 6 yr Exp Ability to lead + 2 yr	14	£31,003	£16.07
		Labourer Semi Skilled 6 yr Exp Ability to lead + 1 yr	13	£30,144	£15.62
		Labourer Semi Skilled 5 yr Exp Ability to lead	12	£29,300	£15.19
Top of Semi Skilled Labourer Grade	<b>TP2</b> (Points 7 - 14 Inc)  Semi Skilled Labourers	BAR Labourer Semi Skilled 4 year Exp	11	£28,495	£14.77
		Labourer Semi Skilled 3 year Exp	10	£27,738	£14.38
		Labourer Semi Skilled 2 year Exp	9	£26,983	£13.99
		Labourer Semi Skilled 1 year Exp	8	£26,323	£13.64
		Labourer Semi Skilled	7	£25,755	£13.35
<b>TP1</b> (Points 1 to 7 Inclusive)		Labourer 6 Years Exp	6	£24,984	£12.95
		Labourer 5 Years Exp	5	£24,240	£12.56
Labourers		BAR Labourer 3 Years Exp	4	£23,505	£12.18
		Labourer 2 Years Exp	3	£23,126	£11.99
		Labourer 1 Years Exp	2	£22,678	£11.75
		Labourer Appointment	1	£22,238	£11.53

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JNC READING SENIOR MANAGEMENT - April 2023								
SCP	Per Annum	Per Hour	GRADE				SCP	
1	£59,515	£30.85	RSM D				1	
2	£60,973	£31.60					2	
3	£62,430	£32.36					3	
4	£63,887	£33.11					4	
5	£65,349	£33.87					5	
6	£66,805	£34.63		RSM C			6	
7	£68,261	£35.38						7
8	£69,720	£36.14						8
9	£71,178	£36.89						9
10	£72,636	£37.65					10	
11	£74,095	£38.41					11	
12	£75,553	£39.16					12	
13	£77,011	£39.92					13	
14	£78,470	£40.67			RSM B		14	
15	£79,926	£41.43					15	
16	£81,385	£42.18					16	
17	£82,846	£42.94					17	
18	£84,299	£43.69					18	
19	£85,763	£44.45					19	
20	£87,225	£45.21					20	
21	£88,679	£45.96				RSM A	21	
22	£90,136	£46.72						22
23	£91,598	£47.48					23	
24	£93,052	£48.23					24	
25	£94,508	£48.99					25	
26	£95,972	£49.74					26	
27	£97,426	£50.50					27	
28	£98,884	£51.25					28	
29	£100,344	£52.01					29	
30	£101,798	£52.76				30		
31	£103,255	£53.52				31		
32	£107,918	£55.94				CDIR	32	
33	£111,181	£57.63					33	
34	£114,676	£59.44					34	
35	£118,278	£61.31					35	
36	£119,429	£61.90					36	
37	£122,948	£63.73					37	
38	£126,465	£65.55					38	
39	£133,713	£69.31					39	

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**Council**

**30 January 2024**



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
*Working better with you*

<b>Title</b>	Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2024/25
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Michael Graham, AD of Legal & Democratic Services
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Jason Brock
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Not applicable, but still requires a decision
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. A motion will be moved at the meeting to recommend the Councillors' Allowances scheme as set out in Appendix B.

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, as set out in appendix A, following their meeting on 22 November 2023, in relation to the review of the current scheme of Councillors' Allowances which is in place until April 2027. The Panel will continue to review the scheme each year of the four-year term.

## 2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Remuneration Panel reviews annually the Council's scheme for Councillors' Allowances and makes recommendations for a scheme of allowances to include:
- The amount of basic allowance to be paid to all Councillors;
  - The duties in respect of which Councillors should receive a special responsibility allowance, and the amount of such an allowance;
  - Allowances for the care of children or dependants.
- 2.2. The Remuneration Panel was set up to include at least three and no more than five independent members appointed to represent stakeholders of the Council. Its current membership is:
- Mick Pollek – member with experience of the local trade union movement
  - Lady Audrey Durant – member with experience of the local voluntary sector
  - Sally Swift - member with experience of the local media
  - Jeanette Skeats – member with experience of local politics

## 3. The Proposal

- 3.1. Recommendations by the Remuneration Panel set out in Appendix A, are reflected in the updated scheme at Appendix B. The Panel considered that the Councillors' Allowances Scheme was still 'fit-for-purpose' and should continue predominantly in its current form. This would mean that the Basic Allowance (BA) and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) would continue to increase in line with the Local Government Pay Settlement (LGPS). Based on this analysis, the Panel decided not to recommend any significant changes to the scheme.
- 3.2. The Panel noted that the Councillor allowances had been uplifted by the NJC pay award (3.88% for allowances) and backdated to April 2023 and endorsed this approach.

- 3.3. The Panel recommended Councillors should be able to receive benefits available to Council staff where this is possible.

#### **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 4.1. The provision for the payment of allowances to Councillors gives local authorities the scope to set allowances schemes to suit local needs and to help ensure that Councillors are not financially disadvantaged in serving as elected Members.

#### **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

- 5.1. There are no environmental or climate implications as a result of this report.

#### **6. Community Engagement**

- 6.1. South East Employers conducts an annual survey of members' allowances that provides benchmarking data. The Panel was provided with a copy of the South-East Employers Members' Allowances Survey which shows a comparison of the level of allowances in Reading with other comparable authorities.

#### **7. Equality Implications**

- 7.1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to this decision.

#### **8. Other Relevant Considerations**

- 8.1. There are none.

#### **9. Legal Implications**

- 9.1. The Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities to set up and maintain an independent Remuneration Panel to make recommendations to the authority concerning the allowances to be paid to councillors.
- 9.2. Any decision to amend, revoke or replace an allowances scheme will have to be taken by the Authority having regard to the recommendations of the Panel.
- 9.3. The Council may not delegate this function to a Committee or to an officer. The Council has to take all decisions relating to the adoption of its Scheme of Councillors' Allowances.

#### **10. Financial Implications**

- 10.1. The 2023/24 budget for Members' Allowances is currently £630,200. It is anticipated that the budget will remain sufficient to meet the costs of the Scheme in 2024/25, subject to the number of councillors eligible for SRAs remaining similar to the current year.
- 10.2. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy includes a provision for the base budget to be increased in line with the Local Government Pay Settlement.
- 10.3. These costs will be reviewed annually as part of the Council's budget setting process.

#### **11. Timetable for Implementation**

- 11.1. Any changes to the Councillors' Allowances scheme should be effective from April 2024.

#### **12. Background Papers**

- 12.1. There are none.

#### **Appendices**

1. Appendix A - Recommendations of the Remuneration Panel
2. Appendix B – Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2024/25



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## REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL APPOINTED TO REVIEW THE ALLOWANCES PAID TO COUNCILLORS OF READING BOROUGH COUNCIL FOR 2024/25

FOR SUBMISSION TO COUNCIL ON 30 JANUARY  
2024

### Background

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 provide for the payment of Allowances to Members of the Council in connection with their work as Councillors. Before the Council can make or amend a scheme of allowances, it should consider the recommendations made in relation to it by an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP).

The Council, on 13 November 2001, set up an Independent Remuneration Panel to review annually the Council's scheme for Councillor's Allowances. The Local Government (Local Authority Members in England) Regulation 2003, stated that Independent Remuneration Panels established by local authorities should make recommendations for a scheme of allowances to include:

- The amount of basic allowance (BA) to be paid to all Councillors;
- The duties in respect of which Councillors should receive a special responsibility allowance (SRA), and the amount of such an allowance.
- Allowances for the care of children or dependants.

### The Independent Remuneration Panel

The Remuneration Panel's current membership is as follows:

- Lady Audrey Durant - member with experience of the local voluntary sector
- Sally Swift - member with experience of the local media
- Jeanette Skeats - member with experience of local politics
- Mick Pollek - member with experience of the local trade union movement

The Panel was supported by the following council officers:

- Michael Popham (Democratic Services Manager)
- Jemma Durkan (Committee Services)

### Background

In 2019/20 the Panel undertook a full review of the scheme. As part of that review, the Panel recommended that the BA and the SRAs should be increased at the beginning of each new

financial year in accordance with the Local Government Pay Settlement (LGPS). It also recommended that the carers allowance, which is available to councillors to cover the cost of looking after dependants, whilst they are undertaking approved duties on behalf of the Council, should be increased in line with the 'Real Living Wage'. The review was reported to Council on 25 June 2019 when it accepted that recommendation. The new scheme came into effect on 1 October 2019 and was reviewed in November 2022 after the expiry of its initial four-year term. The scheme was renewed for a further four years from April 2023.

Since the change in approach in 2019, the BA and SRAs have continued to be increased in line with the LGPS and allowances to cover the cost of looking after dependants have risen in line with the 'Real Living Wage' as recommended by the Panel.

### **Recommendations**

The Panel met via Microsoft Teams on 22 November 2023.

The Panel was provided with the following information in advance of the meeting:

- The previous Councillors' Allowances Scheme report, which had been considered by Council on 31 January 2023 and the extract from the Minutes of that meeting (Minute 28 refers).
- South-East Employers Members' Allowances Survey.

The Panel discussed the current scheme and considered that the existing four-year scheme, which had been introduced in 2023/24 until March 2027, was still 'fit-for-purpose' and should continue predominantly in its current form until March 2027. This would mean that BA and SRAs would continue to increase in line with the LGPS. The Panel noted that this year the LGPS had included a lump sum settlement, which had been applied to all grades. The Council had increased Councillors' Allowances by 3.88%, which was in line with the increase to other relevant allowances within the scheme. The Panel endorsed this approach for 2023/24. The Panel agreed that in the event there was a lump sum pay award in future years, it would meet to consider potential options for increasing Councillors' allowances. It was noted that the LGPS had not been agreed for 1 April 2024.





READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF REMUNERATION PANEL**

The Panel recommends that the Councillors' Allowances Scheme adopted from 1 April 2024 be as follows:

- (1) That, for 2024-25, the total sum for the payment of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances to councillors remain at the same level as set for 2023-24 at £630,200 (subject to confirmation of the Local Government Pay Settlement for 2024/25);
- (2) That, within this total sum, the provision for the payment of Basic Allowance to all councillors be set at £403,642.03 (subject to being increased in line with the Local Government Pay Settlement for 2024/25); and the Basic Allowance paid to individual councillors be set at £9,289.08 a year.
- (3) That the Special Responsibility Allowances payments be as follows:
  - (a) the amount paid to the Leader to be £20,903.55;
  - (b) the amount paid to the Deputy Leader to be £12,768.12;
  - (c) the amount paid to SRA Tier 1 to be £10,734.23;
  - (d) the amount paid to SRA Tier 2 to be £6,865.40;
  - (e) the amount paid to SRA Tier 3 to be £3,433.83;
  - (f) the amount paid to SRA Tier 4 to be £1,213.55.

No councillor shall receive more than one Special Responsibility Allowance;

- (4) That the existing categorisation of tiers should remain unchanged, as follows:
  - Tier 1 to be paid to the Lead Councillors;
  - Tier 2 to be paid to the Leader of the main opposition group and the Chairs of Licensing Applications Committee and Planning Applications Committee;
  - Tier 3 to be paid to the Chairs of Committees (except the Chair of the Appeals Committee), and Group Leaders of the other political groups;

- Tier 4 to be paid to the Vice-Chairs of Committees, the Independent Person appointed in accordance with Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 to carry out the functions specified in that Act in relation to the Members' Code of Conduct and Local Standards Committee.

(5) That in addition to the categories set out in tier 4 above, tier 4 SRA be paid to the Council's representative(s) on the Fostering Panel.

(6) That the 2024-2025 arrangements for the payment of Dependant Carers' Allowance be in line with the real living wage, as follows:

- (a) Up to £12 per hour for childcare for up to 15 hours a week
- (b) Up to £12 per hour towards the cost of a care attendant for an elderly or disabled relative (including a disabled child) for up to 15 hours a week

The person providing the care may not be a close relative defined as spouse, partner (opposite or same sex cohabitees), parents, children, brothers, sisters, grandparents and grandchildren. The paid care attendant must sign a receipt to show that they have cared for the dependant during the hours claimed for;

(7) That, subject to (9) below, the level of subsistence allowances, with the exception of overnight subsistence, remain the same as officers receive. The allowances are currently:

Subsistence

- Breakfast allowance £9.15
- Lunch allowance £12.64
- Tea allowance £5.01
- Evening meal allowance £15.65
- Overnight subsistence £82.21 a day outside London  
£93.77 a day in London or at LGA Annual Conferences

(8) That the level of travel allowances be set as the same as officers receive, as follows:

- Travel by councillor's own motor vehicle - 45 pence per mile
- Travel by councillor's own bicycle - 37 pence per mile
- Travel by councillor's own motorcycle - 40.9 pence per mile
- Public Transport - cost of the ordinary fare, cheap fare or portion of any weekly ticket;

(9) That the subsistence limits referred to in (7) above be exceeded in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer, e.g. to enable a Councillor and an officer attending a conference to stay at the same accommodation, subject to there being sufficient budget provision;

(10) That provision for Co-optees' Allowances is payable solely to non-councillor members of the Standards Committee attending meetings of the Committee or any Sub-Committee set up by the Committee as part of its process of assessing, investigating and hearing complaints about Councillors; the allowances to be paid at the daily rate equivalent of the Councillors' Basic Allowance; the Monitoring Officer to be authorised to settle the rate to be paid on each occasion;

- (11) That benefits available to Council staff also be made available to Councillors, where this was possible;
- (12) That the basic allowance and the Special Responsibility Allowances set out above be increased at the beginning of each new financial year in accordance with the Local Government Pay Settlement for the period of the scheme (ie until April 2027).

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