

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 18 NOVEMBER 2024

Present: Councillor Terry (Chair);
Councillors Leng (Vice-Chair), Barnett-Ward, Emberson, Ennis, Griffith, McEwan, Rowland, Thompson, White and Yeo

In attendance: Councillor Gittings (via Microsoft Teams)

34. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair announced that Councillor Asare had been appointed as a Director of Homes for Reading Limited replacing Councillor Eden. This appointment was made under the Monitoring Officer's delegation.

35. MINUTES

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

36. QUESTIONS

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

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Tony Page	Bath Rd/Castle Hill Active Travel Improvements	Cllr Ennis
2.	Alison May	Energy from Waste Facilities	Cllr Rowland
3.	Caroline Langdon	Littering	Cllr Rowland
4.	Caroline Langdon	Fast Food Outlets/Disposable Crockery	Cllr Rowland
5.	Caroline Langdon	Empty Units	Cllr Yeo

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr Thompson	Increases to Employer National Insurance Contributions, Living Wage and Minimum Wage	Cllr Terry
2.	Cllr White	Long-Term Empty Council Buildings	Cllr Yeo

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

37. LOCAL AUTHORITY NEW BUILD UPDATE

The Committee considered a report on the status of the Local Authority New Build (LANB) programme which had delivered 267 local authority new build homes and an additional 63

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property acquisitions, with schemes in development to deliver another 218 new homes by 2027. This would take the total LANB delivery to 548 homes, with further property acquisitions expected.

The report noted that Phase One of the Estate Improvement Project at Wensley was currently on site and expected to be fully complete in early 2025. The scheme would deliver 46 new build homes (8 x 1 bedroom flats, 10 x 2 bedroom flats, 26 x 3 bedroom houses and 2 x 4 bedroom houses), a new play park, new car parking and new roads. Bidding on the new homes had been phased and commenced for residents in August 2024.

Phase Two of the project at Wensley involved a range of maintenance and improvement works both internally and externally to the three existing tower blocks at Wensley Road. This included the refurbishment and reconfiguration of existing block entrances with new footings/foundations, drainage, and service connections. It also included bin refuse improvement works with bin chute replacement, internal refurbishment works to the ground floor with a new drying room, and installation of MVHR (Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery) systems.

Installation of MEV (Mechanical Extract Ventilation) systems would be included within each apartment with making good works as required. Work would be undertaken on the external building fabric improvement with the replacement of existing wall covering material with a high-quality, non-combustible EWI (External Wall Insulation) system. There would also be completing window removal and replacement works, glazing replacement to stair cores and replacement roof works and hard and soft landscaping works around the blocks with the formation of new cycle stores.

The report noted that the RIBA Stage 4 Technical Design, using a Pre-Construction Service Agreement (PCSA) with the appointed contractor, were finalising the tendered design and submitting the planned construction through the Building Safety Act (BSA). The submission through the Regulator was Gateway 2 of the BSA process, which was envisaged to take 12 weeks to complete. However, it was noted that the ability of the Regulator to meet demand for this service meant that this process was likely to take between 20 – 30 weeks.

The final designs were nearing completion, and the Gateway 2 submission was expected to take place in November 2024. The anticipated time for the Regulator to approve the project would impact on the eventual start date, which was looking to be June 2025 with completion in August 2026. The project remained on track to deliver within the existing budget under the Major Repairs - Existing Homes Renewal Capital Programme scheme.

The increased spend approval and budget reallocation for completion of Wensley Phase One was detailed in the exempt Part Two report and was considered with the recommendations in closed session.

Resolved –

That the report be noted and that the recommendations be considered alongside the exempt financial information in closed session.

38. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved –

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of item 39 below as it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

39. LOCAL AUTHORITY NEW BUILD UPDATE

The Committee gave further consideration to the increased spend approval and budget reallocation as referred to in Minute 37 above.

Resolved –

- (1) That the revised budget allocations within the Local Authority New Build Phase 2 – 4 Capital Programme scheme, as set out in more detail in section 9 of the associated report, and the Part 2 Confidential Annex be agreed;**
- (2) That the revised spend approvals in line with the revised budget allocations as set out in section 9 and the Part 2 Confidential Annex be approved;**
- (3) That the updates in relation to the wider Local Authority New Build (LANB) programme and Wensley Road Phase Two be noted.**

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.25 pm)