

Summons and Agenda 25 March 2025

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



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Jackie Yates
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Civic Offices, Bridge Street,
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To: All Members of the Council

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michael.popham@reading.gov.uk

17 March 2025

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 in the **Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Reading**, on **Tuesday, 25 March 2025 at 6.30 pm**, when it is proposed to transact the business specified in the Agenda enclosed herewith.

Yours faithfully

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

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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 PLAN 2025-28

19 - 58

Report by Executive Director of Resources

Motions

8. SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING - 24 JUNE 2025

Councillor Terry to move:

That the Council resolves to convene, on 24th June 2025, a special meeting for the purpose of considering a nomination for conferring the title of Honorary Alderman, in accordance with section 249 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the criteria approved by the Council on 23rd February 2022, on the following person:

- Tony Page, for having rendered eminent service on Reading Borough Council as a member for Abbey ward, including a term as Mayor of Reading and having held senior political office.

**** Access to Civic Offices** - Please note that, from 13 January 2025, the Customer Main Entrance to the Civic Offices is moving from the front of the building to the back, because of construction work for the new Central Library. If you are attending the meeting in person, please enter via the new Customer Main Entrance in Simmonds Street. (The Council is asking customers not to come down Fobney Street to access the new Customer Entrance, due to heavy construction traffic in this area, and instead to walk via the pedestrian alleyway off Bridge Street next to the “Greek Van”). See map below:



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COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 25 FEBRUARY 2025

Present: Councillor Dennis (Mayor);

Councillors Asare, Ayub, Barnett-Ward, Cresswell, Cross, Davies, Eden, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gavin, Gittings, Goss, Griffith, Hacker, Hornsby-Smith, Hoskin, Juthani, Keeping, Lanzoni, Leng, Lovelock, McCann, McElroy, McEwan, McGrother, Mitchell, Moore, Mpofu-Coles, Naz, Nikulina, O'Connell, Rowland, D Singh, R Singh, Stevens, Tarar, Terry, Thompson, White, Williams, Woodward and Yeo.

In attendance (via Microsoft Teams): Councillor Keane;

Apologies: Councillors Ballsdon, Magon and McGoldrick.

40. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Former Councillor Margaret Cook

Margaret, who was known locally as Meg Singh and was a Labour Councillor in Katesgrove Ward from 1972 until 1995, sadly passed away recently. Meg was Chair of the Housing Committee from 1986 to 1988 and went on to chair the Association of District Councils for a number of years. The ADC was eventually merged with the Association of County Councils to become the Local Government Association.

The Council stood for a minute's silence in Meg's memory.

41. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

42. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER NO 10

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.		Withdrawn	
2.	Cllr White	Cuts to Inequality Budget Impacting Community Projects	Cllr Terry
3.	Cllr McElroy	Reading's Labour Council delivers Labour Government's Austerity Agenda	Cllr Terry

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

43. CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER'S REPORT ON THE ROBUSTNESS OF THE COUNCIL'S 2025/26 BUDGET

The Director of Finance submitted a report fulfilling the requirement on him under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 as the Council's Chief Finance Officer to report on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations of the budget and the adequacy of the proposed level of financial reserves. The Council had a duty to have regard to the advice set out in the report when considering setting its 2025/26 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy for the subsequent two financial

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years. The Statement of Reserves and Balances, which provided a summary of estimated reserve movements from 31 March 2025 and 31 March 2028, were attached to the report for information.

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

Resolved –

That the Chief Finance Officer's report on the robustness of the Council's 2025/26 budget and indicative budgets for the subsequent two financial years 2026/27 and 2027/28 be noted and the opinion contained therein be taken into account in making the decisions set out in Minutes 44-47 below.

44. BUDGET; 2025/26 BUDGET & MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26 – 2027/28

Further to Minutes 46 and 61 of the Policy Committee meetings held on 18 December 2024 and 17 February 2025 respectively, the Director of Finance submitted a report on the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the three years 2025/26 – 2027/28. The report provided an update on the results of the subsequent budget engagement exercise, changes arising from the publication of the Final Local Government Finance Settlement 2025/26 as well as other changes that had arisen since the report to Policy Committee in December 2024. The following documents were attached to the report:

- The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 - 2027/28
- Summary of the Proposed General Fund Budget 2025/26 - 2027/28
- General Fund Revenue Budget by Service 2025/26 - 2027/28
- Detailed General Fund Budget Changes 2025/26 - 2027/28
- The Housing Revenue Account Proposed Budget 2025/26 - 2027/28
- The Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Proposals 2025/26
- The General Fund and HRA Capital Programmes 2025/26 - 2027/28
- The Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2025/26
- Fees and Charges Proposals from April 2025
- Equality Impact Assessment of the Budget Proposals
- Summary of the Response to the Budget Engagement
- Summary of the Residents' Survey 2024

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had published the Final Local Government Financial Settlement 2025/26 on 3rd February 2025. Most of the figures had remained the same as the Provisional Settlement (18th December 2024), however there was one change that impacted on the Council's net budget: the Employer National Insurance Contribution Grant was announced as £1.572m, which was an increase of £0.035m from what had been estimated. Allocations in respect of the Public Health Grant for 2025/26 had been announced on 7th February 2025. In 2025/26 the Council's allocation was £11.604m. As the grant was ringfenced any increase/decrease to the Council's grant allocation would be offset by a corresponding increase/decrease in expenditure. Therefore, the MTFS assumed a nil impact on the bottom line.

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The underpinning rationale of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy was to deliver a balanced and affordable 2025/26 budget, to ensure that the Council's finances were robust and sustainable over the medium term and that, in the longer term, the Council's finances would not be reliant on the unsustainable use of one-off reserves or funding. The Strategy was informed by the Council's Vision: "to help Reading realise its potential and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success", as well as its Corporate Plan priorities.

The report explained that Reading Borough Council was not immune to national issues. The 2025/26 Budget and MTFS 2025/26-2027/28 reflected the changing landscape in which Councils were now operating and was based on another one-year Local Government funding settlement from Central Government. The most significant impacts on the Budget and the MTFS included demand pressures, exacerbated by the impact of the cost of living crisis, in particular, increased placement costs in adult and children's social care services arising from increased demand, complexity and market challenges; the cost of temporary accommodation arising from increased homelessness presentations due to landlords moving out of the private rented sector and pressures on Housing Benefit resulting from the significantly increased demand in temporary accommodation and supported accommodation for which Housing Benefit subsidy was not 100% recoverable.

The Budget and MTFS assumptions included:

- a) Council Tax increases of 2.99% plus an Adult Social Care precept of 2.0% for each year 2025/26-2027/28;
- b) Delivery of £16.135m of efficiencies and increased income across 2025/26-2027/28;
- c) A net draw from earmarked reserves totalling £3.945m in 2025/26, as set out in paragraph 10.2 of the report;
- d) A housing rent increase for 2025/26 of 2.7% in line with approved Government policy of CPI + 1%;
- e) General Fund capital investment of £155.487m and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital investment of £178.261m over the 5 year period 2025/26 to 2029/30;
- f) An initial allocation of £1.500m of transformation funding for each year from 2025/26 to 2029/30 to support delivery of efficiency savings assumed within the MTFS, taking the total transformation funding to £29.229m across the whole life of the Delivery Fund.

The Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block was anticipated to be £26.503m in deficit by 31st March 2025. Further details were set out in paragraphs 2.8 to 2.11 and in Appendix 6 of the report.

This report had been prepared with reference to the following documents:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26-2027/28 Update Report agreed by Policy Committee (18th December 2024)
- Autumn Budget 2024 – HM Treasury (30th October 2024)
- Final Local Government Finance Settlement 2025/26 – MHCLG (3rd February 2025)

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- 2025/26 Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26-2027/28 Report approved by Policy Committee (17th February 2025)

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

Resolved –

That, in relation to the report on the 2025/26 budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2028, due regard be taken of the results of the budget consultation exercise (as outlined in Appendices 11 and 12 of the report) and the 2025/26 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets, Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendices 1-10 be approved, whilst noting the following:

- (a) the Council's General Fund Budget Requirement of £178.109m for 2025/26 and consequent increase in the band D Council Tax for the Council of 2.99% plus an additional 2.00% Adult Social Care Precept, representing a band D Council Tax of £2,117.52 per annum, an increase of £100.64 per annum excluding precepts from Police and Fire, as set out in paragraph 2.4 of the report;**
- (b) the proposed efficiency and invest to save savings of £7.065m and additional income of £7.277m in 2025/26 required to achieve a balanced budget for that year as set out in Appendices 2 and 3 to the report;**
- (c) the overall savings proposed within the £16.135m (£11.559m savings and efficiencies and £4.576m additional income) and three-year growth changes to service budgets of £50.190m as set out in Appendices 3 and 4 to the report;**
- (d) the budgeted net draw down from earmarked reserves in 2025/26 totalling £3.945m, as set out in paragraph 10.2 of the report;**
- (e) the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2025/26 of £57.304m as set out in Appendix 5 and the average increase of 2.7% in social dwelling rents from April 2025;**
- (f) the allocation of £117.432m Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) as set out in Appendix 6 to the report;**
- (g) the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes totalling £155.487m and £178.261m respectively over the next five years, as set out in Appendices 7a and 7b to the report;**
- (h) the Strategy for the use of flexible capital receipts to deliver future transformation and ongoing savings as set out in Appendix 8 to the report;**
- (i) the Fees and Charges set out in Appendix 9 of the report;**

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(j) the Equalities Impact Assessment as set out in Appendix 10 to the report;

A recorded vote having been required, the voting was as follows:

For the motion: 32

Councillors Asare, Ayub, Barnett-Ward, Cross, Davies, Dennis, Eden, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gavin, Gittings, Griffith, Hacker, Hornsby-Smith, Hoskin, Juthani, Keeping, Lanzoni, Leng, Lovelock, McEwan, McGrother, Mpofu-Coles, Naz, Rowland, D Singh, Stevens, Tarar, Terry, Woodward and Yeo.

Against the motion: 9

Councillors Cresswell, Goss, McCann, McElroy, Mitchell, Nikulina, R Singh, White and Williams.

Abstentions: 3

Councillors Moore, O'Connell and Thompson.

45. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2025/26

Further to Minute 62 of the Policy Committee held on 17 February 2025, the Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the draft Capital Strategy 2025/26, which was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report noted that the CIPFA 2021 Prudential and Treasury Management Code required the Council to prepare a Capital Strategy report which set out the Council's capital requirements arising from policy objectives, as well as the associated governance procedures and risk appetite of the Council. The Strategy provided an overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contributed to the provision of services; along with an overview of how associated risk was managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.

The Strategy was informed by the Council's priorities and links to other key strategy documents notably the Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), Treasury Management Strategy, Asset Management Strategy, Corporate Investment Strategy and Carbon Reduction Strategy.

The Council's approach to asset management planning, development, and monitoring of the Capital Programme's delivery was set out in the Strategy. The figures in the various tables within the Strategy, most particularly the Capital Programme itself, had been updated to reflect the latest position consistent with the MTFS report (see Minute 44 above). The Action Plan at Appendix 1 Annex D had similarly been refreshed. The Director of Finance would keep this under review during the year and would bring forward any changes that may be required.

The Capital Programme Board was introduced in December 2022 to increase oversight of the Capital Programme and its delivery. Terms of Reference for the Board were attached to the report at Appendix 1, Annex B.

The proposed Action Plan at Appendix 1, Annex D of the Strategy identified three areas of ongoing work required for the Council to remain compliant with the CIPFA Code requirements. These were:

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- Developing knowledge of the Council's existing asset base;
- Identifying what assets were needed in the future;
- Developing and implementing new systems and processes to enable the transition.

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

Resolved –

- (1) **That the Capital Strategy 2025/26, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;**
- (2) **That the updated Action Plan that forms Annex D of the Capital Strategy (Appendix 1) be noted, together with the associated financial implications.**

46. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT (2025/26)

Further to Minute 63 of the Policy Committee held on 17 February 2025, the Director of Finance submitted a report setting out a Treasury Management Strategy for endorsement. The Strategy required approval before the start of the new financial year in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 and the CIPFA Prudential Code for capital finance in local authorities (2021). The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS), which was attached to the report at Appendix 1, set out the parameters for the Council's planned treasury activity during 2025/26, under which the Council's Treasury Team would manage day to day activity. The report stated that the successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risk were central to the Strategy. Included in the TMSS alongside the Treasury Management Strategy were Capital Prudential Indicators, a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement, a Borrowing Strategy and an Annual Investment Strategy.

The CIPFA 2021 Prudential and Treasury Management Code also required the Council to prepare a Capital Strategy report which set out the Council's capital requirements arising from policy objectives, as well as the associated governance procedures and risk appetite. The Capital Strategy included non-treasury investments and was reported separately from the TMSS (see Minute 45 above). The CIPFA Treasury Management Code 2021 further broke down non-treasury investment into: Investments for service purposes – taken or held primarily for the provision and purpose of delivering public services (including housing, regeneration, and local infrastructure), or in support of joint working with others to deliver such services; and Investment for commercial purposes - taken or held primarily for financial return and were not linked to treasury management activity or directly part of delivering services.

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

Resolved –

- (1) **That the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2025/26 be approved as set out in Appendix 1, Section 2 to the report;**

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- (2) That the Capital Prudential Indicators be approved as set out in Appendix 1, Section 3 to the report;**
- (3) That the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy for 2025/26 be approved as set out in Appendix 1, Section 4 to the report;**
- (4) That the Borrowing Strategy for 2025/26 be approved as set out in Appendix 1, Section 5 to the report;**
- (5) That the Annual Investment Strategy for 2025/26 be approved as set out in Appendix 1, Section 6 to the report; and**
- (6) That the Prudential and Treasury Management indicators be approved as set out in Appendix 1, Annex 1 to the report.**

47. COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2025/26

The Director of Finance submitted a report seeking approval of the calculations for determining the Council Tax requirement for the year 2025/26, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The report also sought approval to set the Council Tax amounts for each property valuation band in the Borough including precepts from the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley and Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service.

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

Resolved –

- (1) That the following amounts that have been calculated for the year 2025/26 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 be agreed:**
 - (i) £476,131,500 - Gross Revenue Expenditure, including transfers to reserves and any collection fund deficit, being the estimated aggregate expenditure of the Council in accordance with section 31A (2) of the Act;**
 - (ii) £349,997,200 - Gross Revenue Income, including transfers from reserves, general government grants and any collection fund surplus, being the estimated aggregate income of the Council for the items set out in section 31A (3) of the Act;**
 - (iii) £126,134,300 - Net Revenue Expenditure, being the amount by which the aggregate at (i) above exceeds the aggregate at (ii) above, calculated in accordance with section 31A (4) of the Act, as the Council's Council Tax Requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in section 31A (4) of the Act);**
 - (iv) £2,117.52 - Reading Borough Council Band D Council Tax, being the amount at (iii) above (Item R) divided by the Council's tax base 59,566.99 (Item T) calculated in accordance**

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with section 31B (1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year, representing an increase of 4.99% in the Council's own tax;

- (2) That the net tax base of 59,566.99 band D equivalent properties (being the gross tax base adjusted for an assumed collection rate) for 2025/26 was agreed by Council on 28 January 2025 be noted; and**
 - (i) that the band D charge for Reading Borough Council be £2,117.52 as shown in Table 2 of the report; and**
 - (ii) that, including the Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service and Thames Valley Police precepts, Council Tax by property valuation band be as set out in Table 3 of the report.**

48. 2023/24 AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

Further to Minute 24 of Audit & Governance Committee on 21 January 2025, the Director of Finance submitted a covering report on behalf of the Council's External Auditor, KPMG, which had attached their Annual Report, providing a summary of the findings and key issues arising from the 2023/24 audit. The report had been prepared in line with the requirements set out in the Code of Audit Practice by the National Audit Office and was required to be published by the Council with the annual report and accounts. The report set out a summary of KPMG's conclusions that were required in respect of their responsibilities. In relation to the Council's Accounts, KPMG would issue a disclaimed opinion as part of the nationally agreed process to bring audit opinions back up to date. The significant financial statement audit risks identified were valuation of land and buildings, valuation of investment property, management override of controls and valuation of post-retirement benefit obligations, details of which were described in the Auditor's report. There were not any significant inconsistencies between the content of the narrative report and KPMG's knowledge of the Council. In addition, regarding Value for Money, the Council was found to have appropriate arrangements in place with no identified significant weaknesses in respect of arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

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

Resolved –

That the Auditor's Annual Report for 2023/24, as attached to the report, be noted.

49. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023/2024

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report on the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24. The Council was responsible for ensuring that financial management was adequate and effective and had a sound system of internal control, which facilitated the effective exercise of the Council's functions and included arrangements for the management of risk. The Accounts and Audit Regulations required local authorities to prepare and publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) each financial year to accompany the authority's financial statements. The Annual Governance Statement was a key record of the overall effectiveness of governance arrangements within the Authority. The statement reflected the latest

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guidance from CIPFA/SOLACE on a strategic approach to governance and demonstrated how the key governance requirements had been met. The AGS had to be agreed prior to the Annual Statement of Accounts being approved (see Minute 50 below).

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

Resolved –

- (1) That the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/2024, as attached to the report, be approved.**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make minor amendments to the Statement, in consultation with the Leader and Chief Executive, prior to signature by the Leader and Chief Executive.**

50. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2023/24

The Director of Finance submitted a report on the Statement of Accounts for 2023/24. The report explained that the approval of the annual Statement of Accounts was a matter reserved to Council. The Council's external auditor, KPMG, was expected to issue a 'disclaimed' audit opinion by the statutory backstop date of 28 February 2025. The accounts would be 'disclaimed' purely because KPMG had insufficient time to provide assurance on 'unaudited' opening balances and prior year comparisons before the backstop date. A full audit for 2023/24 had been undertaken and there were no significant issues arising. The report stated that any adjustments identified during the audit had been corrected and there were no matters arising from the public inspection period, which had now closed.

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

Resolved –

- (1) That the Statement of Accounts 2023/24, as attached to the report, be approved;**
- (2) That the Director of Finance, as Section 151 Officer, be authorised to make minor amendments to the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate Services and Resources.**

(The meeting closed at 8.24 pm).

MAYOR:.....

DATE: 25/03/25

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Council

25 March 2025



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Council Plan 2025-28
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Alex Wylde, Policy and Performance Manager
Lead Councillor	Cllr Liz Terry
Corporate priority	This report defines the corporate priorities for the next 3 years.
Recommendations	1. That the Council Plan 2025-28, as appended to the report, be adopted.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. A new Council Plan is needed for 2025-28. The proposed new Council Plan is attached for consideration and adoption by Council. Policy Committee has also had the opportunity to comment on the Plan at its meeting on 17 March 2025.
- 1.2. This has been developed following significant engagement across the organisation and externally, building on the learning from the delivery of the current plan.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. In line with the requirement set out in the Council's Constitution, a draft Council Plan for 2025-28 has been developed. The Council Plan sets out the Council's vision, priorities and objectives for the next three years, together with the projects to deliver them and the measures that we will use to measure our progress. The activities set out in the Plan are aligned with the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy agreed by Council on 25 February.

3. Council Plan structure

- 3.1. The Council Plan is structured around five components:
 - **Vision:** which sets out what we want for the future of Reading. This is unchanged from the previous Corporate Plan and is as follows:

“Our Vision is to help Reading realise its potential and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share in the benefits of its success.”
 - **Priorities:** the Plan includes 5 high-level areas of focus over the next three years to deliver the vision:
 - Promote more equal communities in Reading
 - Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
 - Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint
 - Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
 - Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future

- **Objectives:** these are the specific outcomes (5-6 for each priority) we want to deliver over the next 3 years.
- **Projects:** these are the activities we are undertaking to deliver the objectives. Progress will be reported quarterly to Policy Committee.
- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** these are the metrics that tell us the progress we are making in delivering our objectives and how well our day-to-day services are performing. Each KPI has an associated target and performance against these will be reported quarterly to Policy Committee.

3.2. Key deliverables set out within the Council Plan include:

- The delivery of over 300 new council homes through the Local Authority New Build programme.
- Completing the new Central Library and Civic Reception.
- Investments to reduce the Council's carbon emissions in our buildings, fleet, and operations.
- Delivering 3 new children's homes and four new adult social care facilities in Reading.
- Completing our £8 million programme to improve roads and pavements.

3.3. The Council Plan provides the framework for prioritisation of resources and is used to inform Service Planning and performance objectives for our staff. It does not set out everything the Council will do. However, by setting out the Council Plan in this way, it then informs the activities of our day-to-day services as well.

3.4. The draft Council Plan is appended for approval, having been considered by Policy Committee on 17 March.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1. The Council Plan defines the vision and objectives of the Council over the next three years and is used to inform Service Planning and performance objectives for our staff and provides the framework for prioritisation of resources.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1. The Council Plan includes priorities related to our commitment to environmental and climate improvements for Reading. It does not, however, seek to replicate in full the commitments and activities that are set out in more detailed plans already adopted by the Council (e.g. the Reading Climate Strategy).

6. Community Engagement

6.1. We ran a public engagement exercise from 5 to 23 February on the vision, priorities, and objectives in the Council Plan, as well as our principles and values. Local partners, including the VCS, were also invited to share their views. A dedicated engagement meeting with the VCS took place on 19 February.

6.2. Results from the engagement are appended. Of 162 respondents, 63% "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the vision for the Council Plan. Where individual responses did not agree with the vision and priorities, varied reasons were provided. These included concern about Council Tax increases, that the plan was too ambitious and should focus only on core services, and objections to delivery of net zero and housing development.

6.3. There was a majority support for all five priorities, ranging from 76% for "safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children" to 58% for "develop fairer communities and affordable housing". Responses also included several suggestions for improvements to the Plan, which have informed the final version that is appended.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. The Council Plan sets the overall priorities of Reading Borough Council for the next 3 years and does not in itself introduce any new policies or activities. The Plan aims to reduce inequalities between groups that share protected characteristics and advance equality of opportunity. This is articulated in the Plan's overall vision "to help Reading realise its potential and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share in the benefits of its success" and in the specific programmes of work set out. Individual projects set out in the Council Plan will have separate Equality Impact Assessments where appropriate.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. Given the timescales involved it will be necessary to circulate the Council Plan ahead of Council slightly later (18 March) than the usual dispatch date for Council papers so that any material comments can be incorporated from Policy Committee's review on 17 March.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. None.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. The Council Plan has been developed in parallel with the budget and only includes projects and commitments that are funded and consistent with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. If approved at Council on 25 March, the Council Plan will be immediately adopted by the organisation and published on the Council's website.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices

- 1. Draft Council Plan 2025-28**
- 2. Council Plan engagement results**

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Investing in Reading's Future

Council Plan 2025-28



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Welcome from the Leader

Reading is a great place to live, work and visit. You do not have to take my word for it, as there are many studies and surveys that tell us that it is.

As Leader, I know that the Council continuing to play its part in keeping it that way has become very challenging in the face of shocks such as Covid, the cost of living crisis, and the reduction in funding for public services over the years.

The new Government has made clear its strong desire to strengthen and empower local councils and the communities they serve, and to place them on a more sustainable financial footing. It is vital that Reading Council embraces this opportunity and ensures Reading's continued success, doing all it can to make sure everyone can benefit.

The government's aims for strategic regional planning and simplifying local government structures, as set out in the English Devolution White Paper, bring both uncertainty and opportunity. However, we must not lose sight of the Council's key purpose, which is to deliver services for residents in the face of significant financial challenges, and to build on the huge investments we have made in recent years to leisure and cultural facilities, homes, and care provision across the town.

Looking forward, we continue to be unapologetically ambitious for Reading. As set out in this Plan, over the next three years we will deliver over 300 new council homes, a new Central Library, ambitious investments to reduce the Council's carbon emissions, three new children's homes, and four new adult social care facilities, as well as completing our £8 million programme to improve roads and pavements.

We continue to deliver essential services that so many older residents and vulnerable adults rely on. We have invested in improved services



Cllr Liz Terry, Leader of the Council

for our tenants, with more ways to manage repairs and rent through our website, at times that are most convenient to them.

My sincere thanks go to Council staff and Councillors for their unquestionable commitment to Reading.

Our continued commitment to residents drives this new Council Plan. The very real challenge of ensuring it remains deliverable against ever limited budgets and resources in no way diminishes our ambitions for Reading. We know rising demand for essential statutory services means we will need to think creatively to deliver on our priorities, and our track record shows we can and will do that.

Whatever changes the future brings, we know that Reading's place as an economic and cultural centre will remain. We will continue to grow our economy, working to bring new investment and businesses into our town so that our goal of ensuring everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of this success is achieved. That has been the vision for this Council for some years and will continue to be the focus through this new plan.

Our Achievements

We are proud of the achievements and investments we have delivered in 2024 and will continue to build on these successes. In the last year we have:



Opened four new and improved playgrounds at Westfield Road Recreation Ground, Waterloo Meadows, Rivermead, and Victoria Park.



89% of schools in Reading have received strong Ofsted inspection outcomes and the Council's adult and community learning service, New Directions College, was rated 'Good' by Ofsted.



Developed the new Community Wellness Outreach Service, alongside Health and Voluntary Sector colleagues, to carry out 4,878 health checks.



Built 224 affordable new homes, including new homes for key workers.



Commenced the construction of our exciting new Central Library.



Opened a new 25-metre competition swimming pool and teaching and diving pool at Rivermead Leisure Centre.



Supported the Business Improvement District in securing a £7.5m investment over 5-years to support the town centre, in addition to Council services.

Residents' Survey Results 2024



In 2024 we conducted a survey with a representative sample of 1,000 Reading residents about satisfaction with the Council and the services we provide. Key findings were:

- **60%** were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the way Reading Borough Council runs things overall (compared to 55% nationally)
- **46%** agreed that Reading Borough Council provides value for money (compared to 38% nationally)
- **54%** agreed that Reading Borough Council acts on the concerns of local residents (compared to 47% nationally)





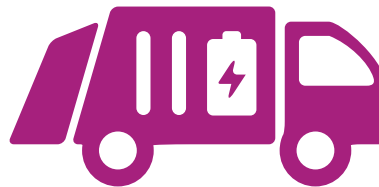
Refurbished Reading Station subway and High Bridge (a designated scheduled monument) on London Street / Duke Street.



Filled in 1,664 potholes.



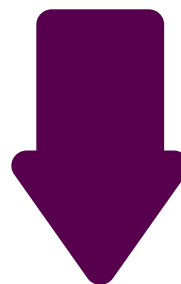
Increased the number of school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities in Reading from 564 to 940.



Added 13 new electric vehicles to Reading's refuse fleet, meaning refuse and recycling collections are now up to 92% electric.



Received 4,226 referrals into Adult Social Care – and through effective work to promote independence only 11% needed to access long term care and support.



Delivered a 30% reduction in energy consumption since 2019/20 and decarbonised energy sources at our leisure centres.



Delivered 752 carer assessments and supported 2,520 people to live more independently by providing essential equipment and technology enabled care.



Successfully implemented a voice automation option in our call centre, enabling residents to report issues such as a missed bin without having to wait to speak to someone.

Your Services

Your Council is proud to deliver a wide range of services for our town, including:

Helping those who are older or living with disability, or physical or mental illness, to maintain their independence and well-being. This includes residential and nursing care, supported living, care at home, and preventative services. In 2024 we received 4,226 referrals for a service and provided support to 1,774 residents last year. This included 181 new admissions to nursing or residential care.

Ensuring enough school places exist to meet the needs of our growing population, including providing a new secondary school in 2024.

Supporting 1,999 children and young people (aged 0-25) with special educational needs and disabilities with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP).



Providing fantastic culture and leisure opportunities, including loaning out **475,545 books** last year through our libraries and receiving **1,101,515 visits** to our leisure centres.

Working with children and families who need support and protecting vulnerable children from harm. Across the year we delivered services to 1,874 children through our early years and youth work. Our children's social care teams work with 3,185 children and undertook over 1,100 child protection enquiries last year resulting in 519 children being placed on a protection plan. We have 283 children in our care, mostly in fostering placements.



Processing over **57,000 tonnes of household waste** a year, including 9,700k tonnes of kerbside mixed dry recycling, 6,200 tonnes of garden waste and 6,600 tonnes of food waste.

Providing nearly 7,000 affordable, good quality Council-owned homes to tenants and providing housing advice and support to prevent and relieve homelessness to over 623 households in 2024.

Providing high quality education and training for nearly 1,810 adults a year across 387 courses through New Directions College.

Providing a Public Health and well-being service to help prevent and reduce health inequalities, delivering a range of public health services, including sexual health services and services aimed at reducing drug and alcohol misuse.

Processing over 800 planning applications a year, including major developments.

Co-ordinating and influencing the delivery of strategic infrastructure to meet Reading's needs and accommodate its growth.



Providing Town Centre Services to make it cleaner and safer for residents and visitors, working closely with the Police and the Business Improvement District.

Managing traffic, parking and public transport services across the town and delivering improvements to roads, cycling, and walking infrastructure.



Maintaining **55 parks and open spaces** and **58 play facilities** for Reading's children – mowing the grass, tending plants and trees, maintaining play equipment, protecting our nature reserves, and maximising rewilding and biodiversity in our parks.

Working with key stakeholders through the Water Safety Partnership to make safety improvements to our waterways.

Looking after streets and neighbourhoods, emptying 6.75m bins a year and maintaining 18,500 streetlights and illuminated signs.

Administering important life events with around 9,200 registrations for births, deaths, and marriages every year.

Supporting 2,111 families to say goodbye to loved ones through our burials and cremation service and presenting c.2,200 people with their new British Citizenship certificates.

Providing Housing Benefit and Council Tax support and delivering a broad range of advice and support for residents and businesses experiencing financial difficulties, in conjunction with our voluntary and community sector partners.

Managing important internal functions, including the Council's finances, legal processes, and contracts with suppliers, ensuring that the Council as an organisation runs efficiently and effectively.

Providing electoral registration services, registering 20,855 people to vote.



Responding to **457,000 enquiries** a year through our Customer Fulfilment Centre, from Council Tax enquiries to housing repairs.

Our Vision and Priorities

Our Vision is to help Reading realise its potential and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share in the benefits of its success.

To deliver this vision we are focusing on the following five priorities over the next three years:

Promote more equal communities in Reading



Secure Reading's economic and cultural success



Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint



Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children



Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future



Our Principles and Values

In delivering the priorities set out in this Council Plan, we will be guided by the following set of principles:

Putting residents first

Being accessible, responsive, and working in the interests of Reading residents.

Building on strong foundations

Delivering the core services that create a safer, cleaner, greener Reading, so the town can grow towards an exciting future.

Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities

Recognising Reading's diversity and rich culture as one of our greatest strengths, we will work with all of Reading's communities across all the Council's services.

Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents

Working closely with residents, businesses, and local groups to collectively achieve great outcomes for Reading.

Being proudly ambitious for Reading

Taking pride in Reading's heritage, history, active community, and achievements, and using them to bring people together.

Within the Council we are driven by the values of TEAM Reading:

Work **Together** as one team:

We work together as one inclusive team with colleagues and partners to deliver great services.

Drive **Efficiency**:

We drive efficiency and value for money in everything we do.

Be **Ambitious**:

We are ambitious in our plans and in what we want to achieve.

Make a **Difference** to Reading:

We are here to make a positive difference to all residents, our diverse communities and the businesses of Reading.



Promote more equal communities in Reading



Reading is a successful and prosperous town, yet also contains some of the most deprived areas in the country. Life expectancy in the poorest parts of Reading is nearly 8 years lower than in the most affluent areas. There remains a stubborn and significant gap in educational attainment between disadvantaged children and their peers. We want to do more to work with Thames Valley Police and other partners to tackle issues such as crime and antisocial behaviour which remain persistent in some parts of our town.

We want Reading to be a place where inequality within our communities is reduced – whether that be differences in health, access to economic opportunities, or the educational attainment of our children. We will work with partners to ensure that services and support are available to those residents that need them, and that everyone shares in Reading's success.

We will:

- Promote best practice across Reading's schools, helping to improve educational attainment and narrow the gap for disadvantaged and vulnerable children.
- Reduce inequalities in health and life expectancy through our Public Health service.
- Tackle social and economic inequalities in partnership with the voluntary and community sector.
- Reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, working with Thames Valley Police and other partners.
- Work with partners to prevent homelessness.

Objectives and projects:

Objective	Project
Promote best practice across Reading's schools, helping to improve educational attainment and narrow the gap for disadvantaged and vulnerable children.	Deliver the Education Strategy to reduce education inequality and increase school attendance and attainment for those groups who experience the most disadvantage.
Reduce inequalities in health and life expectancy through our Public Health service.	Deliver support to help people stop smoking, particularly those working in professions with higher rates of smoking.
	Develop approaches to ensure that health and wellbeing is considered across all policy areas.
Tackle social and economic inequalities in partnership with the voluntary and community sector.	Deliver the voluntary and community sector compact action plan, including small grants funding.
	Develop and deliver our place-based approach to enhance access to education, skills, and training.
	Provide advice and guidance to residents regarding the cost of living and direct financial support through the Household Support Fund.
Reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, working with Thames Valley Police and other partners.	Support the Community Safety Partnership and facilitate Safer Neighbourhood Forums to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.
	Support plans to tackle knife crime, domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.
Work with partners to prevent homelessness.	Continue work to prevent and reduce homelessness.

Secure Reading's economic and cultural success



Reading has the potential to be a national economic powerhouse. It is already the principal economic centre of the Thames Valley, a major retail and leisure destination, and a key transport interchange with access to one of the strongest employment markets in Europe. We want to build on the success of the town and ensure that everyone in Reading shares in that success.

Over the coming years there will be significant opportunities to secure additional powers over areas like economic development by working across Berkshire and the wider Thames Valley area through a new Strategic Authority. We believe this is a great opportunity for our town and we will engage constructively with the government to secure devolution that benefits Reading.

In our 2024 Residents' Survey, access to affordable and decent housing was identified as a major issue, particularly among young people. House prices in Reading are now 9.5 times average household incomes, making home ownership unattainable for many people. We will ensure that high-quality and affordable new homes continue to be built in Reading, including over 300 new Council homes, along with the infrastructure to support new development.

Vibrant cultural offerings and our town's heritage are integral to the town's success in uniting our communities and encouraging people to visit, live, and work in Reading. We will build on these strengths by delivering exciting new developments like the new Central Library and Studio Theatre at the Hexagon.

We will:

- Deliver new energy efficient council homes and improve tenant satisfaction with social housing.
- Enable the delivery of an average of 825 high-quality new homes a year in Reading, including affordable homes, along with the infrastructure to support new development.
- Promote the economic success of Reading by working with Councils across Berkshire and the wider Thames Valley.
- Maximise the benefits available for Reading from opportunities from the Government's plans to devolve power and funding to local areas.
- Continue to deliver quality cultural and leisure services and facilitate exciting improvements to our cultural offer through grant-funded projects.

Objectives and projects:

Objective	Project
Deliver new energy efficient council homes and improve tenant satisfaction with social housing.	Through the Local Authority New Build programme, deliver 362 new homes at Dee Park and other sites by December 2028.
	Complete the acquisition of Homes for Reading housing stock into the Council by the end of 2026 and re-let the homes to households on the Council's Housing Register.
	Increase the number and timeliness of repairs delivered by our Housing Repairs & Property Services teams.
Enable the delivery of an average of 825 high-quality new homes a year in Reading, including affordable homes, along with the infrastructure to support new development.	Progress an updated Local Plan towards adoption to provide a framework to guide decision making on the planning applications for homes and infrastructure.
	Introduce the Additional Licensing Scheme in the private rented sector to improve housing conditions for tenants.
Promote the economic success of Reading by working with Councils across Berkshire and the wider Thames Valley.	In partnership with other Berkshire councils, facilitate the Connect to Work programme to support residents with long term health conditions into work.
Maximise the benefits available for Reading from opportunities from the Government's plans to devolve power and funding to local areas.	Work in partnership to secure devolution for Reading and the wider area through a new Mayoral Strategic Authority.
Continue to deliver quality cultural and leisure services and facilitate exciting improvements to our cultural offer through grant-funded projects.	Deliver a new Civic Centre, including a new Central Library and improved Registrars and Customer provision.
	Improve the technology offer and access to library services funded through the Libraries Investment Fund.

Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint



Reading's economic success is driving significant development and population growth. By 2041 the number of households in central Reading is forecast to increase by 161% - an increase of nearly 9,000. This increase in density and population will require a major shift in infrastructure and presents a huge opportunity to reshape the physical infrastructure of our town for the better.

At the same time, we are already beginning to see the effects of climate change – Earth reached its warmest year on record in 2024. This serves as a reminder of the urgency of continuing to reduce carbon emissions so that we reach net zero emissions as soon as possible, as well as taking steps to adapt to a changing climate.

Our vision for the future is a town where it is quick and easy to get around by public transport, walking, or cycling. By designing our infrastructure and public spaces around pedestrians, we can build spaces that are easy to get around, greener and more attractive, with lower levels of air pollution.

We will:

- Deliver improvements to public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure in Reading.
- Keep Reading moving by delivering investment in highways, including roads, bridges, streetlighting and traffic signals.
- Further improve the physical environment of Reading by improving air quality, access to green space, and the quality of public spaces.
- Continue moving towards a net zero, resilient Reading and Council by 2030.
- Deliver major improvements to our waste and recycling service to ensure compliance with new legislation.

Objectives and projects:

Objective	Project
Deliver improvements to public transport, cycling, and walking infrastructure in Reading.	Deliver the Bus Service Improvement Plan to improve the reliability of bus services by increasing bus priority.
	Deliver funded active travel schemes to encourage more walking and cycling.
Keep Reading moving by delivering investment in highways, including roads, bridges, streetlighting and traffic signals.	Complete the £8 million programme of work to improve residential roads and pavements.
Further improve the physical environment of Reading by improving air quality, access to green space, and the quality of public spaces.	Adopt the Town Centre Public Realm Strategy to secure funding and improvements to Reading's streets and open spaces.
Continue moving towards a net zero, resilient Reading and Council by 2030.	Develop electric vehicle charging infrastructure, including charging points, to move away from fossil-fuelled vehicles.
	Reduce carbon emissions from our buildings, operations, and fleet, including investing in solar panels, energy efficiency in our buildings, and electric vehicles.
	Work with partners to deliver the Climate Strategy for 2025 to 2030 to achieve a net zero Reading resilient to climate change.
	Dispose of property and land that no longer contribute towards the Council's objectives to invest in assets and service transformation.
Deliver major improvements to our waste and recycling service to ensure compliance with new legislation.	Introduce changes to the waste collection service in line with the 'Simpler Recycling' legislation.

Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children



In line with the national average, 70% of our net spending on day-to-day services is on adult and children's social care. These services are at the core of what councils do – protecting and supporting some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

We will continue to ensure that those who are older or living with disability or illness are supported to live independently, support children with special educational needs and disabilities, and ensure that Reading's children are protected.

However, the unprecedented levels of demand for these services, along with increasing costs, presents a major challenge for the Council. Our priority for the next three years is to put in place a range of measures to reduce demand and cost, while delivering better outcomes for Reading's children and adults. This includes major investments in three new children's homes and four adult social care facilities in Reading.

We will:

- Prevent the escalation of children's needs and reduce the number of children in care through improving our early help offer.
- Reduce the number of children in residential care and reliance on private providers by recruiting more foster carers and opening new children's homes in Reading.
- Improve our local special educational needs and disabilities offer and support education settings to develop inclusive practice, so children receive high quality education locally, and achieve their potential.
- Support those who need social care services to live as independently as possible in their homes with improved wellbeing.
- Improve our offer for unpaid carers, ensuring they are supported to live well and can sustain their caring role.
- Work with our partners in health and the voluntary sector to provide support solutions for adults with complex health and social care needs to improve outcomes.

Objectives and projects:

Objective	Project
Prevent the escalation of children's needs and reduce the number of children in care through improving our early help offer.	Deliver Family Hubs to bring together a range of support services in one place, reducing escalation of need and the number of children entering care.
	Redesign and commission an integrated 0-19 child health programme.
Reduce the number of children in residential care and reliance on private providers by recruiting more foster carers and opening new children's homes in Reading.	Increase the number of Brighter Futures for Children/Council foster carers to increase the proportion of children in care living locally and with our own carers.
	Deliver an in-house assessment home and children's homes in Reading to ensure that children in residential care remain living in Reading wherever possible.
Improve our local special educational needs and disabilities offer and support education settings to develop inclusive practice, so children receive high quality education locally, and achieve their potential.	Enable more children with special educational needs and disabilities to be educated in mainstream schools and deliver new special school places.
	Promote independent and active travel to school for children with special educational needs and disabilities.
Support those who need social care services to live as independently as possible in their homes with improved wellbeing	Implement technology systems to support people to live independently at home.
	Deliver four new adult social care services to support people with complex needs, replacing existing buildings that are no longer fit for purpose.
	Support children into adulthood, promoting greater independence and confidence.
Improve our offer for unpaid carers, ensuring they are supported to live well and can sustain their caring role.	Implement our improved carers offer, including employing a dedicated carers lead and delivering carers' breaks.
Work with our partners in health and the voluntary sector to provide support solutions for adults with complex health and social care needs to improve outcomes.	Improve the process of discharge from hospital to prevent patients being readmitted.
	Refresh the existing Home Care and Supported Living Framework to ensure sufficient supply.

Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future



Everything we deliver for the people of Reading depends on ensuring the Council is a modern and effective organisation that is financially stable, with technology that works, and the right workforce in place to deliver services.

Over the past eight years, the Council has transformed its services and operations, investing in new technology, corporate capability (including HR, procurement, finance, and ICT), and driving savings through different ways of working.

We are proud of the work we do for the people of Reading, and we will continue to strive to deliver better quality services through our ongoing commitment to delivering value for money in everything we do.

We will:

- Deliver good, accessible services for our customers.
- Invest in technology that is secure and helps deliver effective services.
- Use procurement of goods and services to secure greater social value and spend locally.
- Secure best value from all Council spending.
- Be a fair employer with an attractive and competitive offer and a workforce that is representative of the local community.

Objectives and projects:

Objective	Project
Deliver good, accessible services for our customers.	Continue to develop our new IT systems in customer services and housing repairs to enable residents to resolve queries at a time that suits them.
	Review the content of our website to ensure it is accessible and to drive customer self-service.
	Ensure continued good services for children by bringing Brighter Futures for Children (children's services) back into the Council.
	Implement an improved telephone system that routes customers effectively and improves the customer data we collect to help continually improve how we support residents.
	Deliver and embed our social care customer front door through enhancing our systems and working with the voluntary sector in providing support.
	Deliver additional cemetery space in order to continue offering a burial service to all residents.
Invest in technology that is secure and helps deliver effective services. ¹	Introduce remote technology for staff who work outside of the office to improve efficiency.
	Introduce artificial intelligence to improve customer service and reduce administration costs in line with our strategy.
Use procurement of goods and services to secure greater social value and spend locally.	Deliver the new Social Value Policy with our partners to increase the number of contracts delivering spend and social value in the local area.
Secure best value from all Council spending.	Deliver our three-year Medium Term Financial Strategy and the financial savings within to ensure that the Council lives within its means.
Be a fair employer with an attractive and competitive offer and a workforce that is representative of the local community.	Ensure recruitment and selection processes support the Council's move towards ensuring the workforce represents the demographics of the Borough.
	Continue to develop talent within the Council, including through our apprentice and work experience programmes.

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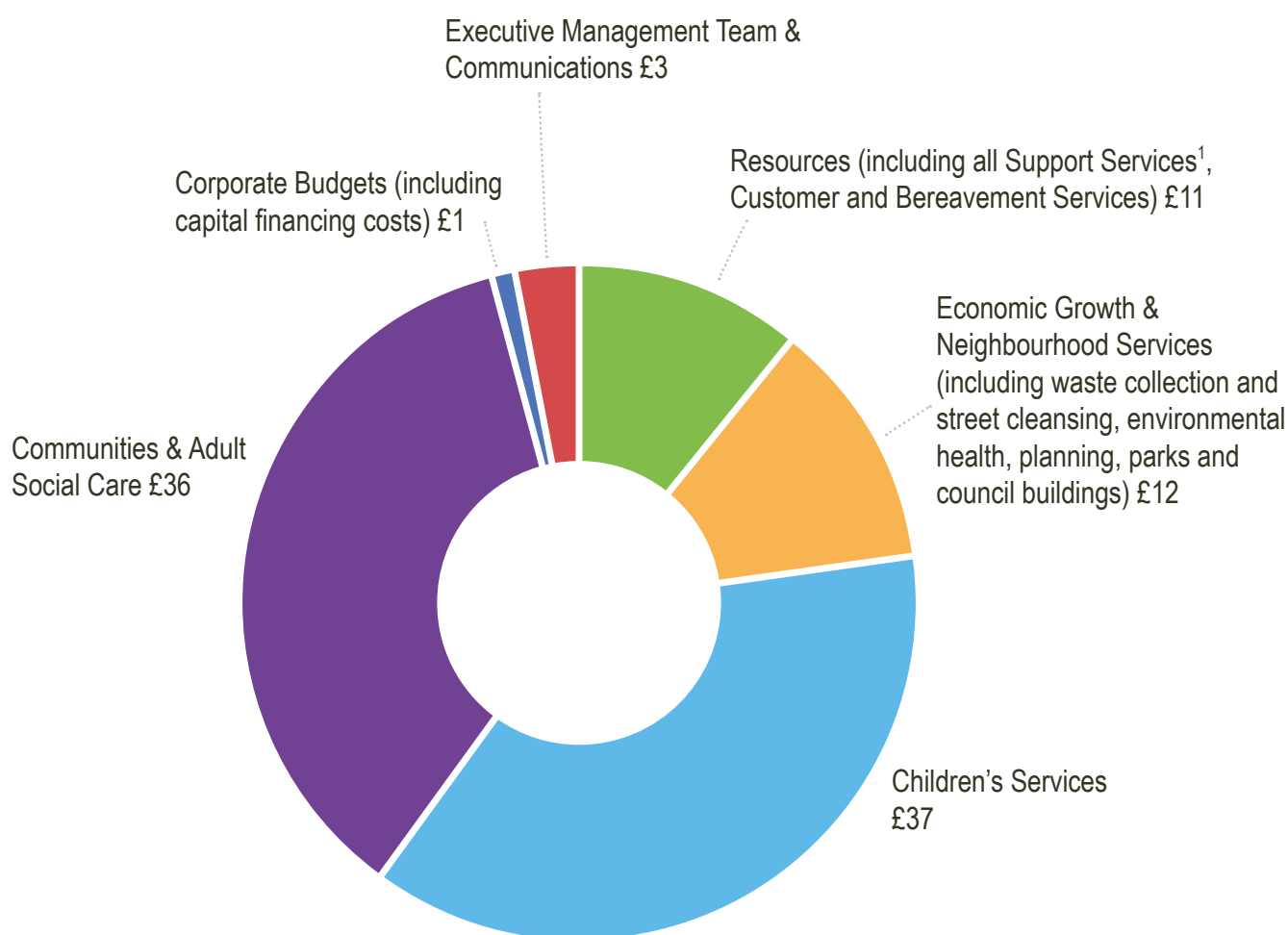
1 The projects against this objective are subject to funding being agreed.

Our Budget

Day-to-day spending

Our net budget for day-to-day services ('revenue') for 2025/26 is £178.1 million. This figure includes income from ring-fenced government grants and service users (in the form of fees and charges). This net budget is funded by council tax (71%), business rates (27%), and non-ring-fenced central government grants (2%).

Every £100 we spend on day-to-day services is split as follows:



Spending on social housing is managed within a separate ring-fenced budget called the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and is funded through rents from Council housing tenants.

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1 Support Services include services such as legal, finance, HR, ICT and procurement.



Capital spending

Capital spending is the expenditure incurred to make improvements to the Council's assets or for the purchase or creation of new assets. Capital spending is funded by grants, contributions from developers, capital receipts (the sale of capital assets), revenue, and prudential borrowing.

Our planned General Fund capital expenditure for 2025/26-2027/28 is £127.5 million, of which £50.7 million is funded from prudential borrowing.

Highlights of the Capital Programme 2024/25 - 2028/29 are:

£16.6m



New performance space and decarbonisation works at the Hexagon Theatre

£24.1m



Investment in education schemes including school buildings

£9.0m



Adult social care facilities to support people with complex needs

£11.7m



Highways Infrastructure Programme

£7.2m



New Reading Library and Civic Reception, including decarbonisation

£14m



Bus Service Improvement Plan

£3.1m



Active Travel Tranches 2 and 3 – Shinfield Rd and Bath Rd/Castle Hill

£2m



Children's homes

Capital spending on new social housing or improvements to the Council's existing housing stock is funded separately by the HRA. The planned capital expenditure for 2025/26-2027/28 is £138.9 million, of which £70.4m is funded from prudential borrowing by the HRA. This planned expenditure includes £57.3 million on new build and acquisitions, £47.8 million on major repairs (including zero carbon retrofit works) to existing stock and £31.8m to purchase homes from Homes for Reading.

Annexe: Key Performance Indicators

Promote more equal communities in Reading

Measure	Result 23/24	Targets			
		24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28
Key Stage 2 gap in percentage of advantaged and disadvantaged pupils who achieve the expected level of attainment in reading, writing, and maths (%)	25%	23%	22%	22%	22%
Key Stage 4 gap in overall Attainment 8 score between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils (Attainment 8 score)	23.6	19.9	18	16	15
Residents quitting smoking (No. as measured four weeks after quitting)	450	518	618	916	1,016

Secure Reading's economic and cultural success

Measure	Result 23/24	Targets			
		24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28
New Council homes delivered (including acquisitions) (No.)	57	11	73	89	83
Housing repairs (urgent) completed within 2 working days (%)	72%	90%	90%	90%	90%
Physical visits to libraries (No.)	276,000	270,000	220,000	350,000	420,000
Planning application decisions for major development made within timescales (% of total)	100%	60%	100%	100%	100%
Participation at our theatres and museums (No.)	362,664	350,000	325,000	335,000	380,000

Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint

Measure	Result 23/24	Targets			
		24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28
Missed bins (No. per 100,000 collections)	93.39	80	80	80	80
Household waste recycled or composted (% of total)	49.8%	51%	51%	51%	51%
Corporate carbon emissions (tonnes CO ₂)	5,149	3,977	2,983	TBC ¹	TBC
Air quality (micrograms per meter cubed of nitrogen dioxide µg/m ³)	26	26	25	24	23
Residential roads in good condition (not requiring further investigation or work) (% total)	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%
Trips to/from the town centre made by walking or cycling (% of total trips)	34%	34.4%	34.7%	35.1%	35.4%
Trips to/from the town centre made by public transport (% of total trips)	42%	42.5%	43%	43.5%	44%
Trips taken to/from Reading using Park and Ride (No.)	135,000	150,000	175,000	200,000	225,000
Trips taken by bus (individual bus trips starting in the Borough, millions)	19.5	19.0	19.7	20.4	21.2
New trees planted on Council owned land (No.)	332	300	300	300	300

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1 To be confirmed in the RBC 2025 to 2030 Carbon Plan

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Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children

Measure	Result 23/24	Targets			
		24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28
Children in care living more than 20 miles from Reading (% of total)	32%	24%	25%	23%	21%
Children placed in external children's homes (No.)	18	38 ¹	30	25	25
Children looked after (No.)	266	280	275	270	263
School places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (cumulative total)	564	940	1,065	1,184	1,184
Older People (65+) who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement (%)	88%	87%	87%	88%	88%
New contacts to the Advice and Wellbeing Hub resulting in a successful outcome and not requiring an ongoing service (%)	88%	84%	87%	90%	90%
Children with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) with a plan at age 14 for transition into adulthood at age 14 (% of total)	New	50%	60%	70%	80%

Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future

Measure	Result 23/24	Targets			
		24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28
Contracts over £125,000 achieving Social Value (% of total)	New	New	55%	60%	65%
Customer satisfaction with the outcome of contact with the customer fulfilment centre (% 'satisfied' or 'partially satisfied')	86.9%	90%	90%	90%	90%
Resident contacts handled through self-service channels (% of total)	New	New	50%	60%	70%
Employees in Council's workforce that are of Global Majority background (% of total workforce)	18.5%	20%	22%	23%	24%
Senior managers in the Council's workforce of Global Majority background (% Assistant Director or above) ¹	27.8%	N/A	N/A	N/A	32%

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¹ This is a 3-year target due to being dependent on turnover of staff and the small numbers involved.



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Contact Us:

T 0118 937 3787 (out-of-hours emergencies: 0118 937 3737)

W www.reading.gov.uk

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Council Plan 25-28 final report

- **Project:** Council Plan 2025-28
- **Period:** 5 - 24 February 2025
- **Project manager:** Alex Wylde

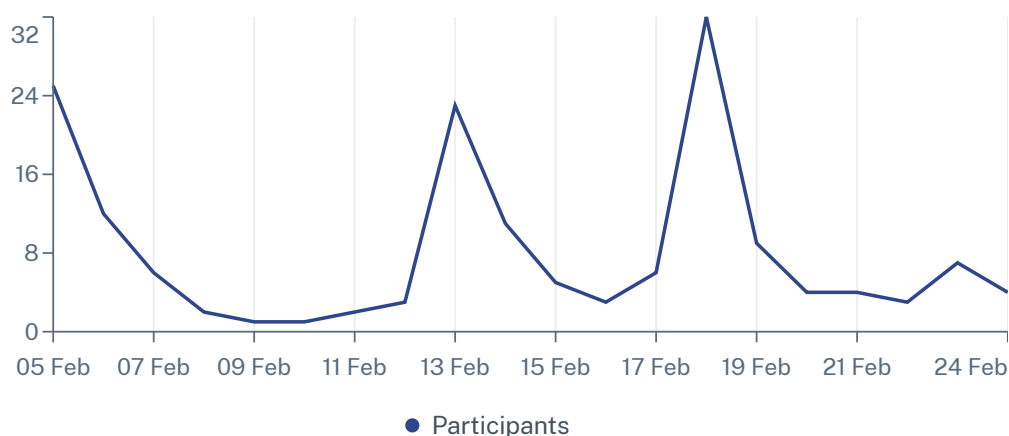
Participants timeline

Total participants

163

Participation rate i

15%



Headline results

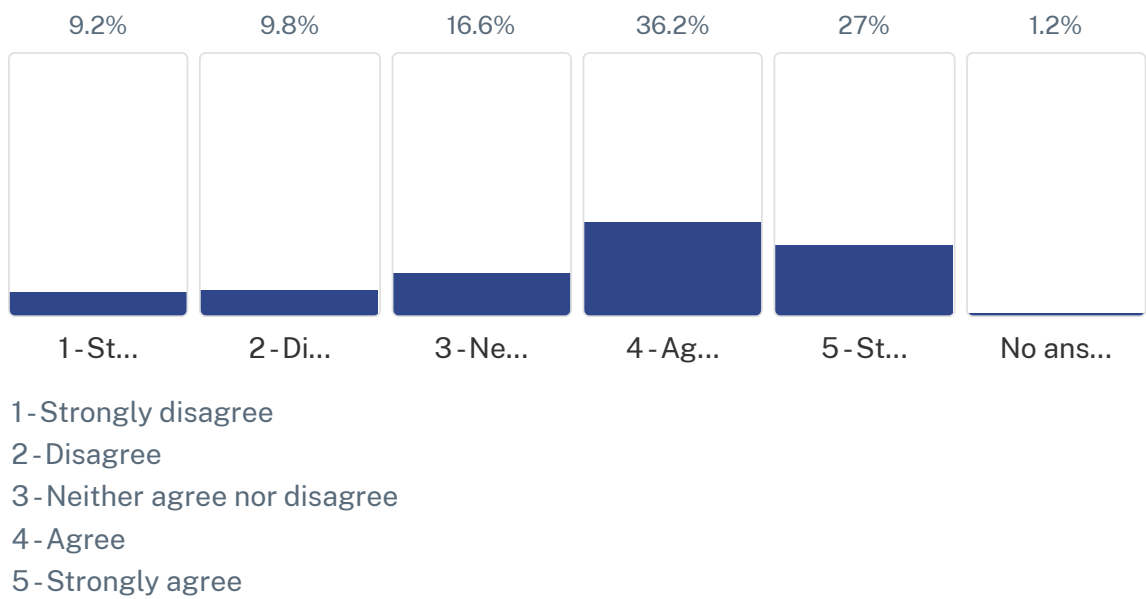
63% of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the overall vision for the Council Plan.

For each of the priorities, the following proportion of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with each:

- **58%** for "develop fairer communities and affordable housing"
- **72%** for "secure Reading's economic and cultural success"
- **61%** for "deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint"
- **76%** for "safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children"
- **71%** for "ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future"

To what extent do you agree with the vision for Council Plan above?

161/163 - Linear scale - required



To what extent do you agree with the priorities in the draft Council Plan?

161/163 - Matrix - required

	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly agree
1. Develop fairer communities and affordable housing	14.91%	11.18%	16.15%	31.68%	26.09%
2. Secure Reading's economic and cultural success	8.07%	5.59%	14.29%	39.75%	32.3%
3. Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint	12.42%	13.04%	13.66%	29.19%	31.68%
4. Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children	8.7%	6.21%	8.7%	36.65%	39.75%
5. Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future	9.94%	4.97%	14.29%	37.27%	33.54%

Summary of free text responses

Respondents expressed a range of views on the vision and priorities, with some recurring themes. Many agree with the need for economic and cultural success and there is strong support for safeguarding the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children. Views on the development of fairer communities and affordable housing were more mixed.

The most commonly raised issues were:

1. Traffic and Transportation: Many respondents expressed concerns about traffic congestion, the impact of new bus lanes, and the need for better road maintenance.

2. Affordable Housing: There is a call for more affordable housing, particularly for families and lower-income individuals. Some respondents also expressed opposition to developments of flats.

3. Council Spending and Taxation: Respondents are concerned about council tax increases and want the council to provide better value for money.

4. Public Safety and Crime: There is a desire for increased police presence, CCTV, and measures to tackle drug use and crime.

5. Environmental Concerns and Green Spaces: Respondents want more focus on environmental issues, including green spaces, recycling, and tackling litter and graffiti.

Respondents also made a number of comments about the wording of the priorities and the specific objectives set out in the plan. These include helpful suggestions for how the plan could be more clearly laid out or worded. Where possible we have made changes in response to these comments in the latest version of the document.

Demographics

