

To: Councillor Terry (Chair)  
Councillors Leng, Barnett-Ward, Emberson,  
Ennis, Gittings, Griffith, McEwan, Rowland,  
R Singh, Thompson, White and Yeo

Direct: ☎ 0118 9372303

7 March 2025

Your contact is: **Simon Hill - Committee Services (simon.hill@reading.gov.uk)**

## **NOTICE OF MEETING - POLICY COMMITTEE 17 MARCH 2025**

A meeting of the Policy Committee will be held on Monday, 17 March 2025 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Reading, RG1 2LU. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

1. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**
2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3. **MINUTES**

**To  
Follow**

4. **DELEGATED DECISIONS**

**5 - 6**

5. **PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS**

To receive any petitions from the public and any questions from the public and Councillors.

6. **CLOSING THE GAP 2 - RECOMMISSION OF COMMUNITY-BASED PREVENTATIVE SERVICES**

**BOROUGH  
WIDE**

**7 - 84**

This report sets out the commission of the next iteration of the Closing the Gap framework, including services that focus on community-based, preventative work, delivered by providers primarily from Reading's Voluntary and Community Sector.

7. **DISCRETIONARY LICENSING IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR - IMPLEMENTATION PROPOSAL**

**BOROUGH  
WIDE**

**85 - 96**

This report seeks approval to procure and contract with a delivery partner to support the implementation of a proposed Discretionary Licensing Scheme in the Private Rented Sector.

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<b>8.</b>	<b>2024/25 QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE AND MONITORING REPORT</b>	<b>BOROUGH WIDE</b>	<b>97 - 184</b>
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This report sets out the provisional revenue and capital outturn positions for the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account as at the end of Quarter 3 2024/25 as well as performance against the measures of success published in the Council's Corporate Plan.

<b>9.</b>	<b>COUNCIL PLAN 2025-28</b>	<b>BOROUGH WIDE</b>	<b>185 - 224</b>
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This report sets out a proposed new Council Plan 2025-28, for recommendation to Council.

**ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION IN CLOSED SESSION**

**10. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The following motion will be moved by the Chair:

"That, pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following items on the agenda, as it is likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of that Act"

**11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FOR CLOSED SESSION ITEMS**

<b>12.</b>	<b>GRANT FUNDED HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT SERVICES CONTRACTS: PODS AND THE NOVA PROJECT 2025/26</b>	<b>225 - 230</b>
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**\*\* Access to Civic Offices** - Please note that the Customer Main Entrance to the Civic Offices has moved 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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Policy Committee	Min No.	Title	Delegated Decision	
20.1.25	52(5)	Changes to Parking Services	That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake statutory consultation processes for the introduction of the proposed new tariff structures and emissions-based charging for on street pay and display, Residents and all other permits;	
20.1.25	55(4)	Local Authority New Build Programme Update	That the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Lead Councillor for Housing, be authorised to bid for Homes England grant funding for all appropriate schemes within the LANB programme and to approve details of the bids;	
20.1.25	55(6)	Local Authority New Build Programme Update	That the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Director of Finance, the Assistant Director for Procurement and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised to enter into contract with relevant parties to enable delivery of the schemes listed at paragraph 2.1 of the report;	
20.1.25	55(7)	Local Authority New Build Programme Update	That the latest position on Dee Park be noted and that the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Director of Finance, be authorised to procure an appropriate multi-disciplinary team as set out in the report;	
20.1.25	55(9)	Local Authority New Build Programme Update	That the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised to enter into collateral warranties as required on all phases of the LANB programme.	

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## Policy Committee

17 March 2025



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

<b>Title</b>	Closing the Gap 2 – Recommission of Community-Based Preventative Services
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a key decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Lara Stavrinou
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Terry
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Thriving Communities
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Council commit to the recommission of preventative services in the community to meet identified needs in Reading.</li> <li>2. That the budget envelope be agreed at £1,450,543 to fund 18 contracts, each with a remit to focus on an identified area of need in line with the respective grant requirements.</li> <li>3. That the Executive Director of Communities &amp; Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be granted delegated authority to enter into contracts with the successful organisations for 3 years with the option to extend for up to 2 years, commencing on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2025.</li> </ol>

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Closing the Gap 2 is the commission of the next iteration of the current Closing the Gap framework, with the current contracts expiring on 31 October 2025. Services under this contract opportunity were commissioned in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy, supported by a needs analysis, and with a focus on community-based, preventative work, delivered by providers primarily from Reading's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). These services are commissioned to reduce differences around health outcomes across the borough, increase wellbeing, reduce inequalities and loneliness, support statutory requirements around carers, provide support around poverty and debt, provide infrastructure support to the VCS and contribute to long-term positive change.
- 1.2 The programme brings together funding from Public Health, Adult Social Care, and Housing, along with additional funding from Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) and West Berkshire Council to achieve shared outcomes. Funding streams have conditions attached to how they should be used. For example, the Public Health Grant stipulates that funding must be spent against the Public Health Outcomes Framework.
- 1.3 The budget envelope is £1,450,543 per annum. This represents a small increase to the current amount (£1,368,043) owing to additional resource allocation towards Debt Support, a Hospital to Home Service, and the Visual Impairment Service. In consultation with funding stakeholders, a working group of internal and external officers, engagement with prospective providers and using information from a needs analysis, the budget has been allocated across 18 service specifications. This data driven, outcomes-led allocation

of the budget seeks to address the most pressing needs for Reading's residents. Please note, the spend allocation is the most up to date version and may be subject to further minor amendments. The overall principles will however remain the same.

- 1.4 Following a review of the last Closing the Gap VCS Commission, it is clear that a full tender process for all contracts is not proportionate to the level of funding being awarded and service requirements. It also has a high risk of excluding smaller organisations with limited resources from participating in complex bidding frameworks. To mitigate this, a project-based, tiered procurement approach has been recommended for the recommissioning of VCS services, with clear service specifications based on needs analysis, engagement sessions with providers and working groups. This will comprise of full tender exercises and Requests for Quotation (RFQ) depending on the value of each contract.
- 1.5 Bids will be evaluated by a multi-disciplinary team and contracts will be awarded to the highest scoring bidders. The scoring criteria will be published with the tender/RFQ information.
- 1.6 Successful bidders will be offered contracts of three years, with the option for the Council to extend by up to two years, acknowledging the positive impact of stability and certainty of funding for providers. The Council will work in partnership with successful bidders throughout the contract period to achieve the contractual outcomes.

## **2. Policy Context**

- 2.1 Closing the Gap directly supports the outcomes outlined within the Tackling Inequalities Strategy 2023 to 2026. The strategy references Closing the Gap as an example of the Council working with partners towards reducing inequalities through a strong local voluntary and community sector infrastructure, enhanced resilience, independence, and wellbeing for residents, and helping people to get out and stay out of poverty.
- 2.2 Closing the Gap directly supports the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 to 2030 by delivering against its priorities to improve the health of Reading's population. The strategy highlights that health outcomes are worse in the pockets of deprivation across Reading.
- 2.3 The Corporate Plan 2022 to 2025 outlines our aspiration to represent the diversity, inclusivity and community that makes Reading excel; our commitment to prioritising the needs of those most in need and excluded in our communities; and our continued support to ensure those who are older, living with disability, or physical or mental illness are supported to live independently.
- 2.4 The Corporate Plan also includes our goal of maintaining an inclusive economy which enhances wellbeing with more opportunities for more people to participate in the growth and success of the town. The existing Closing the Gap Framework is a key initiative under this theme. Closing the Gap 2 will continue to meet this priority.
- 2.5 The Voluntary and Community Sector Compact 2023 to 2025 is a co-produced agreement between the Council and the VCS. The aim of the Compact is to promote understanding, engagement and co-operation between the Council and voluntary and community groups and organisations which make up the sector, in order to provide effective and joined up services for residents of Reading.
- 2.6 The Council aims to support people early, to focus on their strengths and assets in the community. Prevention approaches not only benefit residents but support the Council in

managing demand by intervening early and reduce future pressure on statutory and formal provision. For example, Closing the Gap contracts will be linked to the new Local Connector Service (delivered by the Red Cross) which has been commissioned to support Adult Social Care, to ensure that people contacting the Council can be directed, when appropriate, to community services for advice, guidance and support.

### **3. The Proposal**

- 3.1. It is within the policy context described above that the Council seeks to recommission the Closing the Gap Framework contracts and services, building on the work that has been achieved, taking into account the need to address growing levels of inequality and deprivation. This represents only one aspect of the Council's work with the VCS but it is important in supporting the Council to deliver on strategic priorities.
- 3.2 Funding preventative activities supports reduced future expenditure. Given the financial context and local needs, the emphasis for this funding is on addressing the most pressing needs for Reading's residents and how we can best achieve positive outcomes.

### **Current Position**

- 3.3 In order to inform the Closing the Gap 2 commission, the following steps have been taken:
- A Needs Analysis;
  - A review of the current contract procurement and monitoring arrangements;
  - Consultation with current and prospective providers, including monthly engagement sessions;
  - A working group of internal and external partners;
  - Consultation with funding stakeholders on grant conditions;
  - Engagement with providers in the community, who also represent residents, to determine the outcomes required from the commission.

### **Needs Analysis**

- 3.4 The Needs Analysis has drawn on a number of sources<sup>1</sup>. See *Appendix 1 – Needs Analysis - Closing the Gap 2* for full details.
- 3.5 Reading has both affluent and highly deprived areas within its borders. Within Reading there are some areas that are within the bottom 5% of the country for education, skills and training, and for income deprivation, affecting both children and adults. Areas with higher deprivation have poorer access to healthcare, lower life expectancy and higher rates of chronic diseases compared to wealthier areas.
- 3.6 Experiencing financial hardship is a major determinant of poor health outcomes, with people being more likely to suffer from stress, anxiety, depression, and other health conditions. The impact of debt on individuals can be seen in various ways, including lower

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<sup>1</sup> Main sources include:

Reading Borough Council Social Exclusion Analysis 2022  
Reading Joint Strategic Needs Assessment  
Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-30  
Berkshire Observatory  
PHE Mental Health Surveillance Tool  
Evidence of demand from reviews of RBC commissioned services delivered by VCS providers  
Office for National Statistics  
National Online Manpower Information Service  
Fingertips Public Health England Framework  
POPPI - Projecting Older People Population Information  
PANSI - Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information

standards of living such as reduced spending on food, breakdown of family and personal relationships, poor mental health and sleep problems. There is an 8-year gap in life expectancy between females in the most deprived areas of Reading compared to those in the most affluent areas, and a 7-year gap in life expectancy for males.

- 3.7 The significant increase in the number of Reading residents aged 65+ will affect the type and level of support required in the community. Loneliness and social isolation is particularly prevalent in older age groups, with digital isolation contributing to this. This can lead to depression and a serious decline in both physical health and wellbeing. It is predicted that we will see an increase in depression, dementia, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity and mobility issues in people over the age of 65, as a result of the growth in population.
- 3.8 Mental health problems in adults represent the largest single cause of disability in the UK. Mental health problems are also a leading cause of disability in children and young people and can have long-lasting effects. There is a strong socioeconomic gradient in mental health, with people of lower socioeconomic status having a higher likelihood of developing and experiencing mental health problems.
- 3.9 Many people in Reading experience health inequalities. These include people with sensory needs, physical disabilities, learning disabilities and autism, ethnically diverse communities, refugees and asylum seekers and people with HIV, as well as those who are economically disadvantaged.

#### **Review of current contract procurement and monitoring arrangements**

- 3.10 Following a review of the last procurement exercise - Closing the Gap 1 - a key challenge identified was aligning the services commissioned with the required outcomes for each key funding stakeholder and any associated grant conditions. For Closing the Gap 2, service specifications and key performance indicators will be clearly determined alongside the overarching outcomes to be delivered in order to meet the most pressing needs for Reading residents.
- 3.12 The current Closing the Gap contract arrangements are for 3 years (to October 2025). Longer contracts are ideal for developing strong, effective programmes and delivering long-term change. A longer contract will support bidders to plan and deliver sustainable services to meet needs over time and allow space for the programmes to develop and work in collaboration, thus supporting VCS growth with regard to how inequalities within Reading are tackled.
- 3.13 Since the start of the current Closing the Gap contract, the contract monitoring arrangements have been reviewed and adjusted in line with iterative feedback from providers. Providers have expressed positive feedback in relation to the changes already made and these have been incorporated into the new contract arrangements. The Closing the Gap contract monitoring process has matured, with the inclusion of onsite visits and in person meetings which support a shared collaborative approach.

#### **Consultation with current and prospective providers**

- 3.14 Officers have engaged regularly with providers to keep them informed and embed their feedback in the service specifications and procurement process. Prospective providers have been consulted on draft specifications via online and in person engagement sessions as well as having the opportunity to respond by e-mail. Their input on their development has been welcomed and taken into consideration.
- 3.15 A key theme identified within Closing the Gap engagement sessions, which is also supported by national evidence, has been the challenges that smaller VCS organisations

face to successfully bid on large-scale tenders. Providers expressed a need for a more proportionate procurement process in line with the contract values.

- 3.16 The VCS have fed back that they require greater flexibility in contracts in order to be able to respond to residents' needs and meet key performance indicators (KPIs). Officers have acted on all feedback from the VCS and are proposing that Closing the Gap 2 contracts and KPIs will be reviewed at the end of contract year one, to ensure that adjustments are made where appropriate.

### Option Proposed

- 3.17 A **project-based tiered procurement approach**; a full tender exercise for high value contracts and a Request for Quotation (RFQ) procurement exercise for lower value services, all of which will be monitored through robust contracts.

Stakeholders have worked together to identify the most pressing needs and develop focused service specifications to meet these needs. This will allow the Council a greater degree of control over the way that services are delivered and ensure that all priority areas are addressed.

- 3.18 **Separating the current Infrastructure Support contract** from the service delivery contracts by recommissioning these services five months later and remaining on this offset timescale in the future in order to better support the VCS.

- 3.19 The current Infrastructure service will be **extended** by five months, up to April 2026, to enable this separation with the intention of publishing the tender in November 2025.

- 3.20 Procurement colleagues have identified which procurement process can be used for each tender, as well as ways to reduce the burden to bidders as much as possible whilst still remaining compliant. The procurement approach for each contract is contingent on the contract value over the full life of the contract, which is up to 5 years.

Anything above the Procurement Contract Regulations 2015 threshold (£214,904 contract life value) will by necessity go out as a full tender, but anything below this can use a Request for Quotation or Request for Quotation Lite approach, which is a compliant but simplified process and allows for questions and paperwork to be reduced.

Additionally, the Light Touch Regime will be used where applicable. Light Touch contracts are defined by The Procurement Act 2023 and set out in the Procurement Regulations 2024. They are contracts for certain social, health, education and other public services and are subject to more flexible procurement rules. These are services provided directly to individuals or groups of people and therefore warrant special treatment and greater flexibility.

Each route to market will be agreed by the project team (including Procurement) and will be proportionate to the contract opportunity being published.

This approach ensures that the Council remains compliant within procurement regulations without risk of challenge, whilst at the same time ensuring that the commissioning process is proportionate to the value of the contract.

- 3.21 **Benefits of Proposed Approach**

**Proportionate:** The approach is more proportionate to the level of funding awarded.

**Rigorous:** All commissioned services will have clear specifications and outcomes and will be monitored through robust contracts.

**Inclusive:** This approach promotes the Council's goal, as outlined in the Corporate Plan, of maintaining an inclusive economy. It makes the process more accessible to smaller organisations with limited resources.

**Diverse:** With a reduced risk of smaller grassroots organisations not receiving funding, this allows for more diversity within the services procured as well as greater opportunity to support more of the diverse communities within Reading.

**Responsive:** A tiered procurement process demonstrates the Council's willingness to listen to and work with the voluntary and community sector to overcome barriers to success. It also allows the Council to be responsive to additional funding as it arises.

### 3.22 Service areas where a change is proposed

Due to the project-based approach, services are not being commissioned on a like-for-like basis. However, considerations have been made to ensure that areas of need that are currently funded continue to be resourced. Given funding limitations, we are focusing on specifications which cover core needs, with clear essential outcome targets, as well as more flexible outcomes which can be defined by bidders. This is in order to stipulate areas of priority so that nothing essential is missing from the commissions, whilst still allowing the VCS to identify what is achievable within the budget.

- 3.22. Social prescribing management in Reading is currently delivered by Reading Voluntary Action (RVA) and funded through Closing the Gap. Whilst core Social Prescribing management is funded in RVA through the Primary Care Network (£15,000), this is supplemented by £30,000 through Closing the Gap (via Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire Berkshire Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) contribution). This includes line management, development of cross-sector working and a quarterly Social Prescribing Forum. It has been agreed between BOB ICB and RBC that this contract should sit directly with the Primary Care Network in future. This is subject to the BOB ICB continuation of direct funding.

#### 3.22.2 Current Service Areas Where Change is Proposed:

**Infrastructure support funding and Ethnically Diverse Communities funding to be separated** - £130,000 allocated to Infrastructure Support and £68k allocated to Ethnically Diverse Communities Support.

Funding for ethnically diverse grassroots organisations currently sits within the Infrastructure Support contract. This element will be separated from Infrastructure Support and will sit in a new contract for Ethnically Diverse Communities Support.

The intention of the Infrastructure Support service is to support with building capacity, sustainability, representation, and the effectiveness of the VCS in Reading. The contract will support four core functions moving forward: leadership and advocacy; partnerships and collaboration; capacity building; and (support for) volunteering.

The new Ethnically Diverse Communities Support contract will benefit from increased resource from Public Health. Funding for this area of work will increase from £30,955 (within the current Infrastructure contract) to £68k in its own contract.

The benefit of this approach is that the Ethnically Diverse Communities Support contract will augment to meet demonstrated demand and need, whilst the Infrastructure service



specification can be made more specifically aligned to the infrastructure support needs of the VCS.

**3.33.3 Funding for older people's and younger people's wellbeing to be separated - £125k** allocated to the Ageing Population contract, £65k allocated to the Young People's Mental Health contract.

The proposal is to commission separate contracts based on specific areas of work.

The current Wellbeing Partnership contract predominantly provides services for older people, and includes services for younger people and the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) demographic. These areas will be separated out in the forthcoming commission. Funding for older people will sit in the Ageing Population contract, whilst wellbeing for younger people will sit within the Young People's Mental Health specification, so these areas of need will continue to be funded but within separate contracts.

The benefit of this approach is that RBC can be more precise in specifying the deliverables of each of these specialist contracts, based on population needs and a data driven approach. It allows both contracts to have fit for purpose KPIs and for the Young People's Mental Health contract to augment to meet demonstrated demand and need.

**3.33.4 HIV Support:** From £30,950 to £25,000

and

**Learning Disabilities and Autism:** Previously jointly funded at £58,721. Proposing separate funding: £25,000 for Autism Support, £25,000 for Learning Disability Support

As funding provision does not fully meet level of need, officers have sought to be proportionate in how the lower value contracts are allocated.

These are all lower value contracts, which have been reduced to be brought in line with the other lower value contracts. Some smaller contracts (for example HIV support) are Public Health priorities and therefore receive full funding from this grant, whereas others (such as Learning Disabilities & Autism) deliver on a minor element of Loneliness and Social Isolation for the Public Health Grant but primarily deliver on Adult Social Care outcomes around living well independently. These funding sources and their attached grant conditions impact on how much can be allocated against each contract area.

The smaller scale of these contracts allows for an RFQ Lite procurement approach.

The consequences of these funding reductions are reduced delivery and support to residents. The Learning Disabilities contract is particularly affected as it is currently the largest of the small contracts, being funded at £45,721 per annum. This contract is unlikely to continue to offer the current level of information and advice, as a Family Advisor role will be at risk. With the current delivery model, the reduction of one Family Advisor role would reduce the current provider's casework capacity by a third.

Day services will, however, remain operational. In addition to this Closing the Gap contract, a separate RBC commissioned service will continue to offer advocacy services to people who have a learning disability and there is also an RBC commission which will continue to offer provision addressing the gap in employment rate between those who are in receipt of long-term support for a learning disability and the overall employment rate.

Furthermore, it is expected that residents with a learning disability will be supported by contracts across Closing the Gap 2. For example, we know that people with a learning disability have higher rates of symptoms of common mental health problems and therefore should be supported via the Women's Wellbeing and Men's Mental Health contracts, as well as by Compass Recovery College which sits within RBC's Public Health team. It will be stipulated in service specifications, contracts and KPIs for other contracts to ensure accessibility and inclusivity.

### 3.22.5 Lead Mental Health Support contract

It is proposed that a **strategic** Mental Health contract be delivered in-house rather than commissioning it externally.

It has been proposed that a strategic Mental Health contract be delivered in-house, to be overseen by the Public Health team alongside Compass Recovery College. This would mean providing the service internally rather than commissioning it externally. This will take place from November 2025, when the current Closing the Gap contracts terminate.

The lead Mental Health contract is about **Primary Prevention and strategic system leadership**. This is a new service specification and is not the same as the current mental health service being delivered by Together for Mental Wellbeing. As such, there are no foreseen TUPE implications.

This funding will enable the Public Health team to lead on and co-produce the development of a primary prevention approach to Mental Health for Reading, with strategic oversight of the Mental Wellbeing group and how Reading delivers against priority 5 of the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It is about how we remove barriers to services and focus on prevention.

The aim of this service is to act as an overarching **strategic** mental health lead, supporting the VCS to collaborate systematically and sustainably around promoting good mental health and wellbeing, preventing mental health problems and suicide, reducing mental health inequalities and improving the lives of people experiencing and recovering from mental health problems.

The funding will be spent on:

- **An Advanced Mental Health Practitioner.** This post will be a new role identified as part of the Public Health restructure.
- **Resource for the Mental Wellbeing Group** partnership based on needs identified in the Mental Health Needs Analysis. The Mental Wellbeing Group partnership comprises of VCS organisations that deliver on Mental Health and Wellbeing in Reading.

This is not the only mental health funding within Closing the Gap. The CTG2 project-based procurement approach is more prescriptive, and therefore rather than having one mental health contract, it will include multiple contracts within priority areas. The current Mental Health contract holder (Together for Mental Health, a national provider) will be eligible to apply for other contract areas, such as Women's Wellbeing, Men's Mental Health and the mental health elements of the Refugee and Asylum Seekers Support contract. There will be a transition plan to ensure that service users currently supported by Together are able to access these commensurate services.

Delivering this service in-house represents better value for money due to reduced contract management, building on existing internal services, reducing duplication of work and allowing for more focused strategic oversight of the wider VCS mental health support offer.

This will also provide the additional benefits of improved collaborative working, increased focus on prevention and more efficiency in how residents access services. Residents' needs will continue to be met by the Compass Recovery College offer and the other Closing the Gap 2 mental health contract areas.

### **3.23 Separation of Infrastructure Support contract**

The purpose of the Infrastructure Support contract is to support with building capacity, sustainability, representation, and the effectiveness of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Reading. At present, VCS infrastructure support is commissioned alongside all other Closing the Gap services. Procuring infrastructure support at the same time as other large scale contracts risks destabilising the sector with too many fundamental changes. A separation of the infrastructure support element from the other services under Closing the Gap is recommended for Closing the Gap 2.

This separation allows the infrastructure support element to be a standalone exercise and signifies that these organisations are commissioned to support all voluntary and community sector activity, including advice and support with bid writing, not just those services that are commissioned under Closing the Gap 2. This would also serve to reduce the level of uncertainty in the sector throughout the commissioning process of Closing the Gap 2, as while others are going through a procurement process, the infrastructure support would remain in place up to and beyond the conclusion of the process.

An extension of 5 months to the current infrastructure support contracts would be required in order to achieve this separation successfully without negatively impacting the sector. In order to separate this contract out before rather than after, it would need to be reprocured 6 months prior to the Closing the Gap procurement, which is currently already in development. This is therefore not feasible.

This extended timeline also presents an opportunity for more effective co-production of the infrastructure support services, with greater input from the VCS. RVA (Reading Voluntary Action) have conducted a sector survey and an engagement session has been facilitated with the sector to focus specifically on what the VCS needs from an infrastructure organisation. An extended timeline will allow officers to develop a fit for purpose specification which reflects key feedback and consult the sector and internal colleagues further.

It is recommended that for future re-procurements, infrastructure support services continue to be separate from the service delivery contracts, in line with the proposed dates of the contract extension.

Officers are engaging with stakeholders to review the specification for this contract, as with all contracts under Closing the Gap. This will allow for greater alignment between delivery expectations and commissioning requirements.

## **Other Options Considered**

### **3.24 Do nothing**

The Council could decide not to reprocure under the Closing the Gap framework and budget elements remain with the relevant stakeholders.

If the Council does not reprocure, the existing contracts will expire on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025. The available funding could be used differently, however many of the current needs being met by the existing services would still need to be met by alternative services as they deliver some of the Council's key preventative outcomes. The Carers' Information and Advice service would still need to be recommissioned, or an internal offer developed, as it is a

statutory requirement to offer this service. The funding would still need to be used to meet key outcomes, for example Public Health Framework Outcomes.

This option is **not** recommended as the lack of an overarching framework through which to procure VCS services would reduce the level of strategic oversight that the Council has of services supporting the most vulnerable communities within Reading. By consolidating funding under one framework, the Council can also ensure equitable treatment of providers as they are subject to the same procurement processes and contract terms and conditions.

### 3.25 **Follow the same procurement approach as previously to recommission services**

When commissioning the current Closing the Gap framework, the Council identified three overarching outcomes that it wanted to achieve, inviting providers to outline how they would achieve these outcomes. Following the initial procurement process, gaps were identified in service provision which resulted in a 'Phase 2' of the procurement, for which clearer service specifications were required.

This option is **not** recommended in order to ensure that there will be no gaps in provision.

### 3.26 **Allocate grants for lower value services**

The Council could allocate grants to providers to deliver lower value services in order to meet identified needs.

This option is **not** recommended in order to ensure a robust procurement process for all services and best value for money. The Council is committed to ensuring that it is compliant with all procurement regulations and that the process for allocating and spending public money is fair and transparent. A grants process runs the risk of leaving the Council open to challenge, which would be mitigated by the use of the RFQ process.

### 3.27 **Keep the Infrastructure Support contract integrated with the wider Closing the Gap services**

The Council could commission the Infrastructure Support contract at the same time as the other Closing the Gap 2 contracts.

This option is **not** recommended. The separation and proposed extension ensures that the that infrastructure providers can support the VCS as effectively as possible during the Closing the Gap commission and beyond.

### 3.28 Using the learning and feedback gained previously, the intended approach will strengthen the Council's offer to residents in Reading by providing funding to the organisations that deliver the services which are most needed. In order to award contracts and complete the required preparation work in time for contracts to commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2025, the tender is intended to be published in **April 2025**, working under The Procurement Act 2023 and the Procurement Regulations 2024.

## **4 Contribution to Strategic Aims**

### 4.1 The proposed approach contributes to the Corporate Plan themes in the following ways:

**Healthy Environment** - A key intention of the programme is to improve the overall health and wellbeing of individuals and the community by directly targeting the needs of disadvantaged groups and the social determinants of poor health.

**Thriving Communities** - A key intention of the programme is to target and strengthen the community by harnessing the ideas and creativity of the community towards common purpose. A positive outcome will be a more self-reliant community which works cohesively for the good of its citizens to improve resilience and self-empowerment.

**Inclusive Economy** - the programme recognises that people and groups within Reading, by virtue of a range of interrelated factors - whether this be protected characteristics such as age, disability or race; or by unemployment, housing or poverty - experience poorer outcomes. By seeking to reduce the levels of inequality and deprivation of certain groups, the Commissioning programme will contribute to a more inclusive community in which all citizens have equal opportunity to fare well.

- 4.2 The VCS Commissioning programme reflects TEAM Reading values in the following ways:

**Together** - the programme brings together funding from key local partners. It recognises shared outcomes for all and works with the VCS and citizens of Reading towards common values. The procurement approach and extension to the infrastructure contract is the result of feedback from the VCS indicating the need for a proportionate process and their request for additional support for the next procurement.

**Efficiency** - By uniting resources under one framework, the VCS Commissioning programme is a way of achieving greater efficiency - streamlining outcomes, working collectively with the sector. By focusing on preventative early intervention at a community level, Closing the Gap reduces long term impact on statutory provision.

**Ambitious** – This is an ambitious programme but represents only one element of the Council's work with the VCS. It seeks to make a difference to Reading residents by working with partners to improve the well-being of the whole town, enabling all people to have equal opportunity, to achieve their potential and to support the life that matters to them.

**Make a Difference** - the VCS commissioning programme aims to improve outcomes for people and the community by addressing determinants of inequalities which will positively impact people's lives. Prevention makes a difference on outcomes in the long term, thereby reducing demand on statutory provision.

## 5 Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1 There are no known implications at this stage. This will continue to be taken into consideration throughout the procurement and evaluation process and once there is clarity on the contracts that will be awarded. It is worth noting that one of the key aims for this work is to secure local services for local people within their own neighbourhoods, thus reducing unnecessary travel.

## 6 Community Engagement

- 6.1 Officers have engaged with providers to understand the needs of each represented demographic and how Closing the Gap 2 can best deliver outcomes that align with these needs. Five engagement sessions have been held to discuss lessons learnt from the previous procurement and the needs in Reading. Providers have given feedback around contract monitoring, the procurement method, the terms and conditions of their existing contracts and how the Council engages with them moving forward.
- 6.2 Providers have been involved in identifying how Public Health outcomes relate to Closing the Gap, based on the Public Health Outcomes Framework. They have also been

consulted on the role of the Infrastructure Support contract and how this can best support the wider sector. Providers have also been invited to feed back on the proposed procurement approach and on the draft specifications and outcomes for each contract.

- 6.3 Providers have had opportunities to feed in service user needs, as their representatives. The new services commissioned under Closing the Gap 2 will require providers to work with service users in the development of their programmes to ensure ongoing co-production.
- 6.4 Officers have worked with the Carers' Partnership to engage directly with carers and people with lived experience to inform what the carers' service should look like.

## 7 Equality Implications

- 7.1 In order to meet grant conditions and to apportion the funds available to give Reading residents fairer access to services that they need, two service user groups will be impacted by a reduction in funding to services that support them; people affected by HIV and people with learning disabilities and their families. The reduction in funding brings these contracts in line with other commensurate contracts. If funding were to continue at the current amount, this would disproportionately affect other service user groups. Please see *Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment - Closing the Gap 2* for full details.

## 8 Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1 There are none.

## 9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 Procurement advice has informed the development of this project to ensure the appropriate procurement law and contractual guidelines are adhered to.

## 10 Financial Implications

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

The budget held for the Closing the Gap procurement sits within the DCASC Department (CC R5307) and is broken down as follows:

	2024/25 £000 FYI	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Contract Costs	1,327	1,451	1,451	1,451
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>1,327</b>	<b>1,451</b>	<b>1,451</b>	<b>1,451</b>
Income from:				
General Fund	-228	-228	-228	-228
Grant funding:				
Public Health	-663	-663	-663	-663
HRA	-130	-130	-130	-130
Refugee Resettlement	-35	-35	-35	-35
Better Care Fund	-110	-110	-110	-110
BCF Winter Pressures *	-	-74	-74	-74
Hardship **	-	-100	-	-
Additional ASC Support ***	-	-49	-49	-49

West Berks BFfC	-47 -15	-47 -15	-47 -15	-47 -15
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-1,368</b>	<b>-1,477</b>	<b>-1,404</b>	<b>-1,431</b>
Net Cost (+)/saving (-) ****	-41	-28	47	20

\* Hospital Discharge/Better Care Fund Winter Pressures funding not yet confirmed as the budget is pending, but this is a stand-alone contract, so if funding is not received the contract will not be committed, so the net impact is nil.

\*\* Hardship funding only if required – the issue related to the debt support procurement cannot be funded from another grant stream, but it has been agreed that it must be procured due to the level of need.

\*\*\* Post within ASC disestablished to provide an improved, value for money service. The post could not be recruited to within 24/25 – locums are being utilised in 2024/25.

\*\*\*\* Underspend in 2024/25 due to slight reductions in contracts. This funding is linked to the Better Care Fund so will be re-utilised as per the grant conditions.

There is currently a projected overspend in 2026/27 due to the hardship funding only being committed for 2025/26. The plan is to manage these contracts within the budget envelope where possible, including the planned inflation included in the MTFS. If this is not possible, a formal business case will be presented for the 2026/27 budget process as previously discussed at CMT.

## 10.2 Value for money

- Closing the Gap aims to support people through early intervention, using prevention for demand management and reduce future pressure on statutory and formal provision.
- Value for money is ensured through a competitive procurement process, prescriptive service specifications and robust contract management.
- The commissioning process will ensure partnership working, which will enable reach across the borough, thus reaching residents who may not otherwise access support until crisis point.

10.3 The budget split below (see 10.4) outlines funding sources and allocation of spend, as well as the procurement approach. It has been approved by funding stakeholders and working groups.

## 10.4 Risk assessment of key financial risks

Robust contracts will be in place for each service area to ensure delivery against outcomes.

The table below represents the level of spend for this commission and how it will be allocated. This spend allocation is the most up to date version and may be subject to further amendments once funding decisions are finalised. The overall principles will however remain the same.

It is important to note that some contracts have been disaggregated in order to commission on specialisms and targeted areas of need. For example, ACRE are currently commissioned for £30,955 per annum under the Infrastructure Contract to deliver support for Ethnically Diverse Communities. For CTG 2 this element has been separated out into its own commission (Ethnically Diverse Communities Support), thereby reducing overall funding towards Infrastructure. Funding for core Infrastructure delivery remains the same.

<b>Contract</b>	<b>Estimated annual cost</b>	<b>5-year contract total value</b>	<b>Procurement approach</b>	<b>Budget Source</b>
Carers' Information & Advice Support	£197,043	£985,215	<b>Full tender</b>	Better Care Fund, West Berkshire Council, BfC
Cost of Living Support	£174,000	£870,000	<b>Full tender</b>	Housing Revenue Account, Public Health Grant
VCS Infrastructure Support	£130,000	£650,000	<b>Full tender</b>	RBC Corporate contribution (funding currently held centrally within DCASC)
Ageing Population Support	£125,000	£625,000	<b>RFQ</b>	Public Health Grant
Women's Wellbeing Support	£100,000	£500,000	<b>RFQ</b>	Public Health Grant
Mental Health Support	£100,000	£500,000	<b>Internal</b>	Public Health Grant
Debt Support	£100,000	£500,000	<b>RFQ</b>	Hardship fund
Young People's Wellbeing Support	£65,000	£325,000	<b>RFQ</b>	Public Health Grant
Ethnically Diverse Communities Support	£68,000	£340,000	<b>RFQ</b>	Public Health Grant
Hospital to Home	£73,500	£367,500	<b>RFQ</b>	Better Care Fund
Refugee Support	£65,000	£325,000	<b>RFQ</b>	Refugee Resettlement Grant, Public Health Grant
Visual Impairment Support	£64,000	£320,000	<b>RFQ</b>	Adult Social Care, Public Health Grant
Men's Mental Health Support	£39,000	£195,000	<b>RFQ</b>	Public Health Grant
LGBTQ+ Support	£25,000	£125,000	<b>RFQ Lite</b>	Public Health Grant
Autism Support	£25,000	£125,000	<b>RFQ Lite</b>	Adult Social Care, Public Health Grant



Learning Disabilities Support	£25,000	£125,000	<b>RFQ Lite</b>	Adult Social Care, Public Health Grant
Deaf and Hearing Loss support	£25,000	£125,000	<b>RFQ Lite</b>	Adult Social Care, Public Health Grant
Physical Disabilities Support	£25,000	£125,000	<b>RFQ Lite</b>	Adult Social Care, Public Health Grant
HIV Support	£25,000	£125,000	<b>RFQ Lite</b>	Public Health Grant
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,450,543</b>	<b>£7,252,715</b>		

## 11 Timetable for Implementation

11.2 The key timescales for this work are:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Policy Committee	March 2025
Publish tender/Request for Quotes documentation	April 2025
Evaluate and award tenders	June – August 2025
Issue contract documents and liaise closely with providers ahead of starting the new contracts	September – October 2025
Closing the Gap 2 contracts commence	1 <sup>st</sup> November 2025

## 12 Background Papers

12.2 There are none.

## 13 Appendices

1. Needs Analysis - Closing the Gap 2
2. Equality Impact Assessment – Closing the Gap 2

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# **Closing the Gap 2**

## **Needs Analysis**

**November 2024**



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

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## **SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Purpose of Needs Analysis**

This Needs Analysis aims to identify the key areas of need in the community within Reading Borough to inform the Closing the Gap 2 Commissioning framework.

The document will provide context on barriers to people achieving positive outcomes. In addition to the data within this Needs Analysis, we are incorporating knowledge gathered through the monitoring of current Closing the Gap contracts, insights from engagement sessions with the local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and feedback from multiple stakeholders including Adult Social Care, Public Health and Health colleagues. Using these sources ensures that the approach taken for Closing the Gap 2 is well-rounded, evidence based and responsive to the needs of the community.

When developing Closing the Gap in 2021, the Council sought to align outcomes with its Corporate Strategy, Poverty Needs Analysis and the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The approach to Closing the Gap 2 builds on this - identifying the most pressing needs and developing focused specifications to meet these needs.

### **1.2 Methodology and Consideration**

This Needs Analysis updates and collates information about community support needs, focusing on health and wellbeing, poverty and inclusion to support the development of commissioning plans by RBC in this area.

Data within this Needs Analysis is accurate at the time this document is being created. This Needs Analysis is primarily informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis: Berkshire Observatory and the 2021 Census. It draws on the following local sources as well as national data:

- Reading Borough Council Social Exclusion Analysis 2022
- Reading Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-30
- Berkshire Observatory
- PHE Mental Health Surveillance Tool
- Evidence of demand from reviews of RBC commissioned services delivered by VCS providers
- Office for National Statistics
- National Online Manpower Information Service
- Fingertips Public Health England Framework
- POPPI - Projecting Older People Population Information
- PANSI - Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information

## 1.3 Executive Summary

### **Demographic Profile**

Reading's population is growing and despite being a relatively young demographic compared to England's average, the age 65+ population is increasing more rapidly than the town's general population. The number of people in this age group is predicted to increase by around 40% by 2043, whereas Reading's 0-19 year old population is predicted to **decrease** by almost 6%. The total population of Reading is expected to increase by 3.2%. (Demographic information is due to be updated in Spring 2025)

Reading has a diverse population, with 46.5% of residents being from minority ethnic groups (including White minorities). Ensuring the services commissioned via Closing the Gap 2 are accessible to these communities and are specific to the challenges they face will be a priority.

Reading has both affluent and highly deprived areas within its borders. Reading ranks as the third most unequal 'city' nationally in terms of wealth distribution. Within Reading there are some areas that are within the bottom 5% of the country for education, skills and training, and for income deprivation, affecting both children and older people. These pockets of extreme deprivation exist within generally deprived areas of the borough which are within the bottom 10% and 20% of areas of the country for overall deprivation. Areas with higher deprivation have poorer access to healthcare, lower life expectancy and higher rates of chronic diseases compared to wealthier areas.

According to Government data on UK population according to ethnicity, people from all ethnic minority groups except the Indian, Chinese, White Irish and White Other groups were more likely than White British people to live in the most overall deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England. Due to this marked disparity, there will be a strategic focus on ensuring that Closing the Gap 2 services are accessible to the people within the most deprived neighbourhoods in Reading.

### **Poverty and Debt**

Experiencing financial hardship is a major determinant of poor health outcomes, with people being more likely to suffer from stress, anxiety, depression, and other health conditions. The impact of debt on individuals can be seen in various ways, including lower standards of living such as reduced spending on food, breakdown of families and personal relationships, poor mental health and sleep problems. There is an 8-year gap in life expectancy between females in the most deprived areas of Reading compared to those in the most affluent areas, and a 7-year gap in life expectancy for males.

In-work poverty is a significant issue; there has been a large rise in the proportion of poor households where someone is in work. Employment status is also linked to mental health outcomes, with unemployed or economically inactive people having higher rates of common mental health problems than those employed.

People in families with high work intensity made up 17% of all people in poverty in 2022/23, which is an increase compared to 15% in 2021/22. This is a higher percentage than a decade earlier – 13% in 2012/13 – and it represents a large increase on the proportion in 1996/97 (9%).

People from low work intensity families comprised 46% of people living in poverty in 2022/23, which is a decrease on 2021/22 (47%). This is higher than the proportion a decade earlier (43% in 2012/13) and much higher than the proportion in 1996/97 (35%).<sup>1</sup>

Approximately 14% of Reading residents are disabled. Analysis shows that working-age adults who are disabled are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as those who are not.

This pattern also applies to fuel poverty. Households in the most deprived areas are disproportionately impacted by fuel poverty. Nationally, 18.8% of Ethnic Minority households were in fuel poverty compared to 12.4% for White households. People with a disability were also impacted the most with 17.3% being in fuel poverty compared to 10.9% for non-disabled people.

### **Ageing Population**

The significant increase in the number of Reading residents aged 65+ will affect the type and level of support required in the community. Loneliness and social isolation is particularly prevalent in older age groups, with digital isolation contributing to this. This can lead to depression and a serious decline in both physical health and wellbeing. It is predicted that we will see an increase in depression, dementia, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity and mobility issues in people over the age of 65.

Reading's ratio of excess winter deaths to expected deaths is above the national average and has increased significantly since 2018/19. The number of excess winter deaths depends on the temperature and the level of disease in the population as well as other factors, such as how well-equipped people are to cope with the drop in temperature. Those experiencing fuel poverty are likely to be significantly affected, which in Reading represents a disproportionate number of people from Ethnic minority groups.

Older people are also more likely to be digitally excluded, which can contribute to loneliness and isolation and also impact on their ability to access services.

With this increase in an ageing population there is an expected increase in the number of people with dementia, further information is found in section 4.4 of this Needs Analysis.

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Mental health problems in adults represent the largest single cause of disability in the UK. Mental health problems are also a leading cause of disability in children and young people and can have long-lasting effects. A growing body of evidence, mainly from high-income countries, has shown that there is a strong socioeconomic gradient in mental health, with people of lower socioeconomic status having a higher likelihood of developing and experiencing mental health problems.

People with severe mental illness (SMI), such as psychosis and bipolar disorder, have a life expectancy of up to 20 years shorter than the general population. Much like inequities in physical health, mental illness is also closely linked to broader social inequalities which are complex and interrelated, such as unemployment, discrimination and social exclusion.

The Public Health Outcomes Framework indicates that the suicide rate for males over the age of 10 years is higher in Reading than the national average. In 2018-22 in Reading, suicide rates among people aged 25-44 and those aged 45-64 were higher among males compared with females. This aligns with the national position where male suicide rates are

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<sup>1</sup> [In-work poverty trends - The Health Foundation](#)



higher in males than females.<sup>2</sup> When compared with Reading's Local Authority Peer Group statistics, the number of suicides (all genders) in Reading 2023 (11) are similar to that of Slough (12) and Harrow (12) however areas such as Coventry (31), Barnet (27) and Hounslow (22) are considerably higher.<sup>3</sup>

Community Participatory Action Research (CPAR) in Reading (2021-22) considered the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of ethnic minority men in Reading. It found that isolated men were worst affected and highlighted the value of preventative approaches. It also further highlighted the correlation between poverty and mental health and the need for clearer, easy to access information for diverse communities.

One in five children and young people in England aged eight to 25 had a probable mental disorder in 2023. Addressing mental health problems with a preventative approach means supporting young people to engage with suitable services early to prevent a further decline to their mental wellbeing.

Research has found that increased exposure to 'blue space' (defined as 'outdoor environments – either natural or manmade – that prominently feature water and are accessible to people') improves mental health, particularly psychosocial wellbeing, and has physiological benefits. Research also finds that gardening can have a wide range of psychological and physiological health benefits.

### **Loneliness and Social Isolation**

A large body of research shows that social isolation and loneliness have a serious impact on physical and mental health, quality of life, and longevity. The effect of social isolation and loneliness on mortality is comparable to that of other well-established risk factors such as smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity.

Reading falls in line with the national average of 22.6% of adults feeling isolated, however despite this, we realise that this is not the case for all wards within Reading given the disparity in wealth and health between different areas of the borough.

The risk of social isolation is most prevalent in older adults, ethnically diverse groups, people with mental health needs or learning disabilities, sensory needs, people in the LGBTQIA+ community, those with an HIV diagnosis and refugees and asylum seekers. Studies around the level of community cohesion and its impact on people's mental wellbeing indicate that areas with higher levels of social cohesion experience lower rates of mental health problems than those in neighbourhoods with lower levels of cohesion.

### **Women's Wellbeing**

We know that women are three times more likely than men to experience common mental health problems. Between 209 and 314 women in Reading were estimated to have experienced mild-moderate depressive illness and anxiety, whilst between 314 and 627 were estimated to have experienced adjustment disorders and distress.

Research suggests that women experiencing domestic abuse are more likely to experience mental health problems. In contrast, women with mental health problems are more likely to be domestically abused, with 30-60% of women with mental health problems have experienced domestic violence. Domestic violence is associated with depression, anxiety, PTSD and substance abuse in the general population.

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<sup>2</sup> [Male-to-female ratio of suicide rate, 2021](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>

### **Tackling Health Inequalities**

Many people in Reading experience health inequities. These include people with sensory needs, physical disabilities, learning disabilities and autism, ethnically diverse communities, refugees and asylum seekers and people with HIV, as well as those who are economically disadvantaged.

Through Closing the Gap 2, we aim to support communities that face a higher risk of poor health outcomes by working to address the social determinants like poverty, exclusion and limited access to appropriate support which exacerbate these inequalities.

## **SECTION 2 – DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF READING**

### **2.1 Population Age**

Reading's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment<sup>4</sup> provides information about Reading's demographic profile, which influences residents' needs within the community. Some key findings include:

- The Office for National Statistics estimated Reading's population as 178,196 people in mid-2023.
- Reading has a younger population than that of neighbouring areas and the national average, with 70% of its population aged between 15-64 years and older people representing 12% of the population, compared to 18.41% nationally.
- Despite the younger-than-average population, the proportion of older people, including the very old, in the population is increasing, whilst the number of working age adults is predicted to decrease over time.
- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) predicts an overall population increase in Reading of 3.2% by 2043 (Office for National Statistics mid-2018 based population projections). However, within this total the number of residents aged 65+ is projected to increase by just over 40%. The number of 0-19 year olds is projected to decrease by almost 6%.
- New projections will be available in Spring 2025.

### **2.2 Diverse Population**

Reading's Tackling Inequalities Strategy uses the 2021 Census to demonstrate that the proportion of Reading residents from ethnic minority groups (including White minorities) has now risen to 46.5%, from 34.7% in 2011, and that the most common languages spoken in the borough after English are now Polish, Nepalese, and Romanian<sup>5</sup>.

As demonstrated by data within the Berkshire Observatory (2021 Census Data), Reading has a highly ethnically diverse community that exceeds that of the rest of the South East and England, as shown in Table 2 below. Reading also has a higher population of people that were born in Africa; the Middle East and Asia; the Americas and the Caribbean. Ensuring the services commissioned via Closing the Gap 2 are accessible to these communities and are specific to the challenges they face will be a priority.

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<sup>4</sup> [Reading JSNA People 2023 UPDATE | Reading | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(berkshireobservatory.co.uk\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Committee Report Template 2020 \(reading.gov.uk\)](#)

Of the Reading population, 115,894 people (67%) were born in the UK:

<b>Table 1 – Reading Residents’ Country of Birth</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>South East</b>	<b>England</b>
<b>Europe</b>	138567	8442793	50730043
<b>Europe (%)</b>	<b>79.5%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>89.8%</b>
<b>Africa</b>	8081	235197	1558199
<b>Africa (%)</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>
<b>Middle East and Asia</b>	23081	450868	3241701
<b>Middle East and Asia (%)</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>4.9%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>
<b>Americas and the Caribbean</b>	3902	113825	790002
<b>Americas and the Caribbean (%)</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>

Source: Berkshire Observatory data

<b>Table 2 – Ethnic Profile of Reading</b>			
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>South East</b>	<b>England</b>
<b>Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh</b>	30841	650545	5426392
<b>Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh (%)</b>	<b>17.7%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>9.6%</b>
<b>Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African</b>	12532	221584	2381724
<b>Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African (%)</b>	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>
<b>Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups</b>	8962	260871	1669378
<b>Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups (%)</b>	<b>5.1%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>White</b>	116886	8009380	45783401
<b>White (%)</b>	<b>67.1%</b>	<b>86.3%</b>	<b>81%</b>
<b>Other ethnic group</b>	5002	135683	1229153
<b>Other ethnic group (%)</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>

Source: Berkshire Observatory data

## 2.3 Deprivation in Reading

Despite its status as an economic hub, Reading has both affluent and highly deprived areas within its borders. Reading ranks as the third most unequal ‘city’ nationally in terms of wealth distribution<sup>6</sup>.

RBC’s Tackling Inequalities Strategy 2023–2026 highlights the most recent national analysis of deprivation<sup>7</sup>; within Reading there are some areas that are within the bottom 5% of the country for education, skills and training, and for income deprivation, affecting both children and older people<sup>8</sup>. These pockets of extreme deprivation exist within generally deprived areas of the borough which are within the bottom 10% and 20% of areas of the country for overall deprivation. The priority of reducing ‘the difference in health between different groups of people’ was consistently identified as the most important issue in public engagement exercises that led to the creation of the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-30<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.centreforcities.org/>

<sup>7</sup> IMD 2019 & 2021 Census

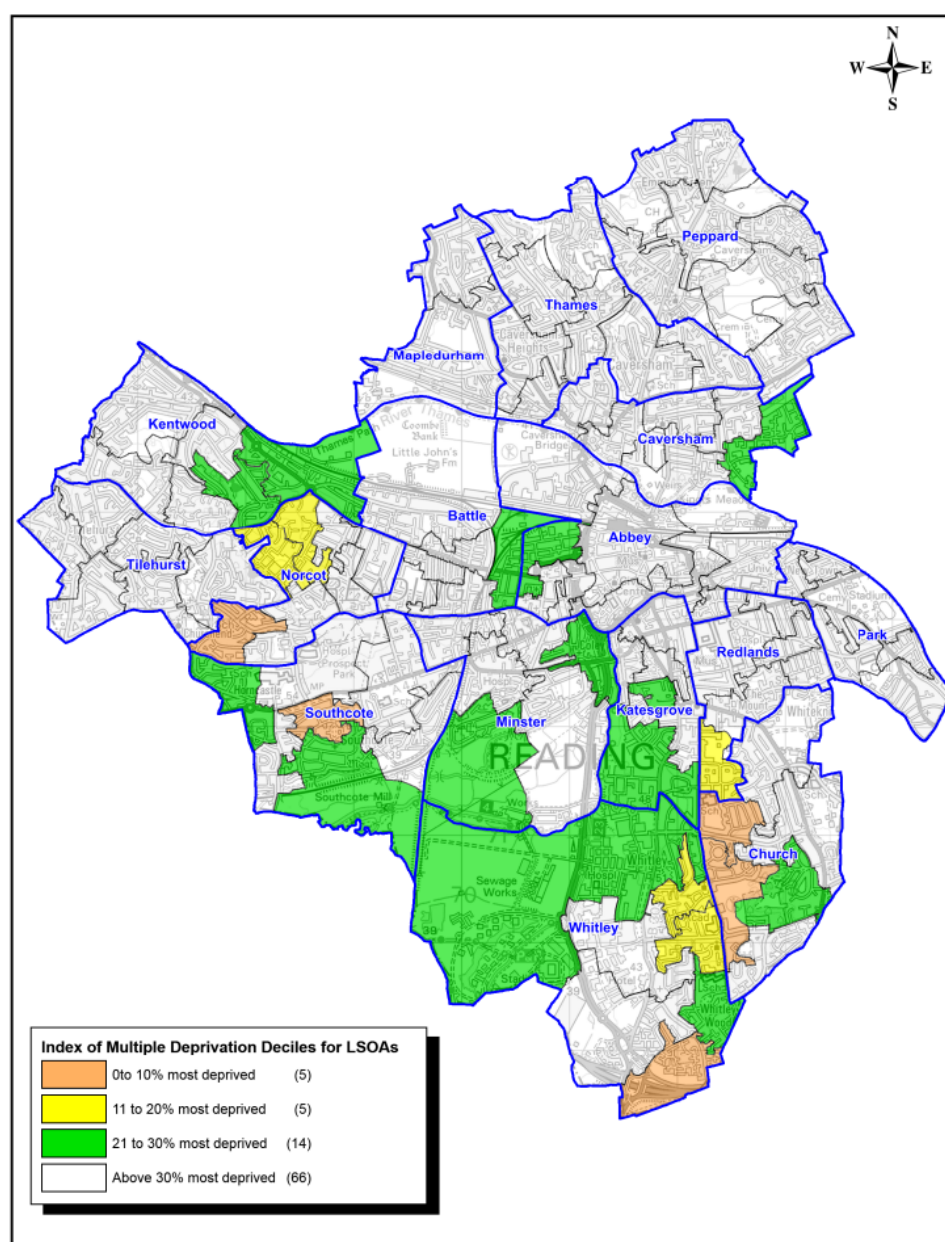
<sup>8</sup> [Committee Report Template 2020 \(reading.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 2030 Dec 20211.pdf \(westberks.gov.uk\)](#)

The Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 to 2030 highlights that health outcomes tend to be worse in the pockets of deprivation across Reading. These differences mean that the life expectancy of our population varies depending on where people live. Data from the Berkshire Observatory shows there is an 8-year gap in life expectancy for females in more deprived areas of Reading and 7-year gap in life expectancy for males. *See Appendix Section 1 for Marmot Indicators, which provide further insight into the inequality in life expectancy in the least and most deprived deciles of Reading.*

The figure below demonstrates the difference in levels of affluence and deprivation within the borough's borders.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 1 – Index of Multiple Deprivation in Reading**



Source: Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

<sup>10</sup> [Berkshire Observatory – Reading – Deprivation – Map](#)

The significance of this disparity is that areas with higher deprivation have poorer access to healthcare, lower life expectancy and higher rates of chronic diseases compared to wealthier areas. The Index of Multiple Deprivation highlights that some of Reading's wards are among the most deprived in Berkshire and as such, people living in these areas will experience adverse effects on their wellbeing, so they will need a higher level of support from Primary Care Networks and the Local Authority. This indicates an incongruity between the level of need for services and the access available.

According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019), Reading as a whole is ranked the 141st (rank of average score) most deprived out of 317 local authorities in the country, compared with 142nd most deprived in 2015. There are 5 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Reading within the most deprived 10% nationally, compared with 2 in 2015. Super Output Areas (SOAs) are a set of geographical areas developed following the 2001 census. Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) typically contain 4 to 6 OAs with a population of around 1500. This data further highlights the disparity in levels of deprivation within Reading and indicates that overall, the level of deprivation compared to other Local Authority areas did not improve between 2015 and 2019.

According to Government data on UK population relating to ethnicity, people from all ethnic minority groups except the Indian, Chinese, White Irish and White Other groups were more likely than White British people to live in the most overall deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England. People from the Pakistani ethnic group were the most represented, at over 3 times as likely as White British people to live in the most overall deprived 10% of neighbourhoods<sup>11</sup>.

Due to this marked disparity, there will be a strategic focus on ensuring that Closing the Gap 2 services are accessible to the people within the most deprived neighbourhoods in Reading.

## **SECTION 3 – POVERTY AND DEBT**

### **3.1 Impact of Poverty and Debt on Health and Mental Wellbeing**

Addressing poverty and debt is not only focused on supporting people with their financial stability, but also a principal point of focus to support them with their wellbeing. Experiencing financial difficulties is linked directly to people having poorer health outcomes, with people being more likely to suffer from stress, anxiety, depression, and other health conditions. As a result of their financial difficulties, people suffering from these poorer health outcomes will also face barriers accessing healthcare, nutritious food, and safe housing, this further exacerbated these poor health outcomes creating a cycle that is difficult to escape. Prevention, in this case, is focused on supporting people to break this cycle before it leads to more complex and costly level of health and social care intervention.

13.8% of Reading residents are disabled<sup>12</sup>. Analysis shows that working-age adults who are disabled are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as those who are not (38% and 17% respectively)<sup>13</sup>.

The Council's 2022 Social Exclusion Analysis found that nationally, income inequality widened in 2018 for the first time in 10 years. This is due to a rise in wages combined with a reduction

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<sup>11</sup> [People living in deprived neighbourhoods - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/ethnicity-facts-figures)

<sup>12</sup> Census 2021

<sup>13</sup> ibid

in benefits, resulting in incomes for the richest fifth of the population rising by 4.7% and incomes for the poorest fifth of the population reducing by 1.6%.<sup>14</sup>

## **3.2 Definitions**

### **3.2.1 Poverty**

There are several definitions of poverty. For example, the government prefers to use 'absolute poverty' and often excludes housing costs – but when this Needs Analysis refers to 'poverty' it means relative poverty, where households have less than 60% of contemporary median income after housing costs.<sup>15</sup>

### **3.2.2 Deprivation**

Deprivation encompasses a wide range of an individual's or household's living conditions. People may be living in poverty if they lack the financial resources to meet their needs, whereas people can be regarded as deprived if they lack any kind of resources, not just income.

## **3.3 Debt**

As outlined in the Council's 2022 Social Exclusion Analysis, for many people already struggling, the Covid pandemic contributed to a financial crisis and has pushed millions into financial hardship. Nearly one in three households lost income because of coronavirus, meaning people struggled to pay bills and many fell into debt<sup>16</sup>. In addition to the cost of living crisis, many have had to turn to credit or debit in order to manage.

- In 2022, the average total debt per household was £63,582
- It now takes 21 years on average to save for a first time buyer house deposit, saving at the average rate out of the average UK income<sup>17</sup>
- People who need debt advice are more likely to be aged under 35 and have children, come from an ethnic minority community and be a social or private tenant in a low-income household<sup>18</sup>

The impact of debt on individuals can be seen in various ways, including lower standards of living such as reduced spending on food, breakdown of families and personal relationships, poor mental health and sleep problems.

## **3.4 Employment status**

Within Reading there are 5,600 out-of-work benefit claimants over the age of 16+. See *Appendix Section 2 for further detail*. Employment status is also linked to mental health outcomes, with unemployed or economically inactive people having higher rates of common mental health problems than those employed.<sup>19</sup>

In-work poverty is a significant issue; there has been a large rise in the proportion of poor households where someone is in work. Around two-thirds (68%) of working-age adults in poverty live in a household where at least one adult is in work, the highest proportion since

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-47370739>, BBC News, February 2019

<sup>15</sup> [Centre for Mental Health Poverty MH Briefing.pdf](#)

<sup>16</sup> Citizens Advice, Jan 2021

<sup>17</sup> UK Debt Service March 2022

<sup>18</sup> Money & Pensions Service 2022

<sup>19</sup> [How employment status affects our health - The Health Foundation](#)



records began in 1996/97<sup>20</sup>. Part-time worker poverty rates are more than double the poverty rates of full-time workers (23% compared with 10%) and self-employed workers are twice as likely to be in poverty than employees (23% compared with 11%)<sup>21</sup>

### **3.5 Digital Exclusion**

Research carried out by the Whitley Researchers in collaboration with the University of Reading in 2020 indicates that the most important barrier to overcome is lack of knowhow (basic skills and understanding), followed by lack of equipment and good connectivity, often due to limited affordability. Motivation is also an important factor, with a third of those interviewed resisting use of the internet, primarily due to lack of confidence. Although digital exclusion has links to deprivation, it is particularly relevant to older people and therefore referenced in further detail in section 4.6.

### **3.6 Fuel Poverty**

A new definition of fuel poverty was introduced in 2021. This is the 'Low Income Low Energy Efficiency' (LILEE) definition of fuel poverty stating that a household is fuel poor if:

- They are living in a property with an energy efficiency rating of band D, E, F or G
- Their disposable income (income after housing costs and energy needs) is below the poverty line.

Fuel poverty is affected by a household's income, their fuel costs, and their energy consumption which can be affected, in return, by the energy-efficiency of the household's dwelling.

Poor energy efficiency dwellings will require more fuel for heating purposes, and, as a consequence, more CO2 emissions will be produced. Energy efficiency improvements are key as they reduce energy and fuel consumption and, as a result, fuel poverty.

Households in the most deprived areas and people who are the most at risk will be disproportionately impacted. The Department for Health and Social Care Mental Health and Wellbeing JSNA has data demonstrating these inequalities; when separated into ethnicity 18.8% of Ethnic Minority households were in fuel poverty compared to 12.4% for White households. People with a disability were also impacted the most with 17.3% being in fuel poverty compared to 10.9% for non-disabled people.<sup>22</sup>

In 2021, within Reading 10.5% of households are in fuel poverty, this is compared to 9.7% in the broader South East and 13.1% as the national average. Given the disparities in wealth across Reading, we know that the percentage will be substantially more prevalent in areas of higher deprivation.

### **3.7 Excess Winter Deaths**

The colder months present significant health risks for older adults, especially those in deprived areas who may struggle with fuel poverty. Ensuring that vulnerable people are aware of support available, whether that be national schemes, VCS support or warm spaces, it is important that work takes place in these areas to reduce this number. As Reading has an

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<sup>20</sup> Households Below Average Income 2020/21; DWP

<sup>21</sup> Households Below Average Income 2020/21; DWP

<sup>22</sup> [Mental Health and Wellbeing JSNA | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care \(phe.org.uk\)](https://www.phe.org.uk/publications/mental-health-and-wellbeing-jsna-fingertips)

ageing population, the development of these resources will need to be a consideration moving into the future. More information on this is provided in section 4.5 as this is particularly relevant to the ageing population in Reading.

### 3.8 Disability

Disabled people face a higher risk of poverty and have done so for at least the last 20 years. Currently, 32% of disabled people are in poverty (excluding disability benefits), a rate that has remained broadly constant since 2013/14. The difference is particularly stark for working-age adults: those who are disabled are more than twice as likely to live in poverty than those who are not (38% and 17% respectively)<sup>23</sup>.

Closing the Gap 2 will address the above areas of need in line with the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people.
- Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults.
- Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives.
- Help families and children in early years.

## SECTION 4 – AGEING POPULATION

### 4.1 Older Adults in Reading

According to the ONS 2018-based population projections, **the proportion of the population aged 60+** will rise from 17.1% in 2020 to 23.1% by 2043.<sup>24</sup>

Table 3 – Projected Number of Older Residents by Age Bracket				
Age	2020 estimates	% of total	2043 projections	% of total
60+	27,455	17.1%	38,617	23.1%
80+	5,752	3.6%	9,790	5.9%
90+	412	0.3%	2,009	1.2%

Sources: ONS mid-year estimates 2020, ONS population projections 2018-based

At present, Reading's population is generally younger than the UK average, however this population is gradually ageing with a growing proportion of older adults. The proportion of older people aged 65+ increased by 17.2% between 2011 and 2021.<sup>25</sup> This demographic shift is expected to increase the demand for health and social care services, especially in areas like dementia care, support for chronic health conditions, tackling social isolation and the impacts that has on their wellbeing.

Based on the 2021 Census: <sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> [Social Exclusion Analysis | Reading](#)

<sup>24</sup> 2017-based population projections, ONS

<sup>25</sup> Census, Office for National Statistics

<sup>26</sup> [2021 Census](#)



- 58.6% of people aged 65 and over in Reading reported being in good health and 41.4% not in good health (which is nearly 8,500 people).
- 6,564 people aged 65 and over were disabled (based on the 2010 Equality Act), which is nearly 1 in 3 (32.0%). Of these, 43.3% reported that their day-to-day activities were limited a lot.
- 9.6% of people 65 and over provided unpaid care to family and friends (845 older people in Reading provided over 50 hours of unpaid care a week).
- 2.0% of people 65 and over did not have central heating in their homes.

Among people aged 65 years and over, 1,561 people were predicted to have dementia, 6,987 cardiovascular disease, 369 bronchitis/emphysema, 2,698 diabetes, 6,585 obesity, and 4,063 were predicted to have mobility issues (unable to manage at least one activity on their own<sup>27</sup>. All of these conditions among people aged 65 years and over are predicted to increase over the coming years.

National estimates from 2022/23 found that the top five most common impairment types reported among disabled State Pension age adults (aged 66 and over) were: mobility (69%), stamina, breathing or fatigue (46%), dexterity (33%), hearing (22%), and vision impairments (18%)<sup>28</sup>. All of these are linked to an increased likelihood of hospital admission and the need for long-term care and support.

## 4.2 Loneliness and Social Isolation

1.4 million older people in the UK are often lonely<sup>29</sup>. More than 2 million people in England over the age of 75 live alone, and more than a million older people say they go over a month without speaking to a friend, neighbour or family member<sup>30</sup>. People can become socially isolated for a variety of reasons, such as getting older or weaker, no longer being the hub of their family, leaving the workplace, the deaths of spouses and friends, or through disability or illness. Loneliness and social isolation can lead to depression and a serious decline in both physical health and wellbeing<sup>31</sup>.

## 4.3 Depression

Depression affects around 22% of men and 28% of women aged 65 years and over, yet it is estimated that 85% of older people with depression receive no help at all from the NHS.<sup>32</sup> In 2023 according to POPPI there are 1,865 people in Reading over 65 who have depression, this is predicted to increase up to 2,144 by 2030.

## 4.4 Dementia

It is estimated that the number of people living with dementia worldwide is 44 million, and this is predicted to double by 2030.

Dementia UK states that age is the biggest risk factor for dementia. On average two in 100 people aged 65 to 69 years have dementia, and this figure rises to 19 in 100 for those aged

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<sup>27</sup> [POPPI](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Family Resources Survey](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Loneliness research and impact | Age UK](#)

<sup>30</sup> [Loneliness in older people - NHS](#)

<sup>31</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>32</sup> [Older people: statistics | Mental Health Foundation](#)

85 to 89<sup>33</sup>. The table below indicates the projected number of people in Reading living with dementia between 2020-2035.

<b>Table 4 – Projected Number of People with Dementia up to 2040 in Reading</b>					
<b>Age Range</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>2035</b>	<b>2040</b>
65-69	101	106	121	126	124
70-74	152	155	177	204	213
75-79	270	276	270	311	360
80-84	333	345	422	411	477
85-89	363	378	399	525	504
90 and over	342	377	401	495	589
Total population aged 65 and over	1,561	1,637	1,789	2,071	2,267

Source: POPPI data<sup>34</sup>

A diagnosis of dementia will impact a person's wellbeing as well as that of any carers and family they have. A holistic wellbeing offer that supports people in this cohort can improve their mental wellbeing. This is important as studies have shown that improved mental wellbeing as well as social engagement and emotional support can slow the progression of dementia.<sup>35</sup>

#### 4.5 Excess Winter Deaths

Excess Winter Deaths Index is the excess winter deaths measured as the ratio of extra deaths from all causes that occur in all those aged 85 and over in the winter months compared with the expected number of deaths, based on the average of the number of non-winter deaths in those aged 85 and over. The number of excess winter deaths depends on the temperature and the level of disease in the population as well as other factors, such as how well-equipped people are to cope with the drop in temperature.

Reading's ratio of excess winter deaths to expected deaths is above the national average and has increased significantly since 2018/19<sup>36</sup>.

<b>Table 5 – Excess Winter Deaths Ratio to Expected Deaths</b>		
	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2018/19</b>
<b>Reading</b>	<b>29.5%</b>	<b>17.0%</b>
<b>SE</b>	17.4%	14.3%
<b>England</b>	17.4%	15.1%

Source: Public Health England Health Profile

<sup>33</sup> RBC Residential Dementia Needs Analysis 2022

<sup>34</sup> [Projecting Older People Population Information System \(poppi.org.uk\)](https://poppi.org.uk)

<sup>35</sup> [Social engagement before and after dementia diagnosis in the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/)

<sup>36</sup> [Social Exclusion Analysis | Reading](#)

## 4.6 Digital Exclusion

Digital exclusion is when an individual experiences a lack of internet access and/or has low levels of digital literacy and skills. This issue can result in people being excluded from a whole range of online services, from banking to buying groceries to accessing job opportunities. They may be forced to pay more than others for goods and services and may suffer from isolation and loneliness. The pandemic has now significantly increased the need to be able to do things online, and this is likely to continue.

Those aged 70 years or older, those living alone, those with a condition that limits their use of communications services, and those who are financially vulnerable are more likely to be digitally excluded. Age is the characteristic that is most likely to identify digital exclusion, and those aged 70+ are significantly more likely to be digitally excluded than all UK adults. Four in ten of the UK population aged 70+ are digitally excluded (compared to 10% of UK adults overall)<sup>37</sup>. A study by Age UK Berkshire in 2021 found that although a large majority of 50-64 year olds (88%) and 65-74 year olds (75%) in England use the internet every day or almost every day, less than half of those (46%) aged 75+ use the internet.

Although Reading is relatively 'digitally included' as a whole, there are many areas of the community which experience exclusion.

Closing the Gap 2 will address the above areas of need in line with the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults.
- Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people.

## SECTION 5 – MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

### 5.1 Mental Health

The World Health Organisation defines mental health as 'A state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community'<sup>38</sup>. Mental health is also often used to describe a spectrum from mental health problems, conditions, illnesses and disorders through to mental wellbeing or positive mental health.

We know that mental health problems in adults represent the largest single cause of disability<sup>39</sup> in the UK. Mental health problems are also a leading cause of disability in children and young people and can have long-lasting effects; 50% of those with lifetime mental illness experience symptoms by age 14<sup>40</sup>.

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, mental ill health was one of the most prevalent forms of illness in the UK<sup>41</sup>, accounting for over a fifth of all illness. One in six people experience

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<sup>37</sup> Ofcom 2020, <http://www.broadbanduk.org/2020/06/02/ofcom-publishes-digital-exclusion-analysis>

<sup>38</sup> [Health and Well-Being \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/health-topics/mental-health)

<sup>39</sup> [NHS England » Community mental health services](https://www.nhs.uk/health-topics/mental-health-services)

<sup>40</sup> [Children and young people: statistics | Mental Health Foundation](https://www.mentalhealthfoundation.org.uk/children-and-young-people/statistics)

<sup>41</sup> Office for National Statistics, 2017

diagnosable mental health difficulties at any time, at a cost of over £119 billion in England alone<sup>42</sup>.

Within the Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health Prevention Planning there are a number of socioeconomic and environmental factors that function as a barrier to someone having good mental health, such as poverty, discrimination, access to education, employment, transport, housing and support for the most vulnerable people<sup>43</sup>. In supporting people with socioeconomic challenges we can work to reduce the impact this is having on their mental wellbeing and in some cases may reduce the cause of their poor mental health, this will support them in leading healthier lives.

A growing body of evidence, mainly from high-income countries, has shown that there is a strong socioeconomic gradient in mental health, with people of lower socioeconomic status having a higher likelihood of developing and experiencing mental health problems.

## 5.2 Local prevalence of Mental Ill-Health

When looking at the Public Health Framework for estimated prevalence of common mental health disorders for people over 16 and over 65, Reading has a higher percentage than the national average for both population groups. See *appendix section 3*. We also know that due to the unequal wealth distribution in Reading, this need will be significantly more pronounced in Reading's areas of deprivation.

In 2023/24, nearly 2,300 people (all ages) had a diagnosis of a mental health problem recorded on their GP records in Reading. In the same timeframe, there were 3,148 new cases of depression recorded on GP records among people aged 18 and over. The incidence of new cases locally was among the second highest quintile in England<sup>44</sup>. The excess risk of mortality under 75 (between people with and without a severe mental illness) was significantly higher in Reading compared with England in 2020-22<sup>45</sup>.

When compared with Reading's Local Authority Peer Group statistics, the number of suicides (all genders) in Reading 2023 (11) are similar to that of Slough (12) and Harrow (12) however areas such as Coventry (31), Barnet (27) and Hounslow (22) are considerably higher.<sup>46</sup>

As outlined in the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy, inequities also exist in adult mental ill-health across protected characteristics, including sexual orientation, sex, ethnicity, and whether they belong to socially excluded groups (e.g. people experiencing homelessness, asylum and refugees). People with severe mental illness (SMI), such as psychosis and bipolar disorder, have a life expectancy of up to 20 years shorter than the general population<sup>47</sup>. Much like inequities in physical health, mental illness is also closely linked to broader social inequalities which are complex and interrelated, such as unemployment, discrimination and social exclusion.

Reducing mental health inequalities is key given the socio-economic disparities and ethnic diversity within Reading. The Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health<sup>48</sup> highlights key factors which need to be addressed:

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<sup>42</sup> Centre for Mental Health, 2020

<sup>43</sup> [Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health Prevention planning \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>44</sup> [Mental Health and Wellbeing JSNA](#)

<sup>45</sup> [Severe Mental Illness](#)

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>

<sup>47</sup> <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2018/12/18/health-matters-reducing-health-inequalities-in-mental-illness/>

<sup>48</sup> [Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- Protective factors – maternal and infant mental health, early years support, family and parenting support, connecting with others and forming good relationships, good education, stable, secure, good quality and affordable housing, good quality work, a healthy standard of living, accessible safe and green outdoor space, arts and cultural activities, community cohesion.
- Risk factors – poverty, discrimination, socio-economic inequalities, child neglect and abuse, unemployment, poor quality work, debt, drug and alcohol misuse, homelessness, loneliness, violence, discrimination.<sup>49</sup>

### 5.3 Men's Mental Health

The Public Health Outcomes Framework indicates that the suicide rate for males over the age of 10 years is higher in Reading than the national average. In 2018-22 in Reading, suicide rates among people aged 25-44 and those aged 45-64 were higher among males compared with females, and more years of life were lost to suicide among males aged 15-74 compared with females<sup>50</sup>. In the last year, the prevalence of suicide is highest in the 40-59 age group and the White European population<sup>51</sup>. Men living in the most deprived areas are 51% more likely to have depression than those living in areas that are not deprived.

National data from 2019 indicates that there were 5,691 suicides registered in England and Wales that year:

- Of these, three-quarters were among men, which has been the case since the mid-1990s;
- Three times as many men as women die by suicide;
- Men report lower levels of life satisfaction than women, according to the government's national wellbeing survey;
- Men are less likely to access psychological therapies than women: only 36% of referrals to NHS talking therapies are for men;
- Men are nearly three times as likely as women to become dependent on alcohol and three times as likely to report frequent drug use.<sup>52</sup>

Community Participatory Action Research (CPAR) in Reading (2021-22) considered the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of ethnic minority men in Reading. It found that isolated men were worst affected and highlighted the value of preventative approaches. It also further highlighted the correlation between poverty and mental health and the need for clearer, easy to access information for diverse communities.

### 5.4 Young People's Mental Health

One in five children and young people in England aged eight to 25 had a probable mental disorder in 2023<sup>53</sup>. 20.3% of eight to 16-year-olds had a probable mental disorder in 2023. Among 17 to 19-year-olds, the proportion was 23.3%, while in 20 to 25-year-olds it was 21.7%.

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<sup>49</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>50</sup> [Suicide Prevention](#)

<sup>51</sup> Real Time (Suspected) Suicide Surveillance 2024 YTD Report, Berkshire

<sup>52</sup> [Men and women: statistics | Mental Health Foundation](#)

<sup>53</sup> [NHS England » One in five children and young people had a probable mental disorder in 2023](#)

After a rise in rates of probable mental disorders between 2017 and 2020, prevalence continued at similar levels in all age groups between 2022 and 2023<sup>54</sup>.

Addressing mental health problems with a preventative approach means supporting young people to engage with suitable services early to prevent a further decline to their mental wellbeing.

- 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24.<sup>55</sup>
- 10% of children and young people (aged 5 to 16 years) have a clinically diagnosable mental health problem, yet 70% of children and adolescents who experience mental health problems have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age.<sup>56</sup>
- The World Health Organisation identifies that between 5 and 15 per cent of adolescents are experiencing loneliness<sup>57</sup>.
- Children from the poorest 20% of households are four times as likely to have serious mental health difficulties by the age of 11 as those from the wealthiest 20%<sup>58</sup>

#### 5.4.1 Young People's Mental Health in Reading

- In 2023, an estimated 4,177 children and young people aged 5-19 had a mental health disorder in Reading, 2,632 had an emotional disorder, 1,515 a behavioural disorder, 536 a hyperactivity disorder, whilst 690 had a less common mental health disorder<sup>59</sup>.
- In 2022/23, 3.4% of school age pupils in Reading had social, emotional and mental health needs (833 pupils), similar to the England average of 3.3%<sup>60</sup>.
- In 2022/23, Among children and young people aged 15-19, there were 85 hospital admissions as a result of self-harm; the admission rate in Reading was significantly higher than England<sup>61</sup>.

#### 5.5 Creativity and Mental Health

Arts, culture and heritage engagement have tangible, measurable effects on public health, including:

- Helping to maintain positive wellbeing.
- Reducing our risk of developing mental health problems
- Maintaining good cognitive functioning
- Protecting against age-related physical decline<sup>62</sup>

University College London research on 'The relationship between arts and cultural services and health outcomes' indicates that cultural activities can deliver high impact preventative outcomes in a cost-effective way. For example, adults engaged with culture once a month or more are 48% less likely to develop depression. When compared with physical activity,

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid*

<sup>55</sup> <https://cloa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Prof-Daisy-Fancourt-The-relationship-between-arts-and-cultural-services.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> *ibid*

<sup>57</sup> [Social Isolation and Loneliness \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/social-isolation-and-loneliness)

<sup>58</sup> [Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/prevention-concordat-for-better-mental-health)

<sup>59</sup> [NHS Digital, Population Estimates](https://www.nhs.uk/digital-population-estimates/)

<sup>60</sup> [Child and Maternal Health](https://www.nhs.uk/digital-population-estimates/)

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*

<sup>62</sup> <https://cloa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Prof-Daisy-Fancourt-The-relationship-between-arts-and-cultural-services.pdf>

engaging with culture has comparable outcomes in numerous areas. For example, reduced odds of chronic pain by 25%, which in turn reduces the risk of a person developing associated mental health problems.

## 5.6 Green Wellbeing and Mental Health

Research has found that mental health, particularly psychosocial wellbeing, can be improved with increased blue space exposure. Increased blue space exposure is additionally associated with better cardiovascular health and increased levels of subjective wellbeing<sup>63</sup>. Blue space is defined as 'outdoor environments – either natural or manmade – that prominently feature water and are accessible to people'<sup>64</sup>.

Research also finds that gardening, when incorporated into therapeutic and mindfulness activities, can have a wide range of psychological and physiological health benefits including decreased hypertension, and decreased negative symptomatology of post-traumatic stress disorder, adjustment disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders. One systematic review conducted by Howarth et al. assessing 77 intervention studies found significant effects of gardening on mental wellbeing, physical activity and reduced social isolation<sup>65</sup>.

Additionally, increased exposure to green space and nature was associated with slower cognitive decline, reduced risk of diabetes, reduced risk of obesity and increased physical activity. Exposure to green spaces additionally positively impacted mental health, increased mindfulness practice, perceived happiness, resilience and subjective wellbeing<sup>66</sup>.

Socioeconomic factors are associated with visits to natural spaces. Those on lower incomes, with fewer educational qualifications, those who are unemployed or living in the most deprived areas are least likely to visit natural spaces. Research conducted by the Environment Agency and Forest Research found that 44% of people living in households earning £15,000 or less (below the relative poverty line) in England visit natural spaces, compared to 70% of people living in households earning £50,000 or above. Only 45% of adults in England living in areas ranked as most deprived had visited a natural space in the last 14 days, compared to 68% of adults in the least deprived areas.<sup>67</sup>

Closing the Gap 2 will address the above areas of need in line with the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people.
- Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults.

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<sup>63</sup> [how-the-natural-environment-can-support-health-and-wellbeing-through-social-prescribing\\_.pdf](https://socialprescribingacademy.org.uk/how-the-natural-environment-can-support-health-and-wellbeing-through-social-prescribing_.pdf) (socialprescribingacademy.org.uk)

<sup>64</sup> <https://environmentagency.blog.gov.uk/2021/08/04/blue-space-the-final-frontier/#:~:text=Blue%20spaces%20are%20officially%20described%20as%20%E2%80%98outdoor,collective%20term%20for%20rivers%2C%20lakes%20or%20the%20sea>

<sup>65</sup> [how-the-natural-environment-can-support-health-and-wellbeing-through-social-prescribing\\_.pdf](https://socialprescribingacademy.org.uk/how-the-natural-environment-can-support-health-and-wellbeing-through-social-prescribing_.pdf) (socialprescribingacademy.org.uk)

<sup>66</sup> [how-the-natural-environment-can-support-health-and-wellbeing-through-social-prescribing\\_.pdf](https://socialprescribingacademy.org.uk/how-the-natural-environment-can-support-health-and-wellbeing-through-social-prescribing_.pdf) (socialprescribingacademy.org.uk)

<sup>67</sup> [ibid](#)



## **SECTION 6 – LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION**

### **6.1 Impact of Loneliness and Social Isolation**

The World Health Organisation identifies that “High-quality social connections are essential to our mental and physical health and our well-being. Social isolation and loneliness are important, yet neglected, social determinants for people of all ages – including older people”<sup>68</sup>. Importantly, a large body of research shows that social isolation and loneliness have a serious impact on physical and mental health, quality of life, and longevity. The effect of social isolation and loneliness on mortality is comparable to that of other well-established risk factors such as smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity<sup>69</sup>.

### **6.2 Loneliness in Reading**

One of the indicators under the Public Health Outcomes framework relates to the percentage of adults who feel lonely often or always or some of the time.

For this Public Health outcome, Reading falls in line with the national average of 22.6% of adults feeling isolated, however despite being in line with the national average we realise that this is not the case for all wards within Reading given the disparity outlined in this Needs Analysis (section 2.3 on Deprivation in Reading). The Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy identifies Loneliness and Social Isolation as well as the growing digital divide as areas of consideration, both of which affect our ageing population.

### **6.3 Factors Contributing to Loneliness and Social Isolation**

The Reading 2018 ‘Loneliness and Social Isolation in Reading’ Needs Analysis sets out how becoming lonely or socially isolated is a complex process affected by a range of interrelated factors, but concludes that individuals may be at greater risk if they:

- Are single (have no current spouse or life partner);
- Have recently experienced a significant change to their life;
- Are impeded by practical barriers (e.g. a health problem, transport, lack of time or energy); or
- Lack economic or social resources.

Whilst validating the all-age approach taken by the Reading Loneliness and Social Isolation Steering Group, it was found that older people or older working age people were more likely to be exposed to the identified risk factors. Further research was commissioned from the University of Reading to help develop an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of loneliness and social isolation in Reading and to identify best practices which may prevent and tackle it, including recommending raising awareness, greater provision of specialist support services, more collaborative working and peer support initiatives<sup>70</sup>.

### **6.4 Cohorts Most Affected by Social Isolation**

The World Health Organisation identifies that that an estimated one in four older people experiencing social isolation<sup>71</sup>. Ensuring older people are supported to engage with other

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<sup>68</sup> [Social Isolation and Loneliness \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/loneliness)

<sup>69</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>70</sup> [Bridger-and-Evans-2019-Tackling-Loneliness-in-Reading-report.pdf](#)

<sup>71</sup> [Social Isolation and Loneliness \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/loneliness)



people and services that can support them will be a focus of Closing the Gap 2 to prevent a decrease in their wellbeing.

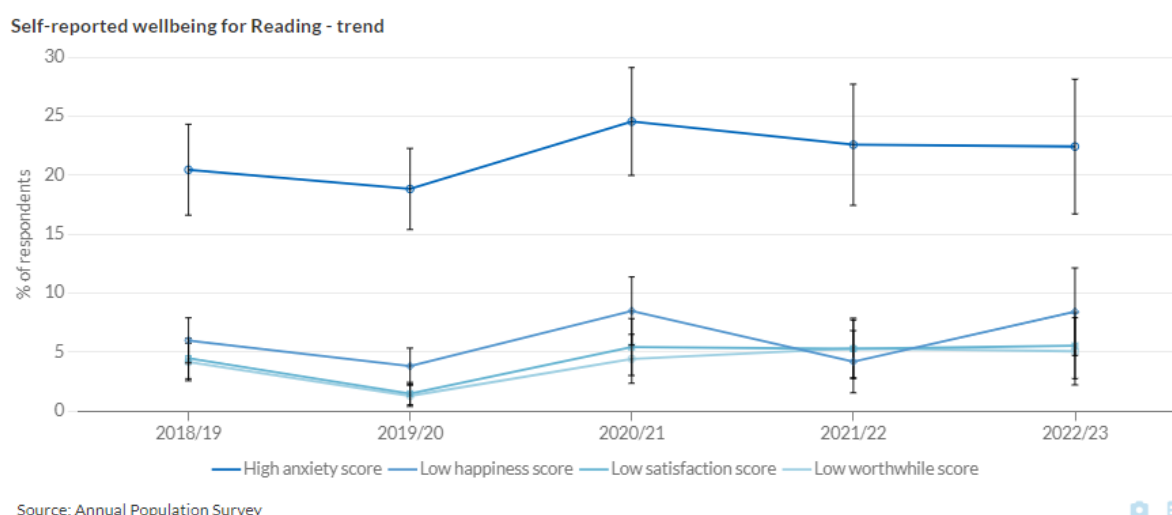
Other areas where people are at higher risk of experiencing isolation are:

- LGBTQIA+ community
- Ethnically Diverse communities
- People with existing mental health needs
- People with a learning disability or autism
- People with sensory needs
- Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- People with a HIV diagnosis

Data on Public Health indicator 'B19 – Loneliness: Percentage of adults who feel lonely or always or some of the time' evidences inequalities between different ethnicities, employment status, the type of employment and whether or not a person has a disability<sup>72</sup>. See *Appendix section 4* further detail.

The Adult Social Care Survey 22/23 reported the percentage of service users that felt they have as much social contact as they want with people, they like increased to 44.4% from 40.6% in 2021-22. The percentage of service users that reported they have little social contact and feel socially isolated decreased to 6.7% from 8.3% in 2021-22. The impact of COVID-19 should be considered when reviewing this data. The responses in 2022-23 are more in line with pre COVID-19 years.

**Figure 2 – Self-reported Wellbeing**



Studies around the level of community cohesion and its impact on people's mental wellbeing indicate that areas with higher levels of social cohesion experience lower rates of mental health problems than those in neighbourhoods with lower levels of cohesion. This was found to be the case independently of how deprived or affluent a neighbourhood is.<sup>73</sup>

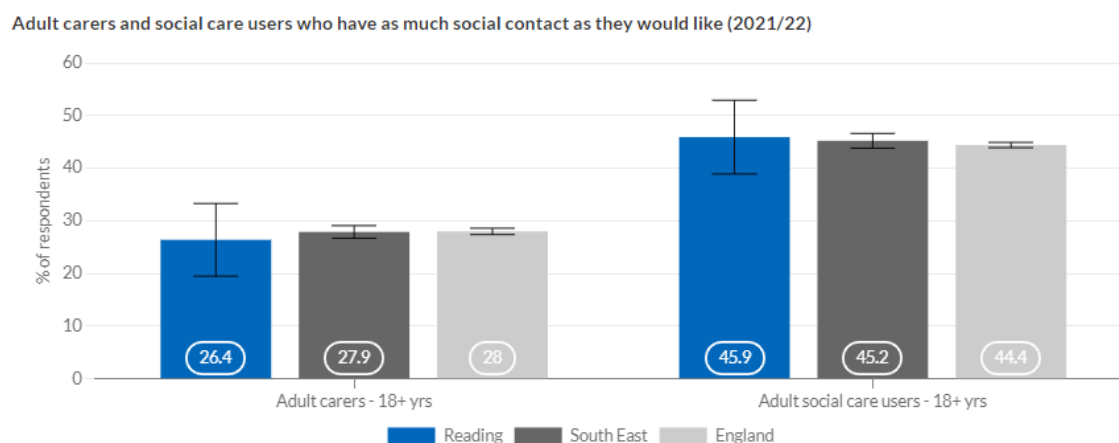
<sup>72</sup> Mental Health and Wellbeing JSNA | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care (phe.org.uk)

<sup>73</sup> [Effect of neighbourhood deprivation and social cohesion on mental health inequality: a multilevel population-based longitudinal study - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

This can be further demonstrated by research measuring the impact of social cohesion and its link to a reduction in depressive symptoms in older people.<sup>74</sup>

The below graph from the Berkshire Observatory shows that the number of carers and social care users that report having as much social contact as they would like is low.

**Figure 3 – Levels of Social Contact**



Source: ASCOF

## SECTION 7 – WOMEN’S WELLBEING

### 7.1 Women’s Health

This area is complex and multifaceted and therefore sits separately to generalist mental health support.

The Department of Health and Social Care recently published a Women’s Health Strategy for this reason. It explains that while women in the UK on average live longer than men, [women spend a significantly greater proportion of their lives in ill health and disability when compared with men](#)<sup>75</sup>. And while women make up 51% of the population, historically the health and care system has been designed by men for men. This has led to gaps in our data and evidence base that mean not enough is known about conditions that only affect women – for example, menopause or endometriosis. It has meant that not enough is known about how conditions that affect both men and women impact them in different ways – for example, cardiovascular disease, dementia or mental health conditions<sup>76</sup>.

We know that women are three times more likely than men to experience common mental health problems<sup>77</sup>. Latest national wellbeing estimates<sup>78</sup> show that women, compared with men, are more likely to report:

- Lower levels of happiness (9.6% v 8.3%)
- Higher levels of anxiety (26.6% v 19.9%)

<sup>74</sup> [Neighbourhood social environment and depressive symptoms in mid-life and beyond. \(apa.org\)](#)

<sup>75</sup> [Women’s Health Strategy for England - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>76</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>77</sup> [Men and women: statistics | Mental Health Foundation](#)

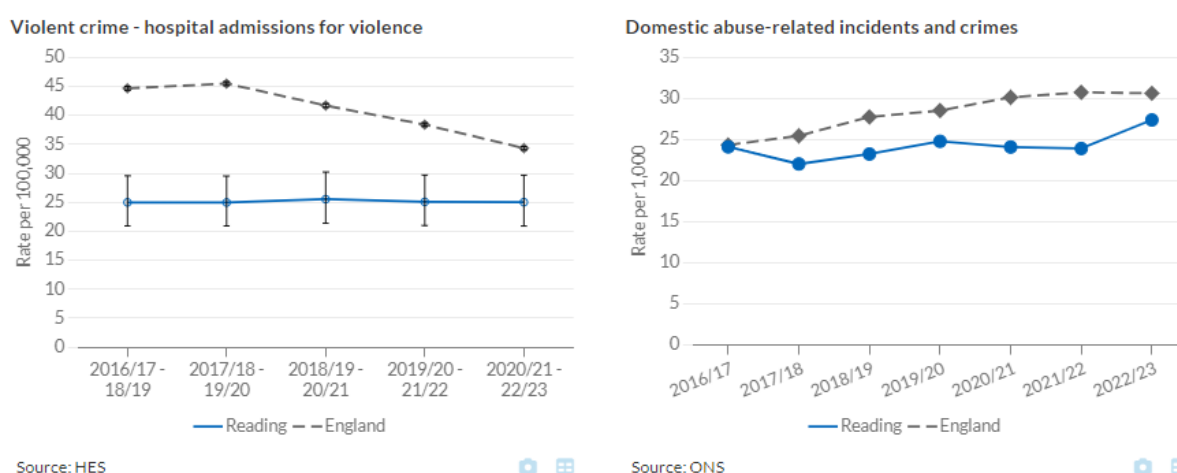
<sup>78</sup> [UK Measures of Wellbeing](#)

- More likely to feel lonely (8.0% v 7.7%)
- More likely to report feeling depressed or anxious (25.5% v 17.8%)
- Were less likely to feel safe (69.1% v 89.1%)
- More likely to be digitally excluded (5.7% v 4.4%)

## 7.2 Domestic Abuse

Approximately 1.2 million women experience domestic violence each year, according to the Office for National Statistics. These figures relate only to official reports of violence, with the real figure likely to be much higher.

**Figures 4 and 5 – Reports of Violence in Reading 2016/17 – 2022/23**



The above charts show how Reading compare to England for the number of hospital admissions for violence and domestic abuse related crimes. Within Reading although the rate of Hospital admissions has been consistently lower than national average, the national figures have continued to reduce between 2016-2023 whereas Reading hasn't had a reduction in that same timeframe. The second graph shows that although Reading has had a lower number of domestic abuse-related incidents when compared to the national average this gap has been closing and the number of incidents has been increasing over time.

Domestic Violence is a contributing factor to women's wellbeing and as such has been included. The Mental Health Foundation has found that domestic violence has an estimated overall cost to mental healthcare of £176 million. Research suggests that women experiencing domestic abuse are more likely to experience mental health problems. In contrast, women with mental health problems are more likely to be domestically abused, with 30-60% of women with mental health problems have experienced domestic violence. Domestic violence is associated with depression, anxiety, PTSD and substance abuse in the general population. Exposure to domestic violence has a significant impact on children's mental health. Many studies have found strong links between poorer educational outcomes and higher levels of mental health problems<sup>79</sup>

Supporting women with their wraparound needs around Domestic Violence, such as mental health, also prevents additional statutory demand, that could otherwise have high costs.

<sup>79</sup> [Domestic violence: statistics | Mental Health Foundation](#)

### 7.3 Women's Wellbeing in Reading

Between 209 and 314 women in Reading were estimated to have experienced mild-moderate depressive illness and anxiety, whilst between 314 and 627 were estimated to have experienced adjustment disorders and distress<sup>80</sup>.

Reading's Community Participatory Action Research (2021-22) explored local inequalities in health and indicated needs around digital access for women's health purposes, prioritising women's health education and language support for appointments (including for maternity support).

Estimates for Reading suggest that between 209 and 418 mothers experienced mental health problems in 2022 during the perinatal period (pregnancy and the first year of life). Early Access to maternity care by varies by ethnicity, as evidenced in Appendix Section 5. Given Reading's demographic, this will be more pronounced in areas of Reading with a higher prevalence of ethnically diverse groups.

Closing the Gap 2 will address the above areas of need in line with the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults.
- Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people.

## SECTION 8 – TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES

### 8.1 Health Inequalities

As outlined in the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy, health inequities are a matter of fairness and social justice. It is the unfair and avoidable differences in people's health across social groups and between different population groups, often expressed as the "social gradient in health". In England, there are still significant unfair and avoidable inequities and in access to and experiences of NHS services. Many people in Reading experience health inequities. This may include groups who are economically disadvantaged, isolated young people, refugees and asylum seekers and people with physical disabilities or those who may find it harder to communicate. Health is influenced not only by choices that a person makes (such as smoking, or eating a healthy diet), but also by their living and working conditions and the community that surrounds them<sup>81</sup>.

The Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy identifies 3 key issues:

- Inequities in opportunity and/or outcome: some people don't get a good start in life, have fewer social opportunities, live shorter lives or have longer periods of ill health;
- Inequities and lack of access – some people cannot access services, do not know about them cannot use them or need support to use them (for example, due to learning disability or sensory impairment).
- Covid-19 – its impact has exacerbated existing health inequities.

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<sup>80</sup> [Perinatal Mental Health, Live Births](#)

<sup>81</sup> [Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy \(HWBS\) 2021 – 2030 - Reading Borough Council](#)

As addressed within the Council's Tackling Inequalities Strategy 2023-26: "Each area of the borough has its own inherent strengths and opportunities for improving the lives of the people who live and work in that area. The Council's approach to developing its Tackling Inequalities Strategy is to understand these inherent aptitudes and how to focus its activities, supported by partners, as required by each area." Closing the Gap 2 will focus on using a place-based approach where appropriate, for example utilising community centres to ensure services are accessible within the heart of the communities they serve.

Through Closing the Gap 2, we aim to support communities that face a higher risk of poor health outcomes by working to address the social determinants like poverty, exclusion and limited access to appropriate support which exacerbate these inequalities.

## 8.2 Sensory Needs

The Royal National Institute of Blind People provide data via their Sight Loss Data Tool for statistics regarding people with sensory needs both visual and auditory. Through this evidence and research conducted by RNIB we are aware that overall, feelings of wellbeing are lower among people with sensory needs when compared to the UK average. This includes feelings of unhappiness or depression, worthlessness and lack of confidence. This is compounded by inaccessible information and difficulties engaging with everyday tasks and services.<sup>82</sup>

Research shows that social isolation and loneliness have a serious impact on physical and mental health, quality of life, and longevity. The effect of social isolation and loneliness on mortality is comparable to that of other well-established risk factors such as smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity<sup>83</sup>.

'Tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation in Reading' (2019) recommendations included:

- Developing and supporting peer support initiatives and befriending and volunteering schemes
- Providing more accessible information, communication and promotion of activities and services in appropriate formats.

Data on Public Health indicator 'B19 – Loneliness: Percentage of adults who feel lonely or always or some of the time' evidences increased loneliness if a person has a disability<sup>84</sup>.

In 2022, there were an estimated 4,000 people living with sight loss in Reading (2.4% of the population compared with 3.3% in England), and this number is estimated to increase locally to 4,700 by 2032 (which is a 17.5% increase)<sup>85</sup>. The estimated number of working age people (18-64) living with sight loss in 2022 was 950, whilst the estimated number of children aged 0-17 who are blind or partially sighted was 80<sup>86</sup>. In 2023, there were 622 people aged 65-74 predicted to have a moderate or severe visual impairment, and 1,302 people aged 75 and over. A total of 672 people aged 75 and over were predicted to have registrable eye conditions<sup>87</sup>. These numbers are projected to increase over the coming years.

There were an estimated 12,700 people in Reading in 2022 who were moderately or severely hearing impaired and 270 who were profoundly hearing impaired<sup>88</sup>. An estimated 22,022

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<sup>82</sup> [RNIB Sight Loss Data Tool - statistics on sight loss | RNIB](#)

<sup>83</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>84</sup> Mental Health and Wellbeing JSNA | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care ([phe.org.uk](http://phe.org.uk))

<sup>85</sup> [Sight Loss Data Tool](#)

<sup>86</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>87</sup> [POPPI](#)

<sup>88</sup> [Sight Loss Data Tool](#)

people aged 18 and over in Reading had some hearing loss in 2023, and 2,270 had severe hearing loss<sup>89</sup>. These numbers are projected to increase over the coming years, especially among those people aged 65 years and over.

There were an estimated 790 people in Reading living with any dual sensory loss in 2022 and 310 living with severe dual sensory loss<sup>90</sup>.

### 8.3 Physical Disabilities

An estimated 16.1 million people in the UK had a disability (physical or mental health conditions) in 2022/23, accounting for 24% of the total population<sup>91</sup>.

A physical disability is physical condition or illness that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more, and whether the condition and/or illness reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

National estimates from 2022/23 found that, among disabled working-age adults, the top five most prevalent disability impairments were: mental health (47%), mobility (41%), stamina, breathing or fatigue (34%), dexterity (22%), and other types of impairments (18%). The top five most common impairment types reported among disabled State Pension age adults (aged 66 and over) were: mobility (69%), stamina, breathing or fatigue (46%), dexterity (33%), hearing (22%), and vision impairments (18%)<sup>92</sup>.

The 2021 Census demonstrates clear health inequalities when outlining outcomes for disabled people in the UK:

- Disabled people aged 16 to 64 years had poorer ratings than non-disabled people on all four personal well-being measures; average anxiety levels were higher for disabled people at 4.6 out of 10, compared with 3.0 out of 10 for non-disabled people (year ending June 2021)<sup>93</sup>
- The proportion of disabled people (15.1%) aged 16 years and over in England who reported feeling lonely “often or always” was over four times that of non-disabled people (3.6%) (year ending March 2021).

Data on Public Health indicator ‘B19 – Loneliness: Percentage of adults who feel lonely or always or some of the time’ evidences increased loneliness if a person has a disability<sup>94</sup>.

A total of 4,974 people in Reading aged 18-64 were predicted to have impaired mobility in 2023, 3,619 people aged 18-64 were predicted to have a moderate personal care disability, and 830 were predicted to have a serious personal care disability<sup>95</sup>. 275 people aged 18-64 in Reading in 2023 were predicted to have a longstanding health condition caused by a stroke, whilst 3,098 people aged 18-64 were predicted to have diabetes<sup>96</sup>.

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<sup>89</sup> [PANSI](#)

<sup>90</sup> [Sight Loss Data Tool](#)

<sup>91</sup> [UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences - House of Commons Library](#)

<sup>92</sup> [Family Resources Survey](#)

<sup>93</sup> [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

<sup>94</sup> Mental Health and Wellbeing JSNA | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care (phe.org.uk)

<sup>95</sup> [PANSI](#)

<sup>96</sup> [ibid](#)

## 8.4 Learning Disabilities and Autism

People with a learning disability and autistic people experience very significant health inequalities. These health inequalities are not associated with their learning disability or autism and can be addressed with reasonable adjustments<sup>97</sup>.

### 8.4.1 Learning Disabilities

Learning Disabilities are defined as ‘a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning), which started before adulthood. A learning disability is different for everyone. The degree of disability can vary greatly, being classified as mild, moderate, severe or profound. In all cases, a learning disability is a lifelong condition and cannot be cured.

A learning disability is different to a learning difficulty, which is a reduced intellectual ability for a specific form of learning and includes conditions such as dyslexia (reading), dyspraxia (affecting physical co-ordination) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). A person with a learning disability may also have one or more learning difficulties. Additionally, there are a number of conditions and neurological disorders that often involve or cause some type of learning disability, including Down’s syndrome, autism, meningitis, epilepsy or cerebral palsy. A learning disability is not a physical disability.’<sup>98</sup>

People with a learning disability are under-served in access to healthcare<sup>99</sup>. Research has shown that, compared with the general population, people with a learning disability were three to four times as likely to die from an avoidable medical cause of death. Most of the avoidable deaths in people with a learning disability were because timely and effective treatment was not given<sup>100</sup>. Many people with a learning disability have considerable, and often multiple, physical and mental health conditions. They’re at increased risk of developing chronic conditions from both genetic and lifestyle factors<sup>101</sup>.

- 49% of the deaths of people with a learning disability in 2021 were avoidable compared to 22% in the general population.
- the median age of death for people with a learning disability was 61 compared to 82 in the general population.

Inequalities are even starker for people from ethnic minority groups:

- The average life expectancy for people with a learning disability from an ethnic minority was 34, compared to 62 years for people denoted as ‘white’<sup>102</sup>.

People with lower intellectual ability had higher rates of symptoms of common mental health problems (25%) compared to those with average (17.2%) or above-average (13.4%) intellectual functioning. One study found that 54% of people with a learning disability have a mental health problem<sup>103</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> [NHS England » Learning disability and autism programme update](#)

<sup>98</sup> [Learning disability - applying All Our Health - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>99</sup> [NICE impact people with a learning disability | Reviewing the impact of our guidance | Measuring the use of NICE guidance | Into practice | What we do | About | NICE](#)

<sup>100</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>101</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>102</sup> [NHS Race and Health Observatory, 2023](#)

<sup>103</sup> [People with learning disabilities: statistics | Mental Health Foundation](#)



In 2023/24, 0.5% of people in Reading (all ages) had a learning disability diagnosis recorded on their GP records<sup>104</sup>.

The gap in the employment rate between those in receipt of long-term support for a learning disability (aged 18-64) and the overall employment rate was 77.6% in Reading in 2022/23, which was significantly higher than the England gap of 70.9%<sup>105</sup>.

In 2023, 3,053 people aged 18 and over in Reading were predicted to have a learning disability, and of these, 656 people were predicted to have a moderate or severe learning disability<sup>106</sup>. The numbers of people with a learning disability aged 18-34 and 65 and over are predicted to increase in the coming years. 242 adults aged 18-64 in Reading with a learning disability in 2023 were predicted to be living with a parent, whilst 48 people aged 18-64 with a learning disability were predicted to display challenging behaviour<sup>107</sup>.

Dementia UK research shows that the chance of people with a learning disability developing dementia is rising - a chance already higher than within the general population - as their life expectancy increases. One in 10 people with a learning disability will develop dementia in their lifetime.<sup>108</sup>

#### **8.4.2 Autism**

Autism, also called autism spectrum disorder (ASD), is a lifelong, developmental condition. It affects the way a person communicates, interacts and processes information<sup>109</sup>.

The proportion of the population diagnosed as autistic in England has grown significantly over recent years and that rate of growth is accelerating, with rising diagnostic rates for both children and adults. Autistic adults are more likely than non-autistic adults to experience mental ill health and are more likely to require mental health services. The numbers of people diagnosed as autistic in mental health inpatient settings is increasing; data collected by NHS England tells us that there was an increase of 7.3% in the numbers of autistic inpatients (both with and without a learning disability) in mental health hospitals between March 2017 and August 2023 and an increase of 51.3% in the numbers of autistic inpatients without a learning disability in the same timeframe.

In 2023, 1,077 18-64 year olds in Reading were predicted to have autistic spectrum disorders, alongside 205 people aged 65 years and over<sup>110</sup>. The numbers of people aged 65 and over with autistic spectrum disorders is predicted to increase over the coming years.

### **8.5 Ethnically Diverse Communities**

As demonstrated within our demographic profile, Reading is place with a highly diverse community. The health outcomes of people within these communities can vary immensely depending on the specific cultural, economic and environmental factors that influence their lives.

As referenced within our demographic profile, all ethnic minority groups except the Indian, Chinese, White Irish and White Other groups were more likely than White British people to live

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<sup>104</sup> [Learning Disability Profiles](#)

<sup>105</sup> [Learning Disability Profiles](#)

<sup>106</sup> [PANSI](#)

<sup>107</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>108</sup> RBC Residential Dementia Needs Analysis 2022

<sup>109</sup> [Autism | NHS Inform](#)

<sup>110</sup> [PANSI](#)



in the most overall deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England<sup>111</sup>. This will in turn negatively influence their health outcomes.

## **8.6 Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

Refugees and asylum seekers in the UK face numerous health inequalities due to the insecure status and any trauma experienced as part of them coming to the UK. These can be amplified by factors such as limited access to healthcare, discrimination, poor living conditions or language barriers<sup>112</sup>.

Recent global conflicts and changes to Government policy have seen a significant increase in the numbers of new arrivals of people seeking sanctuary in Reading. In 2014, a review by the Council indicated that approximately 30 refugees and asylum seekers needed support at any one time in Reading; current figures show that this is now over 4,500.

The Home Office accommodates approximately 500 asylum seekers in three Reading hotels, and approximately a further 90 people seeking sanctuary are in dispersed properties.

Since 2016, the Council has been supporting the Government's refugee resettlement programmes. The Council made an ongoing commitment to offer homes and support to three families a year through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (renamed UK Resettlement Scheme, UKRS), the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP). As of May 2024, 32 families (129 individuals) have been resettled through these schemes. Through the Homes for Ukraine scheme, Reading has received around 350 Ukrainian refugees (as of May 2024).

## **8.7 HIV**

Within Reading there is a high prevalence and diagnosis rate of HIV compared to the national averages<sup>113</sup>. Whilst existing services focus on encouraging a diagnosis and further medical intervention, people with HIV often face challenges that impact their overall wellbeing. These could be around the stigma they face, coinciding mental health needs, social isolation or challenges pursuing a relationship post diagnosis. To complement existing services, services commissioned via Closing the Gap 2 will focus on supporting people with HIV towards better overall wellbeing.

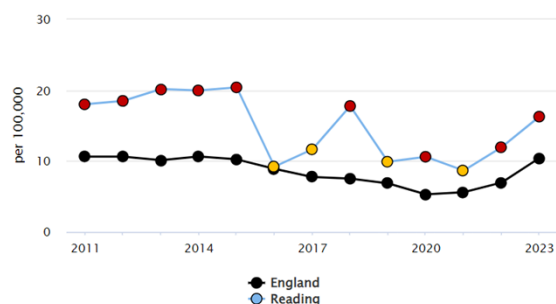
### **Figures 6 and 7 – HIV Diagnosis Trend in Reading and England**

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<sup>111</sup> [People living in deprived neighbourhoods - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/)

<sup>112</sup> [Barriers to healthcare for refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants | Feature from King's College London \(kcl.ac.uk\)](#)

<sup>113</sup> [Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles - Data | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care \(phe.org.uk\)](https://phe.org.uk/)

[Show confidence intervals](#) [Show 99.8% CI values](#)[More options](#)Recent trend: ➡ No significant change

Period		Count	Value	Reading		England
				95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI	
2011	●	28	18.0	12.0	26.1	10.6
2012	●	29	18.5	12.4	26.6	10.6
2013	●	32	20.2	13.8	28.5	10.1
2014	●	32	20.0	13.7	28.2	10.7
2015	●	33	20.4	14.0	28.7	10.2
2016	●	15	9.2	5.2	15.2	8.9
2017	●	19	11.7	7.0	18.2	7.7
2018	●	29	17.8	11.9	25.5	7.5
2019	●	16	9.9	5.7	16.1	6.9
2020	●	17	10.6	6.2	17.0	5.3
2021	●	15	8.7	4.8	14.3	5.6
2022	●	21	11.9	7.4	18.3	7.0
2023	●	29	16.3	10.9	23.4	10.4

Source: UK Health Security Agency

[Indicator Definitions and Supporting Information](#)

Indicator	Period	Reading		South East		England		England		Best
		Recent Trend	Count	Value	Value	Value	Worst	Range		
New HIV diagnosis rate per 100,000 <span>New data</span>	2023	➡	29	16.3	10.4	45.9				1.4
HIV late diagnosis in gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men first diagnosed with HIV in the UK <span>New data</span>	2021 - 23	—	-	14.3%*	34.3%	100%				0.0%
HIV late diagnosis in heterosexual men first diagnosed with HIV in the UK <span>New data</span>	2021 - 23	—	4	66.7%	56.6%	100%				0.0%
HIV late diagnosis in heterosexual and bisexual women first diagnosed with HIV in the UK <span>New data</span>	2021 - 23	—	3	50.0%	46.4%	100%				0.0%

The above data shows demonstrates that within Reading when compared to the national average across England there is a higher rate of new HIV diagnosis' and within heterosexual men and heterosexual and bisexual women a higher number of those diagnosis are late.

## 8.8 LGBTQIA+

Latest data from the 2021 Census shows that 86.8% of people aged 16 and over in Reading identified themselves as straight or heterosexual, 1.6% as gay or lesbian, 2.0% as bisexual, 0.6% as other sexual orientations (9.0% did not answer). In total, 4.2% of people in Reading identified themselves as gay or lesbian, bisexual or as other sexual orientations compared with 3.2% in England<sup>114</sup>.

People within the LGBTQIA+ community experience significant health inequalities when compared to the general population. Mental health problems such as depression, self-harm, alcohol and drug abuse and suicidal thoughts can affect anyone, but they're more common among people who are part of the LGBTIQ+ community. A study by Stonewall found that in 2018<sup>115</sup> half of LGBTIQ+ people had experienced depression, and three in five had

<sup>114</sup> [2021 Census](#)

<sup>115</sup> [LGBT in Britain - Health \(2018\) \(stonewall.org.uk\)](#)

experienced anxiety. One in eight LGBTIQ+ people aged 18 to 24 had attempted to end their own life and almost half of transgender people had thought about ending their own life.<sup>116</sup>

The LGBTQIA+ community are also at higher risk of experiencing isolation<sup>117</sup>.

## **SECTION 9 – CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the data included in this Needs Analysis, it is recommended that all the areas of need explored above be included in the next set of contracts under Closing the Gap. This is in line with the aspirations in the Council's Tackling Inequalities Policy 2023-2026, Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2030, the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2025 and the Voluntary and Community Sector Compact 2023-2025.

The following specific recommendations are made:

- Ensure that the services commissioned via Closing the Gap 2 are accessible to the diverse communities in Reading and specific to the challenges they face.
- Ensure that Closing the Gap 2 services are accessible to the people within the most deprived neighbourhoods in Reading.
- Complement existing services to support people with HIV towards better overall wellbeing.

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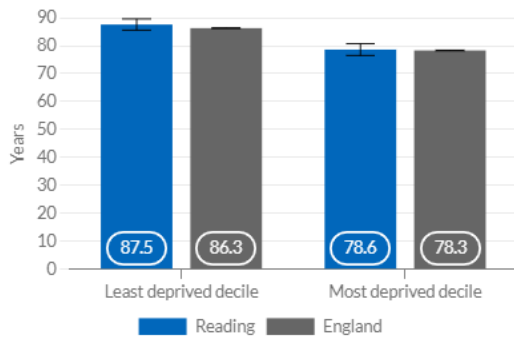
<sup>116</sup> [LGBTIQ+ people: statistics | Mental Health Foundation](#).

<sup>117</sup> [Social Isolation and Loneliness \(who.int\)](#)

## Appendix A – Supporting Data

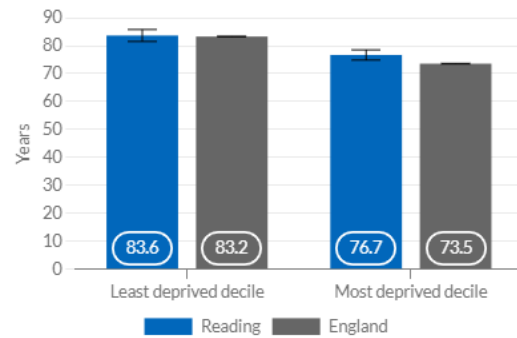
### Section 1: Marmot Indicators – Source: Berkshire Observatory

Life expectancy at birth in least and most deprived decile - females (2018 - 20)



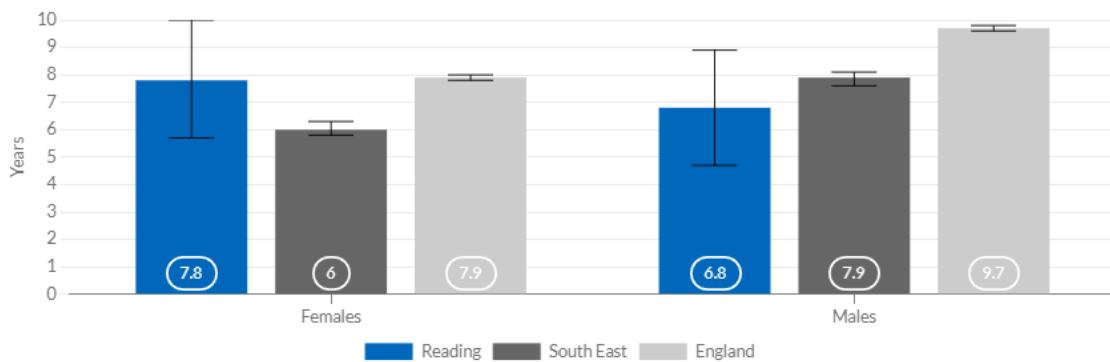
Source: ONS

Life expectancy at birth in least and most deprived decile - males (2018 - 20)



Source: ONS

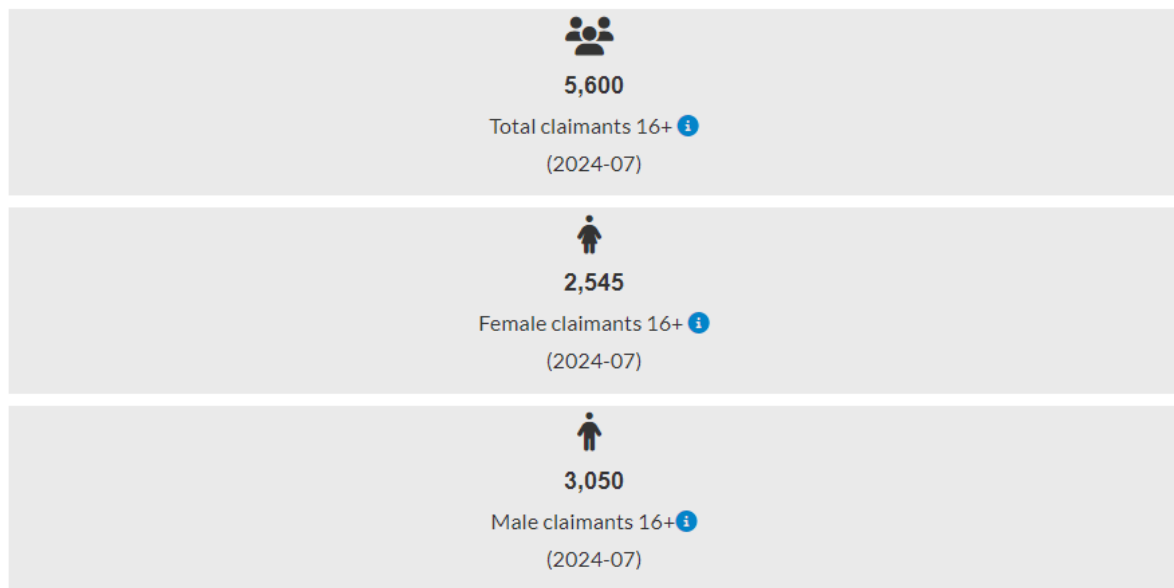
Inequality in life expectancy at birth (2018 - 20)



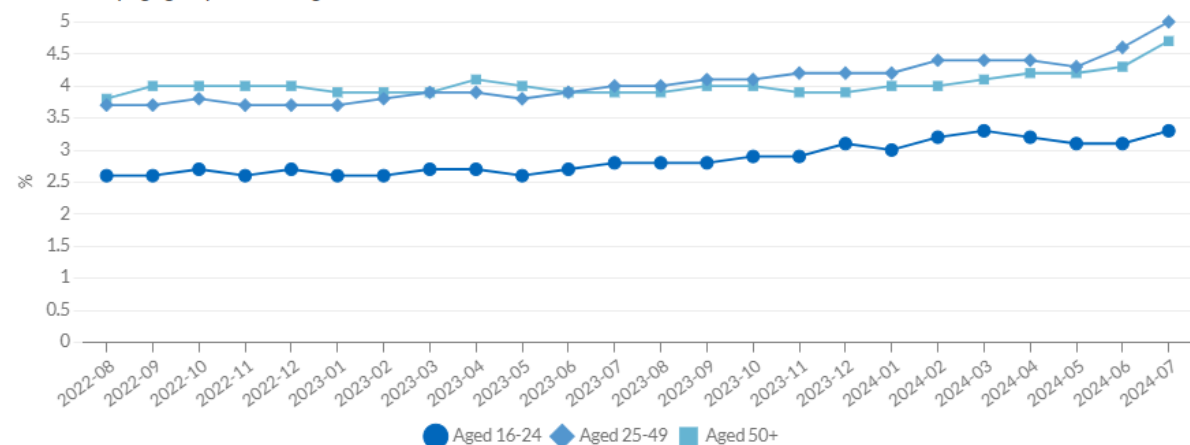
Source: OHID

### Section 2: Benefits Claimants - Source: Berkshire Observatory

## Claimant count



Claimants by age group for Reading



Source: ONS

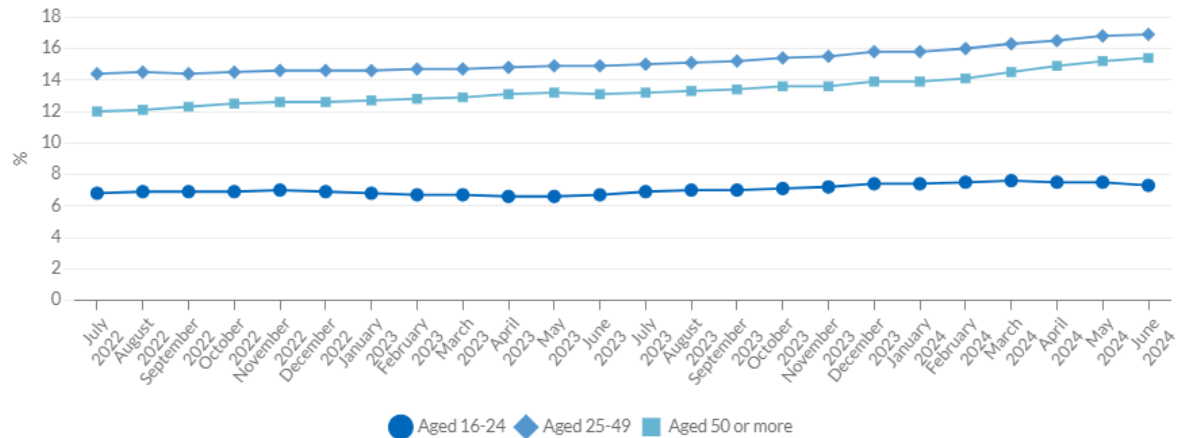


## Universal Credit - Definition

Universal Credit is a single payment for each household to help with living costs for those on a low income or out of work. It replaces six benefits, commonly referred to as the legacy benefits:

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

People on Universal Credit by age group for Reading



Source: DWP



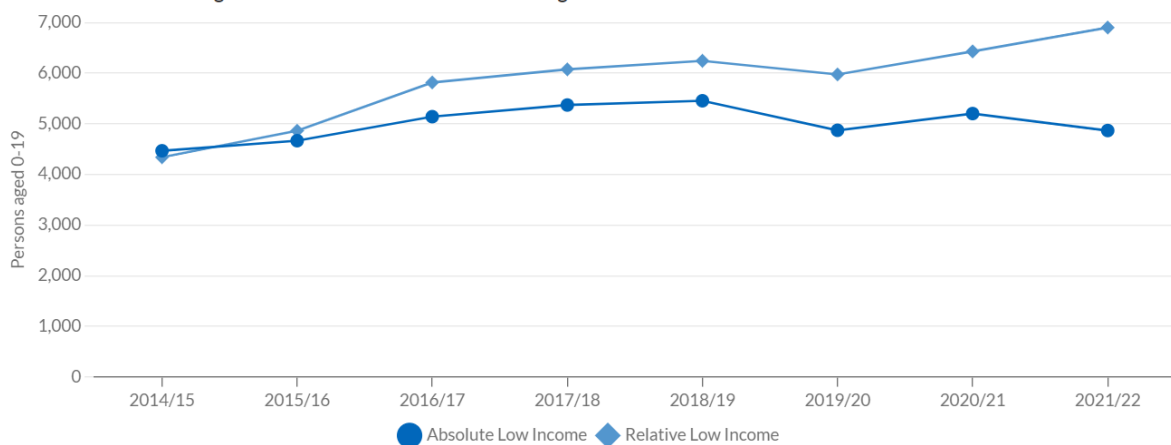
## Low Income Households

**Absolute low-income** is defined by the Berkshire Directory as “a family whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of the 2010/11 median income adjusted for inflation”.

**Relative low-income** is defined by the Berkshire Directory as “a family whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of contemporary median income”.

Gross income measure is Before Housing Costs (BHC) and includes contributions from earnings, state support and pensions. Income is equivalised to adjust for household size and family composition.

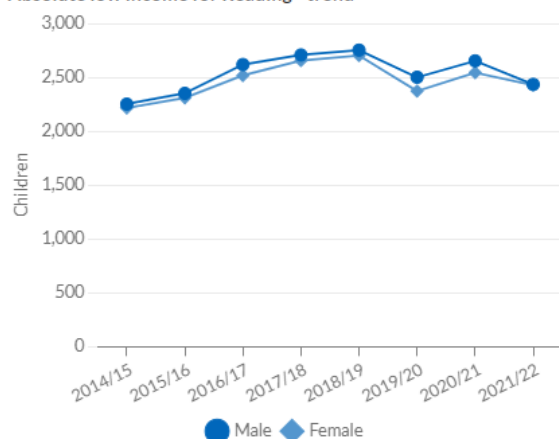
Number of children living in families with low income for Reading - trend



Source: DWP

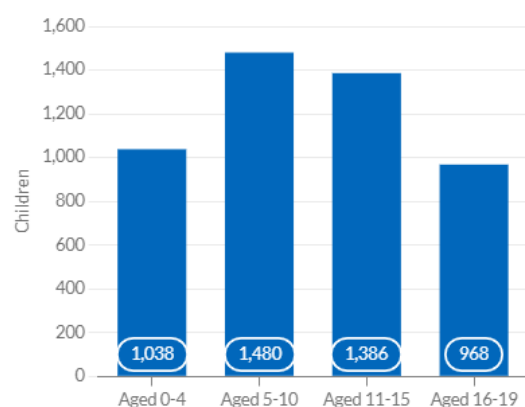


Absolute low income for Reading - trend



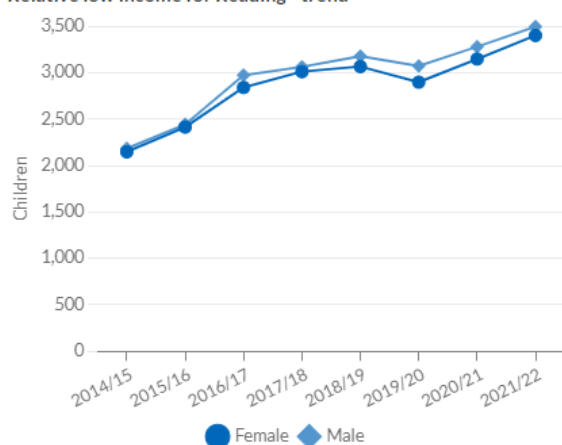
Source: DWP

Absolute low income by age group for Reading (2021/22)



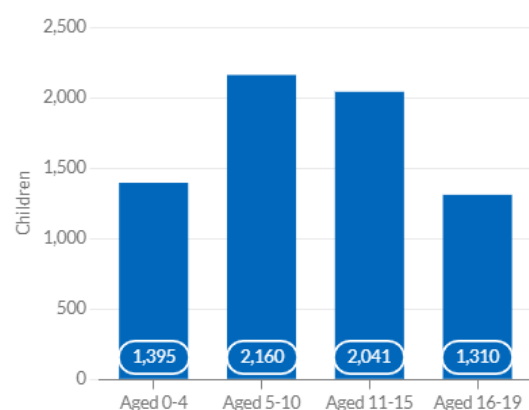
Source: DWP

Relative low income for Reading - trend



Source: DWP

Relative low income by age group for Reading (2021/22)






Source: DWP

### Section 3: Local Prevalence of common mental health disorders – Source: Berkshire Observatory

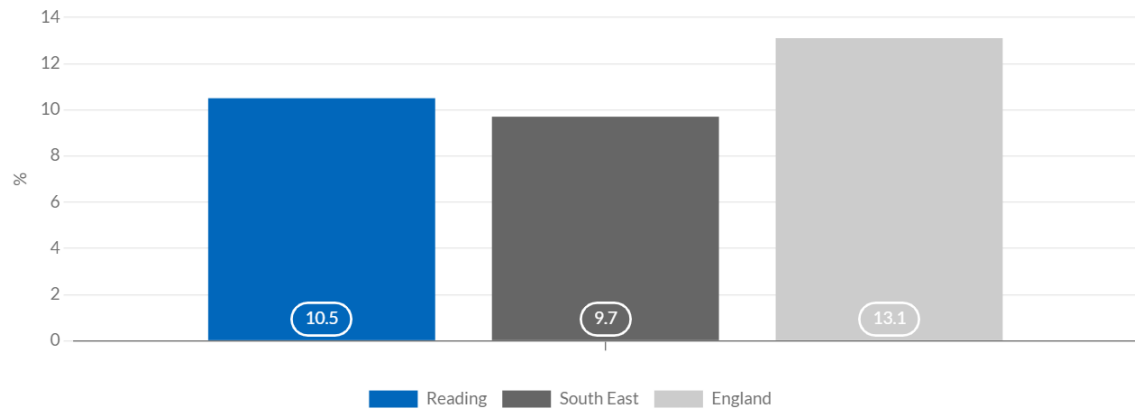
Indicator Name	Area Name	Sex	Age	Value
Estimated prevalence of common mental disorders: % of population aged 16 & over	England	Persons	16+ yrs	16.91715193
Estimated prevalence of common mental disorders: % of population aged 16 & over	Reading	Persons	16+ yrs	17.9936
Estimated prevalence of common mental disorders: % of population aged 65 & over	England	Persons	65+ yrs	10.24665332

Estimated prevalence of common mental disorders: % of population aged 65 & over	Reading	Persons	65+ yrs	10.5879
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### Suicide rates in Reading – 2021-23

Indicator	Period	Reading			England			
		Recent Trend	Count	Value	Value	Worst	Range	Best
Overall suicide rate for population aged 10 years and older (3 years pooled)								
Suicide rate (Persons, 10+ yrs)	2021 - 23	–	43	8.8	10.7	19.6		4.2
Suicide rate (Male, 10+ yrs)	2021 - 23	–	34	14.4	16.4	30.9		6.7
Suicide rate (Female, 10+ yrs)	2021 - 23	–	9	*	5.4	12.6		2.1

Percentage of households in fuel poverty - Low Income/Low energy Efficiency (LILEE) (2022)



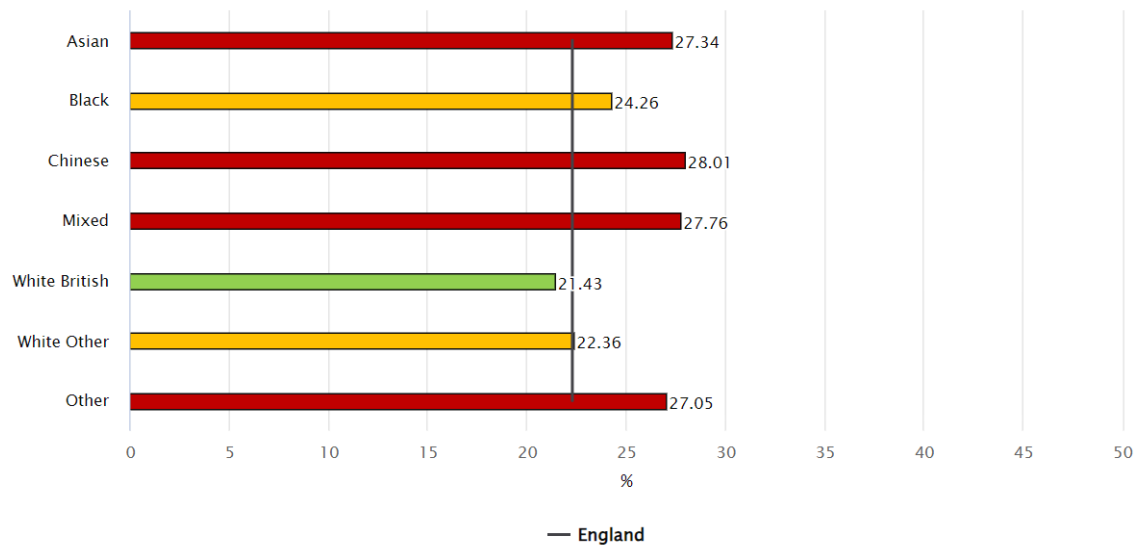
Source: BEIS



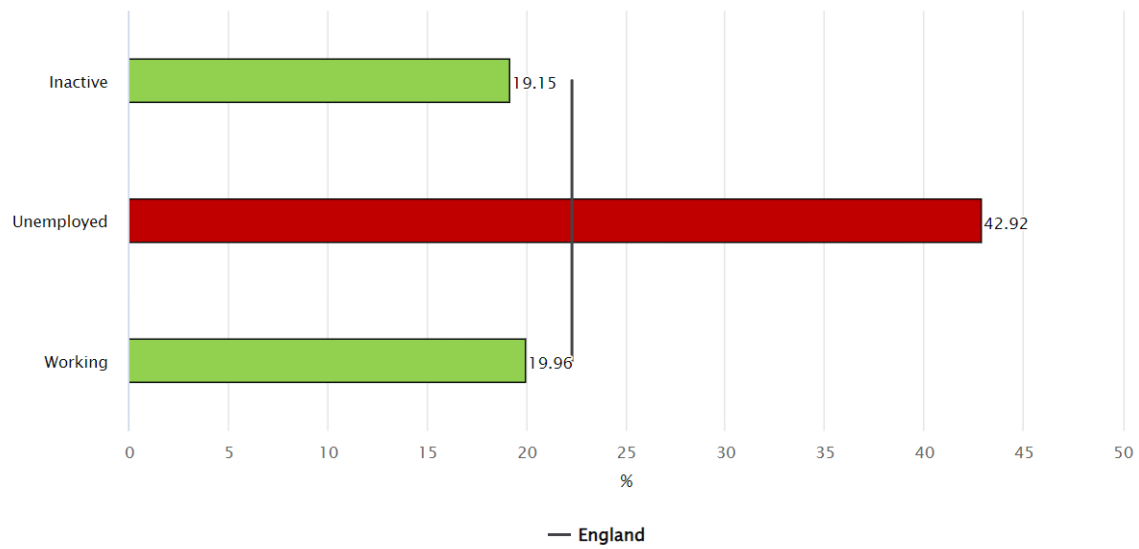
### Section 4: PH Indicator – B19 – Loneliness: Percentage of adults who feel lonely or always or some of the time

#### Inequalities Data 2019/20

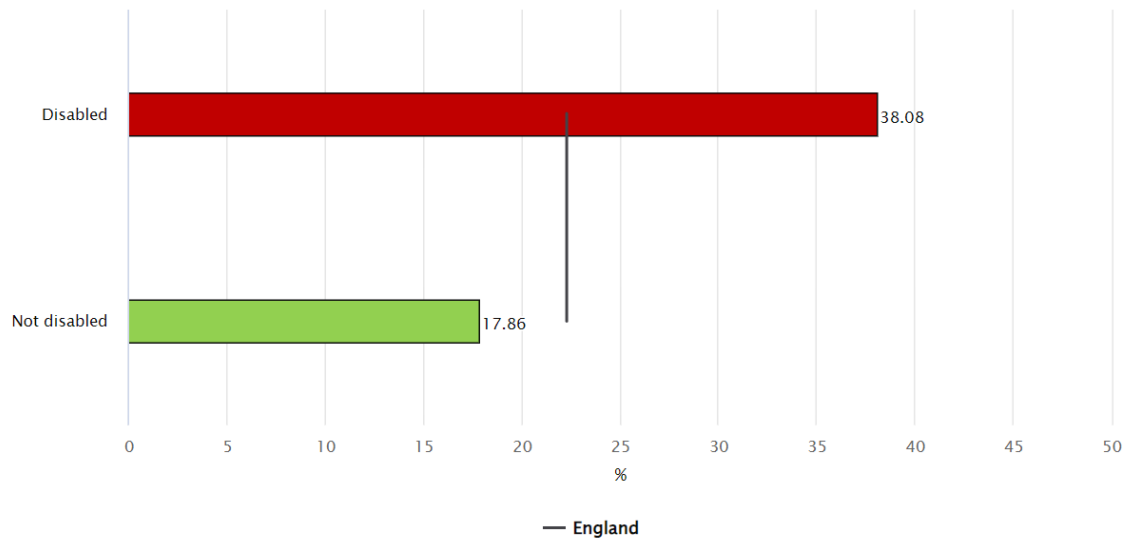




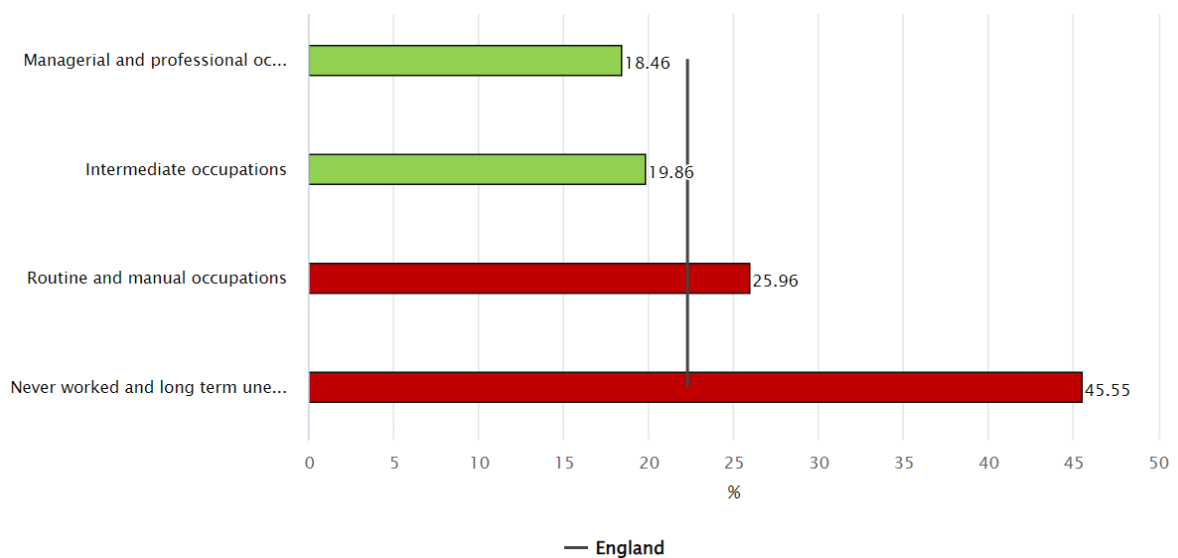
Source: [Mental Health and Wellbeing JSNA | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care \(phe.org.uk\)](#)



Source: [Mental Health and Wellbeing JSNA | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

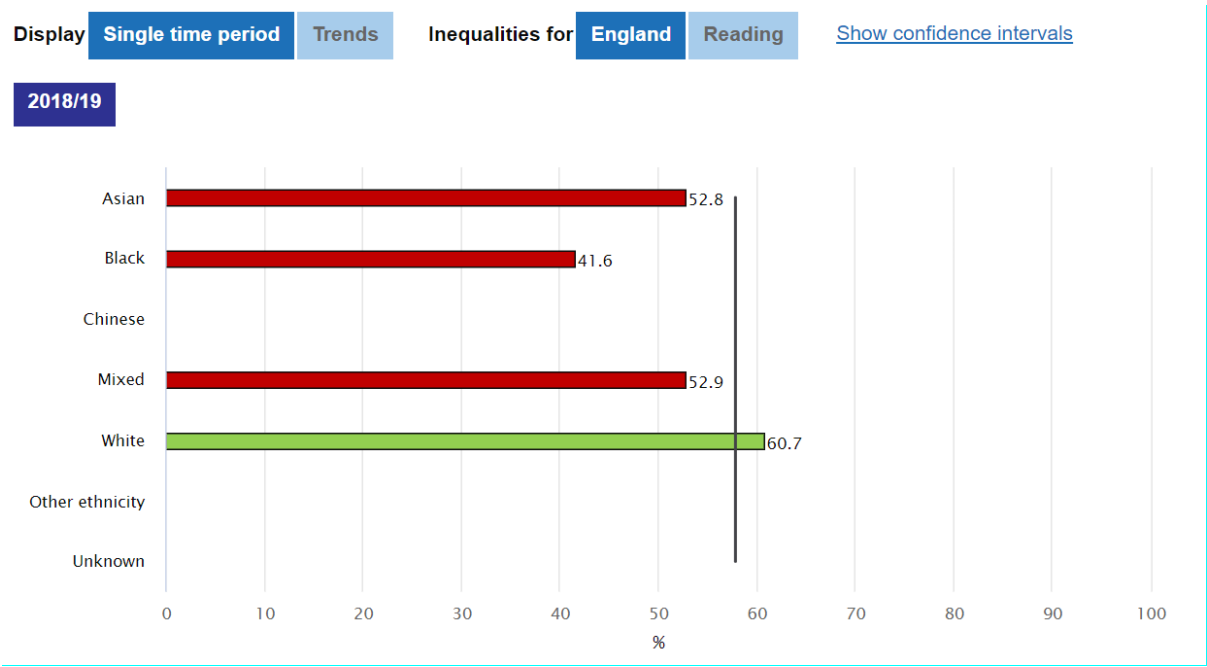


Source: [Mental Health and Wellbeing JSNA | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care \(phe.org.uk\)](#)



Source: [Mental Health and Wellbeing JSNA | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

Section 5: 2018/19 Inequalities Data for Women’s wellbeing - Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework



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## Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

For advice on this document please contact Clare Muir on 72119 or email [Clare.Muir@reading.gov.uk](mailto:Clare.Muir@reading.gov.uk).

Please contact the Project Management Office at [pmo@reading.gov.uk](mailto:pmo@reading.gov.uk) for advice and/or support to complete this form from a project perspective.

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Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed: **Closing the Gap 2**  
Directorate: **DCASC**  
Service: **Commissioning**

Name: **Lara Stavrinou**  
Job Title: **Commissioning Manager (Staying Well)**  
Date of assessment: **13/02/25**

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### Version History

Version	Reason	Author	Date	Approved By
1		Lara Stavrinou	13/02/25	Lara Fromings

## Scope your proposal

- What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?

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Closing the Gap 2 is the commission of the next iteration of the current Closing the Gap framework with the current contracts expiring on 31 October 2025. Services under this framework focus on community-based, preventative work and are currently delivered by providers in Reading's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). These services are commissioned to reduce differences around healthy life expectancy and contribute to long-term change.

Following a review of the last commission, officers recommend a project-based procurement exercise, identifying the most pressing needs and aligning with the outcome requirements of the funding streams that support Closing the Gap. Services under Closing the Gap 2 will be procured in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy and a Needs Analysis and the Council's requirements will be clearly specified. This will ensure that the most pressing residents' needs are met in the most efficient way. This also means that the proposed contracts for Closing the Gap 2 will not necessarily be like for like for what is currently funded.

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### Service Areas where change is Proposed:

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Given limited funding, we have focused on specifications which cover core needs, with clear outcomes targets (as identified through contract monitoring, needs analysis, provider engagement sessions and working groups).

**Infrastructure support funding and Ethnically Diverse Communities funding to be separated** - £130,000 allocated to Infrastructure Support and £68k allocated to Ethnically Diverse Communities Support.

Funding for ethnically diverse grassroots organisations currently sits within the Infrastructure Support contract. This element will be separated from Infrastructure Support and will sit in a new contract for Ethnically Diverse Communities Support.

The intention of the Infrastructure Support service is to support with building capacity, sustainability, representation, and the effectiveness of the VCS in Reading. The contract will support four core functions moving forward: leadership and advocacy; partnerships and collaboration; capacity building; and (support for) volunteering.

The new Ethnically Diverse Communities Support contract will benefit from increased resource from Public Health. Funding for this area of work will increase from £30,955 (within the current Infrastructure contract) to £68k in its own contract.

The benefit of this approach is that the Ethnically Diverse Communities Support contract will augment to meet demonstrated demand and need, whilst the

Infrastructure service specification can be made more specifically aligned to the infrastructure support needs of the VCS.

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**Funding for older people's and younger people's wellbeing to be separated** - £125k allocated to the Ageing Population contract, £65k allocated to the Young People's Mental Health contract.

The proposal is to commission separate contracts based on specific areas of work.

The current Wellbeing Partnership contract predominantly provides services for older people, and includes services for younger people and the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) demographic. These areas will be separated out in the forthcoming commission. Funding for older people will sit in the Ageing Population contract, whilst wellbeing for younger people will sit within the Young People's Mental Health specification, so these areas of need will continue to be funded but within separate contracts.

The benefit of this approach is that RBC can be more precise in specifying the deliverables of each of these specialist contracts, based on population needs and a data driven approach. It allows both contracts to have fit for purpose KPIs and for the Young People's Mental Health contract to augment to meet demonstrated demand and need.

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### **Lead Mental Health Support contract**

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It is proposed that a **strategic** Mental Health contract be delivered in-house rather than commissioning it externally.

The lead Mental Health contract will be about Primary Prevention and strategic system leadership and will sit well within the Public Health team, complementing their existing work. It will focus on how we remove barriers to services, support the VCS to collaborate systematically and sustainably around promoting good mental health and wellbeing, prevent mental health problems and suicide, reduce mental health inequalities and improve the lives of people experiencing and recovering from mental health problems.

There will continue to be mental health funding available to the VCS. Closing the Gap 2 will include multiple contracts within priority areas. The current Mental Health contract holder (Together for Mental Health) will be eligible to apply for contract areas such as Women's Wellbeing, Men's Mental Health and the mental health elements of the Refugee and Asylum Seekers Support contract. Service users currently supported by Together for Mental Health will continue to be supported by RBC's Compass Recovery College, as well as the aforementioned mental health contracts within Closing the Gap 2.

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**HIV Support:** From £30,950 to £25,000

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and

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**Learning Disability and Autism:** Previously jointly funded at £58,721. Proposing separate funding: £25,000 for Autism Support, £25,000 for Learning Disability Support

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As funding provision does not fully meet level of need, officers have sought to be proportionate in how the lower value contracts are allocated.

These are lower value contracts, which have been reduced to be brought in line with the other lower value contracts. Some smaller contracts (for example HIV support) are Public Health priorities and therefore receive full funding from this grant, whereas others (such as Learning Disability & Autism) deliver on a minor element of Loneliness and Social Isolation for the Public Health Grant but primarily deliver on Adult Social Care outcomes around living well independently. These funding sources and their attached grant conditions impact on how much can be allocated against each contract area.

The smaller scale of these contracts allows for an RFQ Lite procurement approach.

*(Please see further detail on pages 10-11)*

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- **Who will benefit from this proposal and how?**
- 

#### **Providers**

As outlined above, there are some areas of need that will see a reduction in funding. A clear benefit to these providers is that the contracts will fall under the threshold for a full tender procurement approach. These contracts will be able to be procured using a Request for Quotation Lite approach, which is far less onerous and resource-intensive for providers. It makes the process more accessible to smaller organisations with limited resources. With a reduced risk of smaller grassroots organisations not receiving funding, this allows for more diversity within the services procured as well as greater opportunity to support more of the diverse communities within Reading.

#### **Reading residents**

The proposed approach has been developed with the needs of Reading's population in mind. The Needs Analysis, along with consultation with providers and a review of current service delivery and KPIs, has highlighted the most pressing areas of need in the borough. With the three lower value contracts above being reduced to be brought in line with the value of other lower value contracts representing a similar level of need, this ensures that the funding is allocated proportionately across the services areas according to residents' needs within the restricted financial envelope and within stipulated grant conditions. Residents will benefit from fairer access to preventative services.

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- 
- **What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?**
- 

The purpose of the changes is to ensure that as many key areas of need in Reading as possible are supported through Closing the Gap 2 funding. The development of bespoke service specifications for each contract will ensure that successful providers have clear outcomes in order to understand what the service is expected to deliver

In order to meet the needs of the Reading population with limited funding, a proportionate approach to the allocation of funding has been applied, in line with funding grant conditions, consultation with funding stakeholders and providers in the voluntary & community sector and the data in the Needs Analysis.

The aim of this approach is to provide Reading residents with fairer access to services which meet their needs.

Below is a summary of the contracts that are being proposed under Closing the Gap 2, their target demographic and their overarching aims.

Contract	Target demographic	Aim of service
Carers' Information and Advice	Unpaid carers of adults and children	Improving the quality of life, health and wellbeing of carers through access to advice and timely support.
Cost of Living Support	Adults and children who are living in poverty and experiencing deprivation	Reducing the impacts of poverty and deprivation by providing practical tools, advice and assistance to communities and individuals.
Infrastructure support	Providers in the voluntary & community sector in Reading	Providing support with building capacity, sustainability, representation, and delivering high quality services.
Hospital to Home	Adults who require additional support when being discharged from local hospitals	Facilitating a safe transition back home, minimising hospital re-admissions and enabling people to continue living at home independently.
Ageing Well	Adults aged 50+ who are affected by loneliness and social isolation, chronic	Providing older people and people with dementia with services that will support their mental

	health conditions, and dementia	wellbeing and ability to remain independent for longer.
Debt Support	People in debt and facing challenges such as possible homelessness because of their level of debt	Supporting individuals to reduce/manage their level of debt, looking to stabilise and improve their financial position.
Ethnically Diverse Community Support	Ethnically diverse residents in Reading, with particular emphasis on under-represented groups at higher risk of health inequalities	Strategic lead for Reading-based organisations supporting ethnically diverse communities; promoting joint working, expanding outreach initiatives and addressing inequalities through community support provision which improves wellbeing and health outcomes.
Men's Mental Health	Adult men at risk of social isolation or those facing barriers to accessing mental health services	Support for men's mental health, particularly around early intervention and social interaction for suicide prevention, with a focus on areas of deprivation.
Refugee & Asylum Seeker Support	Refugees and asylum seekers in Reading, with particular emphasis on individuals in temporary accommodations	Improve access to services for refugees and asylum seekers in Reading, including healthcare services; education and skills development; mentorship and support networks; advocacy support; social inclusion and community integration; and mental health and wellbeing support.
Visual Impairment	Adults living with sight loss who are at risk of social isolation or have limited community engagement	Provide person centred, tailored support to adults who live with sight loss, with a focus on information and advice and increased social interaction, improved wellbeing and reduced social isolation and loneliness.
Women's Wellbeing	Women in Reading who are at risk of poor health outcomes	Supporting and empowering women at risk of poor health outcomes to address their needs, whilst increasing their resilience, wellbeing and independence.

Young People's Mental Health	Young people who are in secondary school and at risk of exclusion or Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET) status	Provide young people at risk of poor health outcomes and social isolation with preventative emotional wellbeing support.
Autism Support	Adults with or without a diagnosis of autism who are at risk of social isolation, need support with engaging with existing services or need support with upskilling to improve their level of independence	Support and empower autistic adults to live well independently and improve their wellbeing.
Deaf & Hearing Impairment	Deaf adults or adults with a hearing impairment who are at risk of social isolation or have limited community engagement	Offer person centred, tailored support to adults who have been born deaf or with a hearing impairment and adults who have become deaf or have developed a hearing impairment during their life, with a focus on information and advice and increased social interaction, improved wellbeing and reduced social isolation and loneliness.
HIV Support	People with an existing or a new diagnosis of HIV diagnosis living in Reading	Supporting individuals with a positive HIV diagnosis for improved wellbeing and reduced loneliness and social isolation.
Learning Disability Support	Adults with a learning disability, particularly those living independently or planning to transition to independent living	Support and empower adults with a learning disability to live well independently, to live a fulfilling life and connect with the wider community.
LGBTQIA+ Support	People within the LGBTQIA+ community experiencing mental health challenges, social isolation, or barriers to accessing existing services	Support and empower the LGBTQIA+ community for improved wellbeing and reduced loneliness and social isolation.
Physical Disability Support	People with a physical disability in Reading, particularly those that face barriers to engaging with	Support and empower adults with a physical disability to live well independently, improve their wellbeing and reduce loneliness.

	existing services or those looking to enhance their life skills and independence	
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- 
- **Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?**
- 

### **Funding stakeholders**

Closing the Gap 2 is funded from multiple funding streams. The key funding stakeholders are:

- 
- RBC Public Health - DCASC
  - Adult Social Care - DCASC
  - Directorate of Resources
  - RBC Housing - DCASC
  - Brighter Futures for Children
  - West Berkshire Council
- 

The largest contributor overall is Public Health. Most of the funding streams have grant conditions attached to them in terms of deliverables, so the proposed contracts seek to meet these conditions in the most effective and efficient way possible.

### **Voluntary & Community Sector**

Providers in the voluntary & community sector (VCS) currently deliver the preventative, community-based services that are being commissioned under Closing the Gap 2. Providers wish to receive funding to continue to deliver their services, and their feedback indicates that they would like the procurement process to be as simple and accessible as possible. This has been addressed through the proposed tiered procurement model.

### **Reading Residents**

Residents in Reading need community-based support to be available and accessible to them. This has been addressed through identifying the key areas of need in the borough and allocating funding proportionately to the level of need and developing clear service specifications to detail the delivery requirements.

## Assess whether an EqlA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; advancing equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

---

- **Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some groups may be affected differently than others (due to race, disability, sex, gender, sexuality, age, religious belief or due to belonging to the Armed Forces community or care experience)? Make reference to the known demographic profile of the service user group, your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.**

**Yes:** The proposed approach to procuring services under Closing the Gap 2 is inclusive and representative of all the groups listed above. However, the decision to allocate the limited nature of the funding and attached grant conditions means the following groups may be affected due to the reduction in funding allocated towards their services:

1. People affected by HIV
2. People with learning disabilities and their families/carers

The HIV contract will see a reduction of £5,950 (approximately 19%). This means that the level of service delivery is likely to be reduced. However, baseline services will continue.

The Learning Disabilities contract is particularly affected (with a reduction of £20,721, 45%), as it currently receives significantly more funding than other commensurate small contracts. It is anticipated that this contract will not continue to offer the current level of information and advice, as a Family Advisor role will be at risk. With the current contract delivery model, this would reduce their casework capacity by a third.

Day services will, however, remain operational, along with support for accessing local services and resources; fostering social opportunities; and training and resources to support with developing life skills. In addition to the Closing the Gap contract, a separate RBC commissioned service will continue to offer advocacy services to people who have a learning disability and there is also an RBC commission which will continue to offer provision addressing the gap in employment rate between those who are in receipt of long-term support for a learning disability and the overall employment rate.

Furthermore, it is expected that residents with a learning disability will be supported by contracts across Closing the Gap. For example, we know that people with a learning disability have higher rates of symptoms of common mental health problems and therefore should be supported via the Women's Wellbeing and Men's Mental Health contracts, as well as by Compass Recovery College which sits within RBC's

Public Health team. It will be stipulated in service specifications, contracts and KPIs for other contracts to ensure accessibility and inclusivity.

Officers are not aware of any other decisions being made elsewhere in the Council that may impact on these service user groups.

- 
- **Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Make reference to your complaints, consultation, feedback, media reports locally/nationally.**

**Yes:** Mencap is the current service provider for the Learning Disabilities contract within Closing the Gap. They have raised concerns about the reduction in funding and notified officers that they believe it will lead to a significant impact on their work and therefore disadvantage people with learning disabilities. Officers were transparent in their response, citing the limited funding available, grant conditions, and need for proportionality across smaller contracts. Senior officers within the Council have been made aware to ensure that this area is prioritised if additional funding should become available.

**Additional consultation:**

Officers have engaged with providers to understand the needs of each represented demographic and how Closing the Gap 2 can best deliver outcomes that align with these needs. Engagement opportunities have included four engagement sessions to discuss lessons learnt from the previous procurement and the needs as they are in Reading. Providers have given feedback around contract monitoring, the procurement method, the legalities of their existing contracts and how we engage with them moving forwards.

Providers have been involved in prioritising Public Health Outcomes for Reading based on the Public Health Outcomes Framework, with an overview presented by our Consultant in Public Health. They have also been consulted on the proposed procurement approach and outcome areas.

Providers have had sight of draft specifications at the VCS Assembly, with a chance to input thoughts for consideration. Providers have provided feedback on the draft specifications, and officers have incorporated the feedback where possible.

Providers have had and will continue to have opportunities to feed in service user needs, as their representatives. The new services commissioned under Closing the Gap 2 will require providers to work with service users in the development of their programmes to ensure ongoing co-production.

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If the answer is **Yes** to any of the above, you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If **No** you **MUST** complete this statement.

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:

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X

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Completing Officer

X

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Lead Officer

## Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- **Consultation**
- **Collection and Assessment of Data**
- **Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive**

Think about who does and doesn't use the service? Is the take up representative of the community? What do different minority groups think? (You might think your policy, project or service is accessible and addressing the needs of these groups, but asking them might give you a totally different view). Does it really meet their varied needs? Are some groups less likely to get a good service?

How do your proposals relate to other services - will your proposals have knock on effects on other services elsewhere? Are there proposals being made for other services that relate to yours and could lead to a cumulative impact?

**Example:** A local authority takes separate decisions to limit the eligibility criteria for community care services; increase charges for respite services; scale back its accessible housing programme; and cut concessionary travel.

Each separate decision may have a significant effect on the lives of disabled residents, and the cumulative impact of these decisions may be considerable.

This combined impact would not be apparent if decisions are considered in isolation.

## Consultation

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts. If you haven't already completed a Consultation form do it now. The checklist helps you make sure you follow good consultation practice.

[Consultation manager form - Reading Borough Council Dash](#)

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
Dementia Carers Support Group	Attendees were given an overview of the current Carers' Information and Advice service and asked directly for their feedback on the current service and thoughts about what the next iteration could include.	10/09/24
Parent Carers' Support Group	Attendees were given an overview of the current Carers' Information and Advice service and asked directly for their feedback on the current service and thoughts about what the next iteration could include.	19/09/24
Impact Co-Production Group	<p>The Impact group, which is led by the RBC co-production lead, consists of local carers who provide insights into several areas within Reading Borough Council and Adult Social Care.</p> <p>Carers within the Impact group were consulted on a draft copy of the Carers' Information and Advice service specification and asked for their thoughts and recommendations on what the service could include moving forward.</p>	03/02/25



Voluntary & Community Sector providers	VCS providers have been consulted and engaged with at regular intervals throughout the re-commissioning process.	23/07/24 20/08/24 07/10/24 19/11/24 21/01/25
Key funding stakeholders	A project working group for key funding stakeholders is in place to discuss the requirements of the new contracts and associated funding.	Fortnightly meetings (approximately) from April 2024 - present (ongoing)

<p>Other stakeholders, including representatives from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing &amp; Communities</li> <li>• Corporate Policy and Voluntary Sector Team</li> <li>• Compass Recovery College</li> <li>• Public Health Team</li> <li>• Mental Health Team</li> <li>• Advice and Wellbeing Hub</li> <li>• Learning, Disability and Autism Team</li> <li>• Community Safety Team</li> <li>• Family Help and Partnerships Team</li> <li>• Sustainable Communities Team</li> <li>• Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire Integrated Care Board and West Berkshire Council</li> </ul>	<p>Separate working groups have been established for each contract area in order to ensure that the commission will address the identified needs, that the procurement process is accessible to providers and that any potential negative impact on providers or service users will be minimal.</p>	<p>Housing Service Working Group - 2/10/24</p> <p>Refugee Service Working Group - 2/10/24</p> <p>LGBTQ+ Service Working Group - 3/10/24</p> <p>Sensory Needs Service Working Group - 9/10/24</p> <p>Women's Wellbeing Service Working Group - 9/10/24</p> <p>Mental Health Service Working Group - 15/10/24</p> <p>Women's Wellbeing follow up meeting - 30/10/24</p> <p>Learning Disability and Autism Service Working Group - 4/11/24</p> <p>Hospital to Home Working Group - 26/11/24</p> <p>Mental Health Service Working Group - 15/1/25</p> <p>Cost of Living Service Working Group - 4/2/25</p> <p>Younger Peoples Mental Wellbeing Service Meeting - 11/2/25</p>
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## Collect and Assess your Data

Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.

(Please delete relevant ticks)

- **Describe how this proposal could impact on racial groups**
  - **Is there a negative impact? No**
- 

There is no data or feedback to suggest that any particular racial group will be affected by the changes proposed under Closing the Gap 2. In general, ethnically diverse groups are likely to be impacted in a positive way due to the accessible nature of the procurement approach, which will enable small, grassroots organisations to have an equal chance of bidding successfully as larger, better-resourced organisations.

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- **Describe how this proposal could impact on Sex and Gender identity (include pregnancy and maternity, marriage, gender re-assignment)**
  - **Is there a negative impact? No**
- 

There is no data or feedback to suggest that any particular sex or gender identity group will be affected by the changes proposed under Closing the Gap 2.

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- **Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability**
  - **Is there a negative impact? Yes**
- 

Due to a proposed reduction in funding for the Learning Disabilities contract in order to ensure a more proportionate allocation of funding, people with learning disabilities may be negatively affected by a reduction in the information and advice service available to them.

It is anticipated that this contract will not continue to offer the current level of information and advice, as a Family Advisor role will be at risk. Day services will, however, remain operational, along with support for accessing local services and resources; fostering social opportunities; and training and resources to support with

developing life skills. In addition to the Closing the Gap contract, a separate RBC commissioned service will continue to offer advocacy services to people who have a learning disability and there is also an RBC commission which will continue to offer provision addressing the gap in employment rate between those who are in receipt of long-term support for a learning disability and the overall employment rate.

- 
- **Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)**
  - **Is there a negative impact? No**
- 

Under Closing the Gap 2, there will be a specific contract to provide support to the LGBTQIA+ community, which is not currently the case. The Needs Analysis highlights that people within the LGBTQIA+ community experience significant health inequalities when compared to the general population. With 13.2%<sup>1</sup> of Reading's population identifying as being part of the LGBTQIA+ community, it is anticipated that these residents will see a positive impact from the proposed budget allocation.

- 
- **Describe how this proposal could impact on age**
  - **Is there a negative impact? No**
- 

There is no data or feedback to suggest that any particular age group will be impacted by the proposed changes under Closing the Gap 2.

Closing the Gap does not currently have any contracts specific to particular age groups; however, the Wellbeing Partnership contract sits closest to this as it includes work for older people and services for younger people and the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) demographic. These areas have been separated out for the Closing the Gap 2 commission. Wellbeing for younger people will sit within the Young People's Mental Health specification as a larger contract, which will positively impact delivery for young people.

The benefit of this separated, more prescriptive approach is that RBC can be more precise in specifying the deliverables of each of these specialist contracts, based on population needs, age and a data driven approach. It allows both contracts to have fit for purpose key performance indicators and for the Young People's Mental Health contract to grow to meet demonstrated demand and need.

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<sup>1</sup> Closing the Gap Needs Analysis

- 
- Describe how this proposal could impact on religious belief
  - Is there a negative impact? No
- 

There is no data or feedback to suggest that people with any particular religious beliefs will be impacted by the proposed changes under Closing the Gap 2.

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- Describe how this proposal could impact on the Armed Forces community (including reservists and veterans and their families)
  - Is there a negative impact? No
- 

There is no data or feedback to suggest that anyone in the Armed Forces community will be impacted by the proposed changes under Closing the Gap 2.

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- Describe how this proposal could impact on care experienced by young people and adults.
  - Is there a negative impact? No
- 

There is no data or feedback to suggest that care experienced by young people or adults in Reading will be impacted by the proposed changes under Closing the Gap 2.

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## Make a Decision

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you **MUST** assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

(Delete numbers below which don't apply)

### 1. Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason

You must give due regard or weight but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.

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A Needs Analysis was carried out in order to understand the key areas of need within Reading's communities (*see Appendix 1 for full details*). Alongside this data-driven approach, the Council has consulted with funding stakeholders, the voluntary & community sector and people who use the services in order to allocate the limited funding proportionately. **It is acknowledged that demand will outstrip supply in all areas.**

Funding streams have conditions attached to how they should be used. For example, the Public Health Grant stipulates that funding must be spent against the Public Health Outcomes Framework; the Housing Revenue Account budget from Housing must primarily benefit Reading Borough Council Housing tenants; and the Brighter Futures for Children budget is attached to parent carers' assessments. It is important to note that the Public Health Grant is the largest investment, and so outcomes must be organised around a primary prevention approach, alongside other grant conditions.

In order to meet grant conditions and to apportion the funds available to give Reading residents fairer access to services that they need, two service user groups will be impacted by a reduction in funding to services that support them; people affected by HIV and people with learning disabilities and their families. The reduction in funding brings these contracts in line with other small contracts. If funding were to continue at the current amount, this would disproportionately affect other service user groups.

The effects of the funding reductions on services users will be partially mitigated through the continuation of other services that support the needs of the affected cohorts.

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Completing Officer

Lara Stavrinou

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Lead Officer

Lara Fromings

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## Policy Committee

17 March 2025



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

<b>Title</b>	Discretionary Licensing in the Private Rented Sector – Implementation Proposal
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report with confidential annex
<b>Report author</b>	Catherine Lewis, Community Protection Group Manager
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Matt Yeo, Lead Councillor for Housing
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Healthy Environment
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That members delegate approval to officers to procure a delivery partner to support the processing and compliance checks for the Council's agreed Discretionary Licensing scheme; and</li> <li>2. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection, in consultation with the, Director of Finance, Executive Director for Environment, Growth and Neighbourhood Services and Lead Councillor for Housing, to enter into a 5-year contract plus 2 years to support the delivery of the licence processing and compliance checks element of the Discretionary licensing in the private rented sector scheme.</li> </ol>

Appendix 1 to this report contains exempt information within the meaning of the following paragraph of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006:

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

And in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because:

The report contains within Appendix 1 financial information which, if published, would provide an unreasonable commercial advantage to future contractors and third parties. Therefore, while the public interest in transparency is acknowledged the priority must be to ensure that the council can continue to negotiate effectively and secure value for money on behalf of its constituents.

## Executive Summary

- 1.1 Discretionary Licensing under the Housing Act 2004 (the 'Act') is a tool which the Council can use to improve housing conditions and management in the private rented sector. This briefing is further to the Committee report taken to HNL on 13 November 2024 on Discretionary Licensing and looks to advise members further on the proposal to identify a delivery partner to support the processing and compliance checks for the Discretionary Licensing project.
- 1.2 This report seeks approval to procure and contract with a delivery partner to support the implementation of the proposed Discretionary Licensing Scheme in the Private Rented Sector.
- 1.3 On 21 February 2024 Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee authorised the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services to commence a statutory consultation exercise with residents, private landlords, businesses and other key stakeholders on proposals for boroughwide additional licensing and a phased introduction of selective licensing, and to propose areas to be included in the consultation on these designations based on the evidence provided by a stock condition report.
- 1.4 On the 13 November 2024 Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee agreed the implementation of 2 Discretionary Private Rented Sector Licensing Schemes. Firstly, an Additional Licensing Scheme for smaller HMOs across the whole borough and secondly a Selective Licensing Scheme for private rented homes within Battle, Redlands and Park Ward; to raise housing standards within the Borough.
- 1.5 The November 2024 Committee report stated at para 15.3: There may also be potential to mitigate staffing issues and costs through securing a delivery partner for the implementation of the licence processing and initial check inspection; *it is noted this would require a further report and a separate committee decision to be implemented.*
- 1.6 Initially it was hoped to run the schemes in house appointing additional staff to carry out the associated work. However, since the November Committee report there have been increased budget and capacity pressures. Hence, the proposal to work with a delivery partner has been brought forward to facilitate delivery of the Scheme.
- 1.7 Operating the Scheme with a delivery partner provides a number of benefits, including reducing the risk of lower than anticipated income. The potential number of properties that meet the criteria for being licensed under the scheme is based on a desk top exercise and whilst the figures used were cautious, until the scheme is implemented it is not fully known how many properties would apply. Using a delivery partner passes this risk on, ensuring the Council does not appoint staff that are not required.
- 1.8 Use of a delivery partner also offers potential benefits, including flexibility on how and when property inspections can occur and the potential for later phases of licensing to be delivered sooner than would be possible via in house delivery. This may enable the timescale for the later phases of Selective Licensing in Park and Redlands wards to be brought forward and for us to be able to consider further designations sooner than would otherwise be possible.

## 2 Policy Context

- 2.1 The Council's 3-year [Corporate Plan](#) 2022 –2025 reflects the Council's priorities for Reading and provides direction for staff in delivering services to meet the needs of the communities within the Borough whilst working to a budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.
- 2.2 The Council's [Housing Standards Enforcement Policy](#) and the [Housing Strategy](#) commit the Council to reviewing evidence in relation to housing conditions and the need for discretionary licensing schemes as part of wider actions to improve the quality and

safety of housing for residents. The Housing Act 2004 sets out the duty to keep housing conditions under review and as part of this, whilst not a statutory requirement, councils undertake a 'Stock Condition Survey'.

- 2.3 [Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) identifies that poor housing is one of the determinants of poor health. The Strategy commits the Council to consider the impact on health in work and to 'address the variation in the experience of the wider social, economic and environmental determinants of health'.
- 2.4 [Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020 – 2025](#) includes a priority to increase access to decent, suitable accommodation and recognises that engagement on this will focus primarily on the private rented sector, particularly through the Rent Guarantee Scheme but also through other initiatives. The strategy also commits to working across teams within the Council to enable enforcement action relating to poor quality accommodation and drive-up housing standards. The recommended discretionary licensing designations will enable this activity to be expanded.

### 3.0 The Proposal

#### **Background**

- 3.1 Poor and unsafe housing can occur in all forms of home ownership and occupancy, but in general the private rented sector has the highest rates of poorer housing. A growing proportion of the population now live in privately rented properties.
- 3.2 The Council as a local housing authority has a range of powers relating to the private rented housing sector. The main powers are contained within the Housing Act 2004 ("the 2004 Act"). The 2004 Act introduced a statutory licensing scheme which the Council introduced in 2006. The Council currently licences 1,184 properties and with 256 further licence applications being processed.
- 3.3 The Housing 2004 Act introduced two other forms of discretionary property licensing in addition to the Mandatory scheme we currently operate:

#### **3.3.1 Additional Licensing.**

This is a discretionary power to declare all or part of the local authority's area subject to licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's). It can cover 'smaller' HMOs that are currently outside of the mandatory licensing i.e. 3 and 4 person properties, generally those with shared facilities. A scheme designation could also include certain buildings converted into self-contained flats.

However, the authority must consider that a significant proportion of the HMOs of that description in the area are being managed sufficiently ineffectively as to give rise, or to be likely to give rise, to problems either for those occupying the HMOs or for members of the public.

#### **3.3.2 Selective Licensing.**

A Selective Licensing Scheme means that all private landlords in a designated area must have a licence. Selective licensing aims to improve the private rented market. It means properties must be of a decent standard for a landlord to rent out. Selective licensing also gives tenants confidence that houses and flats in a designated area will be healthy and safe to live in.

- 3.4 The benefits of engaging a delivery partner for additional HMO licensing are:
  - 1. **Resource Optimization:** A delivery partner would share the burden of managing and implementing the scheme, allowing us to allocate our resources more efficiently. A delivery partner would enable Reading to put more resource into the more complex higher risk cases, whilst the partner deals with processing and routine inspection cases

and also enable better management of peaks and troughs through the application process.

2. **Efficient Application and Licensing Process:** There will be an opportunity to look to join an existing accessible and user-friendly application and licensing process reducing administrative burdens and the level of IT support required. A delivery Partner can support the provision of online platforms, guidance materials, and support services to facilitate the submission and processing of licence applications.
  3. **Enhanced Compliance and Enforcement:** With a delivery partner, there is the opportunity for better oversight and enforcement of licensing requirements, ensuring that properties meet the necessary standards by ensuring more timely compliance checks and potentially 2 inspections per 5 year license period. The partner may also be able to deliver monitoring of landlord compliance with gas and electrical safety testing requirements, throughout the period of the licence, which our current systems cannot automate.
  4. **Effective Data Management and Analysis:** A delivery partner could potentially handle data collection and analysis, freeing up resource to assess the true effectiveness of the licensing scheme and helping to identify areas for improvement.
- 3.5 While there are many benefits to using a delivery partner for additional HMO licensing, it is recognised that there are also some potential drawbacks:
1. **Cost considerations:** Engaging a delivery partner might incur additional costs. This could affect the affordability of the scheme and potentially be passed on to tenants in the form of higher rents. We expect the scheme to operate as cost neutral and believe having spoken to other Local Authorities (LAs) that we could run the scheme within the proposed licence fees.
  2. **Potential for Inconsistency:** The quality of services provided by delivery partners can vary. If the delivery partner does not perform to expected standards, there is the potential it could negatively impact the effectiveness of the licensing scheme and enforcement actions. Officers have liaised with other LAs and feel confident that any concern here could be managed by implementing a robust contract. This is manageable through audit and good communication.
  3. **Dependence on External Expertise:** Relying on external partners for essential services can create a dependency, making it challenging to develop in-house capabilities and expertise. The proposal is to look for a delivery partner retaining expertise in house and also grow the internal workforce to manage engagement with other partner agencies, complex cases and enforcement. The scheme would look to introduce apprenticeships within the team to ensure we have a resilient workforce going forward.
  4. **Data Security and Privacy:** Sharing data with a delivery partner may raise concerns about data security and privacy issues. We would ensure we implement robust agreements and practices to ensure that sensitive information is protected as per our existing policies and procedures.
- 3.6 With the existing mandatory scheme there is an inspection back log due to ongoing staffing shortages. The team have struggled to retain short term fixed contracts to back fill maternity and secondment periods. The current scheme operates with one inspection prior to the licence being issued, there are approximately 140 inspections pending within the current scheme. As is proposed for the Additional Licensing Scheme; Part b of the licence fee is only received once the licence is issued. Working with a delivery partner would enable this full income to be received in a quicker time frame compared to how the current Mandatory scheme is operating.
- 3.7 In order to weigh up the pros and cons of working with a delivery partner; officers have met with a number of other authorities. Peterborough City Council is one such authority who have successfully worked with an external partner to implement some of their Discretionary Licensing functionality. Other authorities have had similar schemes in the past and are looking to re-establish these schemes in the future.

- 3.8 The outcome of these meetings and discussions has highlighted how working with a delivery partner would enable the Council to efficiently achieve more and show greater results with less financial risks in a shorter time period than if we worked to solely resource this in-house.
- 3.9 Officers believe that awarding a contract for the administration and compliance of our Discretionary Licensing Scheme to a delivery partner would provide the infrastructure and associated resources necessary to implement the scheme, thus freeing up internal resource to follow up on non-compliance, furthermore complex enforcement matters, and issue any associated civil penalties.
- 3.10 It is noted that the procurement process for tendering some of the functionality of the Discretionary Licensing scheme will delay the proposed start of the implementation phase. It is likely that the scheme would be delayed until the end of 2025 instead of the anticipated June 25 start date.
- 3.11 However, working with a delivery partner will potentially enable us to bring forward the Selective Licensing Scheme 12 months earlier than previously projected.
- 3.12 It is anticipated that following contract award implementation of the Discretionary Licensing Scheme would be as advised in the November 2024 HNL committee report. Starting with the Boroughwide Additional Licensing Scheme followed by the Selective Licensing Scheme ward by ward.
- 3.13 It should be noted that on 16 December 2024 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) issued a new general approval for Selective Licensing which took effect from 23 December 2024. The new general approval, announced in the English Devolution White Paper, now enables councils to introduce Selective Licensing schemes of any size without seeking approval from the Secretary of State (SOS) for Housing, Communities and Local Government. This will enable us to assess the effectiveness of the Selective Licensing Scheme and potentially extend it to additional wards without requiring SoS approval going forward.
- 3.14 It is anticipated that in working with a delivery partner we will be aiming to inspect all Additionally Licensed properties twice; once at the start of the 5-year term and once at the end. In addition, this approach would guarantee all those on the Selective Licensed Scheme would receive an inspection whereas for a scheme operated in house we had been looking at a fixed percentage of properties, due to the anticipated resourcing issues.
- 3.15 Longer term, there is potential to build the current mandatory licensing processing and initial compliance checks into also working with the chosen delivery partner; enabling better use of resource, allowing officers to address new regulatory reform requirements, focus on the more complex cases, free up capacity to look at illegal evictions, empty homes and improve property standards across the board. A business case will be submitted at a later date to show the effectiveness, efficiency and economic benefits of this along with any associated risks. A tender process can include a modification clause within a proposed contract to allow for this to be added in should members be satisfied such an option proves beneficial.

## **Options Proposed**

- 4.1 **Option 1 – Preferred Option**  
**To approve the implementation of recommendations 1 and 2 within the report. Enabling officers to undergo a procurement process for a delivery partner and to award a contract for implementing the scheme.**

1. 4.2 This option officers believe offers the most effective use of resources in the delivery of a high quality, best value public service (Appendix 1 Financial implications shows a worked example).
- 4.3 Working with a delivery partner will enable consistent enhanced compliance, improving overall housing conditions for tenants. Any contract implemented would ensure clear expectations and performance metrics are established to ensure that the delivery partner aligns with the Council's goals and delivers high-quality services. (Appendix 2 Workload responsibilities example).
- 4.4 This option still means Reading retains scheme delivery but with less risk associated with cost burden.
- 4.5 Some key benefits of providing the scheme through a delivery partner are:
  - A faster application processing time.
  - All properties on the relevant scheme to receive at minimum 1 compliance inspection.
  - All non-compliance will be passed to Council officers for enforcement and to ensure compliance is met.
  - Reading officers will have more capacity to manage poor/ rogue landlords ensuring those evading the licensing scheme meet compliance requirements or are penalised accordingly.
  - Reading officers will have capacity to identify landlords that have not applied for a licence, making a fairer scheme for those good landlords that have complied.
  - The standards of rental accommodation within the Borough will improve.
  - A delivery partner can offer Tenants and Landlords advice on property management/ maintenance direct during visits and via application on the portal. They can also use their experience from other schemes to support existing online advice to landlords and tenants.
- 4.6 **Option 2 – Alternative Option**  
**To implement the scheme by recruiting additional officers and necessary resources as determined within the November 2024 HNL report.**
- 4.7 This was the initial method for scheme delivery; however, current budget pressures and recruitment issues have increased the delivery risk of this approach.
- 4.8 There are significant limitations in the labour market, specifically for qualified Environmental Health staff to undertake the work. The team currently have vacant posts within the service pending recruitment. One of these posts was successfully filled in November 2024 only for the candidate to withdraw a week into the role.
- 4.9 The ability to deliver a successful scheme is dependent on the availability of Officers and therefore, there is a big risk of the scheme failing if we implement option 2.
- 4.10 The number of properties estimated for the Additional and Selective Licensing Schemes are based on a desk top exercise. The Business Case was cautious basing its cost on 80% capture to reduce risks. However, there is a risk that we do not licence the number of predicted properties which would put pressure on the schemes staffing resources.

## **5.0 Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 5.1 The proposal links to the 'Thriving Communities' theme of the Corporate Plan 2020-25. Under the Corporate Plan we are committed to ensure everyone has an equal chance to thrive wherever they live. The Plan also aspires to a place-based approach and for residents to feel safer from risk or harm. The targeted approach set out in the recommendations can contribute to ensuring equal access to a decent home across tenures and across the Borough.

- 5.2 The implementation of the Discretionary Licensing Schemes proposed in this report, aim to improve living standards through improved property conditions. This can have a positive impact on the mental and physical health and wellbeing of tenants.
- 5.3 Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2030 identifies that poor housing is one of the determinants of poor health. The Strategy commits the Council to consider the impact on health in work and to 'address the variation in the experience of the wider social, economic and environmental determinants of health'.

## **6.0 Environmental and Climate Implications**

- 6.1 The impacts of delivering the scheme with a delivery partner would be the same as those detailed within the November 24 HNL Committee report.

## **7.0 Community Engagement**

- 7.1 As set out within the November 24 HNL report a comprehensive consultation process was followed with reference the implementation of the scheme. The consultation was launched on 13 June and ran to 29 August 2024 (11 Weeks).
- 7.2 Prior to launching the scheme, events for agents, landlords and tenants would be offered to advise on registering for the scheme and what to expect from the application process through to the property inspection and licence being issued.

## **8.0 Equality Implications**

- 8.1 The proposals are not expected to have a differential people with protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) or sexual orientation), beyond the impact described below.
- 8.2 The proposals in the report will have a beneficial impact to residents in the private rented sector subject to the scheme(s), particularly those occupants of certain ages (particularly the very old and very young) who may be impacted more due to the risk of injury or poor health caused by poor housing conditions.
- 8.3 The improved housing conditions resulting from the proposal will support individuals at high risk of poor health outcomes, a priority in the [Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2030](#).

## **9.0 Other Relevant Considerations**

- 9.1 Ensure that the procurement process complies with relevant regulations, such as the Public Contracts Regulations 2024 in the UK. This includes advertising the contract opportunity, ensuring fair competition, and following transparent procedures.
- 9.2 Ensure that the delivery partner adheres to data protection laws, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This includes handling tenant information securely and maintaining confidentiality.

## **10.0 Legal Implications**

- 10.1 Handling personal data of landlords and tenants requires compliance with data protection laws, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) will be prepared.
- 10.2 Support with the implementation of contractual obligations, to clearly outline the responsibilities, deliverables, and performance standards.
- 10.3 Legal oversight of the scheme and decision making for approval or refusal of licences remains with Reading Borough Council (RBC). There is no requirement to pass on delegated powers to the delivery partner. The delivery partner inspects properties at the request of the landlord to enable a licence to be issued. All enforcement powers remain with RBC Officers.

## **11.0 Financial Implications**

- 11.1 Licensing allows local authorities to recover costs related to the administration and processing of a Scheme – but not its enforcement. The significant costs are staffing for a combination of processing and inspecting officers.
- 11.2 Fees will be set at a level to ensure full cost recovery. This will be monitored closely, and the scheme will need to be amended if full cost recovery is not achieved.
- 11.3 It is not anticipated that the Business Case submitted to Council February 2025 will need to be altered to implement the scheme with a delivery partner. The original Business case is based on full cost recovery, in using a delivery partner the scheme would be based on same principal.
- 11.4 A potential provider would offer a fee per application and inspection completed rate which removes the risk to Reading from set up and staffing costs pending applications. With a delivery partner Reading would only pay for what is used as opposed to having the resource pending applications being received.
- 11.5 Should the scheme not continue after its initial 5 years licensing period there is redundancy cost risk associated with the scheme. The risk is lower working with a delivery partner as there are less people from the outset.

## **12.0 Value for Money (VFM)**

- 12.1 The proposed option, taking account the public benefit and health benefits and cost recovery element of the scheme, presents value for money.

## **13.0 Timetable for Implementation**

- 13.1 It is expected that the procurement process will delay implementation of the scheme by a minimum of 6 months. However, working with a delivery partner will enable quicker processing and compliance times allowing a greater number of properties to be inspected and licensed within the first 12 months of launching the scheme.
- 13.2 For example Peterborough City Council in working with a delivery partner inspected over 900 properties within the first 6 months of their scheme. During these inspections they identified over 2000 issues across 500 properties. These included hazards such as severe damp and mould, missing or faulty smoke detectors, inadequate ventilation and damaged plaster. The delivery partner engaged with landlords resolving the issues improving living conditions for tenants passing on the higher risk non-compliance cases to Peterborough to enforce directly.

## **14.0 Background Papers**

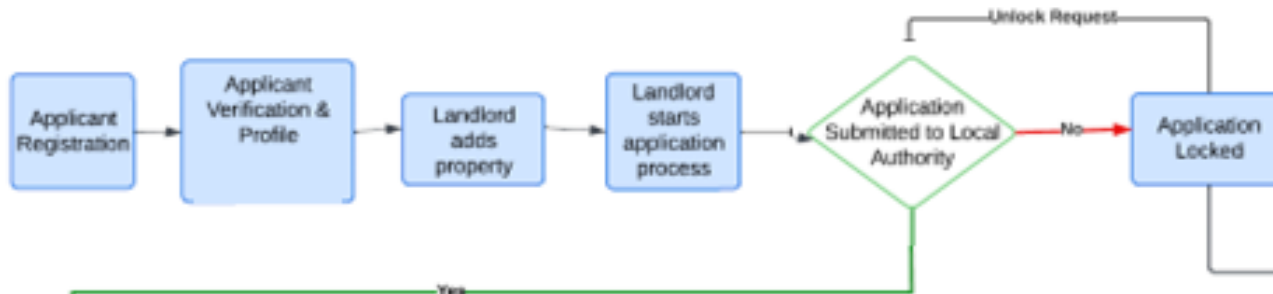
- 14.1 There are none.

## **15.0 Appendices**

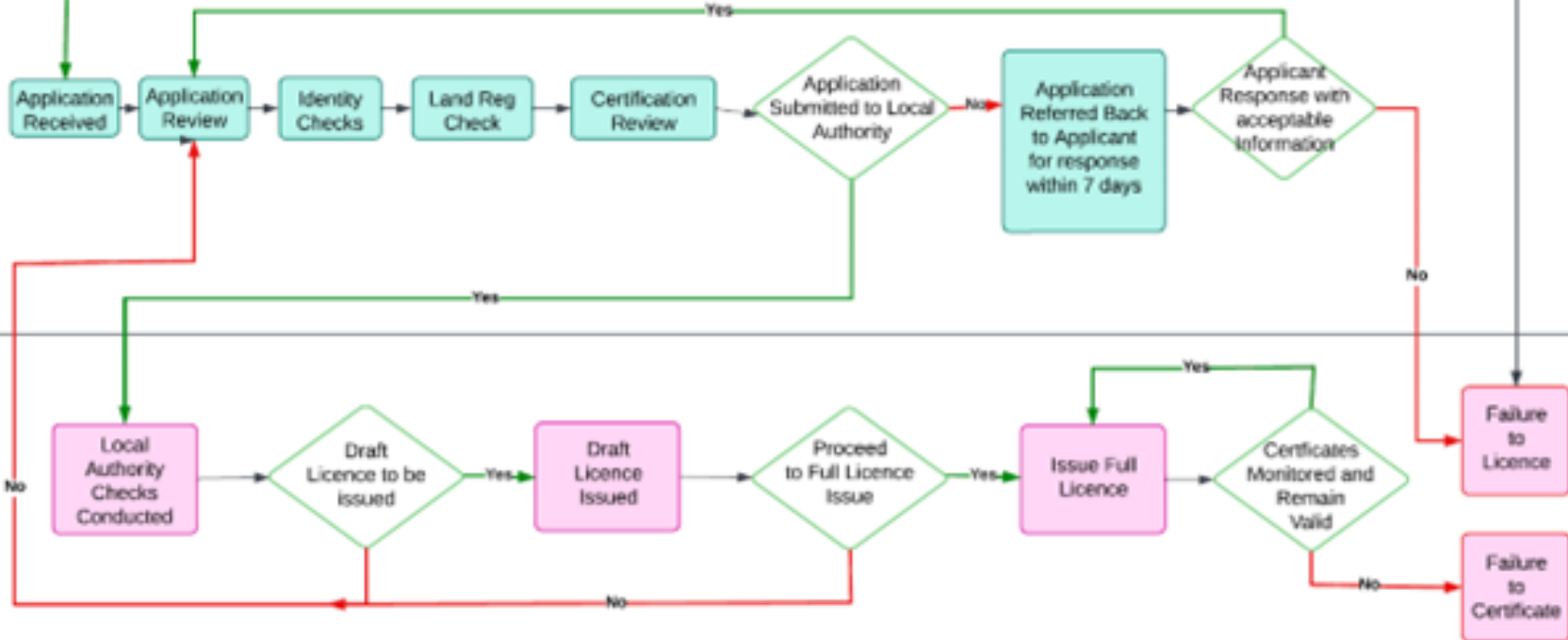
- 1. Financial implications showing a worked example (Confidential)
- 2. Workload responsibilities example:



Applicant



Delivery Partner



Local Authority

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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## Policy Committee

17 March 2025



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

<b>Title</b>	2024/25 Quarter 3 Performance and Monitoring Report
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Partly open to the public and part exempt - see reasons below
<b>Report author</b> (name & job title)	Stuart Donnelly, Financial Planning & Strategy Manager Gavin Handford, Assistant Director of Policy, Change & Customer Services
<b>Lead Councillor</b> (name & title)	Councillor Emberson, Lead Councillor for Corporate Services & Resources
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Our Foundations
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p><b>That Policy Committee notes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the forecast General Fund revenue outturn position for Quarter 3 is an adverse net variance of £10.618m (Appendix 1), which is an increase of £0.998m from the Quarter 2 position;</li> <li>2. The revised forecast delivery of £8.495m against the revised Recovery Plan target of £8.580m as set out in Section 4 and in detail in Appendix 2;</li> <li>3. That £5.421m (72%) of savings have been delivered (blue), £0.130m (2%) of savings are on track to be delivered (green) by March 2025. £1.917m (26%) of savings are currently categorised as non-deliverable (red) (Appendix 3);</li> <li>4. That the General Fund Capital Programme is forecasting a positive net variance of £0.900m against the proposed revised budget of £69.591m (Appendix 4);</li> <li>5. That there is a total £3.143m Delivery Fund available for 2024/25 (inclusive of 2023/24 approved carry forwards). At Quarter 3, £3.097m of this funding has been allocated out to approved schemes;</li> <li>6. That the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is projecting an adverse net variance of £0.227m as at the end of Quarter 3, which results in a forecast drawdown from HRA Reserves of £3.319m rather than the revised budgeted drawdown of £3.092m;</li> <li>7. That the HRA Capital Programme is forecasting to spend to budget against the proposed revised budget of £33.684m (Appendix 5);</li> <li>8. The performance achieved against the Corporate Plan success measures as set out in Section 13 of this report and Appendices 6 and 7.</li> </ol> <p><b>That Policy Committee approves:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. The write-off of debts as set out in Section 7 and Appendix 8 relating to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Non-Domestic Rates - £606,024.69;</li> <li>b) Sundry Debt - £92,597.35;</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

	<p>10. The proposed amendments to the General Fund Capital Programme (as set out in Section 9 of this report and Appendix 4), which would result in a revised Capital Programme budget of £69.591m for 2024/25, £69.349m for 2025/26 and £37.018m for 2026/27;</p> <p>11. The proposed amendments to the HRA Capital Programme (as set out in Section 12 of this report and Appendix 5), which would result in a revised Capital Programme budget of £33.684m for 2024/25, £83.794m for 2025/26 and £29.778m for 2026/27.</p>
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This report contains exempt information within Appendix 8 which is within the meaning of the following paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006:

3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

And in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because:

Having applied the public interest test, it is in the Council's interests not to publish this information to protect the Council's financial and commercial position.

## 1. Executive Summary

### General Fund – Revenue

- 1.1 The overall forecast adverse net variance as at the end of Quarter 3 is £10.618m, which is an increase of £0.998m from Quarter 2.

**Table 1. Summary of Quarter 3 Forecast**

	<b>Quarter 3 Forecast Variance (£m)</b>	<b>Quarter 2 Forecast Variance (£m)</b>	<b>Increase/ (Decrease) from Quarter 2 (£m)</b>
Net Budget Pressures	19.113	18.115	<b>0.998</b>
Recovery Plans	<b>(8.495)</b>	<b>(8.495)</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.618</b>	<b>9.620</b>	<b>0.998</b>

- 1.2 At Quarter 1 the Recovery Plan (Officer decisions) initially set out a target of deliverable mitigations totalling £8.081m. At Quarter 2, a further £0.499m of recently approved Member and additional Officer decisions were included, bringing the total target Recovery Plan to £8.580m. As at Quarter 3, the forecast delivery against this total is £8.495m per Section 4 and Appendix 2.
- 1.3 The movements in the forecast between Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 are summarised in the following table.

**Table 2. Summary of Movements between Quarter 2 and Quarter 3**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Increase/ (Decrease) from Quarter 2 (£m)</b>	<b>Main Reason(s) for Movement</b>
Adult Social Care Operations	2.015	Increased demand in care package commitments.
Housing & Communities	(0.448)	Additional grant funding & ongoing mitigation work.
Planning, Transport & Public Protection	0.438	Decreases in bus lane enforcement and off street parking income.
Environmental & Commercial Services	0.253	Increased costs in Highways & Drainage and Network Management.
Property & Asset Management	(0.400)	Additional rental payment agreed with Reading Transport Limited.
Brighter Futures for Children	0.570	Increased demand & costs of children's placements.
Capital Financing	(1.134)	Additional interest receivable income.
Other Government Grants	(0.257)	Additional grant announced through the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in December 2024.
Other movements	(0.039)	Other minor movements.
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.998</b>	

- 1.4 The main financial pressures within the overall adverse net variance forecast of £10.618m as at Quarter 3 are set out below:

*Adult Social Care Operations*

- 1.5 Adult Social Care Operations is forecasting an overall net pressure of £3.395m, which is an increase of £2.015m from Quarter 2 due to increased care packages, and new high-cost placements that are over and above the level previously forecast that could be contained by the Recovery Plan mitigations.

*Homelessness*

- 1.6 The cost-of-living crisis continues to have a significant impact on homelessness budgets because of inflation pressures and decreased supply in the private sector. The number of families and singles in need of emergency accommodation is currently 182 as at the end of December 2024. The average nightly costs had been reducing from a high of £127.58 in August 2023 down to £85.84 in December 2024. For context, the 2024/25 Budget for Homelessness was increased by £1.000m based on an average weekly caseload of 70 and an average nightly cost of £120.00.
- 1.7 The likely pressure on emergency accommodation is forecast to be £0.824m. For the whole service, positive variances elsewhere reduce the expected total adverse variance to £0.736m. Overall this forecast is an improvement of £0.448m from the position reported at Quarter 2 due to a combination of additional grant funding received and ongoing mitigation work relating to emergency accommodation.

### *Planning, Transport & Public Protection*

- 1.8 There is a total forecast adverse net variance of £1.434m across this service, mainly relating to income shortfalls across Transport services, plus Building Control, Planning and Public Protection. This forecast is an adverse movement of £0.438m from Quarter 2.

### *Children's Social Care*

- 1.9 Children's Services delivered by Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) is forecasting an overall adverse net variance of £6.247m at Quarter 3, which primarily relates to Children Looked After placement costs, and is an increase of £0.570m from the position reported at Quarter 2.
- 1.10 The 2024/25 Budget included an increase of £5.941m for placement demand, based on a total number of Children Looked After (CLA) of 276. As at the end of December 2024, there are 288 CLA, which is an increase of 9 from the end of September 2024.
- 1.11 The current forecast outturn position makes provision for children in care proceedings, but it does not make any further provision for a continued increase in the number of children in residential placements.

### *Corporate Budgets*

- 1.12 Corporate Budgets are forecasting an overall adverse variance of £0.207m, which is a positive movement of £1.103m from Quarter 2 mainly due to Capital Financing. This is comprised of a forecast adverse variance of £3.135m on Housing Benefit and offsetting positive variances of £0.547m within Other Corporate Budgets and £2.381m related to Capital Financing.

### *Savings*

- 1.13 The Quarter 3 forecast is that 5.421m (72%) of savings have been delivered already, £0.130m (2%) of savings are on track to be delivered by March 2025. £1.917m (26%) of savings are currently categorised as non-deliverable (red) (Appendix 3).
- 1.14 There is no Corporate Contingency to mitigate against undelivered savings as it was removed as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process. It is therefore critical that all savings are delivered. The Savings Tracker which lists progress against each individual saving is attached as Appendix 3.

### **General Fund – Capital**

- 1.15 The General Fund Capital Programme had an original budget for 2024/25 of £95.232m which was approved as part of the 2024/25 Budget. This budget was revised to £72.137m following approved adjustments as part of the subsequent Performance and Monitoring reports reported to Policy Committee and adjustments in the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy report to Council in February 2025.
- 1.16 This report is requesting further adjustments, as set out at summary level in Section 9 and in detail in Appendix 4, that would result in a revised approved budget of £69.591m for 2024/25.
- 1.17 At Quarter 3, against the proposed revised budget of £69.591m, the current forecast is a positive net variance of £0.900m. This variance incorporates a £0.934m positive variance for the Delivery Fund, slightly offset by a £0.032m adverse variance on the Hexagon lighting and emergency lighting replacement scheme, and a £0.002m adverse variance on the Hexagon replacement of Public Address System scheme.



- 1.18 The General Fund Capital Programme is set out in more detail in Section 9 and Appendix 4.

### **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – Revenue**

- 1.19 The revised Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget assumes a drawdown from HRA reserves of £3.092m. At Quarter 3, the forecast revenue outturn position on the HRA is an adverse net variance to budget of £0.227m. Therefore, a drawdown from the HRA Reserve is forecast of £3.319m rather than the budgeted £3.092m drawdown from reserves.

### **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – Capital**

- 1.20 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme had an original budget of £47.760m which was approved as part of the 2024/25 Budget. This budget was revised to £27.335m following approved adjustments as part of the subsequent Performance and Monitoring reports reported to Policy Committee and adjustments in the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy report to Council in February 2025.
- 1.21 This report is requesting further adjustments, as set out at summary level in Section 12 and in detail in Appendix 5, that would result in a revised approved budget of £33.684m for 2024/25.
- 1.22 At Quarter 3, the HRA Capital Programme is forecasting to spend to budget against the proposed revised budget of £33.684m.
- 1.23 The HRA Capital Programme is set out in more detail in Section 12 and Appendix 5.

### **Performance**

- 1.24 The report also sets out performance against the measures of success published in the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 1.25 Of the 23 Corporate Plan Performance Measures monitored monthly or quarterly, 35% are currently at or above target (green), 22% within 10% of the target (amber) and 43% are 10% or more off target (red).
- 1.26 Of the 46 Corporate Plan Projects, 9% are currently delivered (blue), 61% are at or above target (green), 28% are within 10% of the target (amber) and 2% are 10% or more off target (red).
- 1.27 The full list of Performance Measures is attached at Appendix 6 and Projects as Appendix 7.

## **2. Policy Context**

- 2.1. The Council approved the 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/25 – 2026/27 in February 2024.

## **3. General Fund – Revenue**

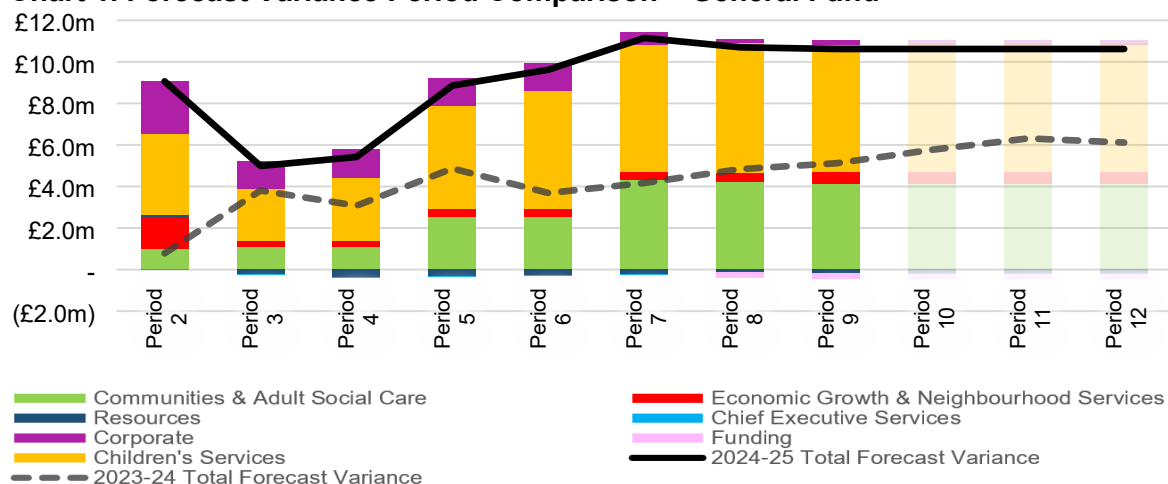
- 3.1. The forecast outturn position of the General Revenue Fund is an adverse net variance of £10.618m as at the end of Quarter 3 and is broken down by Directorate in the following table:

**Table 3. General Revenue Fund Forecast by Directorate 2024/25**

	Current Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance	Increase/ (Decrease) from Quarter 2
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Communities & Adult Social Care	58.507	62.638	4.131	1.567
Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services	22.725	23.274	0.549	0.191
Resources	21.383	21.221	(0.162)	0.111
Chief Executive Services	1.549	1.541	(0.008)	0.000
Children's Services retained by Council	0.843	0.754	(0.089)	(0.081)
Children's Services delivered by BfC	58.839	65.086	6.247	0.570
<b>Total Service Expenditure</b>	<b>163.846</b>	<b>174.514</b>	<b>10.668</b>	<b>2.358</b>
Capital Financing	18.355	15.974	(2.381)	(1.134)
Other Corporate Budgets	(12.178)	(9.590)	2.588	0.031
Movement in Reserves	(2.137)	(2.137)	0.000	0.000
<b>Total Corporate Budgets</b>	<b>4.040</b>	<b>4.247</b>	<b>0.207</b>	<b>(1.103)</b>
<b>Net Budget Requirement</b>	<b>167.886</b>	<b>178.761</b>	<b>10.875</b>	<b>1.255</b>
<b>Financed by:</b>				
Council Tax Income	(118.884)	(118.884)	0.000	0.000
NNDR Local Share	(32.045)	(32.045)	0.000	0.000
Section 31 Grant	(16.031)	(16.031)	0.000	0.000
New Homes Bonus	(1.255)	(1.255)	0.000	0.000
Revenue Support Grant	(2.652)	(2.652)	0.000	0.000
Other Government Grants	(1.193)	(1.450)	(0.257)	(0.257)
One-off Collection Fund Deficit	4.174	4.174	0.000	0.000
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>(167.886)</b>	<b>(168.143)</b>	<b>(0.257)</b>	<b>(0.257)</b>
<b>(Positive)/Adverse Variance</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>10.618</b>	<b>10.618</b>	<b>0.998</b>

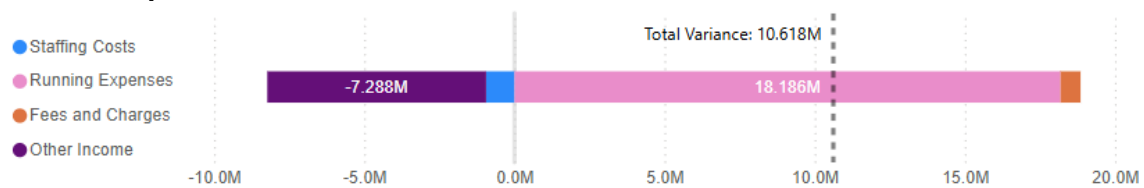
3.2. The following chart summaries the forecast budget variance, split by directorate, for each period to date.

**Chart 1. Forecast Variance Period Comparison – General Fund**



- 3.3. The following chart summaries the overall forecast budget variance for the Council by high level category:

**Chart 2. Split of Total Variance – General Fund**



**Communities & Adult Social Care - £4.131m adverse variance**

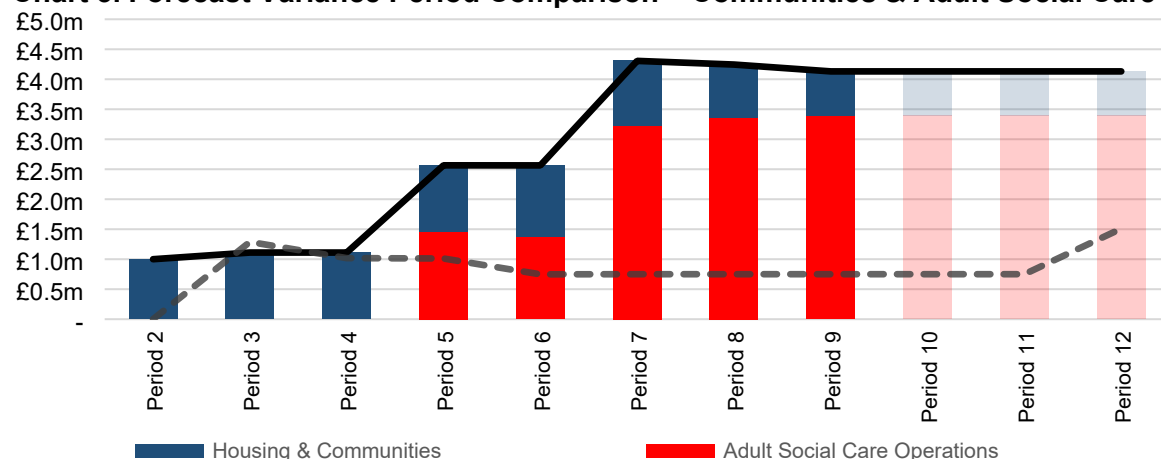
- 3.4. Communities & Adult Social Care is forecasting an adverse net variance of £4.131m at Quarter 3, which is an adverse movement of £1.567m from Quarter 2.

**Table 4. Communities & Adult Social Care Services Forecast 2024/25**

Service	Current Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance	Increase/ (Decrease) from Quarter 2
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Commissioning, Transformation & Performance	3.344	3.344	0.000	0.000
Adult Social Care Operations	46.366	49.761	3.395	2.015
Community & Adult Social Care Management	1.420	1.420	0.000	0.000
Safeguarding, Quality & Practice	4.652	4.652	0.000	0.000
Public Health	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Housing & Communities	2.725	3.461	0.736	(0.448)
<b>Total</b>	<b>58.507</b>	<b>62.638</b>	<b>4.131</b>	<b>1.567</b>

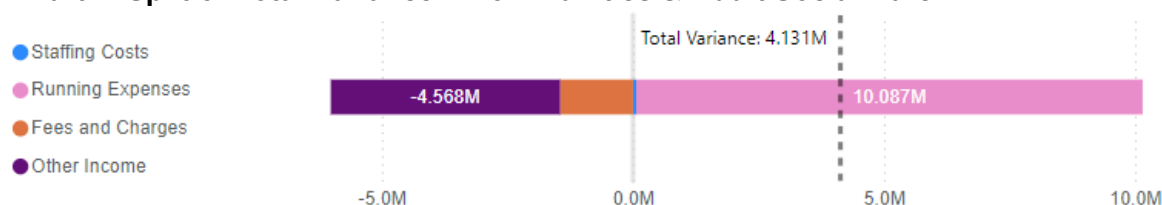
- 3.5. The following chart summaries the forecast budget variance, split by services within Communities & Adult Social Care, for each period to date.

**Chart 3. Forecast Variance Period Comparison – Communities & Adult Social Care**



- 3.6. The following chart summaries the overall forecast budget variance for Communities & Adult Social Care by high level category:

#### Chart 4. Split of Total Variance – Communities & Adult Social Care



3.7. The explanation for these forecast variances is set out below.

#### Adult Social Care Operations – £3.395m adverse variance

3.8. Adult Social Care Operations is forecasting an adverse net variance of £3.395m, which is an adverse movement of £2.015m from Quarter 2. This increase consists of:

- a £1.758m increase in commitments per Mosaic;
- a projected net additional spend of £0.213m to occur in Quarter 4; and
- a £0.044m reduction in budget linked to the realisation of procurement savings (this is offset by £0.044m improvement in the projected variance within Procurement & Contracts within Resources).

3.9. These movements in variances are explained separately below.

3.10. The Quarter 3 placements forecast from Mosaic is £52.028m, which is an increase of £1.207m from Quarter 2. However, the Quarter 3 forecast includes an additional £0.552m of Recovery Plan savings that were delivered since Quarter 2. Therefore, the total increase in placement costs is £1.758m.

**Table 5. ASC Care Costs per Mosaic Commitments (Net of Recovery Plan)**

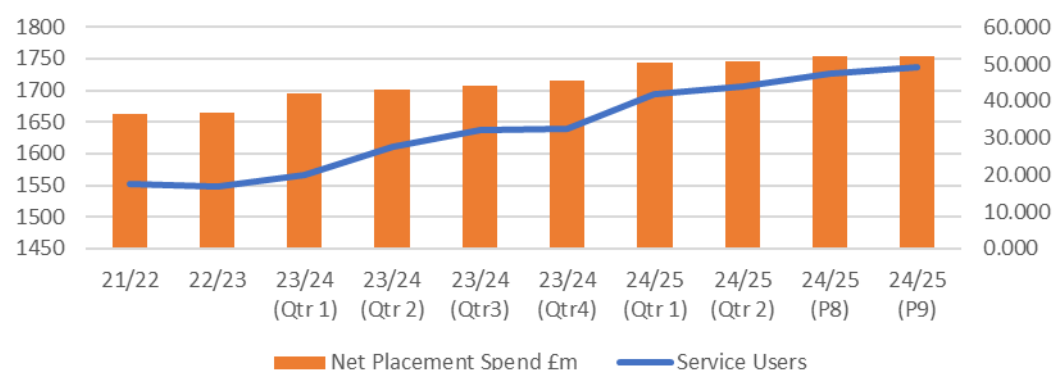
Forecast	Placements Budget £m	Placements Forecast £m	Current Year End Variance £m	Recovery Plan Pending £m	Adjusted Year End Forecast £m
Quarter 2	47.653	50.822	3.169	(1.789)	1.380
Quarter 3	47.653	52.028	4.375	(1.237)	3.138
Increase / (Decrease)	0.000	1.206	1.206	0.552	1.758

3.11. The previously agreed recovery plan target is still on track to be delivered, but the adverse variance is increasing due to further increases in demand.

3.12. The reason for the increased placements pressure is due to a higher than foreseen rise in average service users, increasing from 1,706 as at Quarter 2 to 1,737 by Quarter 3.

3.13. The graph below illustrates the increase in service users across Adult Social Care Operations since 2021/22, and includes the increase to the Care Commitment Spend:

**Chart 5. Increase in ASC Care Commitments Spend and Number of Service Users since 2021/22**



- 3.14. Taking the current data, the projected trend forecast is that demand will increase by a further 33 service users during Quarter 4 with projected additional costs of £0.643m. This projected pressure is partially mitigated by the additional funding for winter pressures of £0.430m from Better Care Funding, resulting in a projected net pressure increase of £0.213m, as per the table below.

**Table 6. Service Users Projections for 2024/25**

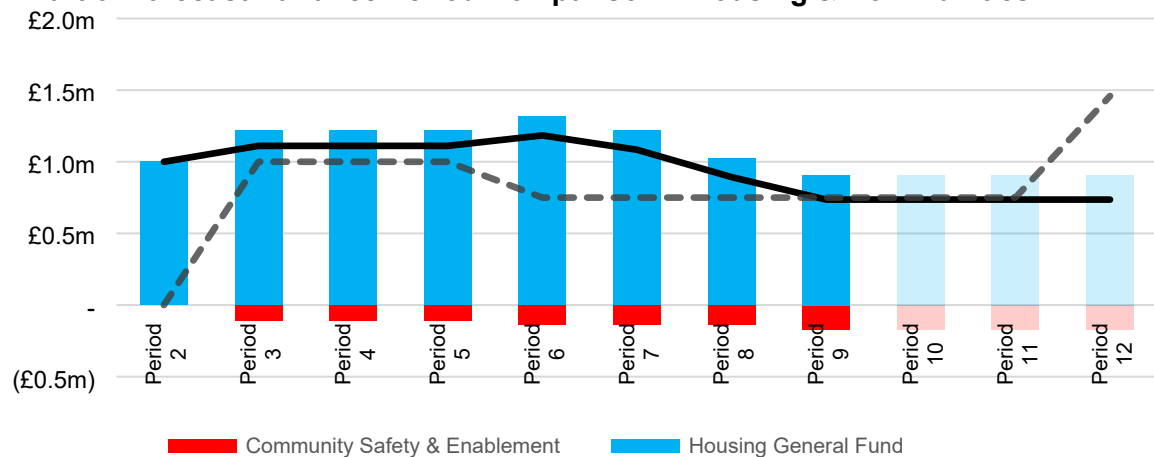
2024/25 Quarter 3 Projections	Projected Additional Service Users between Q3 and Q4	Estimated Total Placements Forecast Including Projected Additional Service Users (£m)	Increase in Funding Required (£m)
Current Increase in Service Users 24/25 - 97 in 9 months approx. 130 Users increase through the year	33	53.016	0.643
<b>Better Care Funding</b>			<b>(0.430)</b>
<b>Net Additional Projected Spend</b>			<b>0.213</b>

- 3.15. The remaining £0.044m increase in the forecast adverse variance from Quarter 2 is not directly linked to the placement's commitment in Mosaic. This variance relates to a reduction in budget within Adult Social Care linked to the realisation of procurement savings (this is offset by £0.044m improvement in the projected variance within Procurement & Contracts within Resources).
- 3.16. There is a further risk that increases in demand over the remainder of the year will increase the cost further, this will continue to be monitored and reported on a monthly basis.

#### **Housing & Communities - £0.736m adverse variance**

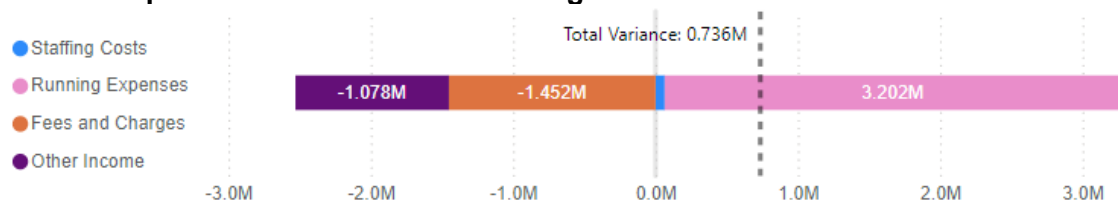
- 3.17. Housing & Communities is forecasting a £0.736m adverse variance for the year, which is a positive movement of £0.448m from Quarter 2. This improvement is due to additional grant funding received of £0.325m and ongoing work to reduce the emergency accommodation adverse variance.
- 3.18. The following chart summaries the forecast budget variance across Housing & Communities for each period to date.

**Chart 6. Forecast Variance Period Comparison – Housing & Communities**



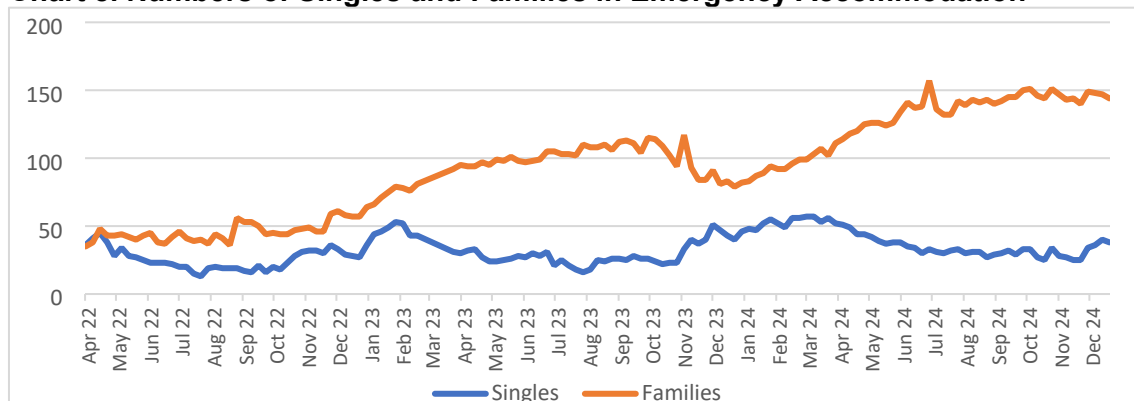
3.19. The following chart summaries the overall forecast budget variance for Housing & Communities by high level category:

**Chart 7. Split of Total Variance – Housing & Communities**



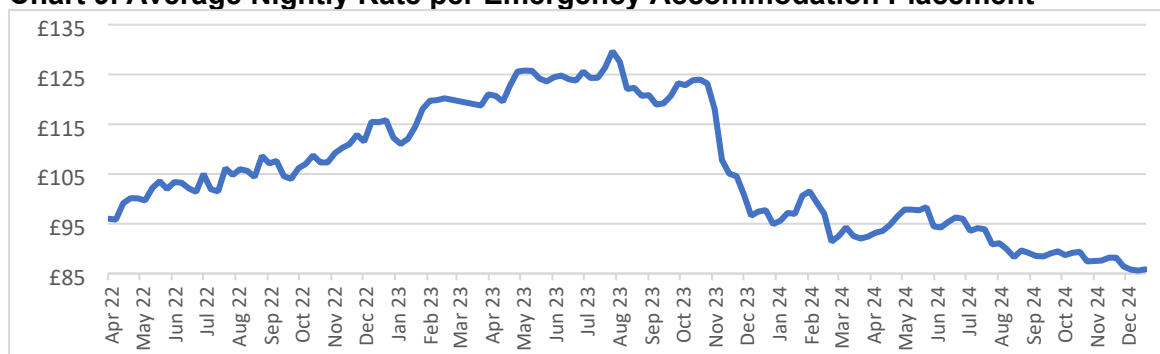
3.20. The cost-of-living crisis continues to have a significant impact on homelessness budgets because of inflation pressures and decreased supply in the private sector. The number of singles and families in need of emergency accommodation has reached a current level of 182 as at the end of December 2024 (as illustrated in Chart 8 below).

**Chart 8. Numbers of Singles and Families in Emergency Accommodation**



3.21. The increase primarily relates to the number of families in Emergency Accommodation, which has a higher nightly rate and has therefore led to a slight rise in the average nightly cost which had previously been successfully reduced over 2023/24. The average nightly costs had been reducing from a high of £127.58 in August 2023 down to £91.39 in March 2024. After increasing back to £98.34 at the end of May 2024, it has since reduced to £85.84 as at the end of December 2024 (as illustrated in Chart 9 below).

**Chart 9. Average Nightly Rate per Emergency Accommodation Placement**



- 3.22. For context, the 2024/25 Budget for Homelessness was increased by £1.000m based on an average weekly caseload of 70 and an average nightly cost of £120.00.
- 3.23. If the current rate of increase for families requiring support continues for the rest of the year, then we would end up with 155 families in emergency accommodation by the end of March 2025 and the adverse deficit would be £1.073m. It is currently anticipated that actions identified within the Recovery Plan will mitigate against this potential pressure should it arise and thus contain the variance to £0.824m. For the whole service, positive variances elsewhere reduce the expected total adverse variance to £0.736m.

**Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services - £0.549m adverse variance**

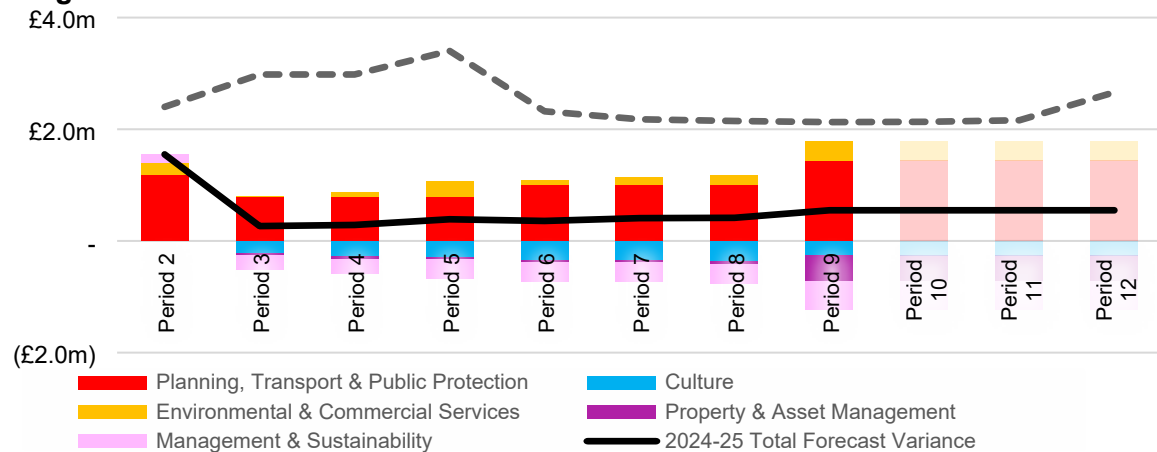
- 3.24. Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services' is forecasting an adverse net variance of £0.549m at Quarter 3, which is an adverse movement of £0.191m from Quarter 2 and is summarised by service below.

**Table 7. Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services Forecast 2024/25**

Service	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance	Increase/ (Decrease) from Quarter 2
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Planning, Transport & Public Protection	0.120	1.554	1.434	0.438
Culture	3.380	3.112	(0.268)	0.068
Environmental & Commercial Services	20.554	20.896	0.342	0.253
Property & Asset Management	(2.559)	(3.009)	(0.450)	(0.400)
Management & Sustainability	1.230	0.721	(0.509)	(0.168)
<b>Total</b>	<b>22.725</b>	<b>23.274</b>	<b>0.549</b>	<b>0.191</b>

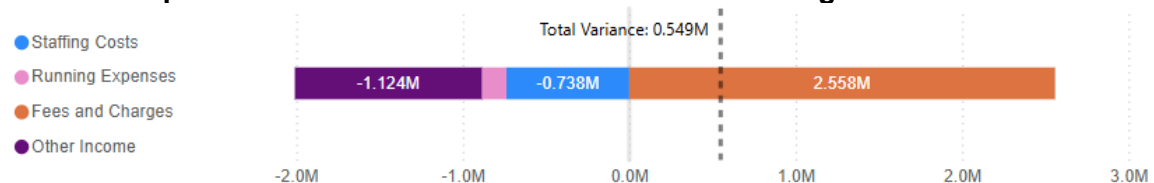
- 3.25. The following chart summaries the forecast budget variance, split by services within Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services, for each period to date.

**Chart 10. Forecast Variance Period Comparison – Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services**



- 3.26. The following chart summarizes the overall forecast budget variance for Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services by high level category:

**Chart 11. Split of Total Variance – Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services**

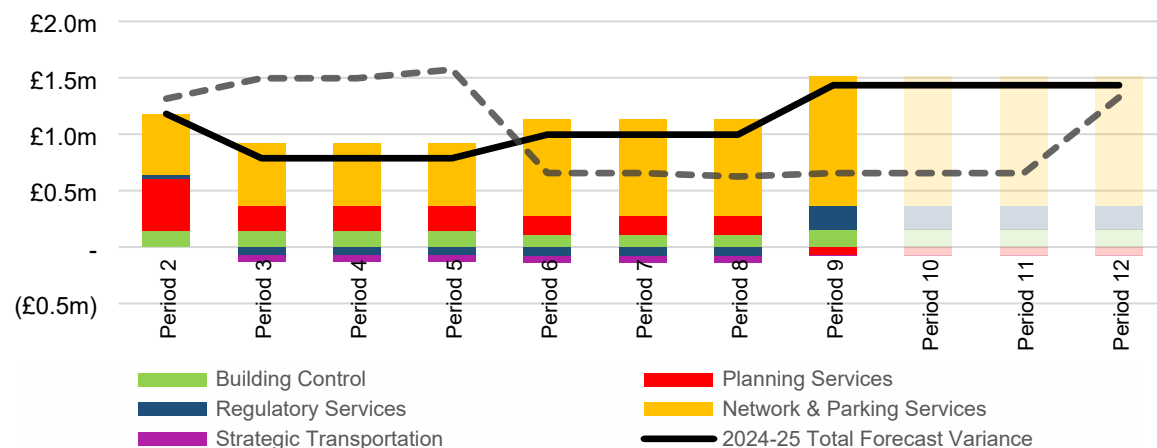


- 3.27. The explanation for these variances is set out below.

#### **Planning, Transport and Public Protection - £1.434m adverse variance**

- 3.28. Planning, Transport and Public Protection is forecasting an adverse variance of £1.434m, which is an adverse movement of £0.438m from Quarter 2. The primary reasons for the increase from the Quarter 2 forecast are a projected decrease in the level of bus lane enforcement income position by £0.125m and an increased off-street parking income shortfall of £0.200m. Further details all variances are set out below.
- 3.29. The following chart summarizes the forecast budget variance across Planning, Transport and Public Protection for each period to date.

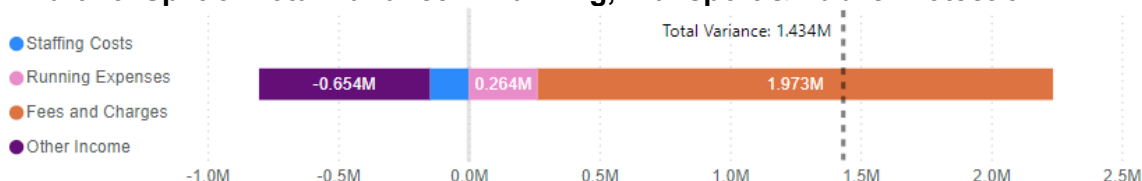
**Chart 12. Forecast Variance Period Comparison – Planning, Transport & Public Protection**



- 3.30. The following chart summarizes the overall forecast budget variance for Planning, Transport & Public Protection by high level category:



**Chart 13. Split of Total Variance – Planning, Transport & Public Protection**



- 3.31. Building Control is forecasting an adverse variance on income generation of £0.155m. There is an adverse variance on income generation of £0.159m. There are other small mitigating items of £0.004m. This income shortfall directly correlates to the lack of staffing and a lack of availability of suitable agency staff to undertake the fee earning work. Recent rounds of recruitment have been unsuccessful in appointing permanent staff and therefore hopes of reducing use of agency staff and their costs not realised. The recruitment challenge has become more significant with a change in legislation which has resulted in professionals leaving the sector. Additional recovery plan items relating to increasing building control fees by an average of 17% has been factored into the forecast. The team also anticipate recouping fees for High Risk buildings in the next quarter which could help reduce the adverse variance.
- 3.32. Planning and Planning Enforcement is forecasting a positive variance of £0.076m. This variance comprises a £0.071m income pressure which is directly related to the number of planning applications, which includes £0.055m of red rated savings (Appendix 3). These have been impacted by successive development risks such as inflation, materials costs, changes in legislation and market factors such as high costs of mortgages. There is a forecast positive variance of £0.096m on salaries and £0.051m on running expenses which mitigates the pressure.
- 3.33. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing is forecasting an adverse variance of £0.148m. This variance comprises a £0.191m income pressure due to staff recruitment issues and lack of suitable staff to undertake the inspections, partly related to the work undertaken on Homes for Ukraine inspections for which a contribution from the grant received has been assumed to partially offset the pressure. This is mitigated by net positive variances on salaries and running expenses of £0.043m.
- 3.34. There is a forecast adverse net variance of £0.400m relating to Bus Lane Enforcement income. There is a measurable decrease in penalties being issued due to improved driver compliance.
- 3.35. Parking enforcement is reporting a forecast adverse net variance of £0.490m. A new contract began in November 2023 which sees an expected rise in the contracted spend but expects a corresponding increase in income from Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) to more than offset the additional spend within the contract. Although income performance is generally stronger than in previous years it is not currently outperforming the increased spend in the contract so there is corresponding expected income shortfall of around £0.390m. The contract is relatively young and further monitoring of the performance is being undertaken to examine if performance is likely to improve. Furthermore, there is an additional pressure from the ceasing of enforcement of some of the TRO areas from March 2024 which equates to around £0.100m.
- 3.36. Moving Traffic Enforcement is forecasting an adverse net variance of £0.060m following on from the introduction of this scheme during 2023/24. There is an income pressure of £0.260m relating to this scheme, which is an improvement on previous months but remains a primarily red rated saving on the Savings Tracker (Appendix 3). This is partially offset by £0.203m of positive variances across expenditure budgets including staffing costs. This remains an ongoing area of concern into 2024/25. Some sites are generating zero non-compliance and currently there are no other sites where enforcement could be switched out to. There will need to be a consideration to rebasing this budget unless resources in Network Services can be released to consider and evidence alternate sites

for deployment of enforcement cameras. It should be noted, that across Bus Lane Enforcement, Moving Traffic Enforcement and Parking Enforcement that whilst reducing numbers of PCNs being issued has a significant financial impact, it is achieving compliance, which is the goal of all traffic enforcement.

- 3.37. There is a forecast net adverse variance of £0.200m in Off Street Parking income (shown within the red rated savings in the Savings Tracker (Appendix 3)). This variance has arisen due to a reduction in usage of the car parks compared to previously anticipated levels, particularly during December, and is projected to continue through the remainder of the financial year. As reported previously, there have been a number of risks highlighted which have contributed to this pressure e.g. the increased cost of living, increased levels of working from home and higher fuel costs is leading to fewer visits to town centre. Additionally, further rental spaces to the Royal Berkshire Hospital at Queens Road has not delivered the additional income anticipated due to the Hospital seeking other alternates to support staff feedback about proximity and safety. Town Centre car parks are subject to competition from providers such as the Oracle, who currently undercut the council's tariffs and have newer facilities. There have also been ongoing issues around reliability of infrastructure which have impacted Broad Street Mall and Queens Road which have reduced income levels. The decreasing draw of the high street for shoppers is another factor.
- 3.38. Other forecast adverse net variances total £0.057m across the service. These include premises licence fees income shortfall of £0.032m in respect of Reading Festival (red rated saving) which is largely based on Festival Republic's need for a licence variation, and £0.030m relating to additional costs of the Dog Warden contract and other smaller variations.

#### **Culture – £0.268m positive variance**

- 3.39. Culture is forecasting a positive variance of £0.268m, which is an adverse movement of £0.068m from Quarter 2. This movement relates to the centralisation of utility budgets of £0.102m, partially offset by £0.034m of improved forecasts across the remainder of the service.
- 3.40. As part of the Recovery plan savings, budgets for utilities have been centralised within DEGNS under the Management and Sustainability service area. This centralisation exercise has reduced the positive variance forecast within Culture by £0.102m, but correspondingly the forecast within Management and Sustainability has improved by a corresponding amount meaning no change to the overall DEGNS position for this adjustment. The services however have mitigated the full Recovery plan savings with additional savings generated during the December period.
- 3.41. Reading Play Services within the Leisure Services is reporting an adverse net variance of £0.065m. This is due to income expected to be achieved below what is budgeted, until the growth strategy is complete. There are also vacancies in service impacting on income generation.
- 3.42. The GLL Contract is reporting a positive variance of £0.105m due to improvement in anticipated Energy benchmarking cost exercise reflecting the lower unit costs and usage as well as pushing back on discretionary spend until 2025/26.
- 3.43. The Park Service within the Leisure Services is reporting an adverse net variance of £0.019m. This is mainly due to income expected to be achieved below what has been budgeted.
- 3.44. Libraries is reporting a positive variance of £0.020m. There is a £0.005m adverse net variance on libraries, but a £0.025m positive variance within the Sites, Monuments and Records service due to increases in income inflation.

- 3.45. Reading Museum is reporting a positive variance of £0.010m relating to business rates.
- 3.46. Archives & Records is reporting a positive variance of £0.025m. This is due to recovery savings from the reprofiling of budgets to the joint arrangement board agreed budgets.
- 3.47. Reading Arts & Venues is forecasting a total positive net variance of £0.105m, which is arising from additional mitigations identified in the DEGNS Recovery Plan.
- 3.48. Additionally, a further £0.087m of Recovery Plan mitigations have been identified relating to the repurposing of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant.

#### **Environmental & Commercial Services – £0.342m adverse variance**

- 3.49. Environmental & Commercial Services is forecasting an adverse variance of £0.342m, which is an adverse movement of £0.253m from Quarter 2. The most significant movements from Quarter 2 relate to increased pressures within Highways & Drainage of £0.150m and Network Management of £0.100m.
- 3.50. Recycling and Waste Collection is forecasting an adverse variance of £0.320m. Changes to staff working conditions, coupled with an increased incident of vehicle failure and spike in sickness absence has led to increased overtime working to recover waste collections to schedule. These issues are being addressed by Management and it is forecast that increased overtime working will be required for most of this financial year. It is hoped that the route optimisation work will reduce cost of overtime once implemented, but this will increase the adverse variance by £0.060m this year. The Recovery Plan scheme of £0.015m to increase green waste charges is included in this figure, as is £0.050m of the increase in the Public Realm SLA charges. The net adverse variance is further reduced by a positive variance of £0.100m on disposal costs within trade waste
- 3.51. Waste Disposal is reporting a positive variance of £0.100m. The waste disposal contract inflationary increase has been less than estimated in the budget, creating a £0.150m positive variance, and recycling income is also projected to be higher than budgeted by £0.090m. This has been partly offset by adverse variances of £0.030m on green waste tonnages, £0.040m on residual waste tonnages and £0.060m on other waste types (including composting, POPS). There is also a £0.010m adverse variance due to extended opening hours at Smallmead due to waste collections being delayed or rescheduled.
- 3.52. Highways and Drainage is forecasting an adverse variance of £0.250m. The large increases in the costs of materials and waste disposal over the past few years has increased the total costs of this service. As much of the work here is internal or Capital works it is not possible to meet the budgeted income targets as the additional costs cannot always be passed on to other services within the Council. Income is also forecast to be lower than expected due to the reduced number of jobs currently available, but the service is hopeful that this will pick up in the remaining months of the year.
- 3.53. Streetscene is forecasting a positive variance of £0.163m. Vacancies within the team are creating a positive variance of £0.600m, but this will be partially offset by an adverse variance on waste disposal of £0.100m and on income of £0.250m. This adverse variance on income includes positive variance of £0.050m from the reworking the Public Realm Service Level Agreement (SLA) as part of the Recovery Plan. There is also a positive variance of £0.013m due to a reduction in weed spraying across the Borough as part of the Recovery Plan. Additional tree works around ash dieback have created a £0.070m adverse variance, whilst covering costs for a wall collapse at Caversham Court has added a further £0.030m adverse variance.
- 3.54. Fleet is forecasting a to deliver to budget. Vehicle hire costs are forecasting an adverse variance of £0.068m, which is predominantly due to the cost of hiring replacement refuse

collection vehicles (commonly 24 vehicles are on site to undertake 13 waste rounds). This pressure is offset by a positive variance of £0.050m on fuel costs and by a further £0.018m from the Recovery Plan for the removal of Streetscene vehicles.

- 3.55. Civil Engineering is reporting a positive variance of £0.065m. There is a £0.140m positive variance due to the repair and correction of lighting technology which has created a reduction in streetlighting power usage as reported in the Recovery Plan. This is partially offset by a £0.075m adverse variance on the costs of winter maintenance and maintenance of the LORAWaN (a low power, wide area monitoring system).
- 3.56. Network Management is reporting an adverse variance of £0.100m. An increase in costs for the ITS contract, along with CCTV costs from 2023/24 being paid in 2024/25 has created a £0.100m adverse variance. The capital recharge for staff time is expected to also create an adverse variance of £0.100m. It is hoped that the onset of the new ITS contract may reduce some costs in 2025/26, and also when the street works permits charges are brought in this should increase income. A positive variance of £0.100m due to vacancies has partially offset this.

#### **Property & Asset Management – £0.450m positive variance**

- 3.57. Property & Asset Management is forecasting a positive net variance of £0.450m, which is a positive movement of £0.400m from Quarter 2. This improved forecast primarily relates to an additional £0.500m rental payment from Reading Transport Ltd.
- 3.58. Assets Management is forecasting an overall positive net variance of £0.010m:
- Acre Business Park is forecasting an adverse net variance of £0.103m (previously a red rated saving on the Savings Tracker (Appendix 3), now mitigated from actions below). This is due to the underachievement of budgeted income resulting from an increase in vacancies on rented units and a delay in the capital works to release more sites for rental.
  - This pressure is offset by the Valuations team which is forecasting a positive variance of £0.099m relating to staff vacancies as well as a business rates rebate from of £0.014m.
- 3.59. Facilities management is forecasting a positive net variance of £0.040m relating to staffing budgets. Additional heating costs at the Civic centre has also been offset within this forecast.
- 3.60. Corporate Maintenance services is forecasting an adverse variance of £0.100m relating to non-rechargeable works on council properties. Further work is underway to mitigate the pressure by examining the split of capital works and funding from agreed uses of reserves.
- 3.61. There is an additional £0.500m rental payment that has been agreed with Reading Transport Ltd, which has been factored into the 2025/26 Budget on an ongoing basis. This additional income offsets the £0.050m net pressures outlined above resulting in an overall positive net variance for the service of £0.450m.

#### **Management & Sustainability – £0.509m positive variance**

- 3.62. Management & Sustainability is forecasting a positive variance of £0.509m, which is positive movement of £0.168m from Quarter 2. This movement in the forecast primarily relates to the centralisation of utility budgets across the Directorate.
- 3.63. Business Development is forecasting an adverse variance of £0.055m. Advertising income has been delayed by planning and contractor issues and it is not expected to

reach the budgeted amount within 2024/25. This is partially offset by a positive variance of £0.020m on the publicity and media budget.

- 3.64. Sustainability is forecasting a positive variance of £0.035m. Inflationary increases in income are forecast to result in a £0.020m positive variance and £0.030m of staffing savings are also included (£0.015m of this is shown in the DEGNS Management code). £0.096m of income from the corporate solar program that will not be achieved is included in the energy savings Recovery Plan – the budget has been reduced in relation to this.
- 3.65. DEGNS Management is forecasting a positive variance of £0.529m. Vacancies are forecast to create a positive variance of £0.100m. Following a review of Business Rates charges for the Council for 2024/25, £0.040m of the provision budget agreed within the MTFs will not be needed and has been released and included in the Recovery Plan. Additionally, the DEGNS Recovery Plan has identified £0.389m of mitigations relating to energy budgets as the price of energy secured for the year is at a reduced level than was assumed in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The budgets across the council for utility costs now been revised and the excess budget added to this area, so the declared amount also incorporates previous positive variances reported in Libraries and the Crematorium.

#### **Resources - £0.162m positive variance**

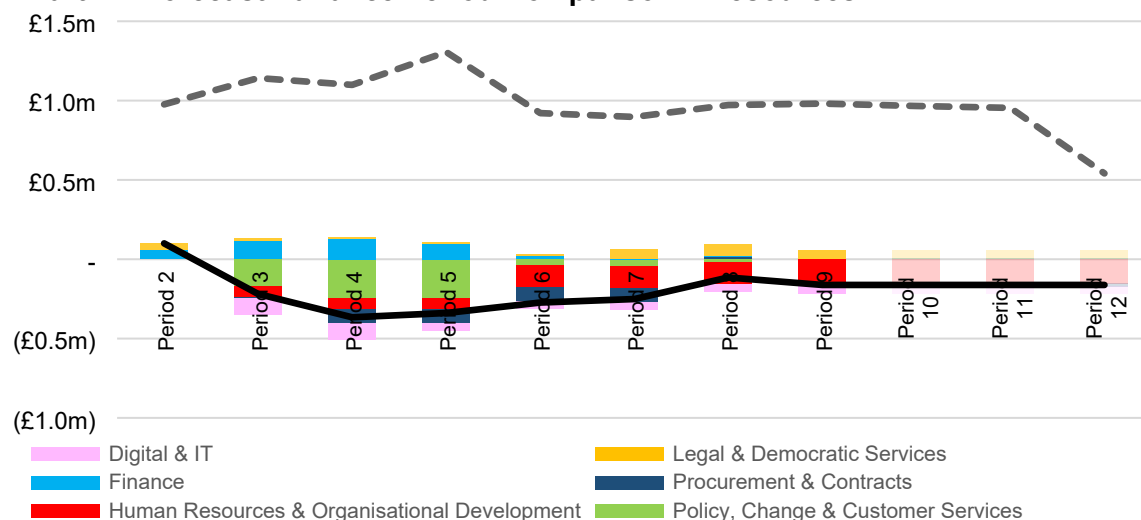
- 3.66. The Directorate of Resources is forecasting a positive net variance of £0.162m at Quarter 3, which is an adverse movement of £0.111m from Quarter 2 and is summarised by service below.

**Table 8. Resources Services Forecast 2024/25**

Service	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance	Increase/ (Decrease) from Quarter 2
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Policy, Change & Customer Services	3.923	3.923	0.000	0.037
Human Resources & Organisational Development	2.194	2.041	(0.153)	(0.012)
Procurement & Contracts	0.459	0.438	(0.021)	0.064
Finance	5.279	5.283	0.004	(0.019)
Legal & Democratic Services	3.387	3.440	0.053	0.041
Digital & IT	6.141	6.096	(0.045)	0.000
<b>Total</b>	<b>21.383</b>	<b>21.221</b>	<b>(0.162)</b>	<b>0.111</b>

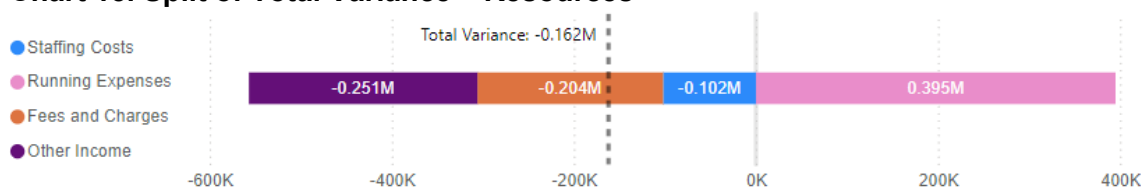
- 3.67. The following chart summaries the forecast budget variance, split by services within Resources, for each period to date.

**Chart 14. Forecast Variance Period Comparison – Resources**



- 3.68. The following chart summarises the overall forecast budget variance for Resources by high level category:

**Chart 15. Split of Total Variance – Resources**



- 3.69. The explanations for these variances are set out below.

### **Policy, Change & Customer Services – balanced budget**

- 3.70. Policy, Change and Customer Services is currently forecasting a balanced budget, which is an adverse movement of £0.037m from Quarter 2.
- 3.71. Across Bereavement and Registration services, there is forecast positive variance of £0.254m. The Bereavement Service reviewed and increased the fees charged in November 2023 and April 2024, which alongside higher activity levels, results in an estimated overachievement of income of £0.100m. Additionally, there are further savings across premises, staffing and contracted services of £0.069m. Activity levels across the Registration Service are also improving anticipated income levels by an estimated £0.070m as part of the Recovery Plan. A positive variance of £0.030m relates to being able to recharge some administration costs to the latest round of the Household Support Fund (HSF), along with a variety of small adverse variances of £0.015m.
- 3.72. The service through the Council's Recovery Plan Actions, following discussion with members, have reduced the Small Grants payments by £0.050m resulting in a further positive variance.
- 3.73. These positive variances are offset by an adverse pressure of £0.304m arising from delays with some elements of the Customer Experience Programme, for example across the Transport Service.

### **Human Resources & Organisational Development – £0.153m positive variance**

- 3.74. Human Resources and Organisational Development is currently forecasting a positive variance of £0.153m, which is a positive movement of £0.012m from Quarter 2.
- 3.75. This variance consists of £0.141m additional income at Kennet Day Nursery, partially offset by £0.030m of staffing pressures across the service. The implementation of

Recovery Plan actions reductions totalling £0.042m relating to learning and development spending and a reduction in advertising costs, increase the overall forecast positive variance to £0.153m.

**Procurement & Contracts - £0.021m positive variance**

- 3.76. The service is currently forecasting a positive net variance of £0.021m, which is an adverse movement of £0.064m from Quarter 2. There are positive variances of £0.109m relating to holding vacancies for the remainder of the year pending a restructure, and £0.008m relating to a one-off contract income reimbursement as part of the Recovery Plan. These positive variances are however partially offset by a pressure of £0.096m based on an estimated shortfall in the achievement of procurement contract savings against the £0.200m corporate contract saving.

**Finance – £0.004m adverse variance**

- 3.77. Finance is currently forecasting an adverse variance of £0.004m, which is a positive movement of £0.019m from Quarter 2.
- 3.78. Staffing pressures of £0.085m are being more than offset by £0.202m of staffing vacancies that are being held as part of the Finance Recovery Plan.
- 3.79. A further Recovery Plan action, considered and approved by Members, increased Revenues & Benefits court fees which is contributing an additional positive variance of £0.073m.
- 3.80. The one-off costs of converting the Revenues & Benefits system from a hosted system to a “software as a service” (SaaS) arrangement combined with a pressure on postage within the service total £0.194m.

**Legal & Democratic Services – £0.053m adverse variance**

- 3.81. Legal & Democratic Services is currently forecasting an adverse variance of £0.053m, which is an adverse movement of £0.041m from Quarter 2.
- 3.82. This variance relates to a pressure of £0.020m due to lower levels of Land Charges activity and related income and additional costs in Electoral Registration of £0.051m. These pressures are partially offset by £0.018m of positive variances arising from vacancies being held.

**Digital & IT – £0.045m positive variance**

- 3.83. Digital & IT is currently forecasting a positive variance of £0.045m, which is unchanged from Quarter 2.
- 3.84. The variance includes pressures relating to license costs of £0.050m and staffing and recruitment costs of £0.024m.
- 3.85. These pressures are more than offset by £0.119m of savings identified as part of the Recovery Plan, including switching off servers outside of working hours, reviewing the costs of hosting, contracts, and subscriptions.

**Chief Executive Services - £0.008m positive variance**

- 3.86. Chief Executive Services is forecasting a positive net variance of £0.008m at Quarter 3, which is unchanged from Quarter 2 and is summarised below.

**Table 9. Chief Executive Services Forecast 2024/25**

Service	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance	Increase/ (Decrease) from Quarter 2
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Executive Management Team	0.912	0.912	0.000	0.000
Communications	0.637	0.629	(0.008)	0.000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.549</b>	<b>1.541</b>	<b>(0.008)</b>	<b>0.000</b>

**Communications – £0.008m positive variance**

- 3.87. Communications is currently forecasting a positive variance of £0.008m, which is unchanged from Quarter 2, due to additional income via the Lord Lieutenant Joint Arrangement administration fee.

**Children's Services Retained by Council - £0.089m positive variance**

- 3.88. The Adoption Thames Valley contract is projected to cost £0.754m for the year compared to the approved budget of £0.843m. There is therefore a projected positive variance of £0.089m.

**Children's Services Delivered by Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) - £6.247m adverse variance**

- 3.89. Children's Services delivered by Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) is forecasting an overall adverse net variance of £6.247m at Quarter 3, which is an adverse movement of £0.570m from Quarter 2 and is summarised below.

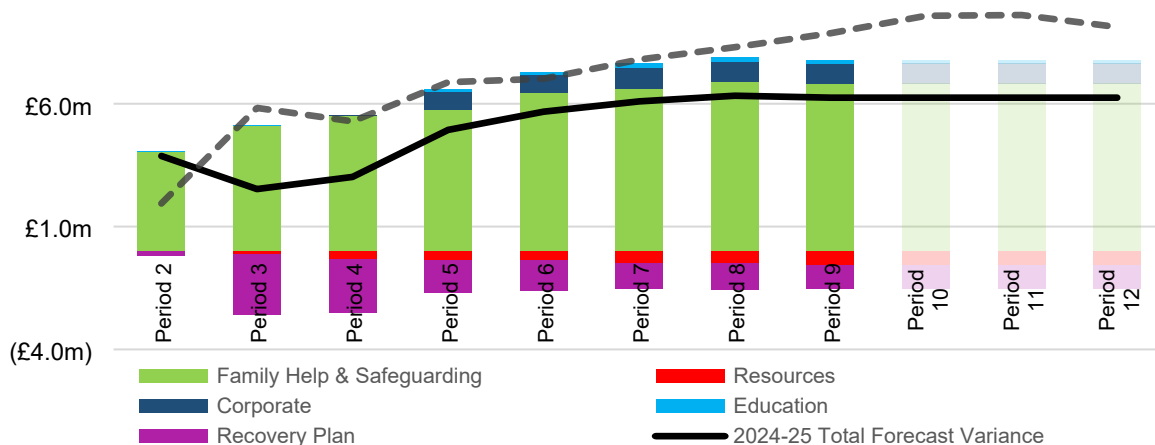
**Table 10. Children's Services delivered by BFfC Forecast 2024/25**

Service	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance	Increase/ (Decrease) from Quarter 2
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Family Help & Safeguarding	41.321	48.136	6.815	0.377
Resources	2.855	2.299	(0.556)	(0.189)
Corporate	1.882	2.710	0.828	0.074
Education	50.814	50.946	0.132	0.040
Dedicated Schools Grant	(44.750)	(44.750)	0.000	0.000
Service Level Agreements	6.717	6.717	0.000	0.000
Recovery Plan	0.000	(0.972)	(0.972)	0.268
<b>Total</b>	<b>58.839</b>	<b>65.086</b>	<b>6.247</b>	<b>0.570</b>

- 3.90. The following chart summaries the forecast budget variance, split by services within Children's Services Delivered by BFfC, for each period to date.

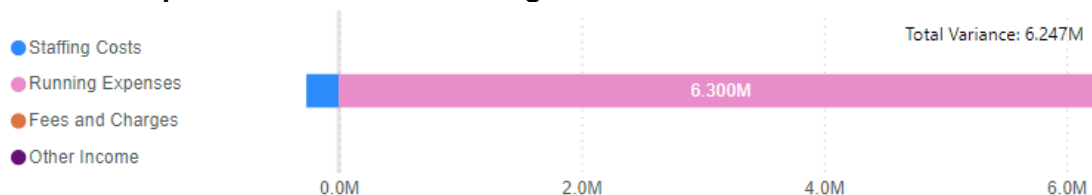


**Chart 16. Forecast Variance Period Comparison – Childrens Services (BFfC)**



3.91. The following chart summaries the overall forecast budget variance for Children's Services Delivered by BFfC by high level category:

**Chart 17. Split of Total Variance – Brighter Futures for Children Contract**

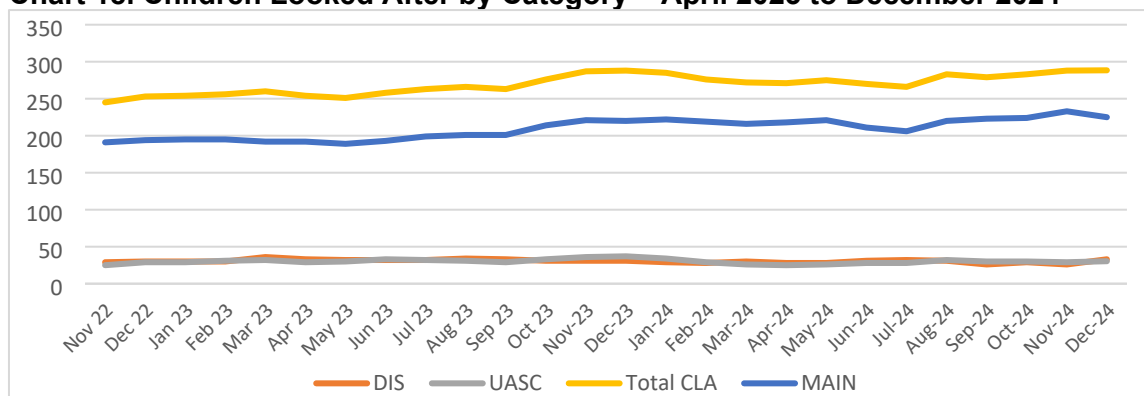


3.92. Family Help and Safeguarding incorporates Children's Social Care and Early Help budgets. This service is forecasting an adverse net variance of £6.815m at Quarter 3. This forecast includes:

- £6.227m of pressures on external placement budgets which reflects the current profile of Children Looked After (CLA). The number of CLA on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 was 288, a net increase of 9 since 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. This includes 30 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), which are government grant funded. The 2024/25 Budget included an increase of £5.941m for placement demand, based on a total number of Children Looked After of 276. This variance therefore relates to the placement mix and increase in placement costs rather than just an increase in CLA numbers;
- £0.305m of pressures on staffing costs. This adverse variance is primarily due to spend on agency staffing, whilst the staffing restructure is implemented;
- £0.027m adverse variance on other placement-related costs;
- £0.256m of other net pressures across Family Help and Safeguarding budgets.

3.93. The following chart shows the movement in the number of children looked after since April 2023.

**Chart 18. Children Looked After by Category – April 2023 to December 2024**



- 3.94. This chart shows that total children looked after placement numbers are rising, but not on a scale that explains why costs are increasing at the current rate. The explanation for the current increase in total placement costs lies in the placement mix, and in particular, the increasing number of high-cost residential placements.
- 3.95. There are 38 children currently living in placements that each cost in excess of £0.200m per annum. These 38 placements have a forecast cost for the year of £12.234m, an average of £0.322m per placement. These placements, which represent 13% of the total number of children looked after, equate to 56% of the total forecast of placement costs for the year.
- 3.96. Resources is forecasting a positive net variance of £0.556m, of which £0.246m relates to vacancies within Business Support; £0.200m within Commissioning; £0.025m within Performance Management; £0.055m within the Marketing team and £0.030m within the Information, Advice and Support Service.
- 3.97. Corporate Services is forecasting an adverse net variance of £0.828m of which £0.824m relates to Joint Legal Team (JLT) legal costs and £0.004m relates to staffing costs.
- 3.98. Education is forecasting an adverse net variance of £0.132m, of which £0.228m relates to SEND & School Travel and £0.205m relates to Head of Education & Schools. These are partially offset by positive variances of £0.160m within Education Psychology, £0.133m within Mental Health and £0.008m within Education Access & Support.
- 3.99. The forecast adverse net variance, prior to any Recovery Plan actions is therefore a total of £7.219m.
- 3.100. Mitigations identified in the BFfC Recovery Plan that are still to be delivered total £0.972m, which reduces the overall forecast adverse net variance to £6.247m.

#### **Corporate Budgets - £0.207m adverse variance**

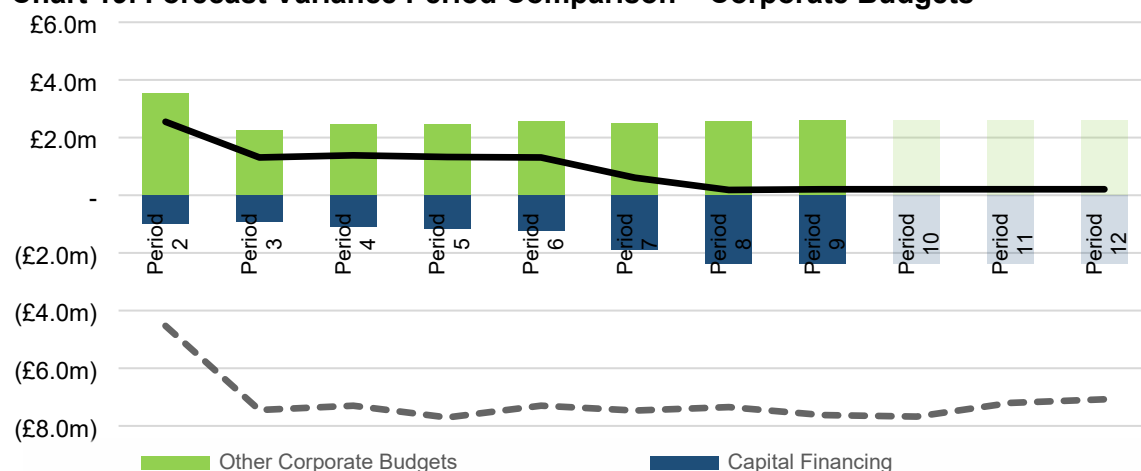
- 3.101. Corporate Budgets are forecasting an adverse net variance of £0.207m at Quarter 3, which is a positive movement of £1.103m from Quarter 2 and is summarised below.

**Table 11. Corporate Budgets Forecast 2024/25**

Service	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance	Increase/ (Decrease) from Quarter 2
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Capital Financing Costs	18.355	15.974	(2.381)	(1.134)
Other Corporate Budgets	(12.178)	(9.590)	2.588	0.031
Movement to/(from) Reserves	(2.137)	(2.137)	0.000	0.000
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.040</b>	<b>4.247</b>	<b>0.207</b>	<b>(1.103)</b>

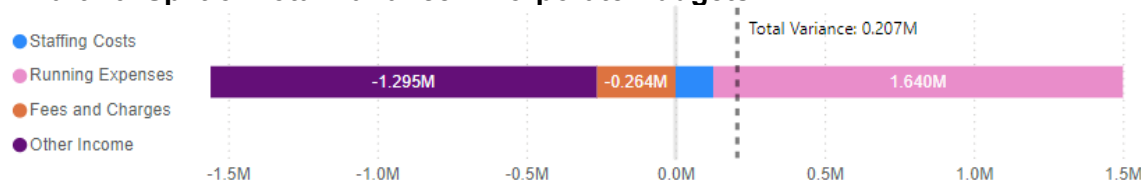
3.102. The following chart summaries the forecast budget variance, split by services within Corporate Budgets, for each period to date.

**Chart 19. Forecast Variance Period Comparison – Corporate Budgets**



3.103. The following chart summaries the overall forecast budget variance for Corporate Budgets by high level category:

**Chart 20. Split of Total Variance – Corporate Budgets**



3.104. Capital Financing Costs is forecasting a positive total net variance of £2.381m, which is a positive movement of £1.134m from Quarter 2:

- As a result of the slippage on the Capital Programme, reported in the 2023/24 Quarter 4 Performance Report, there is a positive variance of £0.005m relating to the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).
- There is a further positive variance of £0.606m on the interest payable budget due to a combination of the slippage on the Capital Programme and the Council's strategy of maximising internal borrowing, supported by temporary borrowing where required, in terms of managing the Council's cashflow.
- There is also a positive variance forecast of £1.770m on the interest receivable budget relating to treasury investments due to a combination of interest rates currently being higher than originally forecast and an improved cashflow position allowing for higher levels of cash balances to be invested.

- 3.105. Other Corporate Budgets is reporting an adverse net variance of £2.588m, which is an adverse movement of £0.031m from Quarter 2. This variance primarily relates to the forecast pressure on Housing Benefit expenditure of £3.135m where Subsidy is not 100% recoverable. This variance is comprised of a forecast pressure of £1.216m relating to unrecoverable subsidy for temporary accommodation and a forecast pressure of £1.919m relating to unrecoverable subsidy for supported accommodation. There is a positive variance of £0.986m relating to Business Rates refunds covering 2017/18 to 2023/24 on the Town Hall, following a successful appeal. There are additional adverse net variances totalling £0.439m.
- 3.106. There is a projected adverse variance of £0.050m relating to the latest 2024/25 pay award assumptions. The 2024/25 Budget assumed a pay award of 3.00% but based on latest information this is now projected to be an average of 3.54%. It is assumed that this pressure will be funded from the Pay & Inflation Earmarked Reserve.

#### **Funding - £0.257m positive variance**

- 3.107. Funding is forecasting a positive variance of £0.257m relating to the Council's projected share of the £100m Business Rates Levy Surplus Account, which Central Government announced would be distributed to Local Authorities by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 as part of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement published on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2024. Whilst individual Local Authority allocations will not be published until the Final Local government Finance Settlement, expected in early February 2025, the Council received £0.257m when the previous £100m Business Rates Levy Surplus Account was distributed in 2022/23.

## **4. Recovery Plan**

- 4.1. The following table summarises the Recovery Plan mitigations which are set out individually in Appendix 2.
- 4.2. At Quarter 1 the Recovery Plan (Officer decisions) initially set out a target of deliverable mitigations totalling £8.081m. At Quarter 2, a further £0.499m of recently approved Member and additional Officer decisions were included, bringing the total target Recovery Plan to £8.580m. The revised forecast delivery at Quarter 3 is £8.495m, which is unchanged from Quarter 2. This position is included within the overall forecast outturn position.

**Table 12. Recovery Plan Quarter 3**

<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Approved Target £m</b>	<b>Forecast Delivery £m</b>	<b>Variance £m</b>
Communities and Adult Social Care	(2.583)	(2.583)	0.000
Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services	(1.418)	(1.418)	0.000
Resources	(0.783)	(0.698)	0.085
Chief Executive Services	(0.030)	(0.030)	0.000
Corporate	(1.286)	(1.286)	0.000
Children's Services delivered by BFfC	(2.480)	(2.480)	0.000
<b>Total</b>	<b>(8.580)</b>	<b>(8.495)</b>	<b>0.085</b>

## **5. Savings Delivery**

- 5.1. Delivery of the Council's budget is predicated on achieving savings and additional income as agreed as part of the budget setting process in February 2024. Detailed monitoring of agreed savings is tracked on a monthly basis.
- 5.2. The projected financial impact of any non-delivery of savings has been included in the projected outturn position reported above.

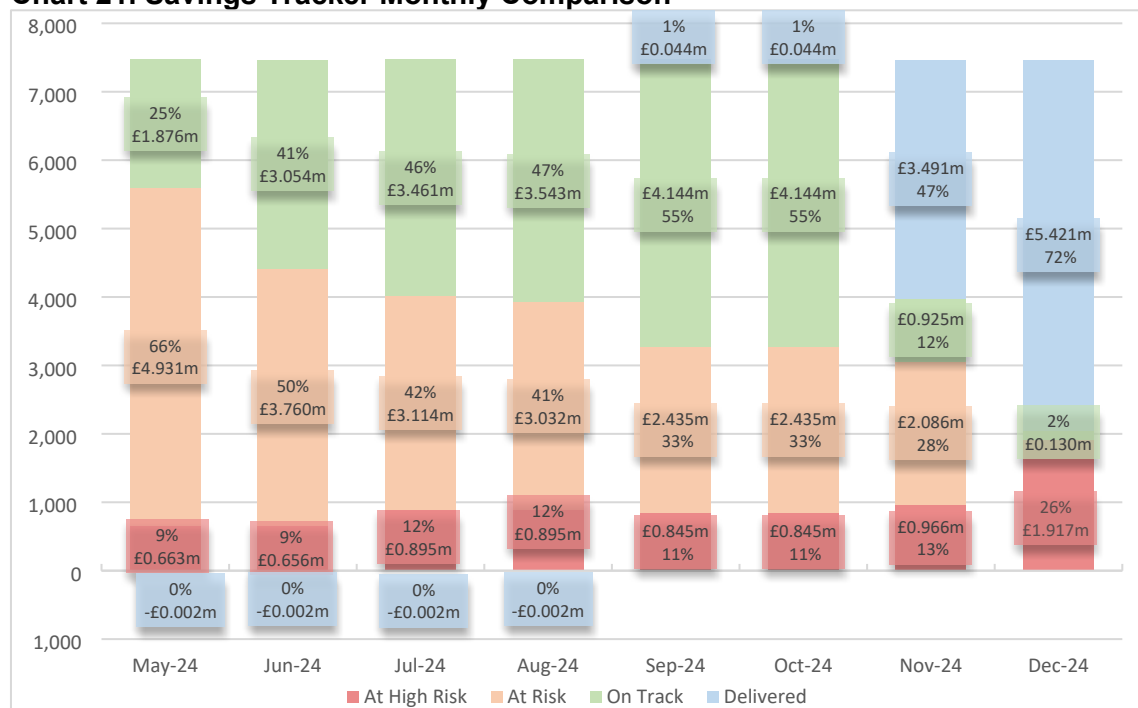
- 5.3. A total of £4.202m of savings were delivered in 2023/24. The residual £2.768m have been carried forward for delivery in 2024/25, giving a revised 2024/25 savings target of £7.468m.
- 5.4. The following table summarises the current forecast savings delivery for 2024/25 (a breakdown by individual saving is provided in Appendix 3):

**Table 13. General Funds Savings Tracker Summary**

Service	Savings At Risk £m	Savings Delayed or at Risk £m	Savings on Track £m	Savings Achieved £m	Directorate Total £m
Communities and Adult Social Care	0.000	0.000	0.000	(1.135)	(1.135)
Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services	(1.517)	0.000	0.000	(2.870)	(4.387)
Resources	(0.400)	0.000	(0.192)	(0.605)	(1.197)
Chief Executive Services	0.000	0.000	(0.012)	0.000	(0.012)
Corporate	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.016)	(0.016)
Children's Services retained by Council	0.000	0.000	0.000	(0.005)	(0.005)
Children's Services delivered by BFfC	0.000	0.000	0.074	(0.790)	(0.716)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(1.917)</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>(0.130)</b>	<b>(5.421)</b>	<b>(7.468)</b>

- 5.5. The following chart shows the Savings Tracker Summary trend by period:

**Chart 21. Savings Tracker Monthly Comparison**



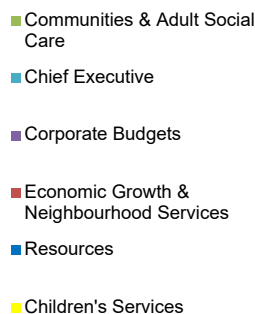
- 5.6. Any savings not delivered in 2024/25 will cause an immediate pressure on 2025/26, unless mitigated with alternative ongoing savings.

## 6. Debt Performance

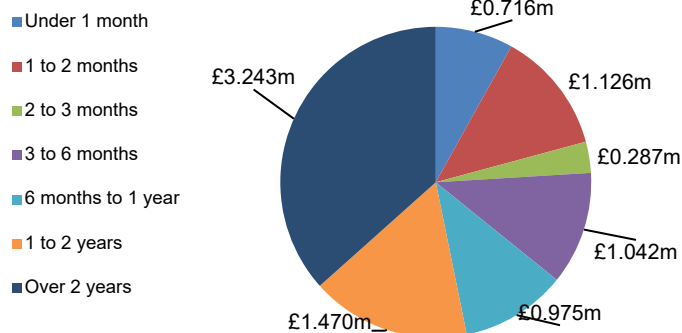
- 6.1. Total General Fund overdue sundry debt as at the end of Quarter 3 is £8.859m. In addition to this, the General Fund also has £4.295m of current debt and £1.068m of deferred debt which is not yet considered overdue.

**Chart 22. Split of General Fund Debt by Directorate and Days Outstanding**

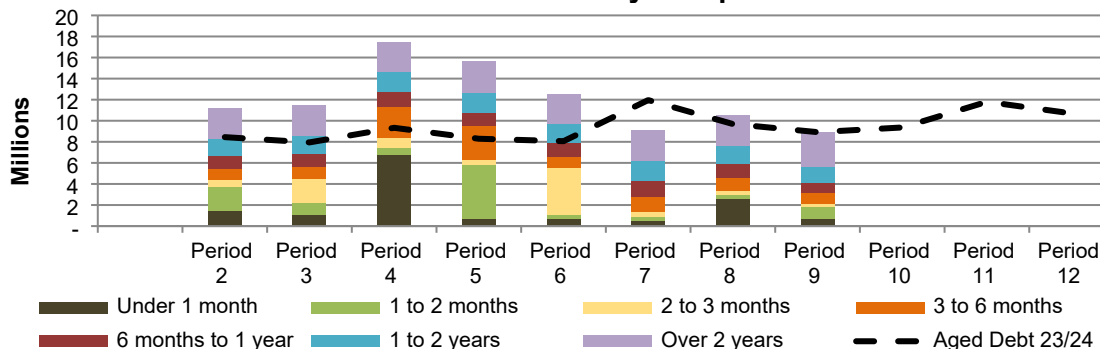
**Split of General Fund Debt by Directorate**



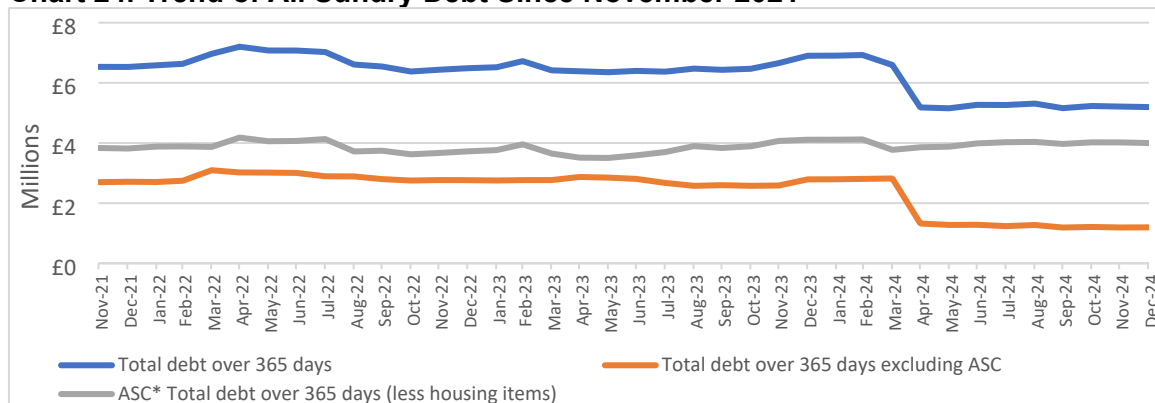
**Split of General Fund Debt Balance by Days Outstanding**



**Chart 23. Overdue General Fund Debt Monthly Comparison**



**Chart 24. Trend of All Sundry Debt Since November 2021**



## 7. Debt Write-Off

- 7.1. Having complied with the requirements of the Council's Debt Management Strategy, all recovery activity has been exhausted and the Director of Finance recommends that the total amounts submitted to the Committee for write-off for cases above £20,000 are:

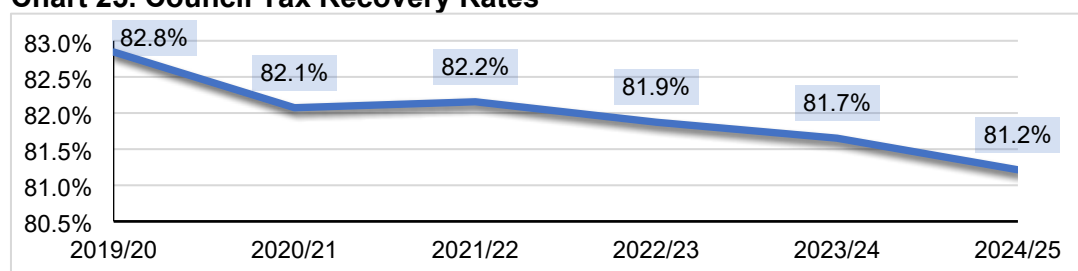
- Non-Domestic Rates - £606,024.69
- Sundry Debt - £92,597.35

- 7.2. The list of specific debts requested to be written-off are set out in Appendix 8. It is considered that information contained within Appendix 8 contains exempt information under the meaning of sections 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and therefore cannot be made public.
- 7.3. The write-offs will be contained within the existing respective bad debt provisions. These bad debt provisions are reviewed annually to take account of the likely levels of bad debt write-offs and the potential for any recovery of debt that has been previously written off.
- 7.4. The cost of non-domestic rates write-offs is shared between the Council (49%), Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (1%) and Central Government (50%).

## 8. Collection Fund

- 8.1. The following chart shows the Council's collection rate of the total annual debit raised for Council Tax and Non-Domestic (Business) Rates as at the end of Quarter 3.
- 8.2. Council Tax collection rates are behind the collection levels at the same point when compared to pre-Covid-19 pandemic rates (2019/20) and 2023/24 collection rates at the same point last year. This is a similar trend across most of Berkshire and is likely related to the continuing cost of living crisis.

**Chart 25. Council Tax Recovery Rates**



- 8.3. The following table shows the collection performance levels for Council Tax across Berkshire:

**Table 14. Council Tax Collection across Berkshire (Quarter 3)**

Council Tax	Comparison to 2023/24	Comparison to 2019/20
Bracknell	↓ 0.66%	↓ 2.28%
<b>Reading</b>	↓ <b>0.44%</b>	↓ <b>1.63%</b>
RBWM	↓ 1.55%	↓ 1.79%
Slough	↓ 1.77%	↓ 4.93%
West Berkshire	↓ 0.31%	↓ 1.96%
Wokingham	↓ 0.34%	↓ 2.65%

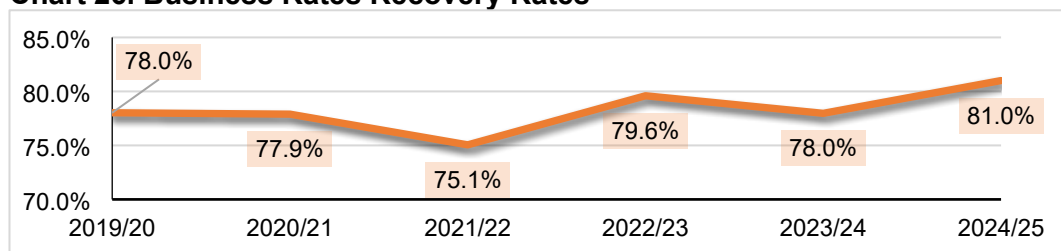
- 8.4. For context, a 0.44% decrease in collection is worth approximately £0.617m to the Collection Fund for 2024/25.
- 8.5. Non-Domestic collection rates are currently ahead of the collection levels at the same point when compared to pre-Covid-19 pandemic rates (2019/20) and 2023/24 collection rates at the same point last year.
- 8.6. There are however a number of timing issues that are currently impacting on the data comparisons:

- Delays to the overall debt recovery cycle due to issues relating to court dates;



- The Council has improved its own Business Rates bills process compared to previous years.

**Chart 26. Business Rates Recovery Rates**



- 8.7. The following table shows the collection performance levels for Non-Domestic (Business) Rates across Berkshire:

**Table 15. Business Rates Collection across Berkshire (Quarter 3)**

Business Rates	Comparison to 2023/24	Comparison to 2019/20
Bracknell	↓ 11.14%	↓ 1.17%
<b>Reading</b>	↑ <b>3.03%</b>	↑ <b>2.98%</b>
RBWM	↑ 1.28%	↑ 0.55%
Slough	↓ 2.70%	↓ 1.72%
West Berkshire	↑ 0.38%	↑ 0.60%
Wokingham	↓ 1.68%	↓ 5.28%

- 8.8. For context, a 3.03% increase in collection is worth approximately £4.561m to the Collection Fund for 2024/25.

## 9. General Fund - Capital Programme

- 9.1. The General Fund Capital Programme for 2024/25 has an approved budget of £72.137m. The following amendments are requested to be formally approved which would result in a proposed revised Capital Programme budget of £69.591m. These amendments are set out on an individual scheme basis in Appendix 4.
- 9.2. Against the proposed revised budget of £69.591m there is a forecast positive net variance of £0.900m. This variance incorporates a £0.934m positive variance for the Delivery Fund slightly offset by a £0.032m adverse variance on the Hexagon lighting and emergency lighting replacement scheme, and a £0.002m adverse variance on the Hexagon replacement of PA System scheme.

**Table 16. General Fund Capital Programme Amendments**

General Fund Capital Programme	£m
<b>Revised Approved Budget 2024/25</b>	<b>72.137</b>
Budget Movements Between Schemes	0.000
Additional Budgets added to the Programme - Funded by Grants & Contributions	0.214
Additional Budgets requested to be added to the Programme - Funded by Capital Receipts, Revenue Contributions and Borrowing	0.021
Reduced Budgets - Completed Schemes & Other carry forward budget adjustments	0.000
Budgets reprogrammed (to)/from Future Years	(2.781)
<b>Proposed Revised Budget Quarter 3 2024/25</b>	<b>69.591</b>

- 9.3. Budget movements requested between schemes are set out within Appendix 4.



- 9.4. A total of £0.214m of additional budget (as set out in Appendix 4) is requested to be formally added into the Capital Programme for capital expenditure directly incurred by schools and funded by devolved formula capital grant funding.
- 9.5. A total of £0.021m of additional budget (as set out in Appendix 4) is requested to be formally added into the Capital Programme. The additional budget will be funded from a one-off contribution from the revenue budget.
- 9.6. A net total of £2.781m of budgets are requested to be reprogrammed between 2024/25 and future years of the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 4. This includes:
- £1.200m for CIL Local Funded Transport schemes;
  - £0.803m for the Highway Signals Capital Bid scheme;
  - £0.600m for CIL Local Funded Leisure and Play schemes;
  - £0.178m of net re-programming between years across all other schemes.
- 9.7. In addition, a net total of £0.260m of budgets across two schemes are requested to be reprogrammed between 2025/26 and future years as set out in Appendix 4. This includes:
- £0.335m for the Heights Permanent Site Mitigation scheme;
  - £0.075m for the Maintenance & Enhancement of Council Properties scheme.

## **10. Delivery Fund**

- 10.1. Costs of service transformation and the delivery of future ongoing savings are able to be charged to capital (and financed from new capital receipts) due to the introduction of the Flexible Capital Receipts Regulations. These regulations have been confirmed to have been extended to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2030.
- 10.2. There is a total £3.144m Delivery Fund available for 2024/25 (inclusive of 2023/24 approved carry forwards). At Quarter 3, £3.097m of this funding has been allocated out to approved schemes and the forecast spend is £2.210m, which represents a positive net variance of £0.933m. A review of any scheme variances will be undertaken as part of 2024/25 outturn processes with any positive variances rolled forward into 2025/26 or returned to the unallocated contingency as appropriate.

## **11. Housing Revenue Account – Revenue**

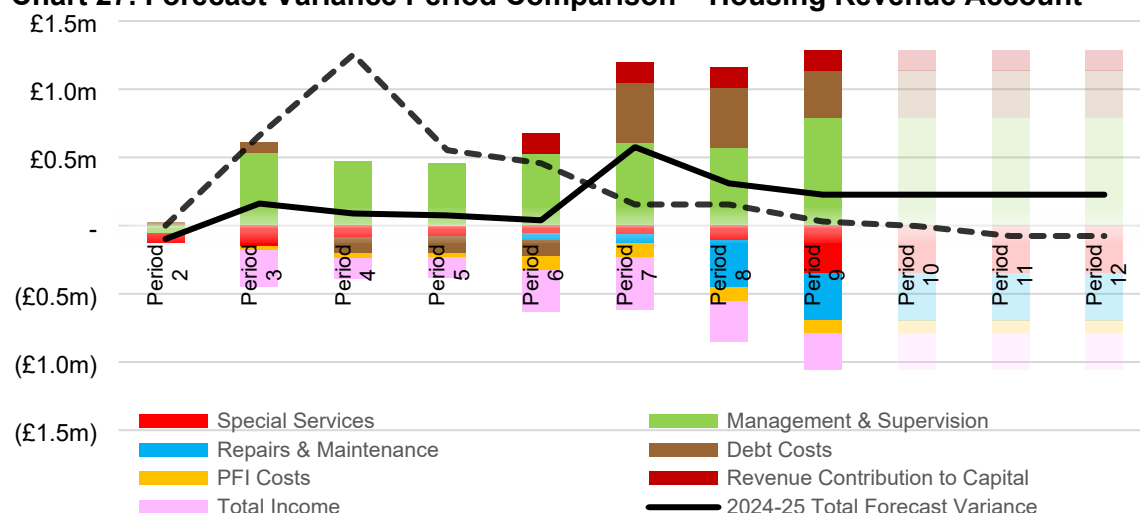
- 11.1. The revised Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget assumes a drawdown from HRA reserves of £3.092m. At Quarter 3, the forecast revenue outturn position on the HRA is an adverse net variance to budget of £0.227m. Therefore, a drawdown from the HRA Reserve is forecast of £3.319m rather than the revised budgeted £3.092m drawdown from reserves. The breakdown of the net variance is set out in the following table and explained below.

**Table 17. Housing Revenue Account Forecast 2024/25**

	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance	Increase/ (Decrease) from Quarter 2 £m
	£m	£m	£m	
Management & Supervision	9.362	10.149	0.787	0.260
Special Services	5.153	4.804	(0.349)	(0.295)
Provision for Bad Debts	0.891	0.891	0.000	0.000
Repairs & Maintenance	8.755	8.410	(0.345)	(0.295)
Major Repairs/Depreciation	15.192	15.192	0.000	0.000
Debt Costs	7.009	7.358	0.349	0.471
PFI Costs	8.254	8.160	(0.094)	0.010
Revenue Contribution to Capital	0.000	0.148	0.148	0.001
HRA Income	(51.524)	(51.793)	(0.269)	0.036
<b>Over/(Under) Budget</b>	<b>3.092</b>	<b>3.319</b>	<b>0.227</b>	<b>0.188</b>
<b>Movement to/(from) HRA Reserves</b>	<b>(3.092)</b>	<b>(3.319)</b>	<b>(0.227)</b>	<b>(0.188)</b>

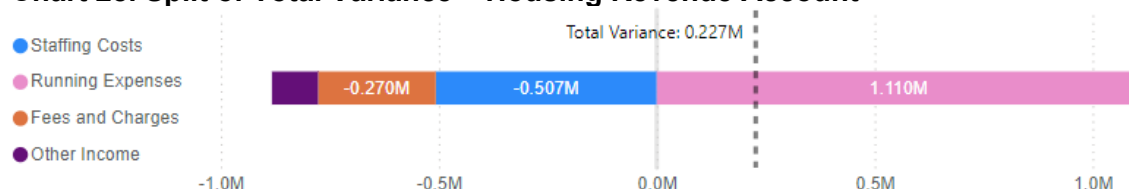
- 11.2. The following chart summaries the forecast budget variance, split by services within the HRA, for each period to date.

**Chart 27. Forecast Variance Period Comparison – Housing Revenue Account**



- 11.3. The following chart summaries the overall forecast budget variance for the Housing Revenue Account by high level category:

**Chart 28. Split of Total Variance – Housing Revenue Account**



- 11.4. Management and Supervision is expected to have an adverse variance of £0.787m. Although there is a positive variance on payroll due to vacancies, there are additional costs of the Repair Task Force and housing digitisation project as well as an increase to the contribution towards the General Fund Central Support Recharges which were reviewed as part of the Recovery Plan process.
- 11.5. Special Services, which include sheltered housing schemes, is expected to have a positive variance of £0.349m due to a positive variance on payroll.

- 11.6. Repairs & Maintenance is expected to have a positive variance of £0.345m due to positive variances on Gas Servicing as a result of resourcing issues.
- 11.7. There is expected to be an adverse variance on Debt Costs of £0.349m due to higher interest rates than expected in the HRA Business Plan and a revised split of interest between the General Fund and HRA as a result of slippage on the Council's General Fund Capital Programme.
- 11.8. PFI costs are expected to have a positive variance of £0.094m due to the rate of inflation being lower than expected in the approved HRA Business Plan.
- 11.9. There is an adverse variance of £0.148m on Revenue Contribution to Capital as it is expected to finance the remainder of the Housing Management System project.
- 11.10. HRA Income is forecasting a positive variance of £0.269m. Dwelling Rents are currently projected to be underachieving on the budget by a total of £0.068m (0.15% less than budget). In addition, there is an overachievement forecast on Service Charges of £0.027m. Other Income is also forecast to overachieve against the budget by £0.188m. Finally, there is expected to be a positive variance of £0.122m on Interest income due to a higher interest rate in the HRA compared to the assumptions in the HRA Business Plan.

## 12. Housing Revenue Account - Capital Programme

- 12.1. The HRA Capital Programme for 2024/25 has an approved budget of £27.335m. The following amendments are requested to be formally approved which would result in a proposed revised Capital Programme budget of £33.684m. These amendments are set out on an individual scheme basis in Appendix 5.
- 12.2. At Quarter 3, the HRA Capital Programme is forecasting to spend to budget against the proposed revised budget of £33.684m.

**Table 18. Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme Amendments**

<b>Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme</b>	<b>£m</b>
<b>Revised Approved Budget 2024/25</b>	<b>27.335</b>
Budget Movements Between Schemes	0.000
Additional Budgets added to the Programme - Funded by Grants & Contributions	0.000
Additional Budgets requested to be added to the Programme - Funded by Capital Receipts, Revenue Contributions and Borrowing	0.000
Reduced Budgets - Completed Schemes & Other carry forward budget adjustments	0.000
Budgets reprogrammed (to)/from Future Years	6.349
<b>Proposed Revised Budget Quarter 3 2024/25</b>	<b>33.684</b>

- 12.3. A net total of £6.349m of budgets are requested to be reprogrammed between 2024/25 and future years of the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 5. This includes:
- £5.000m for the Acquisitions from Homes for Reading scheme to represent the current best estimate of expenditure to be incurred in 2024/25. Due to a number of uncertainties, there may be a variance of spend against budget at year end, which will require further reprogramming to/from 2025/26;
  - £1.349m for the Homes Provided under Local Authority Housing Fund.

## 13. Corporate Plan Performance

### Summary

- 13.1. This section of the Performance Report sets out progress against the Performance Measures and Projects included in the Council's Corporate Plan "Investing in Reading's Future."
- 13.2. The Corporate Plan sets out 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" and three priority themes of:
- Healthy Environment
  - Thriving Neighbourhoods
  - Inclusive Economy
- 13.3. These themes are supported by the strong Foundations of effective service delivery, improvement and transformation needed to ensure the effective delivery of the ambitious programme set out in the Corporate Plan.
- 13.4. The Corporate Plan update, agreed in March 2024, includes 48 KPIs and 46 projects which underpin delivery of the Council's vision and priorities. 3 projects were reported complete at the end of the first quarter and are included in Appendix 7. Of the 48 KPIs, 25 are annual measures.
- 13.5. The full list of Performance KPIs monitored in year is attached at Appendix 6 and Projects as Appendix 7.
- 13.6. The table below provides a summary of the status of the KPIs and projects at the end of the third quarter of 2024/25.

**Table 18. Performance Overview**

	Status %			
What	Red	Amber	Green	Complete
Key Measures	43	22	35	N/A
Key Projects	2	28	61	9

### Corporate Plan KPIs

- 13.7. The KPIs are rated as follows:
- Green – at or above target
  - Amber – within 10% of the target
  - Red – 10% or more off target
- 13.8. The following table shows performance against the target (red/amber/green) for the 23 measures reported in year for 2024/25, compared to previous quarters.
- 13.9. The Quarter 4 figures include the 31 annual measures which were included in the KPI set for 2023/24.

**Table 19. Summary of Performance against target KPIs**

Status	2023/24		2024/25			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	
	%	%	%	%	%	No.
Green	38	40	37	26	35	8
Amber	27	23	17	30	22	5
Red	35	37	46	44	43	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>23</b>

13.10. Further details are provided in Appendix 6.

### **Corporate Plan Projects**

13.11. Projects are rated as follows:

- Blue – complete
- Green – on track
- Amber – at risk
- Red – off track

13.12. The following table shows the RAG status for the Corporate Plan projects:

**Table 20. RAG Status of Corporate Plan Projects**

Status	2023/24		2024/25			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	
	%	%	%	%	%	No.
Blue	0	0	7	0	9	4
Green	66	68	56	65	61	28
Amber	34	32	37	35	28	13
Red	0	0	0	0	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>46</b>

13.13. Further details are provided in Appendix 7.

## **14. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

14.1. 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.

14.2. Delivery of the Council's budget is essential to ensuring the Council meets its strategic aims and remains financially sustainable going forward.

## **15. Environmental and Climate Implications**

15.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2019. The Council's Corporate Plan monitors progress in reducing the carbon footprint of both the Borough and the Council.

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

## **16. Community Engagement**

16.1. Budget-related communications and consultations will continue to be a priority over the next three years as we work to identify savings and efficiencies.

## **17. Equality Implications**

- 17.1. The equality duty is relevant to the development of the Budget. The specific savings and income proposals included in the budget are subject to consultation and equality impact assessments where required and these are being progressed as appropriate.

## **18. Other Relevant Considerations**

- 18.1. There are none.

## **19. Legal Implications**

- 19.1. The Local Government Act 2003 requires that the Authority reviews its Budget throughout the year and takes any action it deems necessary to deal with the situation arising from monitoring. Currently monitoring reports are submitted to Policy Committee quarterly throughout the year.

## **20. Financial Implications**

- 20.1. The financial implications are set out in the body of this report.
- 20.2. At Quarter 3, the total revised Recovery Plan target is £8.580m and the forecast delivery against this total is £8.495m. Work is ongoing to identify further savings, however the position remains challenging. A pause on all non-essential expenditure and recruitment has been implemented until the budget is brought back in line.

## **21. Timetable for Implementation**

- 21.1. Not applicable.

## **22. Background Papers**

- 22.1. There are none.

## **Appendices**

- 1. Summary of the General Fund Budget and Forecast 2024/25**
- 2. Recovery Plan Quarter 3**
- 3. Savings Tracker Quarter 3**
- 4. General Fund Capital Programme**
- 5. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme**
- 6. Corporate Plan Performance Measures Quarter 3**
- 7. Corporate Plan Projects Quarter 3**
- 8. Debt Write-Offs**

## Appendix 1 - Summary of the General Fund Budget and Forecast 2024/25

Directorate/Service	Approved Budget £'000	Budget Changes £'000	Current Budget £'000	Forecast Actuals £'000	Variance to Budget £'000
<b>Communities &amp; Adult Social Care</b>					
Commissioning, Transformation & Performance	2,690	654	3,344	3,344	0
Adult Social Care Operations	46,110	256	46,366	49,761	3,395
Safeguarding, Quality & Practice	3,567	1,085	4,652	4,652	0
Community & Adult Social Care Management	1,650	(230)	1,420	1,420	0
Public Health	0	0	0	0	0
Housing & Communities	2,870	(145)	2,725	3,461	736
<b>Communities &amp; Adult Social Care</b>	<b>56,887</b>	<b>1,620</b>	<b>58,507</b>	<b>62,638</b>	<b>4,131</b>
<b>Economic Growth &amp; Neighbourhood Services</b>					
Planning, Transport & Public Protection	(444)	564	120	1,554	1,434
Culture	2,914	466	3,380	3,112	(268)
Environmental & Commercial Services	18,950	1,604	20,554	20,896	342
Property & Asset Management	(3,190)	631	(2,559)	(3,009)	(450)
Management & Sustainability	1,174	56	1,230	721	(509)
<b>Economic Growth &amp; Neighbourhood Services</b>	<b>19,404</b>	<b>3,321</b>	<b>22,725</b>	<b>23,274</b>	<b>549</b>
<b>Resources</b>					
Policy, Change & Customer Services	2,509	1,414	3,923	3,923	0
Human Resources & Organisational Development	1,929	265	2,194	2,041	(153)
Procurement & Contracts	369	90	459	438	(21)
Finance	4,745	534	5,279	5,283	4
Legal & Democratic Services	2,930	457	3,387	3,440	53
Digital & IT	6,653	(512)	6,141	6,096	(45)
<b>Resources</b>	<b>19,135</b>	<b>2,248</b>	<b>21,383</b>	<b>21,221</b>	<b>(162)</b>
<b>Chief Executive Services</b>					
Executive Management Team	897	15	912	912	0
Communications	734	(97)	637	629	(8)
<b>Chief Executive Services</b>	<b>1,631</b>	<b>(82)</b>	<b>1,549</b>	<b>1,541</b>	<b>(8)</b>
<b>Children's Services</b>					
Retained by Council	843	0	843	754	(89)
Brighter Futures for Children	58,839	0	58,839	65,086	6,247
<b>Children's Services</b>	<b>59,682</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>59,682</b>	<b>65,840</b>	<b>6,158</b>
<b>Total Service Expenditure</b>	<b>156,739</b>	<b>7,107</b>	<b>163,846</b>	<b>174,514</b>	<b>10,668</b>
<b>Corporate Budgets</b>					
Capital Financing Costs	18,426	(71)	18,355	15,974	(2,381)
Other Corporate Budgets	(4,195)	(7,983)	(12,178)	(9,590)	2,588
Movement in Reserves	(3,084)	947	(2,137)	(2,137)	0
<b>Corporate Budgets</b>	<b>11,147</b>	<b>(7,107)</b>	<b>4,040</b>	<b>4,247</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>Net Budget Requirement</b>	<b>167,886</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>167,886</b>	<b>178,761</b>	<b>10,875</b>
<b>Financed By:</b>					
Council Tax Income	(118,884)	0	(118,884)	(118,884)	0
Business Rates Local Share	(32,045)	0	(32,045)	(32,045)	0
Section 31 Grant (Business Rates Retention Scheme)	(16,031)	0	(16,031)	(16,031)	0
New Homes Bonus	(1,255)	0	(1,255)	(1,255)	0
Revenue Support Grant	(2,652)	0	(2,652)	(2,652)	0
Other Government Grants	(1,193)	0	(1,193)	(1,450)	(257)
One-off Collection Fund (Surplus)/Deficit - Council Tax	1,701	0	1,701	1,701	0
One-off Collection Fund (Surplus)/Deficit - Business Rates	2,473	0	2,473	2,473	0
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>(167,886)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(167,886)</b>	<b>(168,143)</b>	<b>(257)</b>
<b>Over/(Under) Budget</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10,618</b>	<b>10,618</b>

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## Appendix 2 - Recovery Plan (2024-25)

### Approved Members & Officers Decisions

Reference	Service	Overview of Activity	Investment Required?	One-off or Ongoing	Category	Estimated Overspend Recovery			Forecast Year End Target Delivery (£000s)	Forecast Year End Variance to Target (£000s)
						Target (£000s)	Delivered (£000s)	Outstanding (£000s)		
DCASC - 1	ASC Operational Teams	<b>Permanent recruitment</b> - To lead a recruitment refresh for approx 35 vacant posts (some pending start dates) across DCASC to recue high cost agency cover, and remain within budget.	No	0	Staffing	60	52	8	60	0
DCASC - 2	ASC Operational Teams	<b>Direct Payment reviews</b> - targeted reviews of 75 clients who had underspends against their Direct Payment budgets in 23/24, with their aim of adjusting the Direct Payment budgets in line with the clients' current needs. Value based on the volume of recouped unspent monies in 23/24.	No	Ongoing	Placements	350	159	191	350	0
DCASC - 3	ASC Operational Teams	<b>Extra Care voids</b> - targeted reviews of 16 clients residing in Supported Living whose needs could be met more cost-effectively in Extra Care, with a view to moving them into the current voids in our Extra Care provision. Value based on an analysis of how these clients care needs could be met within an Extra Care setting, compared to their current costs.	No	Ongoing	Placements	90	0	90	90	0
DCASC - 4	Commissioning & ASC Operational Teams	<b>Targeted Supported Living reviews</b> - Through a combination of Commissioning and Operational work, we propose to review the volume and configuration of hours in a selection of Supported Living group environments with a view to using a combination of TEC, the Independent Living Project and negotiation in order to drive efficiencies. If this work is successful, we plan to deliver it on a greater scale in 25/26 to support continued savings delivery. Value based on the level of in-year savings delivered by the TEC and Independent Living projects in 23/24.	No	Ongoing	Placements	90	101	-11	90	0
DCASC - 5	Legal Services	<b>Transfers of Care</b> - transfer of funding responsibility from RBC to RBWM/ICB for a high-cost placement which we are paying for but which is not our funding responsibility. Value based on the full cost of care being assumed by another body & backdated to the start of the financial year.	No	Ongoing	External Funding	164	0	164	164	0
DCASC - 6	ASC Operational Teams	<b>Routine reviews</b> - right-sizing of care packages across all teams arising from BAU annual reviews (including explorations of implementing TEC where possible in order to reduce support hours). Value based on historic levels of reductions achieved through routine reviews	No	Ongoing	Placements	700	554	146	700	0
DCASC - 7	Commissioning & ASC Operational Teams	<b>Targeted Double-Up reviews</b> - There are 151 clients with double-up Home Care packages, with care costs for the provision totalling £100k per week. We propose using the under-utilised staffing hours in CRT to deliver reablement and/or TEC assessments to reduce double handed packages to single where possible. Value based on achieving a 20% reduction against these costs (£20k per week) and adjusted to show the effect for 10 weeks in-year (allowing for the time taken for reviews to be completed and the likelihood that many reviews may not equate to savings).	No	Ongoing	Placements	200	68	132	200	0
DCASC - 8	LDA Team / BFFC	<b>Transitions</b> - joint work with BFFC to reduce the care package costs of the 30 clients who will transition to DCASC in 24/25 through a variety of methods (including explorations of implementing TEC including AutonoMe where possible in order to reduce support hours). Value based on a 10% reduction against the MTFS pressures for 24/25 (£144k) plus an additional £395k to be delivered by drawing on TEC, existing enablement, supported employment, volunteering opportunities where possible.	No	Ongoing	Placements	539	269	270	539	0
DCASC - 9	ASC Operational Teams	<b>CHC CONTRIBUTIONS:</b> <b>DCASC applications</b> - progression of CHC funding applications for all 34 remaining clients whose weekly costs amount to £39k and who we believe may be eligible for CHC funding (incl. challenging 4 cases where CHC funding may have been wrongly refused by the ICB). As of 15/07: 13 cases are complete; 12 cases are having applications progressed; and 12 applications need to commence (4 of which are new cases identified in July). Value based on the level of savings achieved in 2023/2024.	No	Ongoing	External Funding	200	0	200	200	0

Appendix 2 - Recovery Plan (2024-25)

Approved Members & Officers Decisions

Reference	Service	Overview of Activity	Investment Required?	One-off or Ongoing	Category	Estimated Overspend Recovery			Forecast Year End Target Delivery (£000s)	Forecast Year End Variance to Target (£000s)
						Target (£000s)	Delivered (£000s)	Outstanding (£000s)		
DCASC - 10	BFFC / LDA Team	<b>BFFC applications</b> - there are 11 clients scheduled to transition to DCASC in 24/25 with weekly care costs totalling £37k / £1.9m, who BFFC have identified as potentially being eligible for CHC funding (though the ICB have declined applications in 2 cases). We propose helping BFFC to submit applications and/or challenge previous decisions. Value based on securing CHC funding for approx. 10% of these care costs.	No	Ongoing	External Funding	190	64	126	190	0
	<b>DCASC Total</b>					<b>2,583</b>	<b>1,267</b>	<b>1,316</b>	<b>2,583</b>	<b>0</b>

## Appendix 2 - Recovery Plan (2024-25)

### Approved Members & Officers Decisions

Reference	Service	Overview of Activity	Investment Required?	One-off or Ongoing	Category	Estimated Overspend Recovery			Forecast Year End Target Delivery (£000s)	Forecast Year End Variance to Target (£000s)
						Target (£000s)	Delivered (£000s)	Outstanding (£000s)		
DEGNS - 1	Culture - Libraries	Reprofile of libraries business rates budgets	No	Ongoing	Other	30	30	0	30	0
DEGNS - 2	Culture - Reading Arts & Venues	Reprofile of Town Hall business rates budgets	No	Ongoing	Other	90	90	0	90	0
DEGNS - 3	Culture - Berkshire Archaeology	Reprofile of budgets	No	Ongoing	Other	10	10	0	10	0
DEGNS - 4	Culture - Royal Berkshire Archives	Reprofile of budgets	No	Ongoing	Other	25	25	0	25	0
DEGNS - 5	Culture - UKSPF grant	Repurposing of UKSPF grant towards core functions	No	One Off	External Funding	87	0	87	87	0
DEGNS - 6	Culture - Reading Arts & Venues	Impact of delay of Studio Theatre	No	One Off	Other	20	20	0	20	0
DEGNS - 12	PTPP - Parking Services	Introduction of enforcement on 5 new BSIP Bus Lanes	Funded by BSIP including staffing until becomes self sustaining	Ongoing	Policy Change	10	0	10	10	0
DEGNS - 13	PTPP - Strategic Transport	Contracted Bus Service Income	No	One-off	Other	50	0	50	50	0
DEGNS - 14	PTPP - Strategic Transport	Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Compound Income	No	One-off	Other	10	0	10	10	0
DEGNS - 16	PTPP - Public Protection	Coroners Joint Apportionment	No	Ongoing - Changes over 3 years as part of transitional arrangements	External Funding	56	56	0	56	0
DEGNS - 17	PTPP - Public Protection	Coroners Removals Contract	No	Ongoing	Other	54	0	54	54	0
DEGNS - 18	PTPP - Public Protection	Pavement Cafe Licensing. This is off the back of amendments to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 whereby the fee cap for a pavement licence application is increasing. It will no longer be capped at £100 but instead be capped at £500 for first time applications and £350 for renewal applications. Proposal is £500 for new licenses over 10 chairs (£350 renewals) / £350 up to 10 chairs (£200 renewals) / £300 2 tables and/or 6 chairs (£100 renewals)	No	Ongoing	Fees & Charges Review	8	0	8	8	0
DEGNS - 19	PTPP - Public Protection	Street Trading Pitches	Yes	Ongoing	Other	6	0	6	6	0
DEGNS - 22	PTPP - Planning DM	Stop postage to neighbouring consultees	No	Ongoing	Printing & Postage Savings	7	0	7	7	0

## Appendix 2 - Recovery Plan (2024-25)

### Approved Members & Officers Decisions

Reference	Service	Overview of Activity	Investment Required?	One-off or Ongoing	Category	Estimated Overspend Recovery			Forecast Year End Target Delivery (£000s)	Forecast Year End Variance to Target (£000s)
						Target (£000s)	Delivered (£000s)	Outstanding (£000s)		
DEGNS - 23	PTPP - Planning DM	<p>Fees &amp; Charges increase. Pre-App Planning application fees are set by central government. In December 2023 planning application fees were increased by 25% for most application types and by 35% for Major applications. The high percentage increase was justified by government as was the first increase since 2018.</p> <p>We have tried to keep our pre-app fees in line with but less that planning application fees to encourage advice being sought so in comparison with the new fees our pre-app fees were very cheap for the work carried out and number of officers involved and therefore justified a quick review.</p> <p>Having advised Planning Applications Committee in early July of our intention the fee increase for pre-app was implemented in mid July. The increase to pre-application fees is by 12.5% for smaller schemes and by 25% for larger commercial applications. For the very large developments the fees are calculated by negotiation based on the number of officers involved and time taken and are also expected to rise by 25%. We are also promoting the use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPA.s) to provide a fee based service agreement.</p> <p>Other charges The most recent fee for miscellaneous enquiries and tree advice was £32.00 set in October 2023 and introduced in April 2024. On further analysis of the work involved in providing this information it is clear this charge does not reflect the time taken in many cases, so this fee is proposed to increase to £50. This appears to be a big increase but with most recent planning histories and decisions and other information to be found on our website most customers can find what they need for free. However, some mainly customers or solicitors request information that requires investigation or research into older files or just do not have the time to do the searches themselves. Having taken into account officer time (some can take 1 hour plus) and resources needed to do this £50 is a reasonable figure to seek. We are also looking to increase fees for S106 enquiries, again to more accurately reflect the time taken to do these tasks.</p>	No	Ongoing	Fees & Charges Review	35	0	35	35	0
DEGNS - 25	PTPP - Planning Policy	CIL/s106 Debt recovery	Yes, ongoing	One-off	Other	0	0	0	0	0
DEGNS - 26	PTPP - Planning Policy	Increase S106 monitoring fees	No	Ongoing	External Funding	8	0	8	8	0
DEGNS - 27	PTPP - Planning Policy	Set Biodiversity Net Gain monitoring fees	No	Ongoing	External Funding	5	0	5	5	0
DEGNS - 28	PTPP - Building Control	Increase to Building Control fees by average 17%	No	Ongoing	Fees & Charges Review	43	0	43	43	0

## Appendix 2 - Recovery Plan (2024-25)

### Approved Members & Officers Decisions

Reference	Service	Overview of Activity	Investment Required?	One-off or Ongoing	Category	Estimated Overspend Recovery			Forecast Year End Target Delivery (£000s)	Forecast Year End Variance to Target (£000s)
						Target (£000s)	Delivered (£000s)	Outstanding (£000s)		
DEGNS - 29	Environment and Commercial	Waste Disposal Inflation level	No	Ongoing	Reduced Inflation	75	75	0	75	0
DEGNS - 30	Environment and Commercial	Bulky household waste review of service. Cease from 1st Jan. It is proposed to retain £10k of this saving (full year impact) to fund targeted neighbourhood initiatives that will be delivered in identified areas of the borough to address known fly-tipping hotspots, with community group engagement and participation.	Communication Costs - One off	Ongoing	Service Change	30	0	30	30	0
DEGNS - 32	Environment and Commercial	Streetscene Vehicle reductions - total of 5 vehicles removed - revenue maintenance/Fuel plus Capital Receipt in addition	No	Ongoing	Other	18	0	18	18	0
DEGNS - 33	Environment and Commercial	Updating of current Housing SLA for Streetscene to reflect full costs incurred	No	Ongoing	Other	100	100	0	100	0
DEGNS - 34	Environment and Commercial	Reduction in applications of weed killer to footways and kerb channels from 4 per annum to 3 per annum.	No		Other	13	13	0	13	0
DEGNS - 35	Environment and Commercial	Review of Capital programme to delay/remove vehicle purchasing	No	Ongoing benefit to Capital financing budget	Other	5	5	0	5	0
DEGNS - 36	Environment and Commercial	Road Marking additional income	No	Ongoing	Other	2	2	0	2	0
DEGNS - 37	Environment and Commercial	Street Lighting Efficiency Saving	No	Ongoing	Service Change	140	140	0	140	0
DEGNS - 39	Property & Assets	Fees & Charges review including - Retrospective Consent, Compound and Scaffold Licenses, Service Charges at Acre Business Park, St Marys Service Yard, Planning Viabilities, and rent reviews, including community buildings (previously separate line DEGNS-40/41) High value areas to be prioritised.		Ongoing	Fees & Charges Review	10	0	10	10	0
DEGNS - 44	Property & Assets	Examine Capital funding options around using DFE Grant to fund typically non Capital works for decanting, Feasibility works etc. Darren consulted and in agreement with progressing.	No	Ongoing	External Funding	20	0	20	20	0
DEGNS - 46	Property & Assets	Exercise of Corporate Landlord - Centralising all FM staff and RBC building related budgets ie Stationary, Post Room, Printing, Cleaning Consumables, Fuel costs, sanitary etc. Work with finance to move budgets and calculate saving. Explore option of making all buildings cost neutral as minimum - income to cover building running costs, enabling budgets to be removed/given up as savings.	PM Resource required to support delivery	Ongoing	Other	20	0	20	20	0
DEGNS - 47	Management & Sustainability	Business Rates Inflation budget adjustment. 2024/25 Business rates inflation budget allocated out to service budgets to meet expected level of Business Rates, residual budget remaining so is a saving opportunity.	No	One off but likely to reduce level of growth required in 2025/26	Inflation	40	40	0	40	0

Appendix 2 - Recovery Plan (2024-25)

Approved Members & Officers Decisions

Reference	Service	Overview of Activity	Investment Required?	One-off or Ongoing	Category	Estimated Overspend Recovery			Forecast Year End Target Delivery (£000s)	Forecast Year End Variance to Target (£000s)
						Target (£000s)	Delivered (£000s)	Outstanding (£000s)		
DEGNS - 48	Management & Sustainability	Energy Budgets savings. Budget increase agreed in 2024/25 was set using the Utility growth rates expected for 24/25 at the time, actual agreed rate from West Mercia Energy is now lower so the benefit can be released. Figures take account of (i) undeliverable £96k in solar savings which will be re-profiled in a new revenue budget bid to align with when the investment is expected to happen (ii) £25k in-year savings anticipated from project to make better use of Building Management Systems.	No	One off but likely to reduce level of growth required in 2025/26	Reduced Inflation	326	326	0	326	0
DEGNS - 49	Management & Sustainability	Re-forecasting of solar Feed-in-tariff to reflect inflationary increases not currently in budget	Periodic maintenance of solar systems required to maintain performance and therefore the income stream	Ongoing	Inflation	20	0	20	20	0
DEGNS - 50	Management & Sustainability	Energy Post funded from reserves not recruited to in 24/25	No	One-off	Staffing	30	30	0	30	0
DEGNS-NEW	Environment and Commercial	Green Waste – no additional free bin from January 2025	No	Ongoing	Fees & Charges Review	15	0	15	15	0
DEGNS Total						1,418	962	456	1,418	0

## Appendix 2 - Recovery Plan (2024-25)

### Approved Members & Officers Decisions

Reference	Service	Overview of Activity	Investment Required?	One-off or Ongoing	Category	Estimated Overspend Recovery			Forecast Year End Target Delivery (£000s)	Forecast Year End Variance to Target (£000s)																
						Target (£000s)	Delivered (£000s)	Outstanding (£000s)																		
DOR - 5	Finance	Remove agency capacity in AP saving £6k per month	No	One-off	Staffing	12	12	0	15	3																
DOR - 7	Finance	<p>Increase Council Tax &amp; Business Rates Summons and Liability Order costs. The costs are currently listed as 2 items, Council Tax Summons Cost (£111.00) and Business Rates Summons Cost (£157.00).</p> <p>The first amendment proposed is that we separate the costs into their individual elements as follows:</p> <table><tr><td>Council Tax Summons Cost</td><td>£71.00</td></tr><tr><td>Council Tax Liability Cost</td><td>£40.00</td></tr><tr><td>Business Rates Summons Cost</td><td>£87.00</td></tr><tr><td>Business Rates Liability Cost</td><td>£70.00</td></tr></table> <p>Also proposed is an increase to costs as a result of a number of factors, these include: increases to the costs we incur (staff pay awards, print, postage etc) costs having been held at the current value for a number of years a reduction in the number of liability orders obtained, resulting in the cost per case increasing due to fixed costs (our costs are determined in line with common practise, by calculating and aggregating the reasonable costs and expenses incurred over the previous twelve month period in relation to costs incurred in obtaining a liability order, and dividing that figure by the number of summons and liability orders over the previous twelve months to provide an average figure.)</p> <p>The proposed increased fees are calculated as:</p> <table><tr><td>Council Tax Summons Cost</td><td>£99.50</td></tr><tr><td>Council Tax Liability Cost</td><td>£43.00</td></tr><tr><td>Business Rates Summons Cost</td><td>£106.50</td></tr><tr><td>Business Rates Liability Cost</td><td>£70.00</td></tr></table> <p>Each case also incurs a £0.50 Magistrates fee at the Summons stage. This is a fee fixed by the magistrates court which we collect from the resident and pay to the court.</p>	Council Tax Summons Cost	£71.00	Council Tax Liability Cost	£40.00	Business Rates Summons Cost	£87.00	Business Rates Liability Cost	£70.00	Council Tax Summons Cost	£99.50	Council Tax Liability Cost	£43.00	Business Rates Summons Cost	£106.50	Business Rates Liability Cost	£70.00	No	On-going but dependant on number of orders awarded and no legislative changes.	Fees & Charges Review	73	0	73	73	0
Council Tax Summons Cost	£71.00																									
Council Tax Liability Cost	£40.00																									
Business Rates Summons Cost	£87.00																									
Business Rates Liability Cost	£70.00																									
Council Tax Summons Cost	£99.50																									
Council Tax Liability Cost	£43.00																									
Business Rates Summons Cost	£106.50																									
Business Rates Liability Cost	£70.00																									
DOR - 14	Finance	5 x posts held vacant to fund vacancy saving and additional short-term cost of agency	No	One-off	Staffing	202	202	0	202	0																
DOR - 45	Procurement	Collection of income from CCS for using frameworks	No	One off	External Funding	7	8	-1	8	1																
DOR - 24	PPCS	Defer PBP expenditure, which was subject to a discussion with members and following their steer a decision was taken to remove this saving.	No	One off (but could be ongoing subject to Member decision)	Other	22	0	22	0	-22																
DOR - 26	PPCS	Temporary reduction in small grants	No	One off (but could be ongoing subject to Member decision)	Service Change	50	0	50	50	0																

## Appendix 2 - Recovery Plan (2024-25)

Approved Members & Officers Decisions

Reference	Service	Overview of Activity	Investment Required?	One-off or Ongoing	Category	Estimated Overspend Recovery			Forecast Year End Target Delivery (£000s)	Forecast Year End Variance to Target (£000s)
						Target (£000s)	Delivered (£000s)	Outstanding (£000s)		
DOR - 28	PPCS	Additional Registration Service income	No	Ongoing	Other	70	70	0	70	0
DOR - 29	PPCS	Grave digging contract efficiencies / vacancies	No	Ongoing	Staffing	40	0	40	40	0
DOR - 31	DTaC	Reduction of cost for Hosting Procurement	No	Ongoing	Other	68	0	68	36	-32
DOR - 32	DTaC	Review with Agilisys of potential double-charging following deep dive into consumption costs	No	Ongoing	Other	18	0	18	18	0
DOR - 35	DTaC	Removal of batch processing CCN from main supplier agreement	No	One off	Other	30	0	30	30	0
DOR - 37	DTaC	Termination of subscription, which folloiwng review will now be achieved during 2025/26 and beyond, with no saving during 2024/25 due to the notice period required.	No	One off	Other	6	0	6	0	-6
DOR - 38	DTaC	Switch off servers overnight.	No	Ongoing	Other	35	35	0	35	0
DOR - 40	Legal and Democratic Services	Review use of temporary staff, locum lawyers, cease some work, replace some locum lawyers with other arrangements etc.	None - but depending on the staff released there may be additional costs elsewhere in the system to cover work and lost income.	Ongoing	Staffing	0	0	0	0	0
DOR - 41	HR&OD	Defer 360 degree pilot to 25/26	No	One off	Other	13	13	0	13	0
DOR - 42	HR&OD	Cancel subscription to Jobs Go Public for the year commencing Sept 24	No	One off	Other	12	12	0	12	0
DOR - 43	HR&OD	Deferral/re profiling of a number of L&D interventions and removal of a proportion of L&D 'contingency'	No	One-off	Other	17	17	0	17	0
DOR - 44a	HR&OD	Kennet Day Nursey - measures to address operating loss. 2024/25 charges: from 1 January 2025 - 3 years + £63.20 (£57.50 RBC) and under 3 years £65.20 (£59.50 RBC). The KDN could increase it's charge by approximately 10% to bring into line with the RB Hospital Nursery fees for 2024/25 and a further increase of an estimated 5% in April 2025 to align the fees with the estimated 2025/26 fee rates. In addition a charge of 45p per hour will also be introduced for consumables (meals, formula milk, special activities) and the minimum number sessions per week will be increased from 3 to 4 in line with practice applied across other nurseries locally.	No	Ongoing	Fees & Charges Review	40	0	40	11	-29
DOR - 44b	HR&OD	Kennet Day Nursey - measures to address operating loss	No	Ongoing	External Funding	60	60	0	60	0



Appendix 2 - Recovery Plan (2024-25)

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Reference	Service	Overview of Activity	Investment Required?	One-off or Ongoing	Category	Estimated Overspend Recovery			Forecast Year End Target Delivery (£000s)	Forecast Year End Variance to Target (£000s)
						Target (£000s)	Delivered (£000s)	Outstanding (£000s)		
DOR - 45	Finance	Stop printing council tax leaflet		Ongoing	Printing & Postage Savings	8	0	8	8	0
	DOR Total					783	429	354	698	-85
CEX - 1	Communications	Your Reading Newsletter review of printing & distribution and cover design costs	No	Ongoing	Printing & Postage Savings	30	30	0	30	0
	CEX Total					30	30	0	30	0
CORP - 1	Corporate	Business Rates Refund for Town Hall 2017/18-2023/24 following successful appeal	No	One off	Other	986	986	0	986	0
CORP - 2	Corporate	Review of recharges between General Fund and HRA	No	Ongoing	Other	300	0	300	300	0
	CORP Total					1,286	986	300	1,286	0

## Appendix 2 - Recovery Plan (2024-25)

### Approved Members & Officers Decisions

Reference	Service	Overview of Activity	Investment Required?	One-off or Ongoing	Category	Estimated Overspend Recovery			Forecast Year End Target Delivery (£000s)	Forecast Year End Variance to Target (£000s)
						Target (£000s)	Delivered (£000s)	Outstanding (£000s)		
BFFC - 1	Section 17 payments	Links to tighter control on spend. £48k on transport when children attend school out of borough, and other transport costs for potentially attending family time, expert appointments etc. Review of the children that attends school outside of borough will be undertaken. Procedure for one off payments to be reviewed. Guidance to be issued re Sect 17 spend and financial assessment form to be distributed and used before allocation of funds	No investment required	One off	Placements	10	10	0	10	0
BFFC - 2	Pinecroft and Cressingham	Alternative plan required at Pinecroft and Cressingham to replace combined OLA income generation shortfall of income of £163k. Income is generated through selling one bed in Pinecroft and this is already accounted for - £70k built into the forecast. Cressingham has limited opportunity to generate income but will be reviewed to ascertain if any further income can be generated.	No	One off	Other	10	0	10	10	0
BFFC - 3	Translation and Interpretation Services	Review of SLA and options for more cost effective provision. Scope to reduce spot purchase and make better use of SLA. Potential savings of 44% based on the biggest spend which is in face to face translation. Option to also look at new technology - Google Translate etc., this is happening via the service review as part of the re-procurement of the translation contract, which BFFC are a part of. Budget for 24/25 is £149k. 44% equates to £65,560 saving per year. Social workers now need director approval for any spot purchase, therefore it is anticipated that this saving will be made across the remaining 9 months of the year since this has been implemented. Please see tab 3 for details of savings calculations.	No investment required, this will be an ongoing saving,	Ongoing	Other	49	0	49	49	0
BFFC - 4	Health Funding income	Potential opportunities for increased health income from LDD and external residential placements Links to review of 35 highest cost placements review. BFFC is challenging health colleagues re the process in considering health contributions through ICB and CCC panels and is awaiting follow up from the ICB on a number of children who require health funding - from BFFC's perspective. This challenge is ongoing. One 50% contribution has been agreed thus far for one child. 17 children post review which could be considered for health contribution. 8 children to be presented to October health panel (pending health confirmation of dates). 9 children for a future health panel.	No	Ongoing	Placements	475	211	264	475	0
BFFC - 5	Unconditional grants	Potential for release of funding. Total unconditional grant carried forward 1st April 2024 is £276k. Also option to review any new unconditional grant funding. See grant schedule. Unconditional funding against Parental conflict can be released: £26k	No	One off	External Funding	134	0	134	134	0
BFFC - 6	Conditional grants	Review of planned usage of grant to see if any scope for more cost effective application of grant. Total conditional grant b/fwd. 1st April 2024 is £0.780m. See grant schedule.		One off	External Funding	27	0	27	27	0
BFFC - 7	Business Support	Increased efficiencies potential. Additional savings required to meet the overall target for 24/25. A total of £246k has been identified for savings and this will be delivered - currently £184k is already achieved. Opportunity to link with RBC on tech developments and AI. Deadline for review - 31st August.	No	Ongoing	Staffing	246	246	0	246	0
BFFC - 8	Primary Mental Health	Review of primary mental health worker staffing and associated mental health budgets. Full year saving of £300k - £25k per month saving possible from January 2025. Other staffing savings account for the balance of £29k savings.	No investment required, this will be an ongoing saving,	Ongoing	Staffing	105	105	0	105	0
BFFC - 9	Edge of Care	Increased savings above current Transformation saving target of £190k assumed in 24/25 budget - this will be a mix of savings and cost avoidance, which will be reported separately.		Ongoing	Placements	33	33	0	33	0

## Appendix 2 - Recovery Plan (2024-25)

### Approved Members & Officers Decisions

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						Target (£000s)	Delivered (£000s)	Outstanding (£000s)		
BFFC - 10	Review of 35 most costly placements	Review of all 35 placements completed - deep dive review options for alternative provision, health funding, return home etc. has been undertaken. Current assessment of existing placements is : - 1 move to foster care - 3 case formulation required - 3 return home - 6 targeted for foster care - 7 review current package of support - 10 to remain in current placement	No investment required	Ongoing	Placements	1,118	649	469	1,118	0
BFFC - 12	Contract savings	Savings from contract review of services up for re-tender and other savings. Some of this will be part year savings depending on when the contract end date is. Thus far 4 contracts have been decommissioned in 24/25, totalling £85k. Part year effect is £51k.	No investment required, this will be an ongoing saving.	Ongoing	Other	85	51	34	70	-15
BFFC - 13	Commissioning Restructure	Savings from staffing savings. Proposed restructure of 2 RG8 posts to 2 RG6 post plus vacancy savings. Wider restructure to take place.	No investment required, this will be an ongoing saving.	Ongoing	Staffing	60	60	0	60	0
BFFC - 14	Communications / Compliance / IASS	Savings from one post deletion (IASS - £22K) and vacancy saving from Comms (£26K). Additional savings of £15k on fostering marketing budget. This equates to £48k of savings in P3.	No investment required	Ongoing	Staffing	48	63	-15	63	15
BFFC - 15	Discretionary DSG spend	Consideration of any areas which could reduce/redirect DSG discretionary spend within the constraints of DSG regulations to generate savings. Analysis has identified cost avoidance but not cost savings, supporting staffing of MASH and Early Help support	No savings identified at this stage	Ongoing	External Funding	0	0	0	0	0
BFFC - 17	Review of agency spend	Review of agency spend in Together for Families and other areas to limit use of agency staff to essential areas. Reduce agency SWs through 24/25 to achieve primarily permanent workforce. Consultation relating to contact service will allow Sect 17 children to be allocated to FSW - which can free up 2 x SWs posts - these can be agency SWs and hence a cost saving. Cost saving £5k per month per agency social worker would be £40k. This is possible due to the reduction in caseloads already being achieved through a CHiN review that will close about 130 children to CSC. This consultation is to conclude at the end of October 2024 and would impact from November 2024. Full year impact would be £120k.	No	Ongoing	Staffing	40	40	0	40	0
BFFC - 18	Vacancy management	Holding of vacancies for 6 weeks. This is largely covered by the existing BFFC vacancy target. Within 24-25 MTFS, BFFC added in a vacancy factor of 2.5% to most BFFC payroll budgets (excluding front line social worker budgets) that reduced the payroll budget by 380k. The additional saving of £40k represents additional vacancy management stretch on posts as a one off saving in 2024/25.	No	One off	Staffing	40	40	0	40	0
BFFC - 19	Fees & Charges increases	Scope for in-year increases reviewed and no savings opportunities identified. Nurseries increased rates to benchmarked borough-wide rates in 2024 and increased income is ensuring cost avoidance and a balanced budget on historically at risk of overspend budgets. Review of traded services including Educational Psychology Services has not identified potential increases as current rates are in line with market rates.	No	NA	Fees & Charges	0	0	0	0	0
BFFC Total						2,480	1,508	972	2,480	0
Grand Total						8,580	5,182	3,398	8,495	-85

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**Appendix 3 - Savings Tracker Quarter 3 (2024/25)**

Service Area	Description	Red £000s	Amber £000s	Green £000s	Blue £000s	Total £000s
Adult Services Operations	Adult Social Care Provider Payment Efficiency	0	0	0	(777)	(777)
Adult Services Operations	Vacancy Factor - Adult Services Operations	0	0	0	(95)	(95)
Commissioning, Transformation & Performance	Vacancy Factor - Commissioning, Transformation & Performance	0	0	0	(57)	(57)
Safeguarding, Quality & Practice	Vacancy Factor - Safeguarding, Quality & Practice	0	0	0	(115)	(115)
Community & Adult Social Care Management	Vacancy Factor - Community & Adult Social Care Management	0	0	0	(23)	(23)
Housing & Communities	Increase in fees and charges	0	0	0	(4)	(4)
Housing & Communities	Vacancy Factor - Housing & Communities	0	0	0	(64)	(64)
<b>Total Directorate of Communities &amp; Adult Social Care</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,135)</b>	<b>(1,135)</b>
Planning, Transportation & Public Protection	Introduction of Moving Traffic Enforcement under TMA Powers	(260)	0	0	(110)	(370)
Planning, Transportation & Public Protection	Increased revenue from on-street Pay and Display	0	0	0	(150)	(150)
Planning, Transportation & Public Protection	Increased income from Parking Enforcement	(160)	0	0	0	(160)
Planning, Transportation & Public Protection	Extend Residents Parking permit areas	(10)	0	0	0	(10)
Planning, Transportation & Public Protection	Increase off street parking charges	(87)	0	0	0	(87)
Planning, Transportation & Public Protection	Parking Services Income Review	(86)	0	0	0	(86)
Planning, Transportation & Public Protection	Parking Services Income Review (2024/25)	(676)	0	0	0	(676)
Planning, Transportation & Public Protection	Discretionary HMO Licensing	(150)	0	0	0	(150)
Planning, Transportation & Public Protection	Increase in charges for pre-planning application and planning fees	(55)	0	0	0	(55)
Planning, Transportation & Public Protection	Proposed Fee Income Reading Festival	(33)	0	0	(10)	(43)
Planning, Transportation & Public Protection	Concessionary Travel	0	0	0	(969)	(969)
Planning, Transportation & Public Protection	Vacancy Factor - PTPP	0	0	0	(156)	(156)
Culture	Arts Fundraising campaign	0	0	0	(65)	(65)
Culture	Revenue impact of new contract for borough leisure facilities. Leisure Contract Costs Utilities and Inflation	0	0	0	(436)	(436)
Culture	Covid19 income pressure on the Town Hall and recovery plan*	0	0	0	(30)	(30)
Culture	Covid19 income pressure on the Hexagon and South Street Theatres and recovery plan*	0	0	0	(145)	(145)
Culture	New Directions College	0	0	0	(36)	(36)
Culture	Hexagon - Replacement of PA and Sound Desk	0	0	0	(38)	(38)
Culture	Vacancy Factor - Culture	0	0	0	(125)	(125)
Culture	Increase in fees and charges	0	0	0	(33)	(33)
Environmental & Commercial Services	Increase income on green waste due to additional uptake in years 1-3 and fee increase in years 2-3	0	0	0	(75)	(75)
Environmental & Commercial Services	Purchase of Electric Road Marking Machine	0	0	0	(17)	(17)
Environmental & Commercial Services	Vacancy Factor - Environmental & Commercial Services	0	0	0	(139)	(139)
Environmental & Commercial Services	Cemetery Machinery	0	0	0	(18)	(18)
Environmental & Commercial Services	Increase in fees and charges	0	0	0	(5)	(5)
Property & Asset Management	Increase in fees and charges.	0	0	0	(24)	(24)
Property & Asset Management	Vacancy Factor - Property & Asset Management	0	0	0	(80)	(80)
Property & Asset Management	Acre Business Park	0	0	0	(89)	(89)
Management & Sustainability	Vacancy Factor - Management & Sustainability	0	0	0	(24)	(24)
Management & Sustainability	Corporate Solar Programme	0	0	0	(96)	(96)
<b>Total Directorate of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services</b>		<b>(1,517)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(2,870)</b>	<b>(4,387)</b>
Policy, Performance & Customer Services	New customer services model	(304)	0	0	(33)	(337)
Policy, Performance & Customer Services	Implementation of QGIS	0	0	0	12	12
Policy, Performance & Customer Services	Vacancy Factor - Policy, Performance & Customer Services	0	0	0	(96)	(96)
Policy, Performance & Customer Services	Income generation opportunity - Cremation & Cemetery Service	0	0	0	(47)	(47)
Human Resources & Organisational Development	Vacancy Factor - Human Resources & Organisational Development	0	0	(50)	(9)	(59)
Human Resources & Organisational Development	Traded Services with HR&OD	0	0	0	6	6
Procurement & Contracts	Vacancy Factor - Procurement & Contracts	0	0	0	(12)	(12)
Procurement & Contracts	Procurement & Contracts savings - Resources Directorate	(96)	0	0	(104)	(200)
Finance	Vacancy Factor - Finance	0	0	0	(105)	(105)
Legal & Democratic Services	Legal Support for Enforcement Work	0	0	0	(100)	(100)
Legal & Democratic Services	Vacancy Factor - Legal & Democratic Services	0	0	0	(63)	(63)
Digital, Technology & Change	Digital & ICT Transformation	0	0	(142)	0	(142)
Digital, Technology & Change	Vacancy Factor - Digital, Technology & Change	0	0	0	(54)	(54)
<b>Total Directorate of Resources</b>		<b>(400)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(192)</b>	<b>(605)</b>	<b>(1,197)</b>
Communications	Vacancy Factor - Communications	0	0	(12)	0	(12)
<b>Total Chief Executive</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(12)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(12)</b>
Retained By Council	Children's Services Retained By Council	0	0	0	(5)	(5)
<b>Total Children's Services Retained By Council</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(5)</b>	<b>(5)</b>
Brighter Futures For Children	BFFC Contract	0	0	0	(500)	(500)
Brighter Futures For Children	Cressingham Childrens Home	0	0	0	(100)	(100)
Brighter Futures For Children	Increase in in-house foster carers	0	0	74	0	74
Brighter Futures For Children	Development of Edge of Care	0	0	0	(190)	(190)
<b>Total Brighter Futures for Children</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>(790)</b>	<b>(716)</b>
Human Resources & Organisational Development	Reducing mileage expenses through increased use of alternatives e.g. online meetings	0	0	0	(16)	(16)
<b>Total Corporate</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(16)</b>	<b>(16)</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>(1,917)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(130)</b>	<b>(5,421)</b>	<b>(7,468)</b>

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Appendix 4 - GF Capital Programme Quarter 3 (2024/25)

				Additional Budgets requested to be added to the Programme - Capital Receipts, Revenue Contributions, Borrowing & Reserves £000	Reduced Budgets - Completed Schemes & Other carry forward budget adjustments £000	Budgets reprogrammed (to)/from Future Years £000	Revised Budget Quarter 3 2024/25 £000	Spend to 31 December 2024 £000	Forecast Spend £000	Forecast Variance £000	spend vs forecast £000
Scheme Name	Approved Budget 2024/25 £000	Budget Movements Between Schemes £000	Additional Budgets added to the Programme - Funded by Grants & Contributions £000								
General Fund											
Community & Social Care Services											
Adult Care and Health Services											
ASC Digital Transformation	251						251	0	251	0	(251)
Co-located profound and multiple learning disabilities day opportunities and respite facility and sheltered housing flats	941						941	139	941	0	(802)
Adult Care and Health Services - Sub Total	1,192	0	0	0	0	0	1,192	139	1,192	0	(1,053)
Housing & Communities											
Provision of Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation	0						0	3	0	0	3
Hardened Public Open Spaces to Prevent Illegal Encampments	35						35	0	35	0	(35)
Green Homes Scheme - GF element	40						40	0	40	0	(40)
Disabled Facilities Grants (Private Sector)	1,197						1,197	572	1,197	0	(625)
Foster Carer Extensions	325						325	34	325	0	(291)
Private Sector Renewals	250						250	41	250	0	(209)
Housing & Communities - Sub Total	1,847	0	0	0	0	0	1,847	650	1,847	0	(1,197)
Community & Social Care Services - Total	3,039	0	0	0	0	0	3,039	789	3,039	0	(2,250)

Appendix 4 - GF Capital Programme Quarter 3 (2024/25)

Scheme Name	Approved Budget 2024/25 £000	Budget Movements Between Schemes £000	Additional Budgets added to the Programme - Funded by Grants & Contributions £000	Additional Budgets requested to be added to the Programme - Funded by Capital Receipts, Revenue Contributions, Borrowing & Reserves £000	Reduced Budgets - Completed Schemes & Other carry forward budget adjustments £000	Budgets reprogrammed (to)/from Future Years £000	Revised Budget Quarter 3 2024/25 £000	Spend to 31 December 2024 £000	Forecast Spend £000	Forecast Variance £000	spend vs forecast £000
Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services											
Transportation, Planning & Public Protection											
Air Quality Monitoring	7						7	43	7	0	36
Active Travel Tranche 2	20						20	(7)	20	0	(27)
Active Travel Tranche 3	250						250	94	250	0	(156)
Active Travel Tranche 4	74						74	0	74	0	(74)
Active Travel Tranche 4 extension	0						0	0	0	0	0
Berkshire Coroner's Removals	110					(20)	90	70	90	0	(20)
Bus Service Improvement	11,184						11,184	7,198	11,184	0	(3,986)
Local Transport Plan Development	472						472	0	472	0	(472)
National Cycle Network Route 422	0						0	0	0	0	0
Reading West Station	340						340	50	340	0	(290)
South Reading MRT (Phases 1 & 2)	17						17	0	17	0	(17)
South Reading MRT (Phases 3 & 4)	0						0	(85)	0	0	(85)
Town Centre Street Trading Infrastructure	0						0	0	0	0	0
Construction of Green Park Station	10						10	3	10	0	(7)
CIL Local Funds - Community	159	115					274	8	274	0	(266)
CIL Local Funds -Neighbourhood Allocation	1,498	(1,498)					0	0	0	0	0
S106 individual schemes list	988						988	0	988	0	(988)
Defra Air Quality Grant - Bus Retrofit	0						0	0	0	0	0
Defra Air Quality Grant - Go Electric Reading	18						18	2	18	0	(16)
Electric Vehicle Charging Points	866						866	0	866	0	(866)
Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) grant to RTL	4,736						4,736	3,359	4,736	0	(1,377)
Clean Bus Technology	98						98	0	98	0	(98)
Air Quality Grant - AQ sensors awareness & behaviour change	36						36	0	36	0	(36)
Transport Demand Management Scheme	0						0	0	0	0	0
Transportation, Planning & Public Protection - Sub Total	20,883	(1,383)	0	0	0	(20)	19,480	10,735	19,480	0	(8,745)



Appendix 4 - GF Capital Programme Quarter 3 (2024/25)

Scheme Name	Approved Budget 2024/25 £000	Budget Movements Between Schemes £000	Additional Budgets added to the Programme - Funded by Grants & Contributions £000	Additional Budgets requested to be added to the Programme - Funded by Capital Receipts, Revenue Contributions, Borrowing & Reserves £000		Reduced Budgets - Completed Schemes & Other carry forward budget adjustments £000	Budgets reprogrammed (to)/from Future Years £000	Revised Budget Quarter 3 2024/25 £000	Spend to 31 December 2024 £000	Forecast Spend £000	Forecast Variance £000	spend vs forecast £000
Culture												
Leisure Centre Enhancement	1,934							1,934	37	1,934	0	(1,897)
Development of facilities at Prospect Park/Play	19							19	19	19	0	0
Reading Football Club Social Inclusion Unit to SRLC	0							0	0	0	0	0
Small Leisure Schemes	153							153	0	153	0	(153)
Levelling Up Delivery Plan - New performance space at the Hexagon Theatre	1,496							1,496	1,076	1,496	0	(420)
Levelling Up Delivery Plan - New Reading Library at the Civic Centre	6,231							6,231	1,765	6,231	0	(4,466)
Abbey Quarter restoration works	25						(25)	0	0	0	0	0
High Street Heritage Action Zone	150						(10)	140	110	140	0	(30)
Berkshire Record Office - extension of storage space	30							30	30	30	0	0
Hexagon lighting & emergency lighting replacement	114							114	146	146	32	0
Hexagon replacement of PA System	360							360	362	362	2	0
New Directions Ways into work	59						(59)	0	0	0	0	0
Shared Prosperity Fund	385							385	24	385	0	(361)
Library Improvement Works	200						(100)	100	59	100	0	(41)
Tilehurst Library Works	2							2	2	2	0	0
Culture - Sub Total	11,158	0	0	0	0	0	(194)	10,964	3,630	10,998	34	(7,368)

Appendix 4 - GF Capital Programme Quarter 3 (2024/25)

Scheme Name	Approved Budget 2024/25 £000	Budget Movements Between Schemes £000	Additional Budgets added to the Programme - Funded by Grants & Contributions £000	Additional Budgets requested to be added to the Programme - Funded by Capital Receipts, Revenue Contributions, Borrowing & Reserves £000	Reduced Budgets - Completed Schemes & Other carry forward budget adjustments £000	Budgets reprogrammed (to)/from Future Years £000	Revised Budget Quarter 3 2024/25 £000	Spend to 31 December 2024 £000	Forecast Spend £000	Forecast Variance £000	spend vs forecast £000
Environmental & Commercial Services											
Playground equipment and Refreshment: Boroughwide	318						318	205	318	0	(113)
New Capital Bid - S106 Kenavon Drive Landscape	0						0	0		0	0
Victoria Rec	423					(5)	418	15	418	0	(403)
Restoration of historic Wall at Caversham Court Gardens	40						40	1	40	0	(39)
Forbury Gardens Bandstand	0						0	0	0	0	0
Ecological Works	0						0	0	0	0	0
John Robson skatepark	10						10	7	10	0	(3)
Tree Planting	50						50	0	50	0	(50)
Highways Infrastructure Programme	5,791						5,791	3,672	5,791	0	(2,119)
Chestnut Walk Improvements	29					(29)	0	0	0	0	0
CIL Local Funds - Heritage and Culture	117					(47)	70	0	70	0	(70)
CIL Local Funds - Leisure and Play	395	714				(600)	509	189	509	0	(320)
CIL Local Funds - Transport	806	669				(1,200)	275	28	275	0	(247)
Highway Signals_Capital Bid	1,003					(803)	200	(53)	200	0	(253)
Invest to save energy savings - Street lighting	760						760	405	760	0	(355)
Pedestrian Defined Urban Pocket Gardens	75						75	25	75	0	(50)
Pedestrian dropped kerb facilities with tactile pavers	205						205	0	205	0	(205)
Pedestrian handrails	111						111	0	111	0	(111)
Pumping Station Upgrade Scheme (new)	38						38	32	38	0	(6)
Reading Station Subway	450						450	434	450	0	(16)
Town Centre Improvements	117						117	59	117	0	(58)
Cattle Market Car Park	0						0	2	0	0	2
Car Park Investment Programme (inc P&D, Red Routes & Equipment)	331						331	10	331	0	(321)
Digitised TRO's	150					(100)	50	0	50	0	(50)
Eastern Area Access Works	0						0	0	0	0	0
Local Traffic Management and Road Safety Schemes	50						50	17	50	0	(33)
Oxford Road Corridor Works	0						0	0	0	0	0
Traffic Management Schools	0						0	0	0	0	0
Western Area Access Works	0						0	0	0	0	0
Vehicle Maintenance Workshop	1,306						1,306	945	1,306	0	(361)
Replacement Vehicles	1,349			21		(100)	1,270	1,023	1,270	0	(247)
Environmental & Commercial Services - Sub Total	13,924	1,383	0	21	0	(2,884)	12,444	7,016	12,444	0	(5,428)

Appendix 4 - GF Capital Programme Quarter 3 (2024/25)

Scheme Name	Approved Budget 2024/25 £000	Budget Movements Between Schemes £000	Additional Budgets added to the Programme - Funded by Grants & Contributions £000	Additional Budgets requested to be added to the Programme - Funded by Capital Receipts, Revenue Contributions, Borrowing & Reserves £000	Reduced Budgets - Completed Schemes & Other carry forward budget adjustments £000	Budgets reprogrammed (to)/from Future Years £000	Revised Budget Quarter 3 2024/25 £000	Spend to 31 December 2024 £000	Forecast Spend £000	Forecast Variance £000	spend vs forecast £000
<b>Property &amp; Asset Management</b>											
The Heights Permanent Site Mitigation	50					(20)	30	23	30	0	(7)
Corporate and Community Buildings	700					100	800	726	800	0	(74)
1 Dunsfold Fitout for BFFC Family Contact Centre - Development for Community Use	22						22	(7)	22	0	(29)
Katesgrove Community and YOS Refurbishment - Development for Community Use	5						5	(11)	5	0	(16)
Maintenance & Enhancement of Council Properties	75					(75)	0	0	0	0	0
Acre Business Park	0						0	8	0	0	8
<b>Property &amp; Asset Management - Sub Total</b>	<b>852</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(118)</b>
<b>Management &amp; Sustainability</b>											
Renewable Energy	0						0	0	0	0	0
Salix Decarbonisation Fund	150						150	0	150	0	(150)
Salix Re-Circulation Fund	250						250	215	250	0	(35)
Corporate Solar Programme	50						50	0	50	0	(50)
<b>Management and Sustainability - Sub Total</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(235)</b>
<b>Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services Total</b>	<b>47,267</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(3,093)</b>	<b>44,195</b>	<b>22,335</b>	<b>44,229</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>(21,894)</b>
<b>Resources</b>											
Customer Digital Experience	0						0	13	0	0	13
Universal Digital Systems	0						0	610	0	0	610
IT Future Operating Model	2,431	2				325	2,758	419	2,758	0	(2,339)
ICT Tech Refresh	0						0	0		0	0
Democratic Hybrid AV	146	(2)					144	139	144	0	(5)
Education Management System	77						77	0	77	0	(77)
Cremator Procurement	100						100	63	100	0	(37)
Burial Chambers	80						80	0	80	0	(80)
Additional Burial Space	0					2	2	0	2	0	(2)
Cemetery Land Acquisition	0						0	0		0	0
<b>Resources Total</b>	<b>2,834</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>3,161</b>	<b>1,244</b>	<b>3,161</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,917)</b>

Appendix 4 - GF Capital Programme Quarter 3 (2024/25)

			Additional Budgets requested to be added to the								
			Additional Budgets added to the	Programme - Funded by	Reduced Budgets - Completed						
	Approved Budget	Budget Movements	Programme - Funded by	Capital Receipts, Revenue	Schemes & Other carry	Budgets	Revised	Spend to 31	Forecast	Forecast	spend vs
Scheme Name	2024/25 £000	Between Schemes £000	Grants & Contributions £000	Contributions, Borrowing & Reserves £000	forward budget adjustments £000	reprogrammed (to)/from Future Years £000	Budget Quarter 3 2024/25 £000	December 2024 £000	Spend £000	Variance £000	forecast £000
Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services (Education Schemes)											
Additional School Places - Contingency	50						50	0	50	0	(50)
DFC	222		214				436	436	436	0	0
SEN Provision - Avenue Centre	100						100	(20)	100	0	(120)
Asset Management	414						414	0	414	0	(414)
Children in care Emergency Provision	0						0	0	0	0	0
Civitas- Synthetic Sports Pitch	24						24	(4)	24	0	(28)
Crescent Road Playing Field Improvements	121						121	0	121	0	(121)
Critical Reactive Contingency: Health and safety (Schools)	495						495	208	495	0	(287)
Fabric Condition Programme	980						980	530	980	0	(450)
Green Park Primary School	60						60	(616)	60	0	(676)
Heating and Electrical Renewal Programme	350						350	289	350	0	(61)
Initial Viability work for the Free School at Richfield Avenue	4						4	1	4	0	(3)
Katesgrove Primary Trooper Potts Building	56						56	0	56	0	(56)
Meadway Early Years Building Renovation	0						0	0	0	0	0
Modular Buildings Review	500						500	0	500	0	(500)
Pinecroft-Children who have complex health,	2						2	0	2	0	(2)
Cressingham- Community Short Breaks Provision	260						260	242	260	0	(18)
Provision of additional Children's Homes	685					(15)	670	0	670	0	(670)
Children's Home for Children with Disabilities	0						0	0	0	0	0
Early Years increase to 30 hours provision	270						270	0	270	0	(270)
Dee Park Regeneration - Housing Infrastructure Fund (school)	5,263						5,263	4,293	5,263	0	(970)
Public Sector Decarbonisation Funds - School Estate Double	786						786	0	786	0	(786)
SCD Units	25						25	(9)	25	0	(34)
Schools - Fire Risk Assessed remedial Works	310						310	63	310	0	(247)
SEN Norcot	0						0	0	0	0	0
SEN High Needs provision capital allocations	1,500						1,500	398	1,500	0	(1,102)
The Heights Temporary School	351						351	0	351	0	(351)
Park Lane Primary School Annexe Replacement	2,270						2,270	1,538	2,270	0	(732)
Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services (Education Schemes) Total	15,098	0	214	0	0	(15)	15,297	7,349	15,297	0	(7,948)

Scheme Name	Approved Budget 2024/25 £000	Budget Movements Between Schemes £000	Additional Budgets requested to be added to the Programme -			Budgets reprogrammed (to)/from Future Years £000	Revised Budget Quarter 3 2024/25 £000	Spend to 31 December 2024 £000	Forecast Spend £000	Forecast Variance £000	spend vs forecast £000
			Additional Budgets added to the Programme - Funded by Grants & Contributions £000	Additional Budgets requested to be added to the Programme - Funded by Capital Receipts, Revenue Contributions, Borrowing & Reserves £000	Reduced Budgets - Completed Schemes & Other carry forward budget adjustments £000						
Corporate											
Delivery Fund (Pump priming for Transformation projects)	3,144						3,144	129	2,210	(934)	(2,081)
Loan To RTL (Bus replacement programme)	0						0	0	0	0	0
Oracle Shopping Centre capital works	100						100	0	100	0	(100)
Minster Quarter - Brownfield Land Grant Element	500						500	0	500	0	(500)
Minster Quarter	155						155	74	155	0	(81)
Corporate Total	3,899	0	0	0	0	0	3,899	203	2,965	(934)	(2,762)
General Fund Total	72,137	0	214	21	0	(2,781)	69,591	31,920	68,691	(900)	(36,771)

Appendix 4 - GF Capital Programme Quarter 3 (2024/25 to 2026/27)

Scheme Name	Approved Budget 2024/25 £000	Proposed Total Budget 2024/25 Changes £000	Revised Budget Quarter 3 2024/25 £000	Approved Budget 2025/26 £000	Proposed Total Budget 2025/26 Changes £000	Revised Budget Quarter 3 2025/26 £000	Approved Budget 2026/27 £000	Proposed Total Budget 2026/27 Changes £000	Revised Budget Quarter 3 2026/27 £000	Total Budget 2024/25 to 2026/27 £000	Total Budget Re-programmed into 2027/28 £000
General Fund											
Community & Social Care Services											
Adult Care and Health Services											
ASC Digital Transformation	251	0	251	131	0	131	0	0	0	382	0
Co-located profound and multiple learning disabilities day opportunities and respite facility and sheltered housing flats	941	0	941	6,998	0	6,998	1,264	0	1,264	9,203	0
Adult Care and Health Services - Sub Total	1,192	0	1,192	7,129	0	7,129	1,264	0	1,264	9,585	0
Housing & Communities											
Provision of Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Harden Public Open Spaces to Prevent Illegal Encampments	35	0	35	25	0	25	25	0	25	85	0
Green Homes Scheme - GF element	40	0	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	0
Disabled Facilities Grants (Private Sector)	1,197	0	1,197	1,197	0	1,197	1,197	0	1,197	3,591	0
Foster Carer Extensions	325	0	325	275	0	275	200	0	200	800	0
Private Sector Renewals	250	0	250	250	0	250	300	0	300	800	0
Housing & Communities - Sub Total	1,847	0	1,847	1,747	0	1,747	1,722	0	1,722	5,316	0
Community & Social Care Services - Total	3,039	0	3,039	8,876	0	8,876	2,986	0	2,986	14,901	0
Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services											
Transportation, Planning & Public Protection											
Air Quality Monitoring	7	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0
Active Travel Tranche 2	20	0	20	1,180	0	1,180	0	0	0	1,200	0
Active Travel Tranche 3	250	0	250	1,900	0	1,900	0	0	0	2,150	0
Active Travel Tranche 4	74	0	74	0	0	0	0	0	0	74	0
Active Travel Tranche 4 extension	0	0	0	0	0	0	508	0	508	508	0
Berkshire Coroner's Removals	110	(20)	90	0	20	20	0	0	0	110	0
Bus Service Improvement	11,184	0	11,184	4,834	0	4,834	0	0	0	16,018	0
Local Transport Plan Development	472	0	472	1,900	0	1,900	900	0	900	3,272	0
National Cycle Network Route 422	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reading West Station	340	0	340	0	0	0	0	0	0	340	0
South Reading MRT (Phases 1 & 2)	17	0	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	0
South Reading MRT (Phases 5 & 6)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Town Centre Street Trading Infrastructure	0	0	0	70	0	70	0	0	0	70	0
Construction of Green Park Station	10	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0
CIL Local Funds - Community	159	115	274	0	0	0	0	0	0	274	0
CIL Local Funds -Neighbourhood Allocation	1,498	(1,498)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S106 individual schemes list	988	0	988	0	0	0	0	0	0	988	0
Defra Air Quality Grant - Bus Retrofit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Defra Air Quality Grant - Go Electric Reading	18	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	0
Electric Vehicle Charging Points	866	0	866	0	0	0	0	0	0	866	0
Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) grant to RTL	4,736	0	4,736	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,736	0
Clean Bus Technology	98	0	98	0	0	0	0	0	0	98	0
Air Quality Grant - AQ sensors awareness & behaviour change	36	0	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	0
Transport Demand Management Scheme	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transportation, Planning & Public Protection - Sub Total	20,883	(1,403)	19,480	9,884	20	9,904	1,408	0	1,408	30,792	0

Appendix 4 - GF Capital Programme Quarter 3 (2024/25 to 2026/27)

Scheme Name	Approved	Proposed	Revised	Approved	Proposed	Revised	Approved	Proposed	Revised	Total Revised	Total Budget
	Budget	Total	Budget		Total	Budget		Total	Budget		
	2024/25	2024/25	Quarter 3	2025/26	2025/26	Quarter 3	2026/27	2026/27	Quarter 3	Budget	Re-
	£000	£000	2024/25	£000	£000	2025/26	£000	£000	2026/27	2024/25 to	programmed
		Changes	£000		Changes	£000		Changes	£000	2026/27	into 2027/28
										£000	£000
Culture											
Leisure Centre Enhancement	1,934	0	1,934	661	0	661	976	0	976	3,571	0
Development of facilities at Prospect Park/Play	19	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	0
Reading Football Club Social Inclusion Unit to SRLC	0	0	0	1,534	0	1,534	0	0	0	1,534	0
Small Leisure Schemes	153	0	153	0	0	0	0	0	0	153	0
Levelling Up Delivery Plan - New performance space at the Hexagon Theatre	1,496	0	1,496	6,786	0	6,786	9,851	0	9,851	18,133	0
Levelling Up Delivery Plan - New Reading Library at the Civic Centre	6,231	0	6,231	7,183	0	7,183	0	0	0	13,414	0
Abbey Quarter restoration works	25	(25)	0	140	25	165	0	0	0	165	0
High Street Heritage Action Zone	150	(10)	140	67	10	77	0	0	0	217	0
Berkshire Record Office - extension of storage space	30	0	30	362	0	362	10	0	10	402	0
Hexagon lighting & emergency lighting replacement	114	0	114	0	0	0	0	0	0	114	0
Hexagon replacement of PA System	360	0	360	0	0	0	0	0	0	360	0
New Directions Ways into work	59	(59)	0	0	59	59	0	0	0	59	0
Shared Prosperity Fund	385	0	385	0	0	0	0	0	0	385	0
Library Improvement Works	200	(100)	100	295	100	395	0	0	0	495	0
Tilehurst Library Works	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Culture - Sub Total	11,158	(194)	10,964	17,028	194	17,222	10,837	0	10,837	39,023	0

Appendix 4 - GF Capital Programme Quarter 3 (2024/25 to 2026/27)

Scheme Name	Approved	Proposed	Revised	Approved	Proposed	Revised	Approved	Proposed	Revised	Total Revised	Total Budget
	Budget	Total	Budget		Total	Budget		Total	Budget		
	2024/25	2024/25	Quarter 3	2025/26	2025/26	Quarter 3	2026/27	2026/27	Quarter 3	Budget	Re-
	£000	£000	2024/25	£000	£000	2025/26	£000	£000	2026/27	2024/25 to	programmed
		Changes	2024/25		Changes	2025/26		Changes	2026/27	2026/27	into 2027/28
			£000			£000			£000	£000	£000
<b>Environmental &amp; Commercial Services</b>											
Playground equipment and Refreshment: Boroughwide	318	0	318	300	0	300	0	0	0	618	0
New Capital Bid - S106 Kenavon Drive Landscape	0	0	0	31	0	31	0	0	0	31	0
Victoria Rec	423	(5)	418	50	5	55	0	0	0	473	0
Restoration of historic Wall at Caversham Court Gardens	40	0	40	388	0	388	0	0	0	428	0
Forbury Gardens Bandstand	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ecological Works	0	0	0	21	0	21	0	0	0	21	0
John Rabson skatepark	10	0	10	342	0	342	0	0	0	352	0
Tree Planting	50	0	50	50	0	50	50	0	50	150	0
Highways Infrastructure Programme	5,791	0	5,791	6,900	0	6,900	3,000	0	3,000	15,691	0
Chestnut Walk Improvements	29	(29)	0	0	29	29	0	0	0	29	0
CIL Local Funds - Heritage and Culture	117	(47)	70	0	47	47	0	0	0	117	0
CIL Local Funds - Leisure and Play	395	114	509	0	600	600	0	0	0	1,109	0
CIL Local Funds - Transport	806	(531)	275	0	1,200	1,200	0	0	0	1,475	0
Highway Signals_Capital Bid	1,003	(803)	200	0	803	803	0	0	0	1,003	0
Invest to save energy savings - Street lighting	760	0	760	0	0	0	0	0	0	760	0
Pedestrian Defined Urban Pocket Gardens	75	0	75	0	0	0	0	0	0	75	0
Pedestrian dropped kerb facilities with tactile pavers	205	0	205	0	0	0	0	0	0	205	0
Pedestrian handrails	111	0	111	0	0	0	0	0	0	111	0
Pumping Station Upgrade Scheme (new)	38	0	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	0
Reading Station Subway	450	0	450	0	0	0	0	0	0	450	0
Town Centre Improvements	117	0	117	0	0	0	0	0	0	117	0
Cattle Market Car Park	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Car Park Investment Programme (inc P&D, Red Routes & Digitised TRO's	331	0	331	326	0	326	326	0	326	983	0
Eastern Area Access Works	150	(100)	50	150	100	250	0	0	0	300	0
Local Traffic Management and Road Safety Schemes	0	0	0	199	0	199	0	0	0	199	0
Oxford Road Corridor Works	50	0	50	654	0	654	150	0	150	854	0
Traffic Management Schools	0	0	0	299	0	299	0	0	0	299	0
Western Area Access Works	0	0	0	431	0	431	100	0	100	531	0
Vehicle Maintenance Workshop	0	0	0	128	0	128	0	0	0	128	0
Replacement Vehicles	1,306	0	1,306	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,306	0
	1,349	(79)	1,270	100	100	200	0	0	0	1,470	0
<b>Environmental &amp; Commercial Services - Sub Total</b>	<b>13,924</b>	<b>(1,480)</b>	<b>12,444</b>	<b>10,369</b>	<b>2,884</b>	<b>13,253</b>	<b>3,626</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,626</b>	<b>29,323</b>	<b>0</b>



Appendix 4 - GF Capital Programme Quarter 3 (2024/25 to 2026/27)

Scheme Name	Approved	Proposed	Revised	Approved	Proposed	Revised	Approved	Proposed	Revised	Total Revised	Total Budget
	Budget	Total	Budget		Total	Budget		Total	Budget		
	2024/25	2024/25	Quarter 3	2025/26	2025/26	Quarter 3	2026/27	2026/27	Quarter 3	2024/25 to	Re-
	£000	£000	2024/25	£000	£000	2025/26	£000	£000	£000	2026/27	programmed
			£000							£000	into 2027/28
											£000
Property & Asset Management											
The Heights Permanent Site Mitigation	50	(20)	30	375	(315)	60	0	335	335	425	0
Corporate and Community Buildings	700	100	800	1,000	(100)	900	1,000	0	1,000	2,700	0
1 Dunsfold Fitout for BFFc Family Contact Centre - Development for Community Use	22	0	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	0
Katesgrove Community and YOS Refurbishment - Development for Community Use	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
Maintenance & Enhancement of Council Properties	75	(75)	0	0	150	150	0	0	0	150	(75)
Acre Business Park	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Property & Asset Management - Sub Total	852	5	857	1,375	(265)	1,110	1,000	335	1,335	3,302	(75)
Management & Sustainability											
Renewable Energy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salix Decarbonisation Fund	150	0	150	603	0	603	0	0	0	753	0
Salix Re-Circulation Fund	250	0	250	0	0	0	0	0	0	250	0
Corporate Solar Programme	50	0	50	1,903	0	1,903	0	0	0	1,953	0
Management and Sustainability - Sub Total	450	0	450	2,506	0	2,506	0	0	0	2,956	0
Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services Total	47,267	(3,072)	44,195	41,162	2,833	43,995	16,871	335	17,206	105,396	(75)
Resources											
Customer Digital Experience	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
University Digital Systems	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IT Future Operating Model	2,431	327	2,758	1,289	(325)	964	0	0	0	3,722	0
ICT Tech Refresh	0	0	0	436	0	436	689	0	689	1,125	0
Democratic Hybrid AV	146	(2)	144	0	0	0	0	0	0	144	0
Education Management System	77	0	77	0	0	0	0	0	0	77	0
Cremator Procurement	100	0	100	707	0	707	0	0	0	807	0
Burial Chambers	80	0	80	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	0
Additional Burial Space	0	2	2	166	(2)	164	166	0	166	332	0
Cemetery Land Acquisition	0	0	0	430	0	430	2,070	0	2,070	2,500	0
Resources Total	2,834	327	3,161	3,028	(327)	2,701	2,925	0	2,925	8,787	0

Appendix 4 - GF Capital Programme Quarter 3 (2024/25 to 2026/27)

Scheme Name	Approved	Proposed	Revised	Approved	Proposed	Revised	Approved	Proposed	Revised	Total Revised	Total Budget
	Budget	Total	Budget		Total	Budget		Total	Budget		
	2024/25	2024/25	Quarter 3	2025/26	2025/26	Quarter 3	2026/27	2026/27	Quarter 3	Budget	Re-
	£000	Changes	2024/25	£000	£000	2025/26	£000	£000	2026/27	2024/25 to	programmed
			£000			£000			£000	2026/27	into 2027/28
										£000	£000
Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services (Education Schemes)											
Additional School Places - Contingency	50	0	50	900	0	900	350	0	350	1,300	0
DFC	222	214	436	0	0	0	0	0	0	436	0
SEN Provision - Avenue Centre	100	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0
Asset Management	414	0	414	312	0	312	0	0	0	726	0
Children in care Emergency Provision	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civitas- Synthetic Sports Pitch	24	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	0
Crescent Road Playing Field Improvements	121	0	121	0	0	0	0	0	0	121	0
Critical Reactive Contingency: Health and safety (Schools)	495	0	495	300	0	300	560	0	560	1,355	0
Fabric Condition Programme	980	0	980	3,100	0	3,100	919	0	919	4,999	0
Green Park Primary School	60	0	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	60	0
Heating and Electrical Renewal Programme	350	0	350	2,262	0	2,262	100	0	100	2,712	0
Initial Viability work for the Free School at Richfield Avenue	4	0	4	0	0	0	28	0	28	32	0
Katesgrove Primary Trooper Potts Building	56	0	56	0	0	0	0	0	0	56	0
Meadway Early Years Building Renovation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Modular Buildings Review	500	0	500	250	0	250	900	0	900	1,650	0
Pinecroft-Children who have complex health, physical sensory,disabilities & challenging behaviour	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Cressingham- Community Short Breaks Provision	260	0	260	0	0	0	0	0	0	260	0
Provision of additional Children's Homes	685	(15)	670	816	15	831	0	0	0	1,501	0
Children's Home for Children with Disabilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,138	0	1,138	1,138	0
Early Years increase to 30 hours provision	270	0	270	0	0	0	0	0	0	270	0
Dee Park Regeneration - Housing Infrastructure Fund (school)	5,263	0	5,263	0	0	0	6,153	0	6,153	11,416	0
Public Sector Decarbonisation Funds - School Estate Double Glazing Programme	786	0	786	0	0	0	0	0	0	786	0
SCD Units	25	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	0
Schools - Fire Risk Assessed remedial Works	310	0	310	0	0	0	163	0	163	473	0
SEN Norcot	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SEN High Needs provision capital allocations	1,500	0	1,500	2,199	0	2,199	1,990	0	1,990	5,689	0
The Heights Temporary School	351	0	351	0	0	0	0	0	0	351	0
Park Lane Primary School Annexe Replacement	2,270	0	2,270	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,270	0
Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services (Education Schemes) Total	15,098	199	15,297	10,139	15	10,154	12,301	0	12,301	37,752	0

Appendix 4 - GF Capital Programme Quarter 3 (2024/25 to 2026/27)

Scheme Name	2024/25			2025/26			2026/27			2024/25 to 2026/27	
	Approved Budget	Proposed Total Budget Changes	Revised Budget Quarter 3	Approved Budget	Proposed Total Budget Changes	Revised Budget Quarter 3	Approved Budget	Proposed Total Budget Changes	Revised Budget Quarter 3	Total Revised Budget	Total Budget Re-programmed into 2027/28
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Corporate											
Delivery Fund (Pump priming for Transformation projects)	3,144	0	3,144	1,500	0	1,500	1,500	0	1,500	6,144	0
Loan To RTL (Bus replacement programme)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oracle Shopping Centre capital works	100	0	100	100	0	100	100	0	100	300	0
Minster Quarter - Brownfield Land Grant Element	500	0	500	1,500	0	1,500	0	0	0	2,000	0
Minster Quarter	155	0	155	523	0	523	0	0	0	678	0
Corporate Total	3,899	0	3,899	3,623	0	3,623	1,600	0	1,600	9,122	0
General Fund Total	72,137	(2,546)	69,591	66,828	2,521	69,349	36,683	335	37,018	175,958	(75)

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Appendix 5 - HRA Capital Programme Quarter 3 (2024/25)

Scheme Name	Approved Budget 2024/25 £000	Budget Movements Between Schemes £000	Additional Budgets added to the Programme - Funded by Grants & Contributions £000	Additional Budgets requested to be added to the Programme - Funded by Capital Receipts, Revenue Contributions, Borrowing & Reserves £000	Reduced Budgets - Completed Schemes & Other carry forward budget adjustments £000	Budgets reprogrammed (to)/from Future Years £000	Revised Budget Quarter 3 2024/25 £000	Spend to 31 December 2024 £000	Forecast Spend £000	Forecast Variance £000	spend vs forecast £000
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)											
Disabled Facilities Grants	595						595	359	595	0	(236)
Housing Management System	148						148	215	148	0	67
Major Repairs - Existing Homes Renewal	8,528						8,528	5,249	8,528	0	(3,279)
Major Repairs - Zero Carbon Retrofit works	4,429						4,429	0	4,429	0	(4,429)
Acquisitions from Homes for Reading	0					5,000	5,000		5,000	0	(5,000)
Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP)	1,186						1,186	0	1,186	0	(1,186)
Homes provided under Local Authority Housing Fund	1,002					1,349	2,351	20	2,351	0	(2,331)
Local authority new build programme for Older people and vulnerable adults	2,572						2,572	409	2,572	0	(2,163)
New Build & Acquisitions - Phase 2 - 4	8,875						8,875	3,896	8,875	0	(4,979)
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Total	27,335	0	0	0	0	6,349	33,684	10,148	33,684	0	(23,536)

Appendix 5 - HRA Capital Programme Quarter 3 (2024/25 to 2026/27)

Scheme Name	2024/25			2025/26			2026/27			2024/25 to 2026/27	
	Approved Budget	Proposed Total Budget Changes	Revised Budget Quarter 3	Approved Budget	Proposed Total Budget Changes	Revised Budget Quarter 3	Approved Budget	Proposed Total Budget Changes	Revised Budget Quarter 3	Total Revised Budget	Total Budget Re-programmed into 2027/28
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)											
Disabled Facilities Grants	595	0	595	812	0	812	600	0	600	2,007	0
Housing Management System	148	0	148	0	0	0	0	0	0	148	0
Major Repairs - Existing Homes Renewal	8,528	0	8,528	14,041	0	14,041	12,087	0	12,087	34,656	0
Major Repairs - Zero Carbon Retrofit works	4,429	0	4,429	6,877	0	6,877	3,500	0	3,500	14,806	0
Acquisitions from Homes for Reading	0	5,000	5,000	15,750	(5,000)	10,750	9,450	0	9,450	25,200	0
Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP)	1,186	0	1,186	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,186	0
Homes Provided under Local Authority Housing Fund	1,002	1,349	2,351	3,019	(1,349)	1,670	0	0	0	4,021	0
Local authority new build programme for Older people and vulnerable adults	2,572	0	2,572	16,782	0	16,782	500	0	500	19,854	0
New Build & Acquisitions - Phase 2 - 4	8,875	0	8,875	32,862	0	32,862	3,641	0	3,641	45,378	0
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Total	27,335	6,349	33,684	90,143	(6,349)	83,794	29,778	0	29,778	147,256	0

Corporate Plan Theme	Measure	Units	Target	Actual	Status	Trend	Comments
Foundations	Number of self- service transactions via My Account self- service	No.	28,228	24,029	Red	Improving	Following the continued roll out of the Arcus CRM platform we expect to see a drop off of these Granicus form submissions figures in line with those replacement new processes going live in Arcus (and being unpublished from the Granicus platform).
Foundations	Payment of invoices within 30 days of receipt of a compliant invoice	%	90	82.9	Red	Improving	During Q3 2024/25 just over 16,000 invoices were paid within 30 days of the invoice date - an average of 82.9% (Q2 was 79%). The data for individual months are Oct 24 (81%), Nov 24 (84%) and Dec 24 (84%).
Foundations Page 163	Customer satisfaction in the Customer Fulfilment Centre	%	90	84	Amber	Getting worse	Performance was disrupted during a period of service restructure, with several vacancies including in management roles – these have now been recruited to. Improvements to the performance management systems within the service continue, including enhancing the use of qualitative feedback. Stronger recording and reporting in place, improving the understanding of demand drivers and satisfaction levels.
Foundations	Percentage of responses to Freedom of Information Act requests within 20 days	%	95	71	Red	Improving	During Q3 the Council and BFfC received 310 Freedom of Information requests with 71% responded to within 20 days. The Customer Relations Team now have access to collating data and can track and report on cases. More reminders are being sent within and outside of Arcus. More work/training is required across both organisations around responding on time via the new system. Training and awareness sessions on Arcus took place in January by the Arcus Project Team. FOI training and Comms are planned this quarter to raise more awareness around the importance of responding on time. We are also planning to send the overdue reminders to Assistant and Executive Directors on a Monday morning so that this is at the top of their inbox at the start of the working week.
Foundations	Percentage of responses to complaints within agreed timescales	%	90	68	Red	Improving	During Q3 the Council and BFfC received 369 complaints with 68% responded to within agreed timescales. The Customer Relations Team now have access to collating data and can track and report on cases. More

Corporate Plan Theme	Measure	Units	Target	Actual	Status	Trend	Comments
							reminders are being sent within and outside of Arcus. More work/training is required across both organisations around responding on time via the new system. Training and awareness sessions on Arcus took place in January by the Arcus Project Team. We are planning to send overdue reminders to Assistant and Executive Director's on a Monday morning so that this is at the top of their inbox at the start of the working week.
Healthy Environment	Percentage of actionable (40mm depth) potholes repaired within 28 days	%	99	97%	Amber	No change	367 defects repaired of which 11 were not on time. 4 of these 11 defects were signed off on the same date just slightly outside the time shown on the system.
Healthy Environment	Food waste recycled (percentage of household waste)	%	16	12.1	Red	Improving	Food waste (from schools and the kerbside) represented 12.1% of household waste in Qtr3 2024/25. This compares to 11.7% last year. Whilst food tonnages have increased slightly, other household tonnages have also increased. We are aware that some food waste is present in the residual waste, and we need to capture this for recycling.
Healthy Environment	Percentage of total household waste recycled	%	51	47.3	Amber	Getting worse	The provisional recycling rate for Qtr. 3 2024/25 is 47.3%. This compares to 47.2% last year. Recycling rates have a seasonality associated with them, in large part due to garden waste. This is a recyclable material which is generated more in the spring and summer – so recycling rates are always higher at the beginning of the financial year.
Healthy Environment	Percentage of fly-tipping incidents investigated resulting in a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution	%	26	9	Red	Improving	Please note that the percentage of fly-tipping incidents investigated resulting in a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) or prosecution is dependent on evidence of the waste source being available. Therefore, the percentage may fluctuate due to public awareness of investigations and enforcement procedures or willingness to provide witness statements. Investigations may still be taking place, but evidence may not be available to allow for enforcement action to be taken. As per Flycapture reporting: In December, 284 incidents were reported, 127 incidents were investigated and 11 FPNs were issued for waste



Corporate Plan Theme	Measure	Units	Target	Actual	Status	Trend	Comments
							deposit offences. *The Recycling & Enforcement Team moved over to the ARCUS Salesforce case management system. Data from November onwards incorporates report numbers from all avenues of customer reporting - i.e. call centre, website, love clean reading. Data prior to this did not incorporate numbers from LCR. The alignment of Arcus, Love Clean Reading and Whitespace has allowed for a greater oversight of reports and associated activities.
Inclusive Economy Page 165	Number of school places for children and young people with Special educational need and disability (SEND) (cumulative)	No.	1031	1054	Green	Improving	The target for Sep 2024 was 940 places. There is a projected need of 1184 places, leaving a target of delivering a further 244 places by 2026/2027. To meet the target, a 180-place special school is planned for opening in 2026/2027 and an additional 64 places in ARPS or special schools will need to be delivered by September 2025 (a milestone target of 1004 places), with a trajectory of 30 further places being delivered for Dec 24 and 34 places by Mar 25.
Inclusive Economy	Percentage of Care Leavers who are not in education, employment, or training for work (NEET) 17 and 18-year-olds	%	20	32	Red	Getting worse	This is an area of focus with leaving care, the Virtual School and Elevate working together to understand the barriers to education and employment at an individual and system level and to put in place a plan to address these in the Autumn term. The target remains challenging as the national figure for this cohort in 2023 was 28%
Inclusive Economy	Percentage of Care Leavers who are not in education, employment, or training for work (NEET) 19 to 21-year-olds	%	38	39	Amber	Improving	This is an area of focus with leaving care, the Virtual School and Elevate working together to understand the barriers to education and employment at an individual and system level and to put in place a plan to address these in the Autumn term. We are identifying barriers to training and employment and are encouraging re-engagement activity.
Inclusive Economy	Suspension Rate for primary and secondary school pupils at maintained schools, per 10,000 students	No. per 10,000	5.7	13.17	Red	Getting worse	A small number of schools (2/60) are suspending pupils at a noticeably higher rate than other settings. These schools are under an SLA and monitoring process by BFFC. Primary Schools are less disproportionate in issuing suspensions and there are 21 schools that have issued no suspensions

Corporate Plan Theme	Measure	Units	Target	Actual	Status	Trend	Comments
							so far, this academic year. BFfC have launched the newly formed Secondary Inclusion Forum in Autumn as a space with secondary schools to discuss and address thematic issues of concern, with regular attendance from TVP and Reconnect Service within BFfC focusing on supporting pupils as risk of extra familial harm to help reduce the suspension rate. The development of the revised Behaviour Support Service, with an addition of a primary specialist School Inclusion Officer to be added to the team giving a primary and secondary lead to support schools.
Inclusive Economy	Percentage of people with a learning disability in paid employment	%	6	3.29	Red	Getting worse	This KPI remains a high priority in the Transition and SEND groups, proactive work is being undertaken with the Elevate and New Direction College to target residents with a learning disability. We have completed the commissioning of a supported employment provision for service users with a learning disability and mental health need. We are working with DWP job centre to support people into employment. Small numbers are involved. We are now investigating with the provider to see how many people have been supported and how we can count these in the figures where they have been employed.
Inclusive Economy	Participation at Council cultural venues (cumulative)	No.	270,000	272,756	Green	Improving	Exceeding target participation levels
Inclusive Economy	Number of physical visits to our libraries	No.	202,500	222,051	Green	Improving	Figure is cumulative, year to date is up 7% on 23/24 and 22% on 22/23 - remain well on track for exceeding target
Thriving Communities	Percentage of children in care living more than 20 miles from Reading	%	24	32	Red	Getting worse	This includes children placed historically at a distance who are settled and those in family/ friend's arrangements over 20 miles - these are positive arrangements for these children and there are no plans to move them. The shortage of local and national foster carers and children's homes has increased our use of placements which are beyond 20 miles. All children in care living beyond 20 miles have been reviewed to ensure that, where appropriate, plans are in place to move them closer to Reading. We are pro-actively addressing the shortage of local foster carers

Corporate Plan Theme	Measure	Units	Target	Actual	Status	Trend	Comments
							through the regional fostering recruitment and retention hub and mockingbird support for foster carers. A review of foster carer fees; feasibility studies for properties for local children's homes are underway. An Edge of Care offer to prevent children coming into care, prevent breakdown of care and return children home where safe and appropriate to do so, has been implemented.
Thriving Communities Page 167	First-time entrants (FTE's) to Youth Justice System per 100,000 aged 10-17	No. /100k	190	143	Green	Improving	The absence of Outcome 22 as an available option for prevention and diversion is a potential contributor to higher first-time entrant rates across Thames Valley, when compared with comparator groups in other parts of the country. The recent adoption of Outcome 22 by Thames Valley Police is welcomed as a tool to assist in reducing numbers of children who enter the Youth Justice System for the first time. The rates of FTEs in Reading are now below those of statistical neighbours and national. This remains a priority for the Reading Youth Justice Board.
Thriving Communities	Percentage of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year	%	11 <sup>1</sup>	9	Green	Improving	Target amended in line with BFFC contract PI. Children remain stable in placements; due to better matching and permanence planning
Thriving Communities	Percentage of Older People (65+) who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement	%	87	92.4	Green	Improving	Work has progressed to improve the referral pathway with the hospitals and ensure the right patients are referred into reablement. This has resulted in an improvement in people remaining at home after 91 days.
Thriving Communities	Percentage of new contacts to the Advice & Wellbeing hub resulting in a successful outcome not requiring an on-going service	%	85	86.5	Green	Getting worse	Staff are supporting residents in a proactive manner, signposting residents to voluntary sector and continuing to use a Strength Based Approach
Thriving Communities	Percentage of service users supported to live	%	78	72.8	Amber	Improving	Community Based provision remains a priority for Adult Social Care and teams are working with residents and

<sup>1</sup> This target has been corrected from the originally published Corporate Plan target to bring it in line with the BFFC contract performance indicator.

Corporate Plan Theme	Measure	Units	Target	Actual	Status	Trend	Comments
	independently in the community						families to remain at home as long as possible. Residential and nursing care would always be the last resort based on complexity and need. We are experiencing a high level of complex needs in the community causing more residents to go into nursing and residential care.
Thriving Communities Page 168	Number of NHS Health Checks delivered to residents	No.	425	1579	Green	Improving	<p>The Q3 number shown includes NHS Health Checks delivered to 40-74 yr. olds by GPs (927), RBH to their staff (182) and by the Reading Community Wellness Outreach service (470). Only the 40-74 yr. olds data is shown here, so it can be compared to previous quarters and for national reporting purposes.</p> <p>This quarter, GP Practices and RBH delivered many more checks to their patients/staff compared to the last quarter. GP Practices saw a 79% increase (927 checks compared to 519), while RBH rose sharply to 182 checks from just 18 in the previous quarter.</p>

## Appendix 7: Corporate Plan Projects Q3 2024/25

Blue = Complete, Green = on track, Amber = at risk, Red = off track

Corporate Plan Theme	Project	Q3	Comments
Foundations	Create a workforce that is fully representative of the population we serve where all staff feel welcomed and valued for the unique perspective, they bring to Team Reading, and where everyone, irrespective of their background, is supported and empowered to achieve their goals and progress their careers	At risk	Percentage of staff identifying as BME dropped a little at the end of Q3 (dropping to 19% from 19.2%) against a Borough wide census figure of 32.4%. As with previous months, the % of Global Majority staff recruited in the rolling year (25%) is greater than the % leaving RBC (20.8%). The annual ethnicity and gender pay gap reports produced indicate an on-going excellent performance with median pay gap for gender of 0.00% and 0.68% for ethnicity. A disability pay gap report was also produced for the first time - again indicating an excellent outcome of a 0.00% median pay gap.
Foundations	Deliver a programme of work to ensure that we get the best value for money for the goods and services that we buy	At risk	Procurement Board to launched on 3rd Feb 2025. Pipeline Register close to completion which will inform the Procurement Board Agenda. Quality Assurance Panel launch to co-inside with Procurement Board. Procurement consultation commenced Dec 24 for completion Feb 25, to move towards a defined Hub and Spoke model with transitional period of 6 months.
Page 69 Foundations	Implement Social Value Strategy and reporting (internal training, link with external organisations and deployment of social value achieved)	On track	Refreshed policy went live from 1st Dec 2024. New guidance included within refreshed procurement templates and a new matrix is used in procurements. All procurements above £125k (except for Framework Direct Awards) include Social Value requirement Quality Question. SV register/KPI tracker still in development with aim to launch March 2025.
Foundations	Implementation of the Information Management Strategy	At risk	At the end of Q3 the Information Governance (IG) Team met with Data Stewards from all the Directorates, to recap on the training and information governance work conducted so far. Work on the Information Management Strategy Action Plan is being discussed with the Senior Information Risk Officer on 17/01/25 with a view to looking at how specific tasks/work area can be progressed and tracked for reporting to Corporate Management Team and the Information Governance Board.
Foundations	Implementing the Connected Reading Strategy with the highest priority aims being: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making our services better and quicker for customers and staff, enabled by digital technology.</li> <li>Making our digital services as accessible as possible to all in Reading and helping those who are digitally excluded to become included.</li> </ul>	On track	Case and Customer Management – Significant milestone achieved in this quarter. The second tranche of the Customer and Case Management platform went live in November as planned. This fully completes the replacement of the Public Protection services system, Built Environment and Planning services. We also streamlined the online login for three online portals through the implementation of Single Sign On as part of the November go-live. The Customer Journey Optimisation programme is now set to move forward the digitisation of the personal housing plan process. This will be

Corporate Plan Theme	Project	Q3	Comments
Page 170	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using digital technology to help the elderly and vulnerable to live as independently as possible</li> </ul>		<p>built in our newly implemented salesforce Customer Contact Management platform, as part of our effort to use existing platforms before buying any new ones. It is expected that this will be delivered by the first quarter of the new financial year. It is aimed at streamlining the time for processing residents at risk of homelessness.</p> <p>Adult Social care – Implementation has kicked off on introducing the digital portal for adult social care. This is part of a comprehensive digital programme aimed at transforming how Adult Social Care provides services. This is a one-year programme and is due to start achieving a visible difference from the end of 2025.</p> <p>Independent Living – This project continued in this period with focus on the analysis of the impact the project has had on participants. The project is scheduled to end March 2025.</p> <p>Artificial Intelligence and Robotics: The RBC Policy and Strategy has been agreed and will be published soon in readiness for purchasing tools.</p> <p>Hardware Rollout: In the period we replaced two hundred laptops with another 250 to be rolled out in the next quarter as part of our plans to keep devices up to date.</p>
Foundations	Maintain the externally assessed standard for 'Achieving Customer Services Excellence' including the implementation of the new Customer and Case Management System	At risk	Case and Customer Management System: The Governance (Complaints and FOIs), elements of Regulatory Services and the rest Regulatory services went live in July and Nov 2024, respectively. The Customer application is scheduled to go live in two phases at the end of January and Feb 2025.
Healthy Environment	Commence delivery of the Simpler Recycling Programme for residents to improve borough recycling performance	At risk	Route optimisation work has been undertaken to enable the Recycling & Waste Service to plan for delivery of the requirements of simpler recycling legislation. Whilst progress could be considered 'green', The project has been flagged as 'amber' as the resources required to meet legislative requirements are not yet known and their cost/affordability, may present a barrier to success that will need to be considered in context with available government grant and the broader financial position of the Council.
Healthy Environment	Decarbonise the Hexagon theatre through improved heating and lighting.	At risk	The Ground Source Heat Pumps (GSHP) decarbonisation works are being tendered as part of the overall Studio Theatre tender which is scheduled to be issued w/c 20 January.



Corporate Plan Theme	Project	Q3	Comments
			The water abstraction licence to run the GSHP has been received by the Environment Agency, who have a statutory deadline to respond by 2 April. The electricity substation upgrade to increase capacity to 800KVA has been agreed with Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks, with an estimated 7-month lead in for the works to be installed Summer 2025. The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme grant includes funding for roof insulation, as part of the other energy saving measures. The delivery of this is tied in with investigations for solutions to the Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete within the theatre and therefore unlikely to go ahead. Salix are aware we will be putting in a change request, in parallel with the Studio Theatre Invitation to Tender process, using the detail within the specification to seek alternative energy savings e.g. new heat plate exchangers.
Healthy Environment	Deliver £8m of investment in resurfacing roads and pavements	On track	2-year delivery programme. Phase 1 (2024/25) completed. Phase 2 due to restart mid-Feb 2025.
Healthy Environment	Delivery of Capital Education Property Development Programme	On track	Projects and programme progressing as per the intended timescale.
Healthy Environment	Implement the Climate Emergency Strategy, including delivering over 150 actions to contribute to the overall vision to mitigate and adapt to climate change	At risk	Most actions remain green (on track) or amber (progressing but at risk of not being delivered by the target date). Further details are included in the Annual Progress Report for 2023/24 which was produced and presented to Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee in November 2024 (see <a href="https://readingcan.org.uk/about-us/annualreport/">https://readingcan.org.uk/about-us/annualreport/</a> ). An increasing number of strategy actions have been over-taken by events. A process of stakeholder engagement to review and update the Strategy for the period 2025-30 has now been initiated by the Reading Climate Change Partnership and specialist consultants appointed to support this so that a revised Strategy can be produced in the latter part of 2025. This process began with a successful Reading Leaders' Summit on Climate held on 22nd March 2024 and was followed by three workshops of a core delivery group (~50 stakeholders). This also involved a wider survey. Dialogue matters, having concluded the workshops are currently convening their final report which is due at the end of January 2025.
Healthy Environment	Implement the Local Transport Plan (LTP)	On track	The LTP (Reading Transport Strategy) was adopted by the Full Council in October 24.

Corporate Plan Theme	Project	Q3	Comments
			The LTP underpins the strategic context for the work being delivered by the Transport Planning Team, including its Bus Service Improvement Plan and Active Travel Programmes.
Healthy Environment	Retaining our position on the 'A' list' for bold leadership on climate change following an assessment by the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP)	On track	The Council has submitted its data for the 2024 annual submission to CDP which closed on the 2nd of October, we continue to await the outcome.
Healthy Environment	The allocation of £1.6 million Community Infrastructure Funds and commencement of the approved schemes	At risk	£1.6 millions of Community Infrastructure Levy funds were allocated to eighteen local projects in March 2022 by Policy Committee. Work has completed on fourteen of the projects, whilst the remainder are currently underway, in the preparatory stages or are awaiting the completion of other projects. A further allocation of CIL local funds was made by Policy Committee in July 2024. Different projects are at various stages, and some of the remaining projects still have question marks about delivery. A full description of the status of each project was reported to Policy Committee on 8th July.
Healthy Environment	Deliver the next phase of our fleet electrification and decarbonisation programme and publish our Electric Vehicle Strategy	Complete	The planned purchases of electric vehicles have been completed.
Inclusive Economy	Adoption of a new Town Centre Strategy	Off Track	Strategy has been paused due to resource issues. Consultation led to substantial changes being required. This is being picked up in February 2025 as a priority.
Inclusive Economy	Bring forward the Minster Quarter site for development and using the £2m brownfield development grant	At risk	Development Agreement (DA) and Lease has undergone negotiation with the successful bidder. The DA and Lease is progressing with lawyers finalising the contract terms. OPE and DLUHC are receiving regular updates on BLRF spend overseen by RBC.
Inclusive Economy	Celebrate Reading's diverse arts, culture, and heritage. Use arts, culture, heritage, and leisure as a vehicle for delivering placemaking; health and wellbeing; inclusion; economic development and lifelong learning outcomes.	On track	The Hexagon pantomime offered hundreds of subsidised tickets for children who would not normally be able to attend, tens of thousands of school children attended in the school's performances, and two sold out relaxed performances for children and adults with additional needs. Reading Museum continued its Museum of Sanctuary programme by hosting a group exhibition featuring artworks by Refugees and Asylum Seekers for Heritage Open Days and Friday drop-in art and craft session with Jelly. Premiere of artwork and creative writing from a joint Royal Berkshire Archives, University of Reading and schools project about George



Corporate Plan Theme	Project	Q3	Comments
			<p>Freeman, an African boy liberated in Georgian times and relocated to Berkshire, displayed at Reading Central Library.</p> <p>A new simple Reading Museum guide created in print/digital (aimed at all, with plain text to facilitate digital translation/language needs)</p> <p>Battle Library featured as location for Enigma of Arrival exhibition for Black History Month organised by ACRE with the Museum on a BBC report.</p> <p>University of Reading Researchers and Baker Street Production, Lifespring Stories: The Many Faces of Oxford Road book launch, a community initiative part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone programme.</p> <p>CODE successfully shown to eight schools in South Reading, in partnership with Community Safety, Brighter Futures for Children, Community Team, Thames Valley Police, the VRU and local partners.</p> <p>Using theatre to educate about the dangers of county lines and knife crime.</p> <p>Commission with South Reading Schools around belonging and identity completed.</p>
Page 17 Inclusive Economy	Complete Reading West Station Upgrade	Complete	Works are complete and the new station facilities opened on 19 March 2024.
Page 17 Inclusive Economy	Continued delivery of South Reading Mass Rapid Transport	On track	Bridge was successfully lifted in, in November 24. Works remaining ongoing and there are no major changes to the current milestones or completion date.
Inclusive Economy	Deliver key improvements to the library service, including plans for the Central Library.	On track	Service performance remains good, with visits and issues tracking to target. Libraries Improvement Fund first equipment is in at all sites, next bits progressing. This is all funded via grant capital and has largely moved into 25/26. Designs for new library progressing but not yet finalised.
Inclusive Economy	Deliver our Reducing Inequality Strategy through a place-based approach to improving skills education and training.	On track	The Tackling Inequality Strategy (TIS) Action Plan has been updated following input from BFFC, New Directions College and REDA, and is now being further enhanced with input from Public Health to align its activities with the H&WB strategy. The Place Based Pilots in the south of Reading are delivering the approved projects to support the programme objectives, with further projects being considered by the Programme Sponsors for delivery. There will be a review of the Place-Based Pilots in early 2025 to determine priorities for the forthcoming year.
Inclusive Economy	Develop and implement adult skills, employment support and training programmes	On track	This quarter, we have delivered impactful programmes and created opportunities for our learners, while also expanding partnerships and securing funding for future initiatives.

Corporate Plan Theme	Project	Q3	Comments
Page 174			<p>We successfully delivered a bespoke programme in collaboration with Thames Water for refugees. The programme concluded with a presentation at Thames Water's Clearwater offices, where several Heads of Areas provided valuable guidance to our learners, advising them on roles they should consider applying for within the company. We are currently awaiting the outcomes of these applications.</p> <p>In addition, we have collaborated with two new employers who offered guaranteed interviews to our learners. As a result, two learners have successfully progressed to the second stage of their respective recruitment processes, demonstrating the programme's ability to prepare participants for real-world opportunities.</p> <p>Furthermore, we have secured additional funding to support employability programmes for Hong Kong British National Overseas participants. This funding will allow us to expand our support to this group, equipping them with essential skills and creating pathways to meaningful employment. Just before Christmas, we were inspected by Ofsted. We are optimistic about receiving a good outcome, which would reflect the hard work and dedication of our team and the positive impact of our programmes on learners.</p>
Inclusive Economy	Employment and Skills programme delivered via REDA	On track	<p>The new S106 programme of delivery for 2024-26, was agreed and a review of previous delivery welcomed at Policy in October. Activities will provide ongoing support for residents in most need and ensure continuity of delivery between 2024/25 building on the work REDA has delivered through UKSPF and S106 funding. Dates have been agreed for the next two Job Fests, working with DWP partners. The Outreach in the Community continued through October and November at Battle and Caversham libraries (12 sessions in all engaging over 100 residents) Groundworks programme commenced in November but had to be postponed to February 25 (18-week training programme working with Parks team, training long term unemployed people in green skills). Small business support continued with a series of online and live events attracting over 160 local business owners to two online and two live networking events. The first Whitley Wood Jobs Fair took place in October,</p>

## Appendix 7: Corporate Plan Projects Q3 2024/25

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Corporate Plan Theme	Project	Q3	Comments
			supported by four employers, two providers, with thirty local job seekers attending
Inclusive Economy	Implement and subsequently expand a new apprenticeship and work experience mentoring scheme	On track	Work experience scheme is now 'business as usual' and will be launched again in Q4. Apprenticeships offered to new joiners to RBC is 2.23% (marginally below the target of 2.3%).
Inclusive Economy	Shape the 3-year delivery plan 2022-25 for Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy	At risk	No progress from the last update, due to competing workload priorities. Plan to deliver for the next quarter. Working through the final strategy, we are behind schedule on sending out the final version for approval from key stakeholders.
Inclusive Economy	Start work to deliver significant improvements to our culture and customer offer with major works to the Hexagon and the Civic building where we will be reprovisioning the Central Library and redesigning customer provision to create a more modern and efficient offer	At risk	Decarbonisation works are underway at the Civic Offices and enabling works are concluding, with the main construction works to follow in January. The new temporary customer service and registrar areas are open. Planning permission has been granted for the Hexagon Studio Theatre and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have approved the new programme. RIBA phase 4 designs are complete, and financial assessment is underway ahead of release of the Invitation to Tender.
Inclusive Economy	Support the development of an Economic Development Strategy for Reading led by Readings Economic & Destination Agency (REDA)	On track	REDA and RBC helped shape the Berkshire Regional Economic Strategy adopted by the Berkshire Prosperity Board and it has been forwarded to Government. Work will commence in February to begin refreshing the Reading Economic Strategy.
Thriving Communities	Continue delivery of the new Council homes programme	On track	Site preparation continues towards works commencing on site to deliver the new homes. Inflation is stabilising within the construction industry. However, the war in Ukraine and Brexit remains an issue. Start on site for three programmes still on track for end of 2024-25.
Thriving Communities	Create a co-produced Adult Social Care Strategy	At risk	The steer for the strategy has been delayed due to the ASC inspection by CQC. Now that the inspection has been completed the strategy will be a priority and is expected to be agreed in terms of scope and resources in Q4.
Thriving Communities	Deliver the five implementation plans in collaboration with statutory, voluntary and community partners which cover a range of health improvement actions across the five priority areas: 1. Reducing the difference in health between different groups of people; 2	On track	A paper on recent activity and progress against the key Performance Indicators will be taken to the Reading Health and Wellbeing Board on Friday 17th January 2025. As previously reported, most indicators for each implementation area are green. There are five amber indicators, most of which are new actions following a recent review of the implementation plan

## Appendix 7: Corporate Plan Projects Q3 2024/25

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Corporate Plan Theme	Project	Q3	Comments
	Support for individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives; 3. Help children and families in early years; 4. Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people; 5. Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults		actions and will take some time to progress. Progress against actions continue to be reviewed to ensure they continue to meet local need.
Thriving Communities	Deliver zero carbon initiatives within Council homes including using Passivhaus principles to design new homes, retrofit energy efficiency measures and develop more low carbon energy sources for existing RBC Housing	On track	The delivery of Passivhaus local authority `new build homes has been embedded within our programmes of delivery. We have a number scheme designed to deliver low energy homes that are about to commence on site.
Thriving Communities	Develop a Family Hub model for Reading, focusing on creating a more seamless Family Help offer that is targeted at the areas of greatest need	On track	We plan to launch our pilot Family Hub, based at Ranikhet Family Centre in early 2025, inflight family hubs are currently under review due to the MTFS process
Thriving Communities	Develop a preventative occupational therapy function at the Adult Social Care Advice and Well Being Hub	Complete	The Team Manager has been in place since April 2024 and has been working to recruit Occupational Therapists (OTs) and Assistant OTs. While there remain a few vacancies, the team is now fully operational, with processes and procedures in place. The team is now running as business as usual.
Thriving Communities	Develop an unpaid carers strategy and increased short breaks provision in partnership with carers and partners	On track	We are interviewing for a Carers Lead who will take forward the strategy. We have developed a proposal to extend short breaks through use of Accelerator Reform Funding.
Thriving Communities	Develop our refreshed Early Help strategy with the One Reading Children & Young People's Partnership, strengthened by a shared overarching strategy to tackle child poverty	On track	The Early Help Strategy was signed off by the One Reading Partnership on 22nd October and will be presented at Health and Wellbeing Board in March 2025.
Thriving Communities	Development of a voluntary sector-led Adult Social Care Front Door	On track	The Civic based part of the service (in procurement terms, previously referred to as Lot 1): Local Connector Service, delivered by British Red Cross, has been implemented and the team started taking referrals shortly before Christmas. The Community based part of the service model (in procurement terms, previously referred to as Lot 2), is on track for options appraisal proposal going to Working with People Board beginning of February 2025.

Corporate Plan Theme	Project	Q3	Comments
<div> <div>Driving Communities</div> <div>Page 157</div> </div>	Implement RISE, our new inclusion support service, which will help develop inclusive practice across all Reading schools	On track	<p>Visits have taken place across every mainstream school and specialist settings, indicating strong take-up. There have been 281 Visits across Q3, equating to four hundred hours of support directly within schools across Reading.</p> <p>Twenty-six of the 281 visits have been delivering training with a high satisfaction rate, 86% of participants reporting that the training partly or fully met their needs, an increase from Q2.</p> <p>Schools continue to report that they are more able to meet the needs of cohorts of children with increased need, which has been strengthened by the launch of the updated Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) and Graduated Response (GR) documents, which have been shared widely. We have seen the escalation of EHCNA requests from schools continue to slow down compared to previous years, indicating the success of this approach. Over Q4, there will be further work to support schools to communicate the OAP/GR documents to their parents and carers.</p> <p>RISE has been involved in the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) project alongside our Children &amp; Young Peoples Integrated Therapy Team, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board and Reading Family Forum colleagues. All mainstream primary schools have received a joint visit from a RISE member of staff, alongside a therapist from CYPIT. Early findings indicate that schools have found PINS as a useful tool to develop their whole-school approach towards neurodiversity, with a particular focus on speech, language, and sensory needs. For PINS in Q4, there will be training resources created and a SENCo Conference free-to-attend for all schools, focusing on Speech, Language and Communication Needs.</p> <p>RISE have increased its presence in secondary settings, which has been facilitated via the secondary network.</p> <p>We have also seen the launch of RISE Regulation (an extension to the RISE Team funded outside DBV), which has focused on reducing suspensions and exclusions. In Q3 we saw suspensions half in our target schools (from 80 to 40) compared to Q3 last year, indicating the early signs of success of this service.</p>

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Corporate Plan Theme	Project	Q3	Comments
Thriving Communities	In partnership with GLL, continue to deliver investment in the borough's leisure facilities, including improvements at South Reading Leisure Centre, and finish and open the new swimming pools at Rivermead Leisure Centre	Complete	We opened the new swimming pools and splashpad at Rivermead Leisure Centre on 17th June. The centre is now fully open and operational. The demountable pool continues to be used by a swimming club and schools for approx. 10-15 hours per week. GLL are due to share proposals for the demountable pool with officers in September. The swimming pool and wet side changing rooms at South Reading Leisure Centre reopened on the 24th of June, following an extensive refurbishment. The paddling pool at Christchurch Meadows opened on time on 25th May, following repairs to the site and overcoming complications with power supply. The paddling pool remained open until mid-September, after the school's return.
Thriving Communities Page 178	Implement the VCS action plan to build our relationship with the VCS and increase capacity within the sector.	On track	The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Compact Action Plan is actively being delivered by the Council and VCS partners. Regular engagement with the VCS has continued, including monthly Voluntary Information Network meetings, meetings between VCS leaders and the RBC Leader & CEX, and direct engagement on specific issues. An update on the VCS Compact Action Plan was provided to Social Inclusion Board in September 24. The Compact is due for review by the end of 2025, and early discussions have already begun with VCS leaders on this and its alignment to the Government Civil Society Covenant.
Thriving Communities	Increase the number of local placements for our children in care to ensure as many of our children as possible remain living near their local friends and family networks	On track	Medium Term Financial Strategy papers submitted requesting the approval to build three children's residential care homes in Reading. 1 x assessment home, 1 x 4 bed residential home and 1 x 2 bed residential home to offer solo or complex placements. These have been agreed in principle; this is now a gold programme for the council and has the appropriate resource and governance to drive this programme forward with the required pace.
Thriving Communities	Launch Community Wellness Outreach (CWO) Programme including NHS Health Checks	On track	There have been 2,402 checks (as at end of December), which represents 46% of our target. In December 88% of appointments were booked / 12% were drop in). Outcomes of checks have been consistent with only a 1% to 2% variance each month; 67% very high/high body mass index (BMI), 23% very high/high blood pressure, and 25% with high blood glucose levels (a pre-indicator of diabetes) and 6% high cholesterol. The team have maintained the reach to ethnically diverse groups, with 57% of people attending being from ethnically diverse backgrounds, 52% from



Corporate Plan Theme	Project	Q3	Comments
			<p>Asian/Black background, who have a higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease and diabetes.</p> <p>The age range was widened for these community-based checks and 8% of people seen were above 75 yrs and 31% were below 40 years of age, which has remained consistent, and enabling early intervention to prevent development of heart disease and diabetes.</p> <p>In December 22 people required help with translation. Attendance due to GP communications was 42%, 58% attendance due to combination of other approaches. GP referral and Family or Friend are the two largest contributors to those who attended.</p> <p>At the Forgotten British Gurkhas venue, sixty-one ex-military veterans have been seen between December 2023 and December 2024 and 43 ex-Gurkha wives.</p> <p>86% of people who responded to the survey strongly agreed/agreed that they had an increased awareness of the risks of developing heart disease.</p>
Page 179 Thriving Communities	Set up a dynamic purchasing system (DPS) to enable us to procure good quality and cost-effective emergency accommodation	At risk	<p>Work to establish a DPS continues, however there has been an interim change in approach to include block booked contracts with suppliers. The aim of this approach is to ensure the cost effectiveness of a future DPS, the delivery date of which will be dependent on market stabilisation. A paper seeking delegated authority to procure and award contracts for block booking arrangements was approved at Policy Committee on 21/10/24. The tender was published 03/12/24 and closed 06/01/25. Next steps for Q4 24-25 are to evaluate all tender submissions and undertake property inspections to establish suitability for Emergency Accommodation use and contract awards.</p>
Thriving Communities	Strengthen corporate parenting activity of the Company and Council through a refreshed Corporate Parenting strategy and implement the learning from the Care Leavers' Review and review of our Corporate Parenting Panel	On track	<p>Corporate Parenting is progressing well, with Corporate Parenting Panel actively attended by members, and partners across service areas, as well as by young people representing those in care and care experienced young people. Care leavers not in education, training or employment has been an area of focus and there has been a slight improvement in this area due to seasonal work opportunities, with targeted individual work taking place to secure and sustain education and employment options for our care leavers.</p>
Thriving Communities	Collaborate with our partners and GLL new leisure provider to increase rates of physical	On track	<p>There were over 78,000 participants across the four leisure centres in December 2024, an increase of 20,000 compared to December 2023.</p>

Corporate Plan Theme	Project	Q3	Comments
	activity and attendance at borough leisure centres		<p>GLL surpassed its one million participants target in 2024, attracting a total of 1,101,515 participants. This represents an increase of over 317,000 compared to the number of participants recorded in 2023.</p> <p>For the first time in 2024, the pre-paid membership base did not increase month on month. In December 2024, there were 192 fewer members compared to the previous month. Despite this, the pre-paid membership base grew by 1,624 members year-on-year, indicating ongoing growth. As of 16th Jan, the pre-paid membership base stands at 8,613 people.</p>
<div> <div>Page 189</div> <div>Driving Communities</div> </div>	Year 1 delivery of the Community Safety Actions through the delivery groups as set out in the Plan	On track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Task &amp; Finish Group has been set up to explore increase in violence on Sunday evenings following review of updated serious violence data.</li> <li>The Community Safety Team delivered another CODE event in partnership with the Culture Team on 11th &amp; 12th October. The event was aimed at raising awareness of the dangers of knife crime. Approximately one thousand children from eight schools attended on 11th October.</li> <li>Safer Students Meeting, originally established as part of the Safer Streets 4 Project with scope to collaborate with the further education establishments and students to improve safety for students.</li> <li>New Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Data Reports have been developed and submitted to the CSP Executive Group. The reports will now form part of the ongoing review of performance of the partnership and support to understand trends and emerging issues that the partnership will need to tackle.</li> <li>November saw the delivery of the Online Safety Summit at Reading Town Hall and launch of Young Voices "What Adults Need to Know Video Young Voices: Officers are now working with No 5 to explore future funding opportunities for a future conference, including sponsorship opportunities.</li> </ul>



By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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## Policy Committee

17 March 2025



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

<b>Title</b>	Council Plan 2025-28
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Alex Wylde, Policy and Performance Manager
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Cllr Liz Terry
<b>Corporate priority</b>	This report defines the corporate priorities for the next 3 years.
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. That Policy Committee recommend that Council adopt the Council Plan 2025-28 (appended).

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. A new Council Plan is needed for 2025-28. The proposed new Council Plan is attached for consideration by Policy Committee and Council.
- 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 consideration. It is advised that Policy Committee recommend the Council Plan for approval at Council on 25 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 Policy Committee can 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)





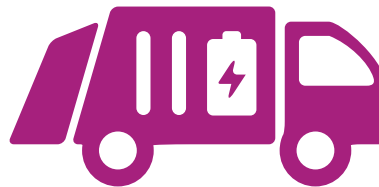
Refurbished Reading Station subway and High Bridge (a designated scheduled monument) on London Street / Duke Street.



Filled in 1,664 potholes.



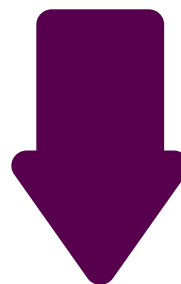
Increased the number of school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities in Reading from 564 to 940.



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.

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## 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. <sup>1</sup>	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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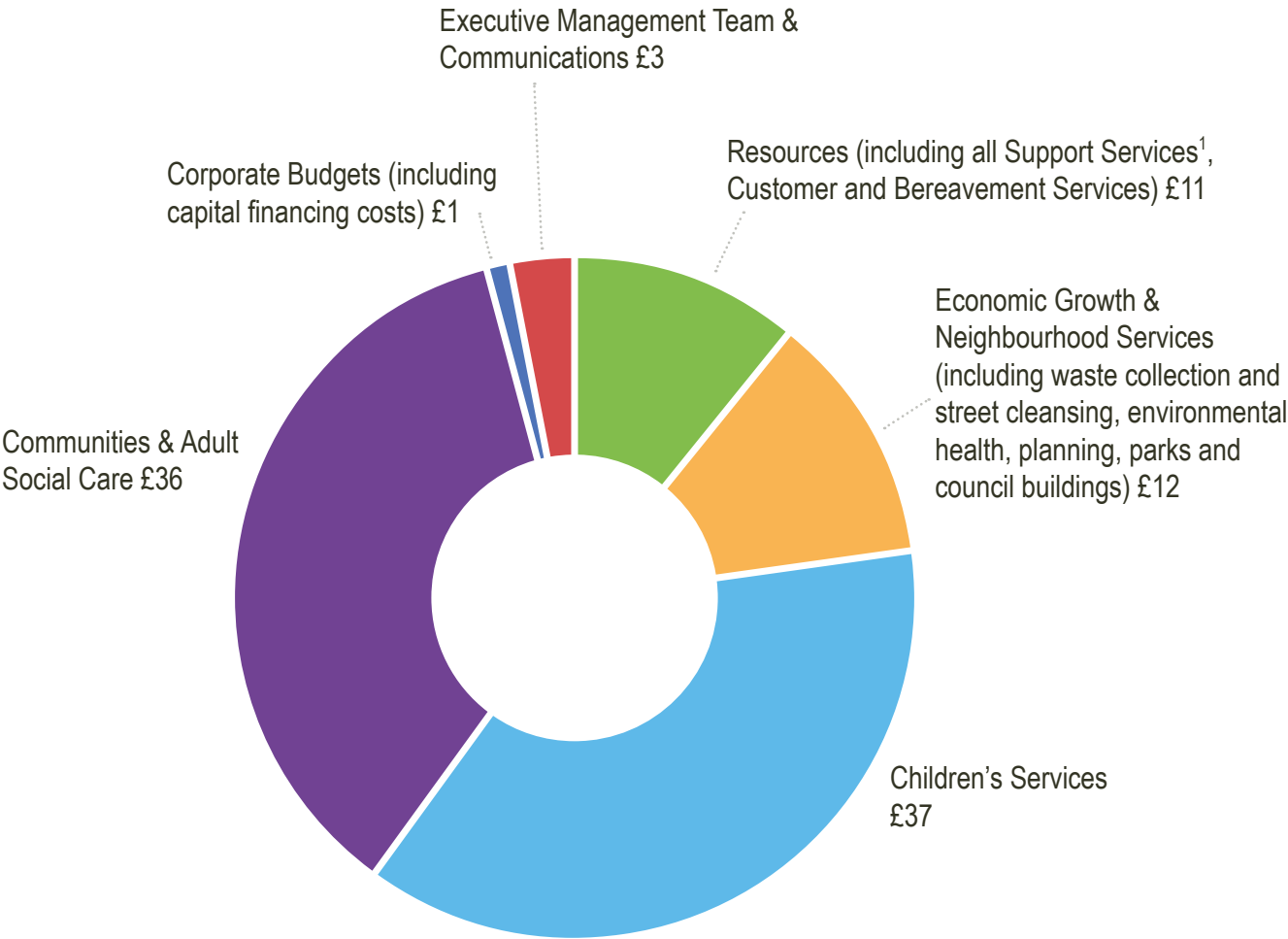
1 The projects against this objective are subject to funding being agreed.

# 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 <sub>2</sub> )	5,149	3,977	2,983	TBC <sup>1</sup>	TBC
Air quality (micrograms per meter cubed of nitrogen dioxide µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	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 <sup>1</sup>	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) <sup>1</sup>	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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## Council Plan 25-28 final report

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

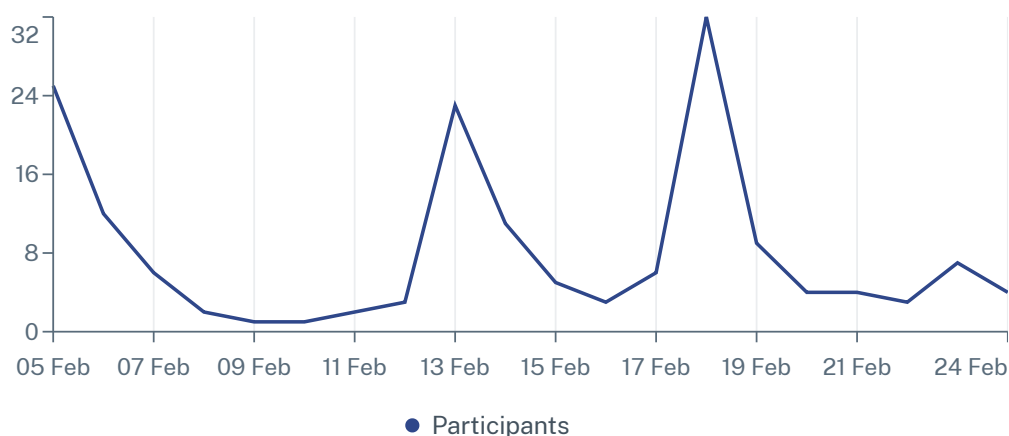
### Participants timeline

Total participants

163

Participation rate i

15%



### Headline results

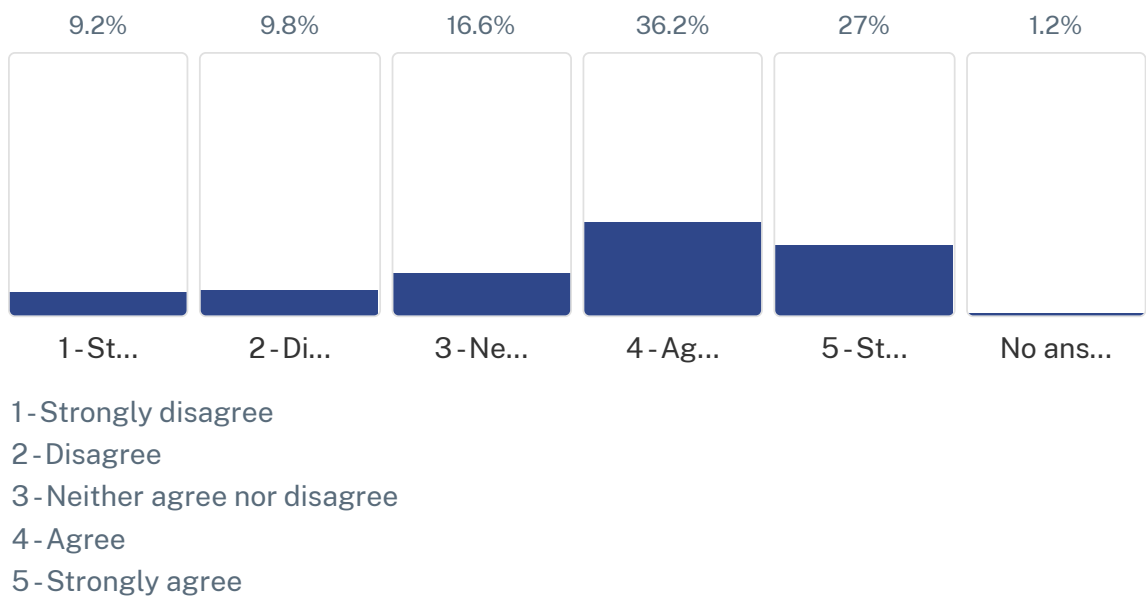
**63%** of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the overall vision for the Council Plan.

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

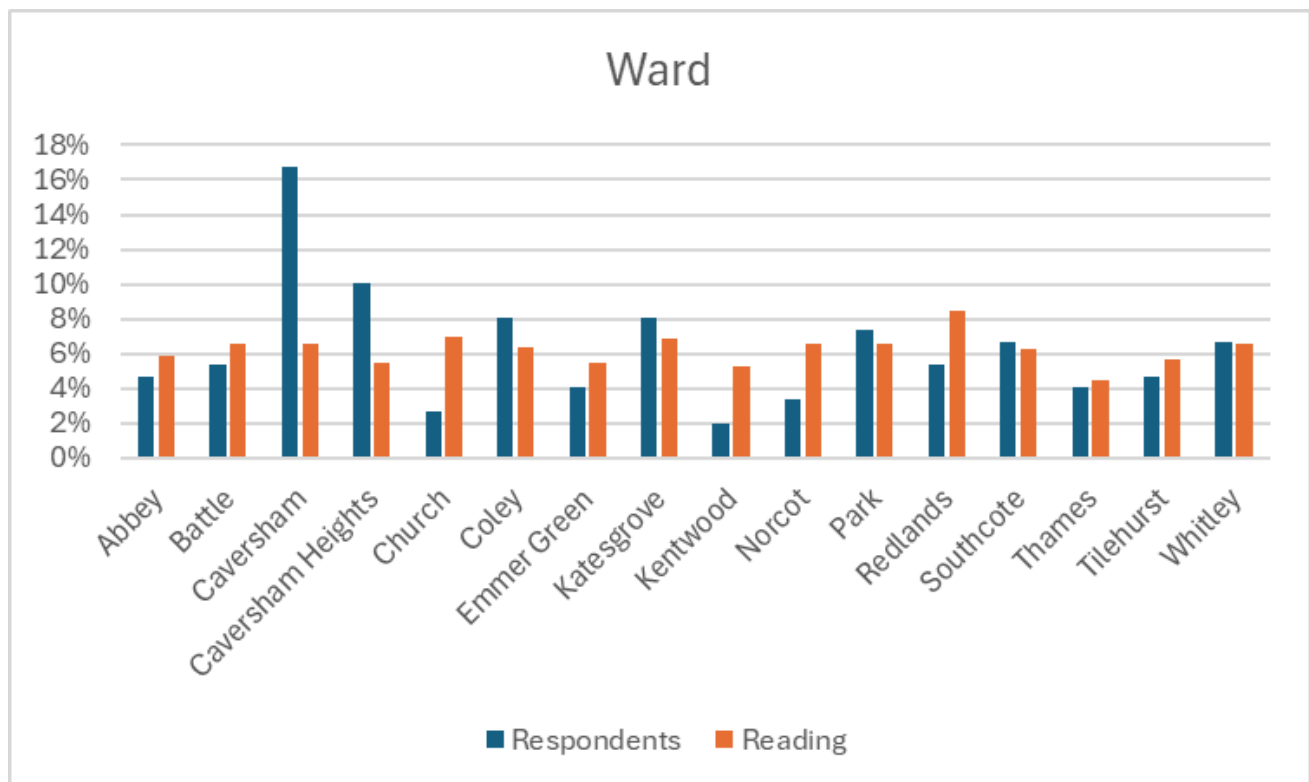
Respondents expressed a range of views on the vision and priorities, with some recurring themes. Many agree with the need for economic and cultural success and there is strong support for safeguarding the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children. Views on the development of fairer communities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

The most commonly raised issues were:

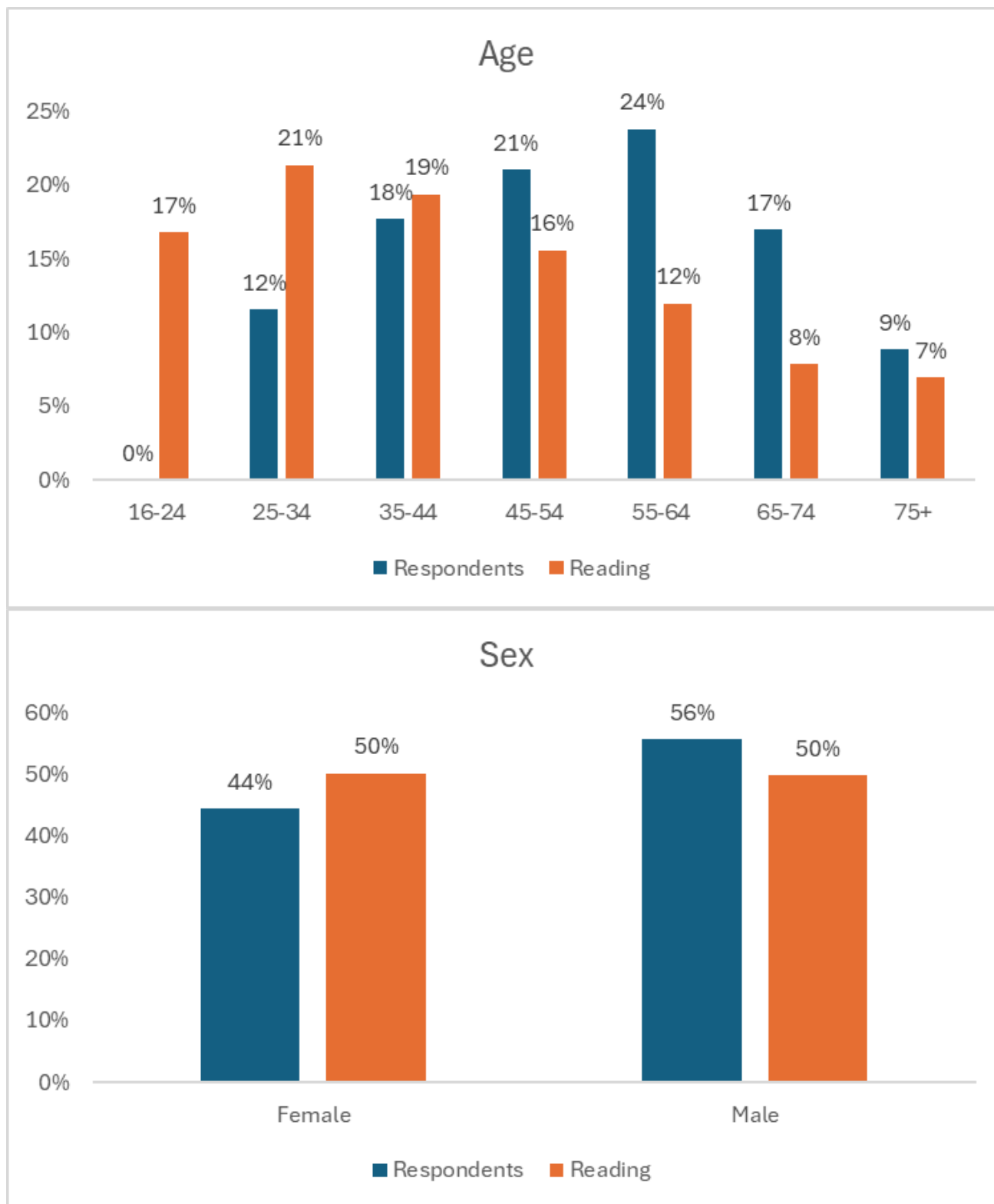
- 1. Traffic and Transportation:** Many respondents expressed concerns about traffic congestion, the impact of new bus lanes, and the need for better road maintenance.
- 2. Affordable Housing:** There is a call for more affordable housing, particularly for families and lower-income individuals. Some 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.

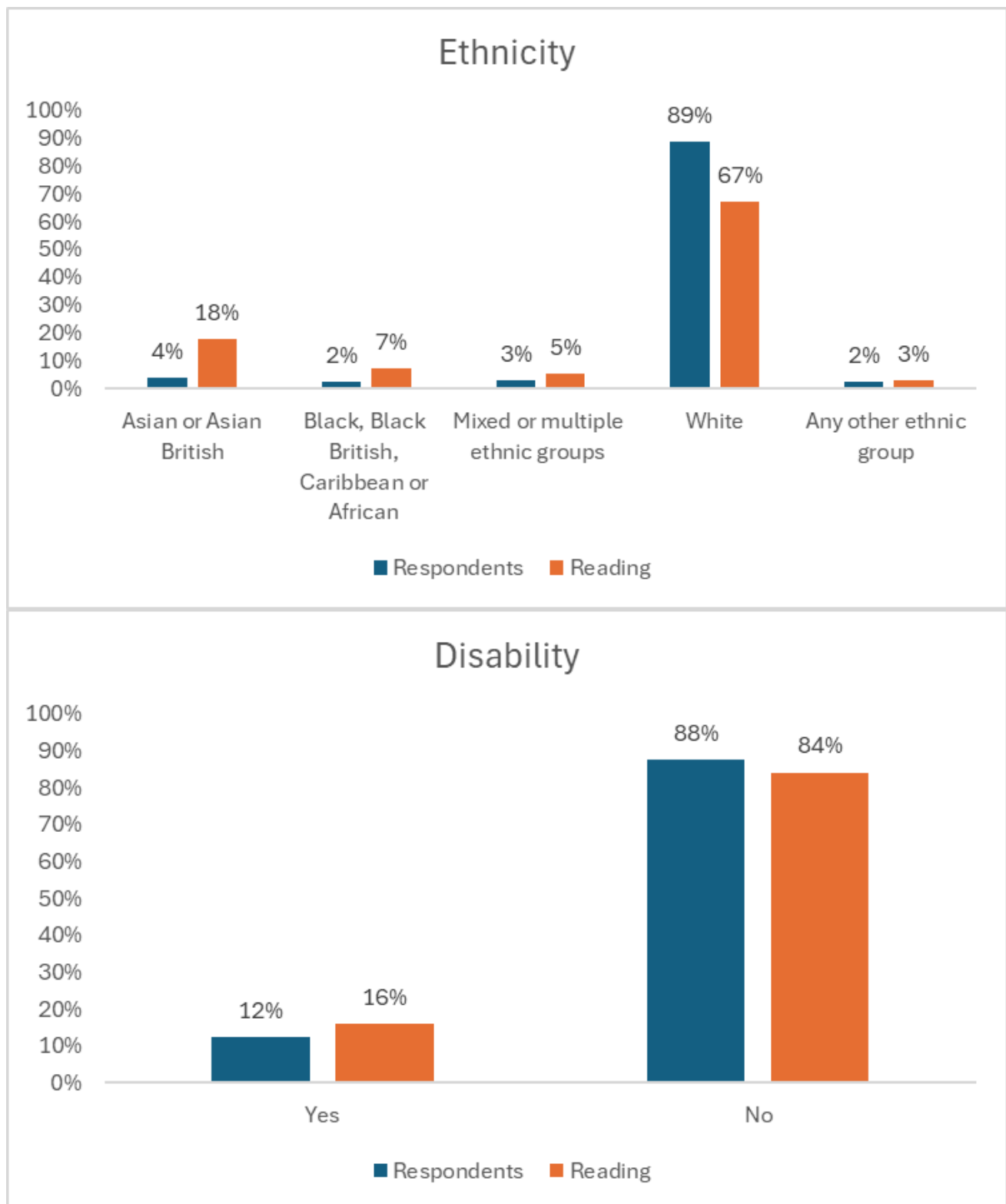
Respondents also made a number of comments about the wording of the priorities and the specific objectives set out in the plan. These include helpful suggestions for how the plan could be more clearly laid out or worded. Where possible we have made changes in response to these comments in the latest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

## Demographics









By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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