

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 20 OCTOBER 2025

Present: Councillor Leng (Vice-Chair in the Chair);
Councillors Leng (Vice-Chair), Barnett-Ward, Eden, Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Griffith, Nikulina, Rowland, Thompson, White and Yeo
Apologies: Councillor Terry

31. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

32. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Matt Shakespeare	Pangbourne, Tidmarsh and Sulham	Councillor Leng

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

33. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr White	Is bus travel up or down in Reading?	Cllr Ennis
2.	Cllr White	Pollution up on London Road	Cllr Ennis
3.	Cllr White	How many Reading children are impacted by two-child benefit cap?	Cllr Griffith

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

34. REVIEW OF THE ANTI-FRAUD, BRIBERY & CORRUPTION POLICY AND ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING POLICY, AND ADOPTION OF A FRAUD SANCTION AND PROSECUTION POLICY

The Committee considered a report setting out for approval the Council's updated Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Anti-Money Laundering Policy and a newly developed Fraud Sanction and Prosecution Policy. The following documents were attached to the report:

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- Appendix A - Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy
- Appendix B - Anti-Money Laundering Policy
- Appendix C - Fraud Sanction and Prosecution Policy

The report noted that the Council's Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy was designed to promote prevention, encourage detection, and establish a clear framework for investigation. The revised policy, attached to the report at Appendix A, aligned with best practice guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), the National Audit Office, and the Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy 2020 and had been updated to reflect the introduction of the new Failure to Prevent Fraud offence, which had come into force on 1 September 2025.

The report explained that local authorities were not legally required to comply with the Money Laundering Regulations 2017, but that CIPFA guidance recommended that councils adopted the principles of the legislation, given its relevance to certain areas of local government activity. Accordingly, the Council had a responsibility to implement internal procedures aimed at preventing the misuse of its services for money laundering purposes. An updated Anti-Money Laundering Policy, attached to the report at Appendix B, would help staff recognise and respond to potentially suspicious transactions encountered in the course of their duties. The policy outlined a clear process for reporting concerns to a designated officer for assessment and, where appropriate, escalation to the relevant authorities.

The report noted that if the Council was to be effective in preventing and deterring fraud and corruption it was essential that it had in place a transparent response that reinforced the message that acts of fraud committed against the Council would be dealt with robustly. The proposed Fraud Sanction and Prosecution Policy, attached to the report at Appendix C, showed that fraud would not be tolerated and indicated how those who committed fraud against the Council could expect to be dealt with. The Policy also acted as a guide and procedural note on how and when certain sanctions might be applied and who key decision makers were. The report also set out arrangements for publication, training and awareness to embed the updated and new policies.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Council's revised Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy, as attached to the report at Appendix A, be approved;**
- (2) That the Council's revised Anti-Money Laundering Policy, as attached to the report at Appendix B, be approved;**
- (3) That the new Fraud Sanction and Prosecution Policy, as attached to the report at Appendix C, be adopted.**

35. UPDATE TO THE COUNCIL'S ADVERTISING POLICY

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The Committee considered a report proposing an update to the Council's Advertising Policy which would introduce restrictions on the advertising and promotion of High Fat, Salt and Sugar (HFSS) products across Council-owned and contracted advertising spaces. An Equality Impact Assessment was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and the Council's Advertising Policy attached to the report at Appendix 2. Also attached to the report was a confidential financial annex which contained exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

The report explained that the proposed change aimed to reduce exposure to unhealthy food marketing and encourage the promotion of healthier alternatives. The update would bring Reading in line with best practice adopted by other local authorities and demonstrate a clear commitment to a Health in All Policies approach with a Policy that accounted for the impact of its decisions on the health of the local population, particularly neighbourhoods which were exposed to the higher intensity promotion of these potentially harmful products. Evidence showed that HFSS products were disproportionately marketed in low-income communities, contributing to health inequalities and poor dietary outcomes. By updating its Advertising Policy, the Council could take a proactive step toward creating healthier environments, supporting residents to make healthier choices, and reducing inequalities in health and life expectancy. The revised Policy was not intended to ban brands or businesses, but rather to encourage the advertising of products that supported healthier choices and did not contribute to poor health outcomes for our residents.

The report noted that the proposed change would apply to both Council-issued licenses for advertising on assets such as roundabouts, lamp posts, vehicles, and the Council website, as well as advertising managed by third-party agents on Council assets, where the Council did not have a direct commercial relationship with the advertiser. At the meeting it was recommended that additional wording be added to Part 1 Section 3.9 and Part 2 Section 3.11 of the proposed Advertising Policy to state that 'Advertising will adhere to Council policy guidance.'. This would allow officers to develop and publish supplementary policy guidance that advertisers must follow, ensuring clarity and consistency in implementation.

Resolved –

- (1) That the content of the report, particularly the trend towards local authorities taking action to protect the health of people living in lower income neighbourhoods, be noted;**
- (2) That the proposed amendment to the Reading Borough Council Advertising Policy for all Council sold advertising opportunities within the borough, including through any Council letting or leasing arrangements, be agreed as set out at Appendix 2, with the additional wording proposed at the meeting;**
- (3) That it be noted that there would be a phased implementation, as and when existing contractual and property arrangements came up for renewal.**

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(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.10 pm)