

To: Councillor Dennis (Chair)  
Councillors Hoskin, Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-  
Ward, Cresswell, Cross, Gavin, Hacker, Keane,  
McEwan, Naz, Nikulina, Rowland, Stevens,  
Thompson and Yeo

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4 November 2025

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**NOTICE OF MEETING - HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 12 NOVEMBER 2025**

A meeting of the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee will be held on Wednesday, 12 November 2025 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

	<u>WARDS AFFECTED</u>	<u>Page No</u>
<b>1. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>		
<b>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>		
Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the items for consideration.		
<b>3. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS &amp; LEISURE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 JULY 2025</b>		<b>5 - 12</b>
<b>4. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES</b>		<b>13 - 24</b>
Minutes of the Community Safety Partnership Meetings held on 3 April and 17 July 2025.		
<b>5. PUBLIC PETITIONS &amp; QUESTIONS</b>		
Petitions and Questions in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been received by the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services no later than 12 noon four clear working days before the meeting.		
<b>6. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS</b>		

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Questions in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been submitted in writing and received by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.

**7. READING FESTIVAL UPDATE**

An update on Reading Festival 2025.

**8. STUDIO THEATRE AT THE HEXAGON**

**25 - 30**

A report informing the Committee on progress on the new Studio Theatre at The Hexagon.

**9. READING LIBRARIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES/THEMES 2025-2029**

**31 - 60**

This report seeks endorsement of the strategic principles/themes for library improvement following consultation.

**10. HIGHWAYS ASSET MANAGEMENT 2025/26 UPDATE REPORT**

**61 - 78**

This report informs the Committee of the Annual Status Options Report for the condition of carriageways, footways and bridges and proposes changes to the Highway Gully Cleaning Regime.

**11. WINTER MAINTENANCE SERVICE PLAN 2025-26**

**79 - 132**

This report informs the Committee of the output of the Winter Service Plan 2024-25 and the outcome of a review of that plan, and seeks approval for the Winter Service Plan 2025-26.

**12. READING BOROUGH COUNCIL'S LANDLORD SERVICES - APRIL TO JULY 2025 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

**133 - 170**

This report provides an update on the performance of Reading Borough Council's Housing Landlord Services up to and including July 2025.

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# Agenda Item 3

## HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 9 JULY 2025

**Present:** Councillor Dennis (Chair), Ayub, Barnett-Ward, Cresswell, Cross, Gavin, Hoskin, Keane, McEwan, Naz, Rowland, Thompson and Yeo.

**Apologies:** Councillor Ballsdon, Hacker, Nikulina and Stevens

### 1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of 11 March 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.

### 2. DELEGATED DECISIONS

**Resolved - That the outstanding delegated decisions be noted.**

### 3. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meeting were submitted:

Community Safety Partnership – 20 February 2025.

**Resolved - That the Minutes be received.**

### 4. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
Jonathan Moore	Litter in the Kensington Park Area	Cllr Rowland
Richard Wong	Environmental Enforcement Partnership	Cllr Rowland
Cllr Cresswell	Footpath 15 linking Southcote Lock to Cottage Lane	Cllr Rowland

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

### 5. GLL ANNUAL REPORT JANUARY 2024 - DECEMBER 2024

Further to Minute 21 of the meeting held on 21 February 2024, the Committee considered a report providing an update on the performance and delivery of Leisure Services and development of new facilities by Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL). Craig Woodward and Stephanie Smith of GLL attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the annual report. The report set out the following priorities for 2025:

- Increase physical activity, reduce obesity and widen participation in the local population;
- Educate participants on healthy eating habits and sustainable weight management;
- Foster a sense of community through group activities and social support;
- Enhance mental well-being by providing a positive outlet for stress and anxiety;

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- Financial sustainability.

The report explained that the Council's £40m investment programme in leisure provision had included further significant works to the leisure centres this year. Structural repairs to the pool tank and the upgrade of the swimming pool and associated changing areas at South Reading Leisure Centre had been completed. The new swimming pool, diving pool and splash pad at Rivermead Leisure Centre had been completed and since reopening to the public in June 2024 the Leisure Centres had attracted over one million visitors. The Council had also successfully applied to the Swimming Pool Support Fund for a capital grant to help improve energy efficiency at Meadway Sports Centre and had been awarded £29,000 to cover the cost of replacing the swimming pool hall windows and pool cover in February 2025. The Artificial Turf Pitch at Rivermead had been refurbished in August 2024 and a significant increase in use had been observed. Formal comparison of user numbers would be made at the end of the winter season. The Stadium track lights and outdoor sport court lights at Palmer Park Leisure Centre and Stadium had been replaced in October 2024.

GLL was required to obtain Quest accreditation for quality assurance and continuous improvement and maintain it throughout the contract period, with 'Good' being the quality management target. Palmer Park Sports Stadium and Rivermead Leisure Centre had been audited by Quest this year and had received scores of "Excellent" and 'Very Good,' respectively. South Reading Leisure Centre and Meadway Sports Centres were due to be audited in Summer/Autumn 2025 and were aiming for 'Good'.

Use of the centres continued to grow as new facilities opened, and service improvements were made. GLL continued to broaden the range of services being provided including:

- the Healthwise Programme to increase participation by underrepresented groups and those with specific health conditions;
- developing partnerships locally with schools and other community organisations to increase participation in physical activity beyond the boundary of the leisure centres;
- improving the quality of customer service;
- improving data collection and analysis to measure the impact of the services provided and to engage and increase participation by underrepresented groups, reflecting the demographics of Reading.

The Committee discussed the presentation and took the opportunity to ask further questions of GLL.

**AGREED:**

- (1) That the report and the presentation by GLL in respect of the operation of the leisure contract be noted;**
- (2) That the following be noted:**
  - (a) The opening of the new swimming pools at Rivermead Leisure Centre in June 2024;**

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- (b) The successful refurbishment of changing rooms, pool tank, reception area plus relocation of Reading Football Club Community Trust to South Reading Leisure Centre;
- (c) That the new and improved leisure facilities welcomed over 1,000,000 visitors in 2024;

(3) That the priorities for 2025-26 as set out in the report be endorsed.

**6. RBC LANDLORD SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT - YEAR END UPDATE 2024-25**

The Committee received an update on the Housing Landlord Service performance and key achievements during the 2025-25 financial year. The report provided assurance that Reading's Housing Landlord Services was delivering the strategic objective of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 to deliver improved outcomes for current and future tenants of social housing against the following five consumer standards:

- Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- Safety and Quality Standard
- Tenancy Standard
- Transparency, Influence and Accountability (including Tenant Satisfaction Measures)
- Consumer standards code of practice

The report also set out details of key achievements during 2023-24, tenant complaints, the tenant satisfaction survey and tenant satisfaction measures, and the Service Improvement Plan.

The Committee noted that following the outcome of the Council's Regulator of Social Housing Inspection published in April 2025 the service was updating its existing improvement plan entitled 'Building Communities, Empowering Lives Improvement Plan' to fully address the findings of the inspection process and agree priority areas for rapid improvement with the Regulator. The service was meeting with the Regulator of Social Housing throughout June and July to finalise the priorities, agree milestones and realistic timescales to ensure sustainable improvements are made. Thereafter the service would engage in monthly meetings with the Regulator to monitor progress and report to the Committee on an ongoing basis.

The Committee also noted that it would be helpful for a cross-party working group to be set up that would allow all Committee members to understand the issues faced by the service and the actions being taken to address those issues.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the Year End position for the Housing Landlord Service Performance for 2024-25 be noted;
- (2) That the Chair of the Committee and the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care investigate the feasibility of setting up a cross-party working group to understand the issues facing the Housing Landlord Service and the actions being taken to resolve those issues.

## 7. RBC TENANCY AGREEMENT

The Committee considered a report that set out proposed changes to the Council's current tenancy agreement, which had last been updated in 2016 and was due for renewal in light of legal changes, sector-wide learning and best practice gathered from other Local Authorities.

The report explained that the Council had taken a collaborative approach with tenants, to ensure that all key aspects of the Landlord functions were appropriately covered in the Agreement with all aspects in one place for the ease of Tenants. The proposed changes aimed to better protect tenants and reflected modern expectations and responsibilities, particularly in areas such as Damp and Mould, tenancy fraud and gang-related activity. The majority of the new requirements and responsibilities would fall on the Council as a Landlord, rather than the tenants themselves.

The following documents were attached to the report:

Appendix 1: Summary of changes;  
Appendix 2: Preliminary Notice of Variation;  
Appendix 3: New Tenancy Agreement.

**Resolved:** That the Tenancy Agreement attached at Appendix 3 to the report be approved for implementation with tenants on 15 September 2025.

## 8. TENANT ACCESSIBILITY POLICY 2025

The Committee received a report requesting approval for the implementation of a Council-wide Tenant Accessibility Policy in response to the new Consumer Standards introduced by the Regulator for Social Housing set out in the Transparency, Influence & Accountability Standard. The Tenant Accessibility Policy was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the Tenant Accessibility Policy aimed to ensure that tenants had equal access to the Council's services and that their diverse needs were addressed. The Policy was designed to ensure that all tenants, regardless of their background, abilities, or personal circumstances, had equal and meaningful access to the Council's Housing and Landlord services, recognised the diversity of the community and affirmed the Council's commitment to inclusivity by actively identifying and addressing barriers that might prevent individuals from engaging with services. The report noted that accessibility was not limited to physical access, but encompassed communication, digital inclusion, cultural sensitivity, and the adaptability of services to meet a wide range of needs. The Policy aimed to create an environment where every tenant felt seen, heard, and supported by providing information in multiple formats and languages, offering support for tenants with disabilities and designing services that were intuitive and user-friendly.

**Resolved:**

(1) That the Tenant Accessibility Policy 2025 be approved for implementation across the Council as outlined in Appendix 1;

(2) That the ambition to work with external partners and contractors, including the commissioned PFI, in supporting the Council's tenants to adopt the principles of the Policy be endorsed.

## 9. PROPOSAL TO IMPLEMENT A BOROUGH-WIDE PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER

The Committee considered a report setting out the case to introduce a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in Reading, the lessons learnt from the previous PSPO that had been introduced in 2018 and the statutory requirements of the process to implement a PSPO, including conducting a public consultation. Colin Hudson, Thames Valley Police, attended the meeting alongside officers to present the report.

The report explained that Reading's last PSPO, which had been introduced in 2018, had lapsed in 2021 due to limited enforcement of the Order and inconsistent recording of its use and of incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) relating to the Order. Feedback from Partners had determined, some of the conditions were seen as being too broad and too subjective, for example, use of the term 'aggressive begging'. As well as limited enforcement, the lack of a formal monitoring mechanism and means to record its use, had also meant that where the PSPO was being used, there was no data to evidence its use and to support considering renewing some of the conditions and as a result, the Order had come to an end.

The report further explained that ASB in the public realm continued to be an issue. Over the last 12 months, issues had repeatedly been raised around on-street begging, street drinking and the anti-social use of e-scooters and e-bikes and it had been suggested by Officers from Thames Valley Police that a PSPO could be an additional tool to support the efforts to deal with these issues. Alongside this, the Council's Public Protection Service has also indicated that using a PSPO for dealing with Dog Control and Dog Fouling, as previously used in the last PSPO, would provide the Animal Warden with the means to take action against individuals when carrying out proactive work in the community.

The report proposed that there be one PSPO that would cover the whole Borough. It had been noted that when targeted action had been taken to address begging and street drinking in the town centre, there has been evidence that the issues had been displaced into other neighbourhoods, further impacting issues that already existed. The anti-social use of e-scooters and e-bikes were boroughwide issues, and dog control and dog fouling impacted parks and open spaces across the town. It was proposed that this Order would be for the maximum period of three years, although this could be varied or extended, following public consultation, during the time the Order was in place.

The Committee discussed the proposal and expressed concern regarding the lack of clarity around the police powers in respect of legal and illegal e-bikes, and the circumstances in which they might be used. There was a corresponding lack of clarity around the definitions of anti-social behaviour around e-bikes and e-scooters.

### Resolved:

(1) That the proposal for a Public Spaces Protection Order in Reading be noted;

- (2) That a public consultation be undertaken on the proposal to implement a Public Spaces Protection Order in Reading;
- (3) That officers, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety and Thames Valley Police, be authorised to amend the consultation documents to provide further clarity around definitions of and police powers regarding e-bikes and anti-social behaviour before the consultation began;
- (4) That following the consultation a report be brought back to the Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee on 12 November 2025, detailing consultation feedback with recommendations on implementing any new restrictions or amendments.

#### **10. ANNUAL REPORT (EXECUTIVE SUMMARY) - READING COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP**

The Committee received a report providing an overview of the work of Reading's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to address the priorities identified in Reading's Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy 2023-2026. The report explained that this was the first update that had been produced by the CSP, and it covered the considerable work that had been undertaken over the last two years to tackle the CSP's Strategic Priorities. There would be annual reports to the Committee going forward. The Reading Community Safety Partnership Performance Framework was attached to the report at Appendix 1. The report set out several key highlights, including:

- An increase in the number of residents who told us they felt safe,
- Expanded provision and service offers to the public
- Increased involvement of the public, including children, in local meetings and problem solving
- High impact community events linked to crime reduction.

The report explained that over the last five years there had been a 10.82% increase in crime. However, crime had started to fall steadily in 2022 and there had been a reduction in overall crime – down 1.58% in 2023, and 6.05% in 2024. Reading had performed better than its statistical neighbours, ranking the 4th lowest rate of offences out of 14 comparable Community Safety Partnerships.

The report also explained that it was important to understand how residents felt about crime and safety. The CSP had relied on regular Community Safety Surveys, which allowed the CSP to better understand public perceptions of crime and safety, which could then help local partnership organisations to deliver better services to residents. The 2024 survey had been completed by 957 residents (up from 606 in 2023) and when asked 'Do you think Reading is a safe place?' 50.1% of respondents felt safe in Reading in 2024, compared to 44.8% in 2023, a 5.2% improvement over 12 months. However, when asked if crime has increased in their neighbourhood 50.0% of residents reported an increase in 2024, compared to 46.53% of residents in 2023. This was a 3.47% increase, which highlighted that feelings of safety do not necessarily align with perceptions or experience of crime. Similarly, resident's perceptions of anti-social behaviour in the last 12 months had increased by 4.27% from 53.65% in 2023 to 57.9% in 2024.

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The report set out the activities that had been undertaken against the CSP's priorities between April 2023 and March 2025:

- Reducing crime in the top crime-generating neighbourhoods
- Improving the way the Community Safety Partnership worked with communities to tackle anti-social behaviour and hate crime.
- Reducing community-based drug related activity
- Reducing knife violence, including the carrying of blades and their use in crime.
- Tackling organised crime gangs transporting illegal drugs across Reading's borders, also known as 'county lines' offending
- Improving safety for women in public places and reducing sexually focused crimes and anti-social behaviour
- Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation

The report also detailed those activities for 2025/26 which were scheduled or already underway and were centred on work with children and young people, training on Hate Crime, support for victim-survivors of domestic abuse and vulnerable people, continuing work with residents and work to undertake assessments leading to the new strategies for 2026-2029.

### **Resolved -**

- (1) **That the update on the activities and impact of the Reading Community Safety Partnership (April 2023 to March 2025) be noted;**
- (2) **That the performance of the Reading Community Safety Partnership in reducing crime (April 2023 and March 2025) be noted.**

## **11. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND HATE INCIDENT POLICY**

The Committee received a report which explained that further to the introduction of new Consumer Standards relating to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and Hate, by the Regulator for Social Housing in 2024, the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy had been reviewed and updated. The updated Policy was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the Policy had retained its focus on providing a clear statement on the Council's approach to dealing with ASB and Hate reported by residents and how it would work with residents and partner agencies to deal with incidents. Whilst the amendments were in the main minor, they strengthened the Council's victim-centred approach to dealing with ASB and Hate incidents and set out a service learning and improvement model which would provide a more robust approach to making sure ASB and Hate was being responded to in line with the associated procedures and leading to an increase in positive outcomes for victims and affected communities.

**Resolved: That the updated Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Policy attached at Appendix 1 to the report be noted.**

## **12. PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY 2021-2036 PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report giving an update on the implementation of the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), which had been approved by Committee on 10 November 2021 (Minute 26 refers), and which identified expected changes to meet demand for certain pitch-based sports. The Council was committed to endeavour to

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provide sufficient sports pitches, subject to available funding, to accommodate the predicted demand up to 2036 for Football, Cricket, Rugby, Hockey, Lacrosse, Gaelic Football and Australian Rules Football.

The report explained that football was by far the sport played by the greatest number of participants, with circa 284 teams based in Reading, and that football played by female players continued to see the largest growth. Demand for football pitches fluctuated from year to year and small changes were being proposed to the format of youth football. The supply of pitches had been tailored to meet the demand that was being experienced and was expected in the forthcoming season. Space for pitches was retained where current demand was less than anticipated in the longer term. Changes made and progress made in delivering the strategy are identified in Appendix 1 to the report.

The report confirmed that implementation of the Playing Pitch Strategy was being delivered as anticipated, and highlighted the achievements, progress to date and future plans for football, cricket, rugby union, hockey, artificial pitches and provision for Gaelic Football, Australian Rules Football and Lacrosse.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the ongoing implementation of the Playing Pitch Strategy leading to year-on-year improvements in provision including converting some adult football pitches to junior pitches at Cintra Park be noted;**
- (2) That the demand for cricket pitches be revisited with the Berkshire Cricket Foundation as squares were reopened over the next three years as demand could change as more local facilities became available;**
- (3) That sports other than cricket and football continue to be accommodated in existing provision in and around Reading.**

(The meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.37 pm).

# Agenda Item 4

## COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP – 3 APRIL 2025

### Present:

Cllr Karen Rowland	Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety, RBC (Vice Chair)
Cllr Terry	Leader, RBC
John Ennis	Probation
Colin Hudson	Thames Valley Police (Chair)
Melissa Wise	Executive Director of Social Care and Health
Jo Middlemass	Community Safety and Enablement Manager, RBC
Jason Murphy	Community Safety, RBC
Matt Golledge	RBC
Jonny Bradish	Brighter Futures for Children
Michael Greenway	TVP
Helen Hathaway	Safer Neighbourhoods Forum
Rachel Spencer	RVA
Sally Anderson	RBC
Kathy Kelly	NHS
James Tribe	TVP
Nick Haskins	Safer Neighbourhood Forum
Vicky Pitchforth	RBC
Julie Quarmby	Committee Services, RBC

### Apologies:

Emma Gee	RBC
Alastair Harsant	Brighter Futures for Children
Bryony Hall	RBC
Zoe Hanim	Prevent/Channel Lead, RBC
Ollie Foxell	Brighter Futures for Children
Sabina Cannell	PACT
Carly Newman	Young Voices
Gail Muirhead	Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Stephen Leonard	Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Neil Whiteman	Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Emma Tompkins	TVP
Lynne Mason	RBC
Christine Lalley	

## 1. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

Councillor Rowland reported that agenda item 7 (Fire Hub Updates) would be deferred to the next meeting.

Councillor Rowland reminded partners to nominate representatives for the Closure Order Review Task and Finish Group and Sex Worker Action Group. Jason Murphy would send reminders to the partners that had yet to make nominations.

## 2. WHOLE YEAR DATA REPORT AND STATUS OF PERFORMANCE GROUP

Jason Murphy gave a presentation on the latest whole-year data, which was compared to statistical, rather than geographical, neighbours. The general trend was positive and the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) had risen in the England rankings. Jason explained

that while various programmes had led to improvements in areas such as shoplifting and drug related offences, this was not reflected in the public perception of crime in the area and further work would be needed to address this disconnect.

The CSP noted that a dedicated performance group would be set up to meet quarterly and discuss the data in depth before then reporting to the CSP meetings. Partners were asked to nominate appropriate representatives for the Performance Group. The CSP also asked the Performance Group to particularly analyse the data around hate crime and drug related crime, and members would put forward any other areas for in-depth consideration.

Colin Hudson added that the Serious Violence Working Group was in its early stages and would welcome the input of relevant data from the Performance Group, although he emphasised the need for the groups' Terms of Reference to be clearly defined to prevent duplication and confusion.

**AGREED:**

- (1) That the position be noted.**
- (2) That CSP Members provide an indication of what data was available and who would attend a performance group**
- (3) That CSP Members submit any comments on the Terms of Reference which would be circulated after the meeting**

**3. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER - PROPOSED**

Jo Middlemass gave a presentation on proposals for Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) in Reading which covered:

- What is a PSPO?
- What is a breach of a PSPO?
- The current position;
- The proposed focus of the proposed PSPOs;
- The proposed timetable.

Colin Hudson explained that PSPOs could be very useful and that enforcement could be anything from people surrendering alcohol when requested by the police to being taken to court. He added that new technology would assist in improving the accuracy of recording the use of PSPOs.

Rachel Spencer welcomed the proposals, with their emphasis on protecting the vulnerable in the community, but expressed concern that concentrating actions in the town centre could just push the problems into other parts of Reading. Jo Middlemass explained that it might be possible to add some of the PSPO functions to the BID wardens in the town centre.

Matt Golledge reported that there were currently no powers relating to dog fouling in the PSPO, and hoped that these functions could be added to the role of the Council's animal warden. He also noted that dog fouling was very difficult to enforce as someone had to be there when the owner failed to pick up and dispose of the waste responsibly.

**AGREED: That the position be noted;**

#### **4. PREVENTION PARTNERSHIPS**

Further to Minute 11 of the meeting held on 20 February 2025, Jason Murphy, gave an update on Prevention Partnerships, including:

- The Victim Referral Unit would be absorbed into the Berkshire Unitary Authorities and the definition would be expanded.
- There were still a significant number of unknowns including the timeline, budget and definitions.
- Many services were unaware of the proposals.
- PCC funding would continue, but there needed to be clarity to ensure the PCC and Home Office processes and activities were aligned.
- It would be essential for all partners to work together rather than in isolation.
- Funding and models were available for Delivering Safer Streets, Preventing Knife Crime and Young Futures.
- Key tasks included establishing a local Prevention Partnership which should meet on a fortnightly basis, identifying resources and identifying a data resource to track, monitor and evaluate the impact of support to children in receipt of transitional funding.

The CSP noted that this was a programme with very broad definitions and expressed concern that the Home Office had not worked closely with those who actually worked with children. There was a lack of clarity about how outcomes could be evidenced, given that the programme was aimed at preventing something from happening. Jason Murphy would be arranging a meeting of the senior leaders from the Partnership as soon as possible.

**AGREED: That the position be noted.**

#### **5. PARTNERSHIP FUND**

Jason Murphy reported on the CSP funding from the PCC which was allocated to bids for initiatives that were compatible with the PCC Crime and Police Plan. The funding was not intended to cover core role and all scheme bids would be evaluated by the Community Safety Manager before being submitted to the PCC via an online portal. Jo Middlemass gave some suggestions for bids. Jo added that the partnership would need to prioritise all funding bids and also plan for funding bids that continued in or started in future years.

**AGREED: That the position be noted;**

#### **6. PREVENT**

**AGREED: That this item be deferred to the next meeting, to be held on 17 July 2025.**

#### **7. ANNUAL COMMUNITY SAFETY SURVEY AND ANNUAL REPORT**

Jo Middlemass reported that the Annual Community Safety Survey and the public version of the CSP Annual Report would be launched together on Monday 2 June 2025. Jason Murphy had reminded all of the partners to submit their contributions to the Annual Report as quickly as possible. Once the report had been completed, it would be circulated to the CSP for review and comments. Jo also explained that the Annual Survey would contain the same questions as previous years as this would help in the analysis of the data and identification of trends.

**AGREED: That the position be noted.**

## **8. FIRE HUB UPDATES**

**AGREED: That this item be deferred to the next meeting, to be held on 17 July 2025.**

## **9. STATUS OF PERFORMANCE GROUP**

See Item 2 above.

## **10. ANNUAL REPORT**

See Item 7 above.

## **11. DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEW UPDATE**

Jason Murphy reported that the Domestic Homicide Review was in its final stages of quality assurance following feedback. Once this had been completed appropriate officers could work with the impacted family and the review could be publicised.

**AGREED: That a further update be submitted to a future meeting of the Community Safety Partnership.**

## **12. YOUNG VOICES**

Jason Murphy reported that Young Voices achievements since the last meeting of the CSP included a very useful meeting with Reading Buses to discuss safety when using buses to travel to and from school and a display in the Digital Reading Exhibition at Reading Museum. Young Voices were planning to hold another summit, following the success of the previous event in 2024.

**AGREED: That representatives of Young Voices be invited to attend a future meeting of the Community Safety Partnership. Young Voices would be asking partners for updates on how Parks and Safety work was being progressed.**

## **13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(a) Councillor Rowland noted that there would be occasions when the CSP would need to discuss confidential items and that certain attendees who were not members of the main partner organisations might be asked to leave the meeting whilst these items were discussed. Such items would generally be put last on the agenda and officers would ensure that the agenda order would reflect the need to exclude attendees who were not members of the main partner organisations.

**AGREED: That the position be noted.**

(b) John Ennis reported that homelessness was often an issue to prison leavers and those on probation and asked if this could be added to a future agenda.

**AGREED: That Jo Middlemass arrange a meeting of representatives from appropriate partner bodies to discuss homelessness in relation to prison leavers and people on probation before submitting a report to the Community Safety Partnership.**

## **11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETING**

The next meetings for 2025/26 would take place on:

17 July 2025 (via Microsoft Teams)

25 September 2025

27 November 20245

19 February 2026

16 April 2026

All meetings start at 9.30am, venue to be confirmed.

(The meeting closed at 11.58 am)

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## COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP – 17 JULY 2025

### Present:

Cllr Karen Rowland	Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety, RBC (Chair)
Cllr Terry	Leader, RBC
Colin Hudson	Thames Valley Police (Vice-Chair)
Melissa Wise	Executive Director of Social Care and Health
Jo Middlemass	Community Safety and Enablement Manager, RBC
Jason Murphy	Community Safety, RBC
Matt Golledge	RBC
Zoe Hanim	Prevent/Channel Lead, RBC
Carly Newman	Young Voices
Lara Patel	Executive Director of Children's Services, Education and Early Help
Michael Greenway	OPCC
Laura Burgess	Probation Service
Rachel Spencer	RVA
Sally Anderson	RBC
Kathy Kelly	NHS
Umi Abdulmutwalib	RBC
Nick Haskins	Safer Neighbourhood Forum
Jason Kew	TVP
Drishi Dahiya	Young Voices
George Mathew	ACRE
Julie Quarmby	Committee Services, RBC

### Apologies:

Emma Gee	RBC
Alastair Harsant	Brighter Futures for Children
Bryony Hall	RBC
Ollie Foxell	Brighter Futures for Children
Sabina Cannell	PACT
Gail Muirhead	Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Stephen Leonard	Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Martin Chester	RBC
John Ennis	Probation Service
Emma Tompkins	TVP
Martin White	RBC
Chantal Foster	Probation
Hayley Berrington	Probation

## 1. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2025 were agreed as a correct record, subject to Councillor Rowland being listed as Chair, and Colin Hudson as Vice-Chair.

## 2. PREVENT UPDATE

Zoe Hanim gave a presentation on the progress made by Prevent during the current year and introduced the draft 2025-26 Prevent Plan, which would be submitted for agreement by the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) on 25 September 2025. Zoe explained that Reading was one of only two Councils to have achieved "Excelling against all benchmarks.

The presentation also set out key objective and actions for 2025-26 including engagement with communities and safeguarding individuals.

**AGREED:**

- (1) That the progress against the 2024-25 Action Plan be noted.**
- (2) That the Prevent Action Plan 2025-26 be submitted to the next meeting on 25 September 2025 for approval.**

**3. PCC UPDATES**

Mike Greenaway (OPCC) submitted a report updating the CSP on the OPCC, which covered the recent restructure, CSP funding, the Police and Crime Panel Review of Ant-Social Behaviour (ASB) and the Keeping the Town Centre Safe This Summer initiative. Mike also reported that the PCC had now published the Annual Report, which would be circulated to CSP members.

**AGREED: That the position be noted;**

**4. PREVENTION PARTNERSHIPS**

Further to Minute 4 of the meeting held on 3 April 2025, Jason Murphy reported that new guidance had been issued for Prevention Partnerships. This guidance concentrated on dealing with children who had slipped through the gaps and how they could be identified, with a focus on under 18s. There would be a multi-agency Panel, based on a remodelling of the Serious Violence Steering Group, which would discuss pathways for those children who had been identified as at risk. The Partnership would concentrate on helping young people who had been suspended from school, as they were seen as being at increased risk and would look at both diversion and deterrence methods,

**AGREED:**

- (1) That a further report on the remodelling of the Serious Violence Steering Group be submitted to the next CSP meeting on 25 September 2025;**
- (2) That the Prevent Partnership be a standing item on the CSP agenda.**

**5. DOMESTIC ABUSE UPDATE**

**JTAI**

Lara Patel reported on the recent Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to children at risk (unborn and up to the age of 7) that had been conducted during February and March 2025. Officers were working on action plans arising from the findings of the review which would be submitted to the Department for Education in August 2025.

**AGREED: That the position be noted.**

**REVIEW OF THE DOMESTIC ABUSE PARTENRSHIP BOARD**

Jo Middlemass reported that the Review of the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board was underway and that a further report with recommendations would be submitted to the CSP on 25 September 2025.

**AGREED: That the position be noted.**

## **DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEW**

Umi Abdulmutwalib updated the CSP on recent the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) which was now ready to be published. and reported that officers were continuing to support the victim's family. The long timescale had been challenging for all involved, including the Home Office Quality Assurance Board's delay in reviewing the DHR prior to publication. Umi added that all of the recommendations from the DHR had now been implemented.

Umi also informed the CSP that there had been another situation that could possibly lead to a DHR, and asked that a scoping review be set up as quickly as possible to agree the way forward. The review would need to be completed and the way forward agreed within four weeks, which would be before the next meeting of the CSP.

### **AGREED:**

- (1) That CSP write to the Home office expressing concern over the time taken by the Quality Assurance Board to assess the DHR;**
- (2) That the Action Plan and completed actions be endorsed;**
- (3) That a scoping review be undertaken and the recommendations circulated to CSP members for agreement before the next meeting.**

## **6. CSP ANNUAL REPORT 2023 AND 2024**

Jason Murphy reported that the CSP annual report had been endorsed by the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee at its meeting on 9 July 2025. Officers were completing a public version of the report to be published by the end of July 2025. Jason explained that the public's perception of levels of crime did not reflect the crime statistics or how safe people felt in their community, and added that this could be addressed by good communications explaining what had been achieved.

### **AGREED: That the position be noted.**

## **7. COMMUNICATIONS AND EVENTS**

Jason Murphy reported that to date there had been over 450 responses to the Community Safety Survey, and Young Voices had also received over 750 responses to the Youth Survey.

Jo Middlemass reported officers were creating a CSP branded area on the Council's website, concentrating on ASB, Domestic Violence and Unauthorised Encampments. There were also plans for a news section that could be used to highlight recent successes, work that had been carried out and upcoming events.

Jo Middlemass also reported that the ASB week held in June had been very successful and had brought together frontline officers, communities and residents.

### **AGREED: That the position be noted**

## **8. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER - CONSULTATION**

Further to Minute 3 of the meeting held on 3 April 2025, Jo Middlemass reported that the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee had considered the draft consultation document at its meeting on 9 July 2025. The consultation would be launched during week

commencing 21 July 2025 and would run for four weeks, with the results and recommendations being submitted back to the Committee on 12 November 2025.

**AGREED: That the position be noted.**

## **9. PERFORMANCE MEETING - APPROACH, CHAIRING AND SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND DATA REPORT**

Jason Murphy explained that the Data Performance Group had been established to discuss shared data in depth before reporting the high-level figures to CSP. The Group, which had a similar structure to West Berkshire and Wokingham, had met in early July and had agreed strategic priorities. The Group would schedule meetings to allow time for reports to feed into CSP meetings.

**AGREED: That the position be noted.**

## **10. SAFER STREETS UPDATE**

Colin Hudson circulated a letter from the Home Office to all Chief Constable and LA Chief Executives informing them of the Government's Keeping Town Centres Safe This Summer initiative that was part of the Safer Streets Mission. The letter set out activities to be undertaken during the summer to increase town centre safety including tackling shoplifting, drugs, organised groups and crime, use of e-bikes/scooters and food deliveries. Police would be expected to have a visible presence in the town centre, using the fines to demonstrate tangible actions. Thames Valley Police were also planning vigilant deployment to target Violence Against Women and Girls, particularly around Reading's night-time economy. There was an expectation that Police would work with relevant partners to achieve results.

Jason Kew added that the Combatting Drugs Partnership would also be tackling some of the problems within the town centre, such as drug use, as this could be linked to acquisitive crime such as shoplifting and aggressive begging.

**AGREED: That the position be noted.**

## **11. PARTNER UPDATES**

### **Safer Neighbourhood Forums**

Nick Haskin reported that the Safer Neighbourhood Forums were working with various residents Associations. There was also a focus on water safety.

### **Young Voices**

Carly Newman reported that Young Voices had had been working with young people and schools to encourage responses to the Youth Survey. The next Youth Summit, to be held in November 2025, would then concentrate on the key themes that arose from the responses to the survey. Young Voices were also looking at ways to address areas of concern for young people including dealing with issues that had started in-person but that had then escalated online, the impact of drug dealing, ASB, use of e-bikes and poor lighting in public spaces, the impact of feeling afraid in the journey to school and its effect on learning and knowing where to find safe spaces in the town centre.

## **Probation Service**

Laura Burgess reported that the release of prisoners would be starting soon. The service was releasing prisoners in tranches and there not great numbers involved, with approximately 17 individuals across Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham.

## **Thames Valley Police**

Colin Hudson reported that there had been a 40% reduction in knife crime in Reading, and that there had also been a decrease in burglary. There had been a slight increase in low level ASB in Tilehurst and Norcot, although high level impact ASB was decreasing. Police were preparing for possible increases relating to Reading Festival.

## **Integrated Care Board**

Kathy Kelly reported that the ICB was in the process of restructuring, and would form the Thames Valley ICB together with Frimley Hospital. The restructure would take a significant amount of time, and could affect staff and teams due to uncertainty about the future.

## **ACRE**

George Mathew reports that ACRE was working well with TVP to explain the law to residents who had English as an Additional Language. A Race Action Plan was being put in place to encourage people to feel that they could have a career in the police.

**AGREED: That the updates be noted.**

## **12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Councillor Rowland noted that this would be Jason Murphy's last CSP meeting as he was starting a new job

**AGREED: That Jason Murphy be thanked for his hard work and commitment to the Community Safety Partnership and wished him well for the future.**

## **13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETING**

The next meetings for 2025/26 would take place on:

25 September 2025 (Mayor's Parlour)  
27 November 20245  
19 February 2026  
16 April 2026

All meetings start at 9.30am, venue to be confirmed.

(The meeting closed at 12.49 pm)

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<b>Title</b>	Studio Theatre at the Hexagon
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report</b>	Emma Gee, Executive Director Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services
<b>Report author</b>	John Luther, Artistic Director. Donna Pentelow, Assistant Director of Culture
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Cllr Adele Barnett-Ward
<b>Council priority</b>	Secure Reading's economic & cultural success
<b>Recommendations</b>	To note the progress of the new Studio Theatre at the Hexagon, scheduled to open in spring 2027.

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Work is progressing in earnest on the new Studio Theatre at the Hexagon in accordance with the construction programme. The Studio Theatre is expected to open to the public in spring 2027.
- 1.2. Over the summer, the back of house was demolished and a new temporary back of house was installed. Work is happening to provide a new kitchen that will serve the Hexagon as well as the Studio Theatre, and this is anticipated to open in autumn this year.
- 1.3. The operational and business planning to programme the Hexagon and Studio Theatre from 2027 as complementary venues will start in the coming months.
- 1.4. The proposed Studio Theatre will be state of the art and is anticipated to provide a circa 200 seat flexible theatre (circa 300 standing) with step free access, accessible toilets on all floors, hearing loops, bar and catering facilities. The Studio Theatre will be easily accessible from town centre transport links, offering a better customer experience and an improved operational environment for visiting companies, with state of the art facilities and logistics.

## 2. Policy Context

- 2.1. At Policy Committee on 11 July 2022, the Council approved its vision for the “*Culture and Community at Minster Quarter*” and resolved to submit a bid to Round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF).
- 2.2. The vision was to regenerate the Minster Quarter area into ‘a high quality, sustainable and inclusive location that has Reading people, businesses and arts, culture, and community at its heart. The regeneration will offer new opportunities for urban living and create a new urban quarter which offers a mix of tenures alongside a commercial, arts and cultural offer that will re-invigorate the public realm and breathe new life into this historic quarter of the town.’

- 2.3. The LUF bid “*Culture and Community at Minster Quarter*” focused on the cultural regeneration of the Minster Quarter and Bridge Street area through the: provision of discovery and learning in an accessible and central location in Reading; investment in the enhancement of the cultural offer at the Hexagon Theatre through the provision of a new studio theatre (the subject of this report); and, the provision of a new library which will be located in the current Civic Offices site in Bridge Street.
- 2.4. The LUF bid was submitted in July 2022 and confirmation of the award of funding was received in January 2023. In February 2023, Policy Committee approved the LUF budget for the Hexagon Studio Theatre project.
- 2.5. The bid highlighted the economic, social and cultural benefits of having a studio theatre attached to the Hexagon. Throughout the latter design stages additional benefits were identified including redesigning the back of house and main theatre “get in” for shows off the IDR to provide better access to the Hexagon for articulated vehicles; and, providing level step free access to The Hexagon from the podium of Queens Walk, improving both access to and visibility of the Hexagon, thus benefitting audiences that currently find access difficult.
- 2.6. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28, one of which is to Secure Reading's economic and cultural success. Delivering the new Studio Theatre at the Hexagon aims to deliver against this priority.

### **3. The Studio Theatre at the Hexagon**

#### **Planning and Procurement**

- 3.1. Following the award of funding in January 2023, work began to appoint a multi-disciplinary team. In July 2023 Equals Consulting were appointed as project managers and Haworth Tomkins as Lead Architect.
- 3.2. Planning consent was achieved in March 2024. In summer 2024 it became apparent that the approved plans were not deliverable due to significantly increased costs associated with materials and inflation. As a result, the plans were revisited and the revised plans for the Studio Theatre and community space were approved by the planning applications committee in January 2025.
- 3.3. Procurement for a new contractor happened in spring 2025 and, in early summer, Feltham Construction Ltd were appointed as the main contractor. During August 2025 once the Hexagon closed for its annual summer recess, the back of house was demolished to make way for the new studio theatre. Temporary back of house units were installed to provide backstage facilities for visiting artists. Work also started on building a new kitchen to serve both the Hexagon and Studio Theatre and will open in the autumn. Throughout the build, the Hexagon will remain open and fully operational. The new Studio Theatre is anticipated to open to the public in spring 2027.

#### **Outputs and Design**

- 3.4. The design and location of the Studio Theatre will provide:
  - easy access from the town centre transport links with better customer experience and an improved operational environment for visiting companies, with state of the art facilities and improved logistics
  - circa 200 seat flexible theatre (circa 300 standing) with step free access, accessible toilets on all floors, hearing loops, bar and catering facilities.
  - connectivity to The Hexagon and with the footfall that provides in the central location of Reading will deliver a strategic objective of the Council of being a key cultural anchor of the Broad St Mall and Minster Quarter developments as well as the town centre.

- improved backstage facilities for performers and crews; and, an upgraded technical area and entrance, which is geared towards and expected to attract quality productions of all sizes. There will be an accessible entrance via Queen's Walk into the Studio Theatre adjacent to the Hexagon.
- a spacious foyer with a bar and an outside area for visitors to enjoy; and, designed to be flexible, the foyer will transform into a rehearsal and community space when performances are not scheduled, offering an alternative space in the local arts scene.

## **Programme**

- 3.5. As part of the funding bid, the Studio Theatre programme will be circa 70% professional and circa 30% amateur/community, focussed on touring programme, live music, comedy, professional theatre, spoken word (talks/book launches etc) amateur theatre/music, schools' events and local arts and community groups.
- 3.6. Access is at the heart of the Studio Theatre, and the Council is keen to continue working with disabled and neurodivergent artists and audiences, who would benefit from the accessible WCs and accessible spaces and seating. The Studio Theatre design provides this opportunity with accessible space to stage work by and for under-represented groups. It also provides the opportunity to and builds on successful collaborations with local and national organisations such as Make/Sense Theatre, the Younger People With Dementia Harmony Choir (for people living with Dementia and their loved ones) and Frozen Light, who stage multi-sensory theatre for audiences with profound and multiple learning disabilities.
- 3.7. The new Studio Theatre at the Hexagon will provide more wheelchair positions at both seating levels, accessible toilets both front and back of house, and a hearing loop. Parking is available nearby at public car parks as well as dedicated disabled parking spaces and drop off.
- 3.8. The Hexagon currently suffers from lack of break out and rehearsal spaces for larger events and conferences, the linkage between the two auditoriums enables a more flexible campus for both spaces to take advantage of increased and improved bar, back of house and foyer spaces. With access to a larger space including the main Hexagon building, there is also the opportunity to explore more collaborations with other creative organisations in Reading.

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

- 4.1. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. These priorities are:
  - 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
- 4.2. In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:
  - Putting residents first
  - Building on strong foundations
  - Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
  - Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
  - Being proudly ambitious for Reading

- 4.3. This proposal supports the Council plan priority to Secure Reading's economic and cultural success. The new Studio Theatre will complement the Hexagon to create a brand new cultural campus at the heart of the Minster Quarter Central development.
- 4.4. Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website - [Council plan - Reading Borough Council](#). These priorities and the Council Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

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

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2. As part of the planning process a detailed sustainability statement was completed. The new Studio theatre has been designed to Breeam Excellent standards. The scheme incorporates a decarbonisation initiative to deliver ground source heat pumps, in place of gas boilers, to reduce carbon emissions and operating costs of both the existing Hexagon and new studio theatre.

## **6. Community Engagement**

- 6.1. Community engagement and communication about the new Studio Theatre is on going with customers, promoters and hirers. Consultation was carried out to inform the funding bid submission and formal consultation was carried out as part of the planning process.
- 6.2. In the survey distributed to all ticket bookers, we requested feedback on the proposed plans, including comments regarding the Studio Theatre. The overall sentiment is overwhelmingly positive. Almost every response supports the plans, with many saying it's long overdue, much needed, and great for Reading. There is a strong sense of excitement and anticipation.
- 6.3. In preparation for the opening of the new Studio Theatre communication and engagement with members, promoters, hirers and stakeholders will take place to provide information about the Studio Theatre and to promote the new programme. This will happen from January 2026 and will continue until the studio theatre opens in 2027, when engagement will form part of the business as usual activity.

## **7. Equality Implications**

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
  - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 7.2. As part of the planning process a detailed access statement was submitted to planning committee for consideration. There are no Equality Implications arising from this report.

## **8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1. As an information only report there are no legal implications arising.
- 8.2. Principal Lawyer for Regeneration has cleared these Legal Implications.

## **9. Financial Implications**

- 9.1. As an information only report there are no financial implications arising.

- 9.2. The total cost of the scheme including the new studio theatre and ground source heat pump scheme is £19.4m, of which £13.5m is funded through external grants.
- 9.3. From 27/28, the revenue implications of the new Studio Theatre have been built into the Council's financial planning process.
- 9.4. The Major Project Accountant of the Council has cleared these Financial Implications.

## **10. Timetable for Implementation**

- 10.1. The build of the Studio Theatre is progressing well. The table below shows the projected major milestones over the coming 18 months.

New temporary back of house in use and main theatre reopens.	Sept 25
Engagement with promoters, members, customers and hirers.	Ongoing
New kitchen opens	November 2025
Theatre main build	October 2025 – December 2027
Commissioning of the studio theatre	January 2027
Studio Theatre opens	Spring 2027.

## **11. Background Papers**

- 11.1. There are none.

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## Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

12 November 2025



<b>Title</b>	Reading Libraries Improvement Programme: Strategic Principles/Themes 2025 – 2029
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Reading Libraries and Museum Manager Assistant Director Culture
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Adele Barnett-Ward
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Thriving Communities
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That committee agrees to adopt the strategic principles for the library service for 2025-2029 noted at 3.13 following the July 2025 public engagement on the draft principles agreed by committee in March 2025.</li> <li>That committee notes the feedback given regarding the new Central library from the exercise carried out in July 2025 and notes the huge opportunity arising from Reading opening a new Central library during the 2026 National Year of Reading.</li> <li>That committee notes the success of the library service in delivering against the strategic principles since inception in 2021, meaning that library issues in Reading have increased year-on-year since the pandemic.</li> </ol>

### 1. Executive Summary

- In November 2024 the library service brought forward a report outlining progress made in developing the library service in line with the strategic principles that committee approved in 2021. The report noted that 'a report will come to Committee in March 2025 with the draft priorities proposed for consultation'.
- The March 2025 committee report stated that following the public engagement, a final version of the principles would come back to committee for formal endorsement. The principles, are noted below at section 3.11 and these are referred to as 'themes' for ease of understanding
- The Council's ambition with these new themes is to deliver a library service across Reading with a high quality community offer of books, IT and support. This supports the new flagship Reading Central library in the town centre, with Reading's residents and organisations using all library buildings for reading, work, digital skills and study, increasing users and usage of Council services. It is proposed that Libraries in the borough will be spaces that further support equality, development and wellbeing achieved, in part, through successfully securing external funding.
- The consultation exercise on the priorities also gathered feedback regarding the new Reading Central library design. The output from the consultation and engagement is noted at section 3.15 of this report.

## **2. Policy Context**

- 2.1. At November 2024 Committee, the library service summarised progress made and activities delivered in each of the strategic priorities that were adopted in 2021 and which needed to be revisited to inform the next stage of service development.
- 2.2. Due to the timing of the move of the current Central Library at [insert location], these themes will form the basis of service planning, development and improvement from now until 2029, or the first 3 years in the new library. The primary focus of the service for the next 12 months is the move to and mobilisation of the new Central Library.
- 2.3. Reading has 7 libraries, 1 home service and provides a digital library of online content including books and magazines. The service has around 280,000 visitors a year and issues around 475,000 items. Around 350 people are visited at home by the home service. The net budget of the library service is £1.2m annually. Methodology from Libraries Connected (2022) indicates the value of a branch library to an area in supporting education and health is around £1m. The methodology can be viewed on following this link: <https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/resource/libraries-living-and-living-better>
- 2.4. The current Council strategic priorities, agreed in 2021, are:
  - Supporting our communities as we recover from the pandemic
  - Helping children and young people
  - Improving access to online services
  - Supporting improvements in health, wellbeing and literacy
  - Bringing arts, culture and heritage into library spaces
- 2.5. The Council's objective is to refresh these to deliver further improvement and help in planning, particularly as the new Reading Central library opens in 2026.

## **3. The Proposal**

- 3.1. It is considered that as these initial strategic principles were the first to be adopted by the service, based on consultation and, in line with the national Universal Offers that library services are tasked with delivering, they formed a good basis of future principles. They now require updating to reflect where the service is today and to reflect the future direction of the service.
- 3.2. Since the pandemic, usage of library services has largely returned to pre-pandemic levels. The borrowing of items, which pre-pandemic has shown a decline, is now higher than pre pandemic levels, driven by an expanded digital offer, using the same budget. Libraries have worked hard to grow digital content, deliver library events and activities.



95,000 e-items issued *supporting mental health and digital inclusion*



480,000 items issued, 200,000 for children *supporting education and literacy*



300,000 visitors, *supporting cohesion and belonging*



19 languages in physical books and more in digital -3 non English language rhymetimes led by parents *supporting cohesion*



350 residents supported by at home service – *reducing isolation and improving cohesion*



15,000 online language courses accessed annually, 1000 practice citizenship tests and 24000 practice driving theory tests *supporting cohesion*



1,250 children started the summer reading challenge, supported by 35 young volunteers *supporting education, school readiness and reducing inequality.*



17,500 people attending 650 annual children's sessions *supporting speech, language, mental health & school readiness*



23 active book groups supported by service, borrowing 1508 items annually *reducing isolation*

- 3.3. The council has successfully secured large capital investment into the Civic Centre Library project via the £19.1m Levelling Up Fund Round 2 grant and £495,000 from the Libraries Improvement Fund administered by Arts Council England.
- 3.4. It is proposed that the £495,000 Libraries Improvement Fund will be directed towards additional ICT equipment going in all libraries, as well as some non-library community locations. The objective being to deliver a improved ICT provision and level of service across all of the libraries in the borough and enable all libraries to share in the improvements being made at the Central library. Community locations in Coley, Whitley Wood and Amersham Road, Caversham will see a form of library provision for the first time, using self service cabinets. All equipment will be installed by end 2026. The Libraries Improvement Fund award will deliver:
  - Tablets for in-library use (all libraries)
  - Borrowable laptops for home use, loaded with free data (all libraries)
  - Screens to host screenings and meetings (all libraries)
  - Interactive tables
  - Games projected onto floors
  - Intelligent shelving
  - Audio visual equipment (Central library only)
  - External lockers to collect reserved items out of hours (Central library only)
  - Library cabinets for Coley, Whitley Wood and Amersham Road, Caversham
- 3.5. It is considered that Libraries will always have a vital role to play in supporting literacy, children and young people, providing equality of access, supporting health and wellbeing and supporting skills development. It is intended that these new themes will facilitate in providing clarity of purpose and assist in ensuring that progress is made in every area, against principles that link to the Council's overall aspirations and plans for Reading.

3.6. 137 people took part in the feedback overall, with nearly all of the participants engaging in the section regarding library themes. Themes' was chosen as it was considered to have clearer language than 'strategic principles'

3.7. The following table shows the response to each theme:

Theme	Number of responses (from 137)	Percentage indicating very important or important	Biggest priority within theme
<b>Supporting children and young people with language and literacy development</b>	132	86.8%	A wide range of free books to borrow (73%)
<b>Improving digital provision, access and content to support learning and skills</b>	131	83.9%	Providing document printing services (53%)
<b>Bringing arts, culture, heritage and creativity into library spaces</b>	133	76.1%	Provision of local history information and resources (47%)
<b>Supporting improvements for Reading's health, wellbeing, literacy and cohesion</b>	131	78.1%	Hosting health activities and sessions (41%)
<b>Ensuring all libraries in the network respond to the needs of communities and building these into funding bids</b>	130	75.9%	Using customer groups for feedback (48%)

3.8. Participants in the consultation were asked about certain actions within themes given as examples. Overall, those participants gave positive feedback, with some not indicating preferences, and some actions also ranking less favourably than others. The outcome of this consultation exercise will be used this to guide the service under the broader themes, noting that some actions are favoured over others.

3.9. The consultation process requested feedback on the themes, which generated 62 responses. Many respondents expressed support for the proposed themes. Several highlighted the importance of the library serving as a community hub, offering activities such as creative, craft, building, and reading clubs. There was a strong emphasis on the library being more than just a place to borrow books, and instead becoming central to community life. Overall, the feedback was generally positive, with appreciation for the work being done.

3.10. Participants were invited to note any other themes they would like the Council to focus on and 55 respondents commented. The following sets out the popular themes which informed officers considerations to include books which now forms an emphasis on book as overarching *theme* for libraries:

- Respondents most frequently emphasised the importance of promoting reading for all ages, ensuring access to new and popular books; and
- providing a welcoming space where people, especially children, can break away from screens and digital distractions.

- strong desire for the library to be a free, inclusive environment that supports people during the cost of living crisis and does not require spending money.
- the value of activities and events, particularly those delivered by external providers, and suggested a wider promotion of literacy across the town. Additionally, there was a suggestion to
- focus on healthy eating.

Given the feedback, .

3.11. The report showing consultation on themes and analysis is at Appendix 1 to this report.

3.12. Following the consultation, the proposed principles to guide the service from 2025 - 2029, with some example actions are below. It is noted that a number of comments highlighted concern that there was no mention of the Council's core library service of lending books. This has been taken into consideration in framing the themes under a unifying mission statement set out below:

*Misson Statement:*

*Our mission is to ignite a love of reading across Reading. Through a variety of books and digital platforms, we connect people to reading and knowledge in safe, trusted library spaces.*

3.13 The Council's themes for future library service development are:

- Ensuring all libraries in the borough's network respond to the needs of communities and partners and build these into external funding applications.
  - Introduce self service book lending/borrowing in community locations furthest from a permanent library, using external grant funding *to expand library service reach to new communities*
  - Promote library spaces for community activities and events *so that libraries are embedded as a key location for delivery by community partners*
  - Introduce a customer feedback panel/focus groups *to inform and shape progress of the service*
  - Make clearer how feedback can be given by customers *at libraries and online*
- Support children and young people with reading, literacy and language development
  - Continue to provide the Bookstart scheme, Summer Reading Challenge and other national offers *to embed children's reading for pleasure*
  - Link into pathways to support school readiness, *particularly highlighting the library role in developing speech, early language and reading skills*
  - Review after school opening patterns at all libraries, *particularly in areas where the Council is operating Place Based Working*
- Improving digital provision, access and content to support learning and skills
  - Introduce on site tablet lending at all sites *to reduce the digital divide*
  - Introduce take home laptops with free data included at all sites – *to be targeted particularly in areas of highest need*
  - Support partners through group laptop lending to community groups *to allow wider outcomes to be achieved and raise awareness of service*
  - Promote and raise awareness of libraries as spaces for partners and community organisation to deliver activities, *particularly in areas where the Council is operating Place Based Working*

- Supporting improvements for Reading's health, wellbeing, literacy and cohesion
  - Work with partners to host more activities with links to improving health and wellbeing outcomes *to benefit the health of Reading and reduce health inequalities*
  - Work with colleagues to promote libraries as a key vehicle for public health messaging and campaign delivery *to benefit the health of Reading and reduce health inequalities and show that libraries are trusted space that can help with change*
  - Explore lending of equipment *to improve health outcomes and encourage healthy choices*
- Bringing arts, culture, heritage and creativity into library spaces
  - Host regular museum activities in libraries *to increase awareness of the museum service and Reading's history*
  - Continue to develop and build on partnerships with local cultural organisations delivering performances in libraries *to support local cultural infrastructure*
  - Deliver live performances at every library every year *to bring performance into Reading's communities*
  - Reprovision of a quality, well provided local history library at the new Reading Central library *to enhance Reading's sense of place*

3.14 These endorsed themes will start immediately and feed into the next round of service planning for libraries, covering the period including the opening of the new Central library anticipated in 2026.

### 3.15 **New Reading Central Library**

This once in a generation opportunity for Reading as a town and a library service, will be opening in 2026, and is part funded by UK Government.

In the consultation document we were able to show finalised designs, focused on 5 distinct areas, for the first time.

3.16 The survey ran from 27 June-26 July 2025, both online and using paper copies with 137 responses being received. Participants were free to take part in as much or as little of the survey as they desired.

As part of the engagement exercise for the new Central Library participants were asked their views on the design.

3.17 Around half of the total number of respondents commented on the different space allocation. Feedback was most positive regarding the children's library and the local studies section.

3.18 Participants were invited comment on what they were anticipating and what they were concerned about regarding the new library.

- Anticipating:
  - most frequently mentioned, a more inviting and comfortable space in the new library, with specific references to enjoying books in a nicer environment and the possibility of relaxing features.
  - a positive change, making the library more accessible.
  - access to new and up-to-date book stock.
  - using the library as a space for study, family visits, and participating in

- Concerns:
  - smaller library , more cramped, and noisier, with less privacy and comfort for users.
  - a reduction in the number of books available on shelves, browsing physical collections is essential and that fewer books would be a significant loss.
  - the design prioritises children and teens at the expense of adult users;
  - a reduction in visible, friendly, and informed staff is another key worry, with some respondents highlighting the importance of human connection and expressing unease about a shift towards automation, as well as the 'clinical' feeling of the images.

### 3.19 Proposals for the New Central Library

- Children and families are the biggest users of libraries in Reading. The new children's library at the new Central Library has been designed responsively to be bigger and better stocked than the children's library in the current central library. The proposal sets the children's library in one section of the two-floor building, with a more user- friendly shape than the current round design and an inspirational design.
- It is anticipated that majority of the space in the new Central Library will be for adult lending and study
- It is proposed that libraries will have, overall, more books on public shelves, with some sections increasing and some decreasing based on use, compared to the current position.. As per previous committee reports, there are reductions in the stock that is currently not publicly accessible.
- The proposals provide for a range of different types of seating for work, relaxation or meeting. This is intended to include circa 100 study spaces with provision of power for working and charging, which cannot currently be accommodated at current Central library.
- All Central library staff will transfer to the new library

3.20 All comments received as part of the exercise have been reviewed by the project team and the summary report is at appendix 1. The comments about how the space could be used, as well as some areas of focus and concern, have provided valuable feedback that will inform how the new Central Library space will operate when it opens.

3.21 Participants were asked what kind of new activities people would like to see at any library, not just the Reading Central. Responses showed a clear desire for a wider variety of interactive, community-focused activities for both adults and children. Respondents most frequently suggested more events and activities centred around reading and writing, such as author visits, creative writing workshops, and poetry groups. There was also a notable interest in expanding group activities, including more adult reading groups. For children, respondents recommended beginning language classes, themed book clubs (e.g. for popular series like Harry Potter or Percy Jackson), local history sessions, and Lego clubs. These pieces of feedback will inform future planning and will be introduced where achievable to do so, the Council currently offer sessions based around craft, modelling and Lego.

3.22 There were some other questions regarding usage of the library app and the gallery space at Central library which will inform future planning.

## 4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1. Reading Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2025-28 sets out the vision:

The Council's 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.

4.2. To deliver this vision the following five priorities are the Council's focus 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

4.3.1 The new library themes meet the above by providing a new space, being open to all, with investment in resources that support this, firmly supporting the economic and cultural success of Reading. Libraries, literacy and reading are key ways for Reading Borough Council to deliver better skills in schools and better outcomes for all. The Council has been able to deliver this using external funding.

4.4 Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website - [Corporate plan - Reading Borough Council](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

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

5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

5.2. There are very limited climate implications arising from this report; greater library usage is considered to have a positive environmental and climate impact assuming greater usage of shared resources is more beneficial than a number of one-off purchases.

## **6. Community Engagement**

6.1. The principles will act as a framework to support library service development and have been informed by community engagement.

## **7. Equality Implications**

7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2. There are no equality implications arising from this report.

## **8. Legal Implications**

8.1. Under Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, local authorities are bound to provide a library service that is 'comprehensive and efficient' for all persons who live, work or study in the area; lend books or other printed material free of charge to those eligible; and encourage the use of the library service by both adults and children . The recommendations in this report are consistent with that aim, ensuring the local authority will continue to comply with the Act.

8.2. These Legal Implications have been provided by Strategic Lead, Corporate Law

## **9. Financial Implications**

- 9.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report. The service budget is agreed as part of the wider budget setting report and no additional investment is required in order to deliver the principles laid out in this report.
- 9.2. The net budget for the library service in 2025/26 is £1.2m.
- 9.3. These Financial Implications have been provided and reviewed by Strategic Business Partner, DEGNS

## **10. Timetable for Implementation**

- 10.1. The themes, once endorsed, will feed into and drive the service planning from now onwards, tying into the new library opening in 2026. Whilst this is the primary focus for the service for the next 9 months, we will work to deliver the themes across the library network and factor into planning.
- 10.2. On the current timetable, the Central library will open at the Civic Centre in Spring 2026.

## **11. Background Papers**

- 11.1. There are none.

## **Appendix 1 - New Central Library and Themes for Service – results of consultation**

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## Reading Libraries

### New Central Library and Themes for Service - results

- **Project:** Reading Libraries - New Central Library and Themes for Service
- Duration: 27 June 2025-26 July 2025
- **Project manager:** Simon Smith, Reading Libraries and Museum Manager

#### Report summary

This exercise was to show get feedback on the final designs for the Central library, in preparation for the move in 2026. We were also seeking feedback on our draft themes for the library service to inform our future development.

#### Do you have any comments about the welcome space? (79/137 commented)

Overall, the main trends were concerns about staff visibility and support, comfort and accessibility of seating, clarity of signage and navigation, and a desire for a warmer and more community-focused atmosphere.

A significant number of respondents raised concerns about the lack of a visible staff presence or reception/help desk in the welcome area, emphasising the importance of staff for assistance and a clear point of contact. Related to this, several people mentioned the need for clear signposting, maps, or wayfinding to help users navigate the library.

Comfort and accessibility of seating were frequently mentioned. Many felt the seating looked uncomfortable, too modern or clinical, or not suitable for longer stays. There were also requests for more individual soft seats and accessible furniture for disabled and older users.

Some respondents felt the space was underutilised or too empty and suggested it could be better used for community activities, public notices, or more bookshelves.

The colour scheme and overall aesthetic received mixed feedback. While some liked the bright and modern look others found it too clinical, childish or likely to date quickly. There were several requests for more plants and local artwork to make the space warmer and more inviting.

A few respondents suggested adding a coffee shop or refreshment area to encourage people to stay longer.

Many respondents commented that the image provided was too small or unclear to properly assess the welcome space.

## **Do you have any comments about the computer and study spaces? (73/137 commented)**

Several respondents commented on the need for more efficient use of space in the computer and study areas, with suggestions to add more work points or study spots.

Feedback indicated a need for increased capacity for individual study and computer use, indicating that the current arrangements are not meeting demand.

## **Do you have any comments on this courtyard space? (73/137 commented)**

Feedback on the courtyard space indicated a preference for a warmer, more inviting atmosphere; specifically, the current colour scheme was described as cold, and the addition of plants was suggested to improve the space.

Several respondents expressed reservations about the inclusion of live events and screens in all libraries, with one noting this was not something they wanted or needed.

## **Do you have any comments on these children's and teen libraries? (70/137 commented)**

Respondents generally reacted positively to the proposed children's and teen library spaces, with several noting that the new designs look much nicer and more engaging than the current Central Library.

There was appreciation for the inspiring and accessible ground floor location. Suggestions included adding plants, local artwork, and a quiet area for creative activities such as Lego building.

## **Do you have any comments on the local history library? (66/137 commented)**

Overall there was satisfaction with the current offering, alongside a desire for more visual representation of local history.

Respondents generally expressed positive feedback about the local history library, praising the work of the local studies specialist.

There was a suggestion to enhance the space with local artwork, such as prints from local presses and historic photographs of buildings and schools.

No negative comments or major concerns were raised.

## **What are you most looking forward to about the new library? (95/137 commented)**

Respondents most frequently mentioned looking forward to a more inviting and comfortable space in the new library, with specific references to enjoying books in a nicer environment and the possibility of relaxing features.

The central location was also highlighted as a positive change, making the library more accessible.

Respondents expressed interest in having access to new and up-to-date book stock.

There was also enthusiasm for using the library as a space for study, family visits, and participating in activities such as reading groups and workshops.

## **Do you have any concerns about the move to the new library in 2026? (95/137 commented)**

Many respondents are worried that the new library will be smaller, more cramped, and noisier, with less privacy and comfort for users.

The most common concerns raised by respondents are about a reduction in the number of books available on shelves, with several expressing that browsing physical collections is essential and that fewer books would be a significant loss.

There is concern that the design prioritises children and teens at the expense of adult users.

A reduction in visible, friendly, and informed staff is another key worry, with some respondents highlighting the importance of human connection and expressing unease about a shift towards automation, as well as the 'clinical' feeling of the images.

## **Supporting children and young people with language and literacy development (132/137 responses)**

**How important do you feel this theme should be for the library service?**

132/137 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Very important 66.4% (91 choices)



Important 20.4% (28 choices)



Neither important or unimportant 4.4% (6 choices)



No answer 3.6% (5 choices)



Not at all important 2.9% (4 choices)



Don't know 1.5% (2 choices)

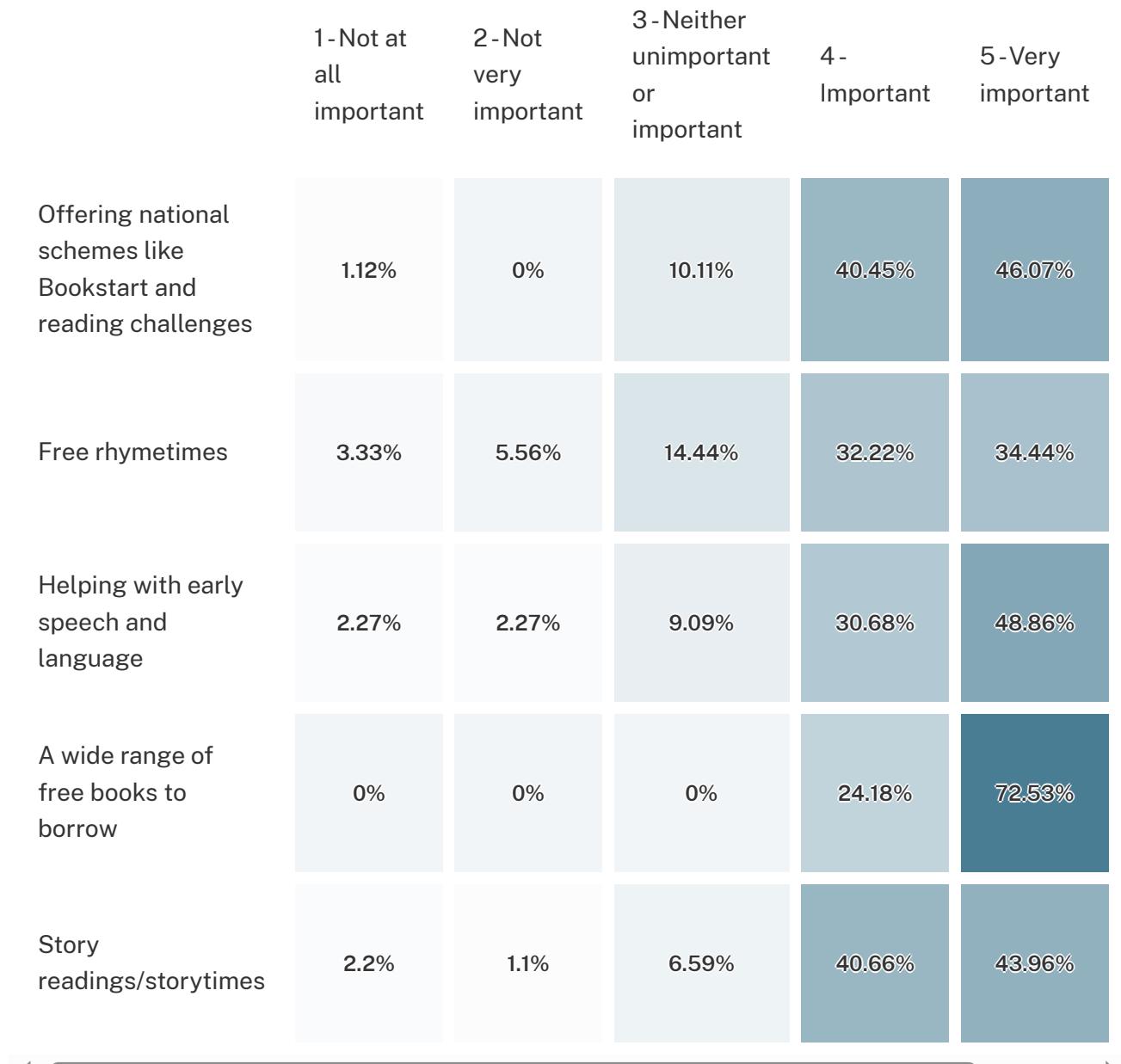


Not very important 0.7% (1 choice)



## And how important do you think the following are?

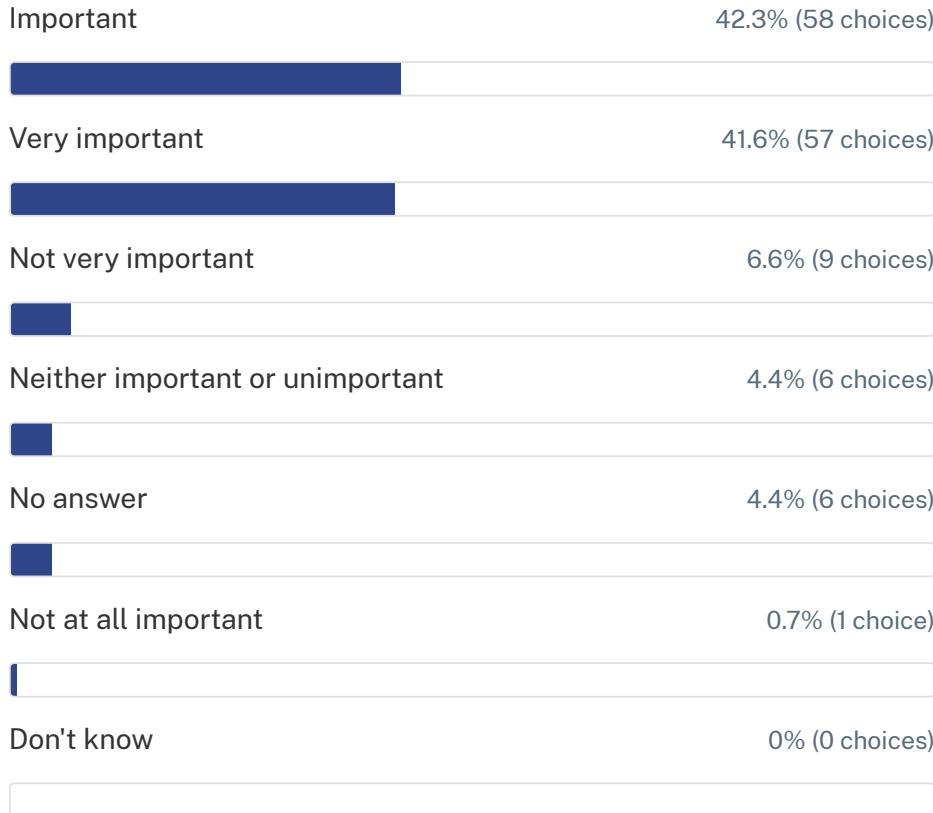
92/137 - Matrix - optional



## Improving digital provision, access and content to support learning and skills (131/137 responses)

**How important do you feel this theme should be for the library service?**

131/137 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional



## And how important do you think the following are?

91/137 -Matrix -optional



◀  ▶

**Bringing arts, culture, heritage and creativity into library spaces (133/137 responses)**

**How important do you feel this theme should be for the library service?**

133/137 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Very important 42.3% (58 choices)



Important 32.8% (45 choices)



Neither important or unimportant 12.4% (17 choices)



Not very important 5.1% (7 choices)



Not at all important 4.4% (6 choices)



No answer 2.9% (4 choices)



Don't know 0% (0 choices)



## And how important do you think the following are?

87/137 - Matrix - optional



## Supporting improvements for Reading's health, wellbeing, literacy and cohesion (131/137 responses)

**How important do you feel this theme should be for the library service?**

131/137 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Very important 39.4% (54 choices)



Important 38.7% (53 choices)



Neither important or unimportant 9.5% (13 choices)



Not at all important 5.1% (7 choices)



No answer 4.4% (6 choices)



Not very important 1.5% (2 choices)

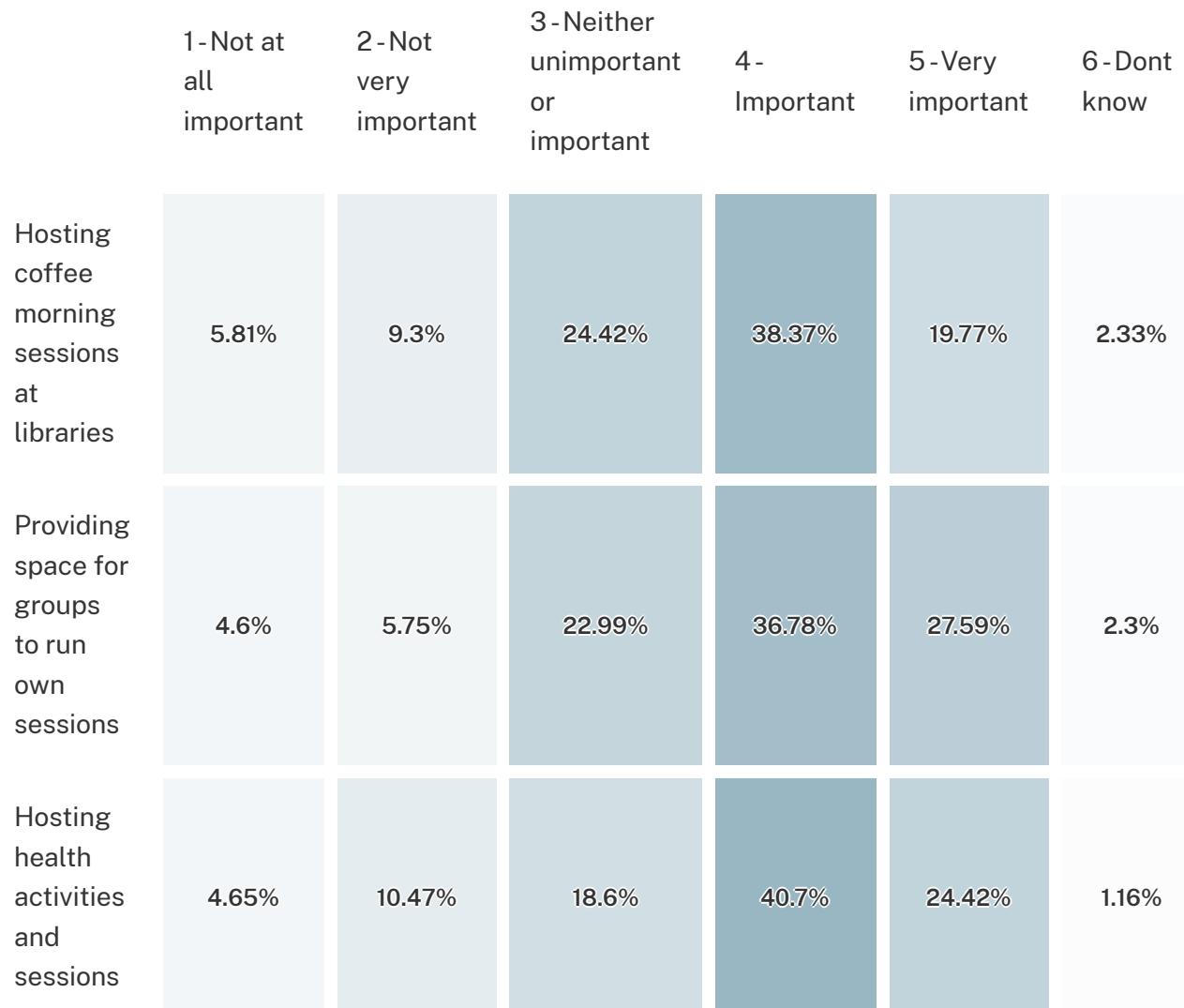


Don't know 1.5% (2 choices)



## And how important do you think the following are?

87/137 - Matrix -optional



**Ensuring all libraries in the network respond to the needs of communities and building these into funding bids (130/137 responses)**

**How important do you feel this theme should be for the library service?**

130/137 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Very important 40.1% (55 choices)



Important 35.8% (49 choices)



Neither important or unimportant 8.8% (12 choices)



Don't know 5.1% (7 choices)



No answer 5.1% (7 choices)



Not very important 3.6% (5 choices)

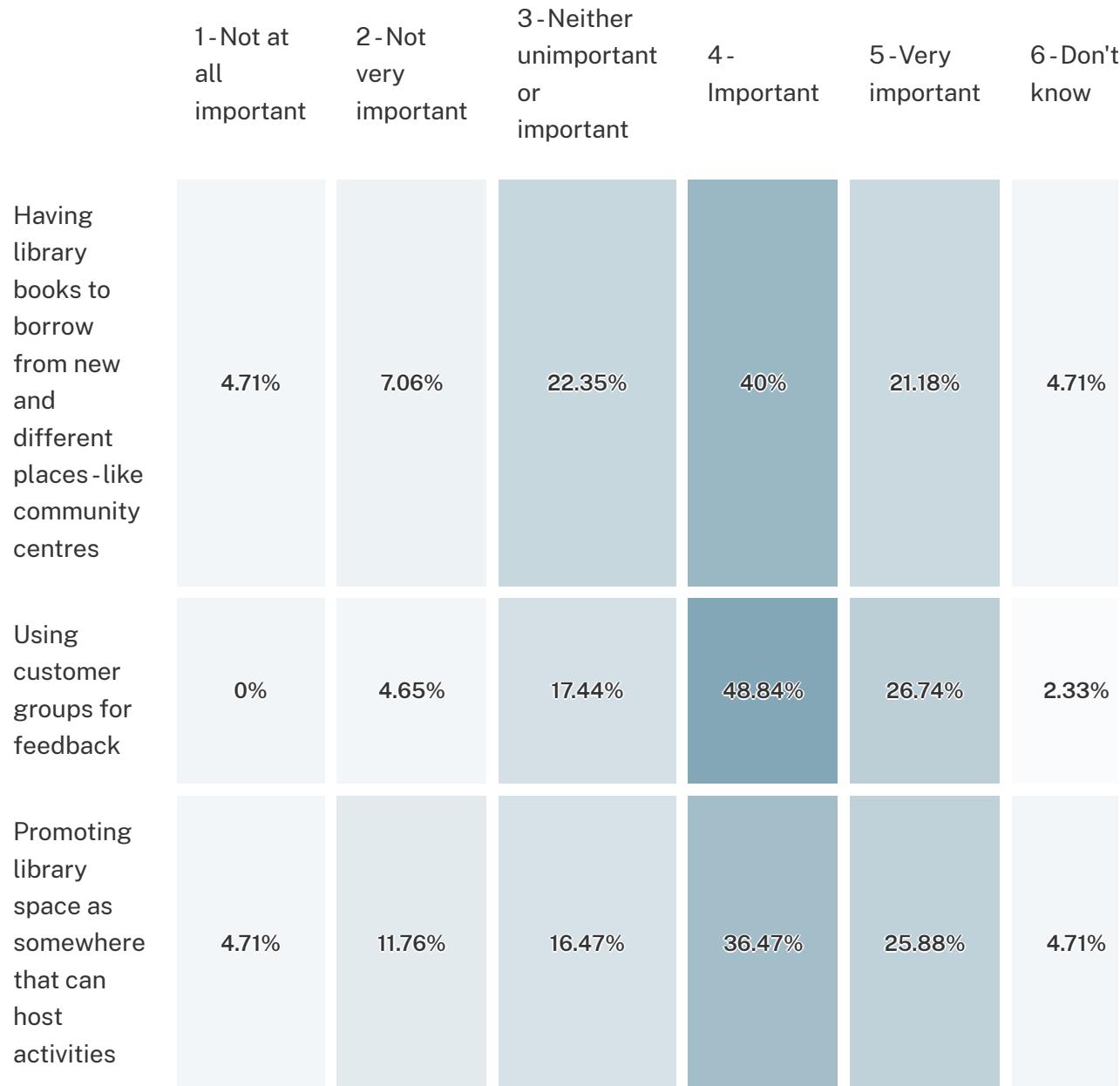


Not at all important 1.5% (2 choices)



## And how important do you think the following are?

86/137 - Matrix -optional



## Do you have any other comments on our themes? (62/137 commented)

Many respondents expressed support for the proposed themes.

Several highlighted the importance of the library serving as a community hub, offering activities such as creative, craft, building, and reading clubs.

There was a strong emphasis on the library being more than just a place to borrow books, and instead becoming central to community life.

Overall, feedback was generally positive, with appreciation for the work being done.

## Are there any other themes you would like us to focus on? (55/137 commented)

Respondents most frequently emphasised the importance of promoting reading for all ages, ensuring access to new and popular books, and providing a welcoming space where people — especially children — can escape screens and digital distractions.

There was also a strong desire for the library to be a free, inclusive environment that supports people during the cost of living crisis and does not require spending money.

Several respondents highlighted the value of activities and events, particularly those delivered by external providers, and suggested a wider promotion of literacy across the town.

Additionally, there was a suggestion to focus on healthy eating, specifically promoting options beyond junk or ultra-processed food as part of library themes.

### Have you or any members of your family used any of Reading's library facilities, either in person, via the home delivery service, mobile service or online? (Please tick one box)

134/137 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional

Yes, in the last 6 months 64.2% (88 choices)



No, not for at least 2 years 19% (26 choices)



Yes, in the last year 10.2% (14 choices)



Yes, in the last 2 years 3.6% (5 choices)



No answer 2.2% (3 choices)



Don't know 0.7% (1 choice)



**Which of the following library buildings or facilities have you used in the last two years?**

108/137 -Multiple choice -choose many -optional

Reading Central Library 65% (89 choices)



Caversham Library 31.4% (43 choices)



No answer 21.2% (29 choices)



Reading Libraries app 20.4% (28 choices)



Online library (ebooks, emagazines, eaudio) 13.9% (19 choices)



Battle Library 13.1% (18 choices)



Palmer Park Library 10.9% (15 choices)



Tilehurst Library 9.5% (13 choices)



Southcote Library 5.1% (7 choices)



Whitley Library 5.1% (7 choices)



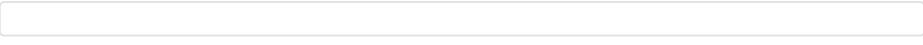
Home Library Service 2.2% (3 choices)



**Which of the following services provided by the library service do you generally use?**

68/137 - Multiple choice -choose many -optional

Onsite tablets for web browsing 0% (0 choices)



Bookgroup sets 0.7% (1 choice)



Audio books (CD) 0.7% (1 choice)



Collaborative working space 0.7% (1 choice)



Meeting rooms 0.7% (1 choice)



Take home laptops 0.7% (1 choice)



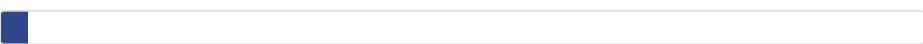
Online events 1.5% (2 choices)



Summer Reading Challenge / Reading loves reading 2.9% (4 choices)



Books in languages other than English 2.9% (4 choices)



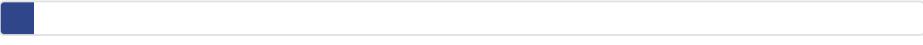
Large Print books 2.9% (4 choices)



Community space 2.9% (4 choices)



Storytime 3.6% (5 choices)



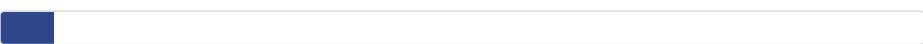
eMagazines / Libby 3.6% (5 choices)



Online resources 5.1% (7 choices)

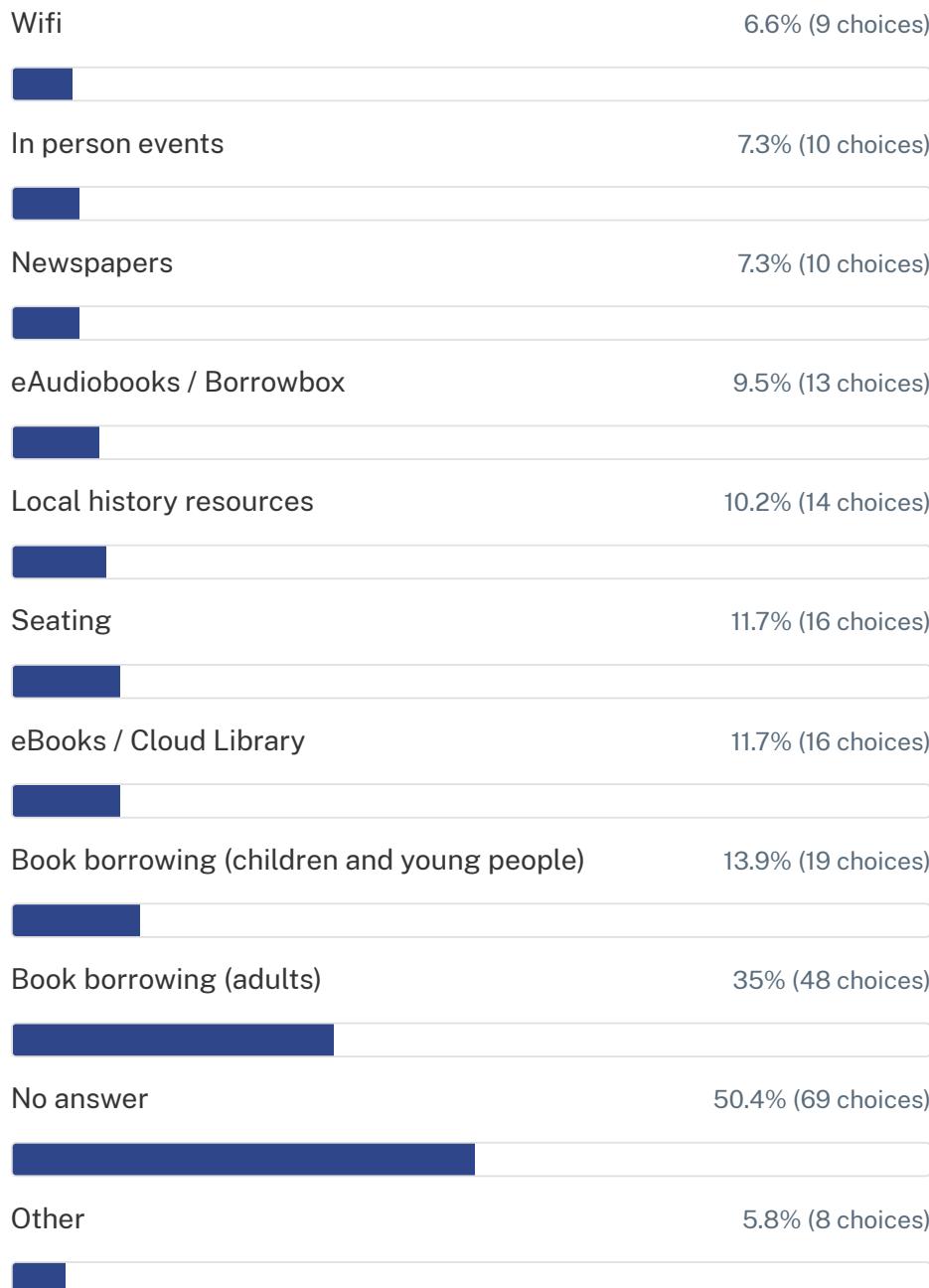


Study space 5.8% (8 choices)



Rhymetime 5.8% (8 choices)





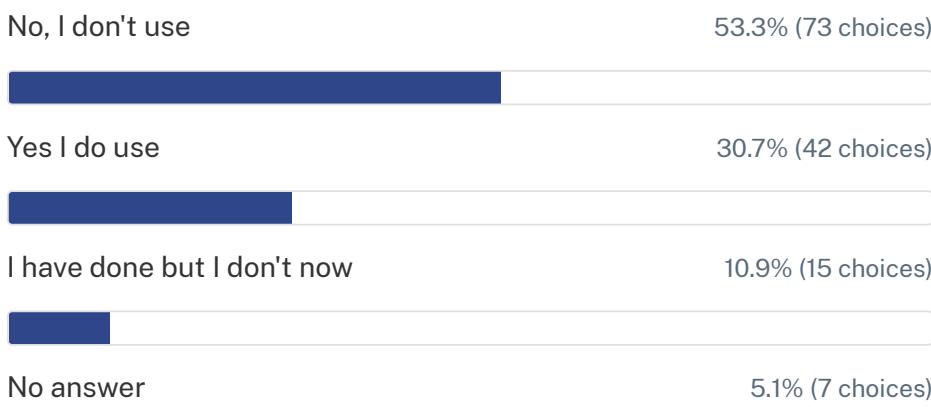
## Some people have told us they have these reasons for not using the library, do any of these apply to you?

61/137 - Multiple choice - choose many - optional



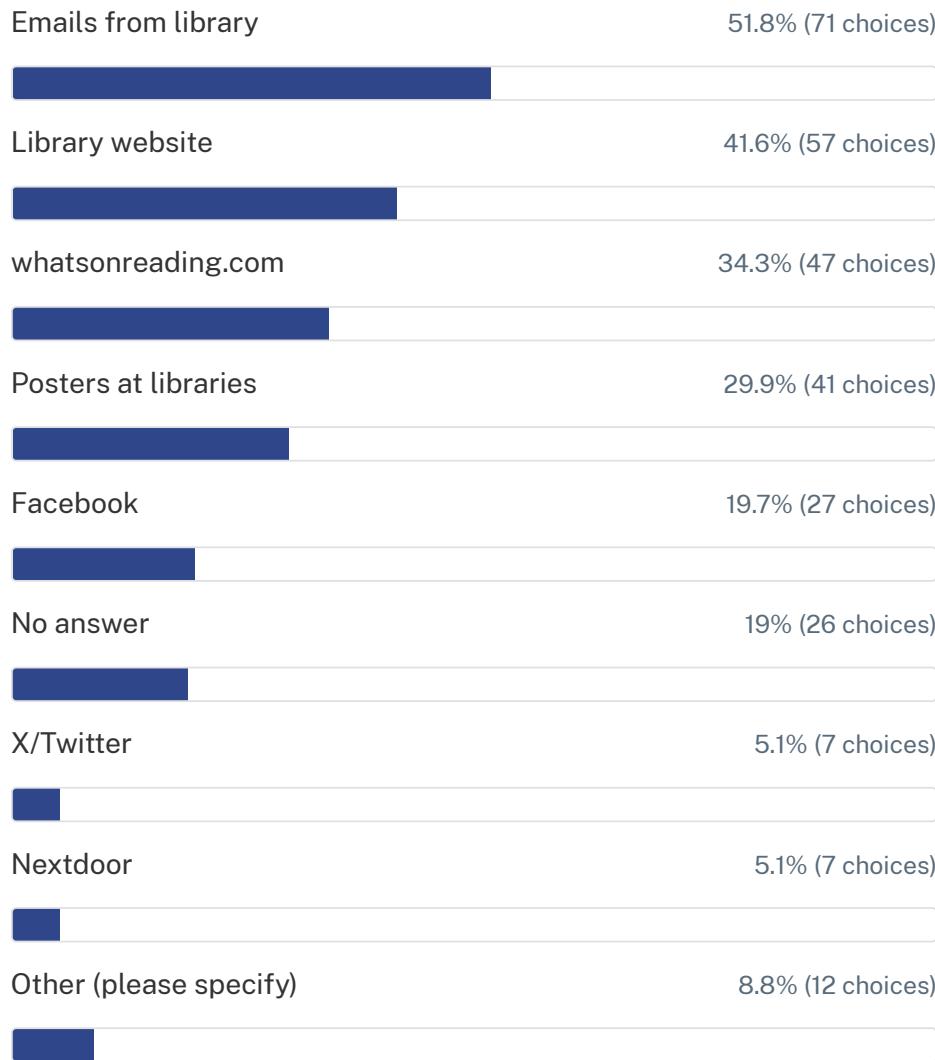
## Have you used the library app?

130/137 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional



## Where would you prefer to find out about library events and activities?

111/137 - Multiple choice -choose many -optional



## Have you got any suggestions for new activities you'd like to see in your local library?

Overall, there is a clear desire for a wider variety of interactive, community-focused activities for both adults and children.

Respondents most frequently suggested more events and activities centred around reading and writing, such as author visits, creative writing workshops, and poetry groups;. There was also a notable interest in expanding group activities, including more adult reading groups. For children, respondents recommended beginning language classes, themed book clubs (e.g. for popular series like Harry Potter or Percy Jackson), local history sessions, and Lego clubs.

## We will have a gallery space at the New Central library - what would you like to see there?

124/137 - Multiple choice - choose many - optional

Art exhibitions by local artists 79.6% (109 choices)



Exhibitions brought in from outside Reading 56.9% (78 choices)



No answer 9.5% (13 choices)



Other 14.6% (20 choices)



## Would you be interested in hiring any library service spaces? If so then as long as your contact detail is given elsewhere on the form we may contact you solely for this purpose

100/137 - Multiple choice - choose many - optional

No 62% (85 choices)



No answer 27% (37 choices)



Yes, room hire 8% (11 choices)



Yes, gallery space at Central Library 4.4% (6 choices)



## Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

12 November 2025



<b>Title</b>	Highway Asset Management 2025/26 Update Report
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report</b>	Emma Gee, Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhoods Services
<b>Report author</b>	Sam Shean, Highways & Traffic Services Manager
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Karen Rowland, Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety
<b>Council priority</b>	Deliver a sustainable & healthy environment & reduce Reading's carbon footprint
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That the Committee note and endorse the proposed changes to the Highway Gully Cleaning Regimes.</li> <li>That the Committee note the Annual Status Option Reports (ASOR's) for condition of the Council's Carriageways, Footways &amp; Bridges.</li> </ol>

### 1. Executive Summary

- To inform the Committee of the review carried out on the gully cleansing regime and the proposed changes to the Highway Gully Cleaning Regimes and for the Committee to endorse the proposed changes.
- To inform the Committee of the Annual Status Options Reports (ASOR) for the condition of the Carriageways, Footways and Bridges.
- Appendix 1 – Carriageways ASOR Summary 2025  
Appendix 2 – Footways ASOR Summary 2025  
Appendix 3 – Structures ASOR Summary 2025

### 2. Policy Context

- The Council approved Shaping Reading's Future – Our Council Plan 2025/26 to 2027/28. The Plan 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).
- The aim of the Highway Asset Management Plan is to improve Highway Maintenance efficiency, reduce wastage, reduce carbon use and to ensure that a best value sustainable public highway network is available for all users.
- To make travel more secure, safe and comfortable for all users of the public highway and to provide conditions that are as safe as reasonably practical having regards to financial constraints and statutory duties.

### 3. The Proposal

#### BACKGROUND

## **Current Position:**

### **Gully Cleaning Regimes**

- 3.1 The Council manage over 18,500 gullies on the public highway network and they currently receive an annual clean. The Highways & Drainage Operations Team (H&D) visit each gully with the Gully Emptying Machine and record the condition findings for the Highway Asset Management database using the WDM Asset Management System.
- 3.2 The gully cleaning records show that over the last 2-years the majority within Unclassified Residential Roads have not required additional cleanses and could be cleansed less frequently without a significant increase in risk of flooding. Cleaning these gullies annually is limiting the capacity to address more urgent gullies that require more frequent cleaning
- 3.3 This provides an opportunity for the Council to amend the gully cleansing frequency for the majority of the Unclassified Roads (Residential) from an annual visit to a bi-annual (every 2-years), cleaning regime. We acknowledge that some Unclassified Roads will need an annual cleaning regime, as they are known to be in areas where there is high leaf fall and other known drainage issues.
- 3.4 It is not proposed to amend the gully cleaning regimes on the Classified (A, B & C) Roads, as they are on the strategic routes, with the highest volumes and class of traffic, and therefore the highest risk and should therefore remain the highest priority.
- 3.5 The capacity generated within this amended gully cleaning regime will allow those gullies that need more regular cleaning to receive an enhanced clean, either every 6 months or 3 months in some cases where there are repeated call outs due to slow running gullies or repeated blockages. The Drainage team has received 145 requests to clear blocked gullies since April 2025 with 10% of them in repeat locations.

### **3.6 Annual Status Option Reports (ASOR's)**

#### **Carriageways**

- 3.7 The Annual Status Option reports provide updated information on the condition of the Highways Assets and the investment that has been made, also what funding would be needed to maintain a steady state.
- 3.8 The Council manages 404km of carriageways, 29% are Classified Roads and 71% Unclassified Residential Streets.
- 3.9 The Council has invested £17m into improving Roads and Pavements (footways) in Reading since 2020/21.
- 3.10 This investment to date has seen over 900 of 1,334 roads, resurfaced (and / or surfaced). Major Classified Roads receive a resurfacing (plane off 40mm of old road surface and resurface with a new bitumen surfacing) and the Residential Unclassified Roads have received a Micro Asphalt cold applied surfacing layer of between 15mm and 20mm thickness.
- 3.11 Satisfaction levels for Reading Borough Council using the National Highways & Transport (NHT) survey compares well with other authorities, with all indicators above national average.
- 3.12 It should be noted that the road condition indicator for Classified (A, B & C) Roads has deteriorated slightly in 2024/25. This was most likely due to a relatively small amount of resurfacing taking place on the classified roads between the 2023 and 2024 road condition surveys, whilst we prepared a 2-year resurfacing contract. This 2-year contract, which included 70+ sections of mainly major roads, began in late 2024 after the surveys had been completed. This work will be reflected in the latest surveys, (which were carried out in August 2025), and it is expected that this will show a significant improvement in road condition.

- 3.13 The Council's investment has brought the condition of the Classified Major Roads to a good condition, and the Council is now looking to bring forward an extensive and cost-effective preservation programme in the coming years to maintain a good steady state.
- 3.14 The Council has extensively invested in the Unclassified (Residential) road network since 2020/21. This investment has reduced the quantity of unclassified roads requiring treatment to 21%. In other words, 79% of the unclassified roads are now in a 'Green' or good condition. Prior to the start of the investment 50% of the unclassified roads were in a 'Green' or good condition.

Of the remaining 21% less than 1% is in a 'Red' or poor condition meaning that they should be prioritised for treatment. It should also be noted that investigations suggest that the remaining red areas are not entire lengths of road, but more localised areas and clusters of potholes

### **Footways**

- 3.15 The Council manages 820km of footways, ranging from busy pedestrianised footways in the Town Centre to lightly used footways in residential areas.
- 3.16 RBC's level of satisfaction with footways using the NHT, (National Highways and Transport Network), survey compares well to other authorities, with all indicators above national averages.
- 3.17 The quantity of customer contacts about footways defects and condition continues to reduce, and is now at the lowest recorded level in the last four years
- 3.18 The Council's investment is bringing the condition of the public footways to a 'steady state', and the Council is now looking to bring forward a preservation cost effective programme in the coming years to maintain a good steady state.

### **Bridges**

- 3.19 The Council manage a stock of 275 highway structures, of which 19 structures are in need of strengthening and 16 are currently rated to be in a 'poor' condition.
- 3.20 The ASOR report has confirmed that the current routine, reactive and cyclical maintenance Revenue budget is sufficient.
- 3.21 Over the next 5 financial years approx. £1.430m p.a. is to be invested in structures maintenance which will enable 9 structures to be strengthened and 3 'poor' condition structures to be refurbished. The investment will address 12 structures and reduce the current structures backlog to approximately £4.3m.
- 3.22 The Council will continue to seek funding from Department of Transport for addressing the Bridges backlog as and when opportunities arise.
- 3.23 It should be noted that 'poor' condition structures does not mean that they are unsafe and need to be closed, often one element of the structure is in poor condition and just that element requires strengthening or replacement, not the whole structure.

### **Summary**

- 3.24 The ASOR's are showing an improvement in the condition of the carriageway and footway assets. Using innovation and asset management principles, the Council will be looking to use lower cost preservation solutions to extend the life of the good condition assets and address more urgent structural repairs with the available funding.

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

- 4.1 Reading Borough Council's vision is:

To help Reading realise its potential – and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

4.2 The Council's Corporate Plan has established five themes for the years 2025/28. These themes are:

- 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

4.3 These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:

- Putting Residents first
- Building in strong foundations
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading

4.4 Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on [Reading Council Plan 2025-28 FINAL](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

4.5 The delivery of Highway Asset Management will meet the Council's stated aims by providing:

- A safe, secure and affordable Highway Maintenance Service for all residents and users of the public highway.
- Maintaining a safe and efficient highway network to support all users, which in turn will maintain economic growth in Reading and the wider region.
- Support the Council's carbon reduction pledge by improving efficiency, using more recycled materials, lower carbon products, reducing energy consumption with electric vehicles & plant, exploring innovation to reduce carbon, wastes and costs.
- Delivering the Social Value requirements set out in the tendered contracts to promote local employment and opportunity for residents of Reading.

## 5. Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

5.2 An Asset Management Approach will benefit the environment by collaborative works, for example the Berkshire Wide Road Sensor Temperature collective trial will improve local road temperature data to provide better decision making. This will lead to reduced number of gritting runs, reduced vehicle usage and reduce waste that will lead to lower carbon emissions and efficiency savings. Using innovation Preservation cold applied products to extend the life of good condition roads and pavements.

5.3 All Highways Maintenance contracts include for contractors to consider Environmental Implications and social value.

5.4 These contracts include carbon reduction targets and improved sustainability. The intent is to reduce the amount of carbon used to produce the materials at source, using recycled materials, reducing the uncontrolled waste in the environment, to reduce pollution of the natural environment, use of electric vehicles and plant, sourcing green

energy alternatives, carbon off-setting, as well as how they will achieve their own carbon on-going reduction targets.

5.5 A Climate Impact Assessment has been conducted, which considers a net 'low-positive' impact as a result of the Highway Maintenance Regimes. There will be a decrease in the amount of carbon compared with the previous financial years.

5.6 The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council in November 2020, highlights the importance of adapting to climate impacts as well as reducing the emissions which are driving climate change

## **6. Community Engagement**

6.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".

6.2 The public and users of the public highway have access to the highway and any fundamental changes that affects this use will be brought to Committee for consideration and approval should they meet the assessment criteria.

6.3 This report will be available on the Council's website following Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee approval processes.

## **7. Equality Implications**

7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2. There is no overall change to service delivery at this time, and all users will have a safe public highway. Should any future updates /amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

## **8. Legal Implications**

8.1. The Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, to provide a safe public highway maintainable at public expense.

## **9. Financial Implications**

9.1. Highway Maintenance Asset Management will be fully funded from within the existing Environmental & Commercial Services Revenue Budget.

## **10. Timetable for Implementation**

10.1. Highway Asset Maintenance is a continuous service.

## **11. Background Papers**

11.1. There are none.

## **Appendices**

### **1. Annual Status Options Report (ASOR's) summaries**

- Carriageways**
- Footways**
- Structures**

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

### 1. Revenue Implications

Use this Table in the report or as an Appendix to set out the revenue implications:

	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
Employee costs (see note1)			
Other running costs	31	42	43
Capital financings costs			
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>31*</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>
Income from:	0	0	0
Fees and charges (see note2)			
Grant funding			
(specify)			
Other income			
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Cost (+)/saving (-)</b>	<b>31*</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>

\* Denotes Actual spend 2024/25

The net cost of the proposal can be funded from existing Revenue Highways & Traffic Services Budgets and capitalisation.

### 2. Capital Implications

Capital Programme reference from budget book: page line	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure	0	0	0
Funded by			

Grant (specify) DfT LTP Award			
Grant DfT Additional Road Resurfacing Fund			
Section 106 (specify)			
Other services (National Highways Grant)			
Capital Receipts/Borrowing			
Total Funding	0	0	0

**Note:** where more than one option /proposal is being made it may be easier to set out the above information in an Appendix.

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

This is a statutory service provision.

The Asset Management Approach complies with Highway Code of Practice; best practice and existing contracts has shown to be competitive.

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

The Council has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the public highway. The Highway Asset Management Plan will continue to reduce the risk to the Council and the public. The on-going revenue maintenance costs for delivering Asset Management will be absorbed within existing revenue budgets for highway maintenance. Method statements agreed with the existing contractors will continue to ensure delivery during the current financial position and climate changes challenges (flood / heat / drought), as well as ensuring that disruption is minimised. Supply chain for products risk mitigated by the contractor buying large volumes & stockpiling materials based on the size of the winter service programme.

Risk Assessments and Method Statements are included with all Highway Contracts and for the Council's own Highways & Drainage Operations Team.

Increasing fuel costs is and will remain a risk pressure, as will climate change, which will need to be managed throughout the programme.

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# Carriageway ASOR summary

March 2025

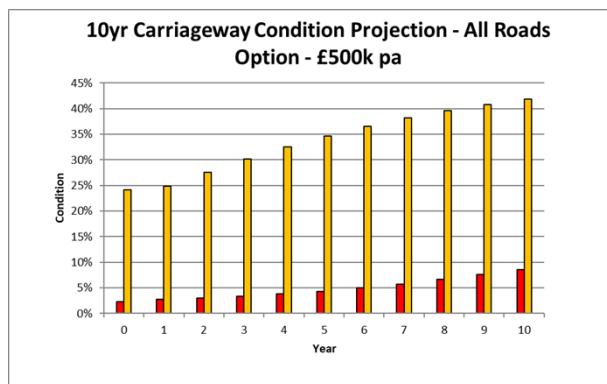
## Purpose

The report summary describes the status of the Council's carriageways in terms of condition and investment as of March 2025.

## The Asset

The council manages 404km of carriageways, 29% are classified roads and 71% residential streets.

## Future Investment



Future investment at £500k is less than half the level required to prevent deterioration.

Over time the benefit of recent investment will be eroded and a consequential increase in roads in poor and deteriorating condition can be expected along with increasing defects, especially in harsh winter weather is experienced.

## Customer Satisfaction

Satisfaction using the NHT (National Highways and Transport Network) survey compares well with other authorities, all indicators above the national average.

2024 NHT Results – Carriageways							
Ref	Indicator	RBC 2019	RBC 2020	RBC 2022	RBC 2023	RBC 2024	National Ave 2024
<b>Key Benchmark Indicators</b>							
KBI23	Condition of highways		31%	40%	33%	34%	24%
KBI24	Highway maintenance		51%	50%	47%	47%	41%
<b>Highway Maintenance Benchmark Indicators</b>							
HMB101	Condition of road surfaces	35%	31%	41%	31%	33%	22%
HMBI13	Deals with potholes / damaged roads	35%	30%	41%	33%	36%	23%
HMBI30	Speed of repair to damaged roads		28%	33%	27%	30%	20%
HMBI31	Quality of repair to damaged roads		35%	39%	33%	35%	26%
<b>Highway Maintenance Quality Indicators</b>							

<b>2024 NHT Results – Carriageways</b>							
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>RBC 2019</b>	<b>RBC 2020</b>	<b>RBC 2022</b>	<b>RBC 2023</b>	<b>RBC 2024</b>	<b>National Ave 2024</b>
HMQI11	Number of Potholes		22%	43%	26%	25%	13%
HMQI12	Action to repair local roads		33%	59%	45%	42%	26%

### **Customer Contact / Potholes**

The five-year trend in the number of customer contacts about carriageways shows that a standard annual level of between 600 and 800 can be expected. The 2024/25 reported level of 760 falls between that standard range.

### **3rd Party Claims**

Claims received reduced in 2024/25 following three years of increases. The Council defended 83% of the settled claims during 2024/25.

### **Condition: Defects**

Almost 400 safety defects were recorded in 2023/24 and 2024/25 almost double the amount recorded in 2022/23.

The quantity of maintenance defects recorded in 3 of the last 4 years has been approximately 3,000.

Despite the investment made in resurfacing over recent years significant levels of defects exist on the roads that have not been resurfaced recently with clusters of defects on some roads.,

### **Condition: Classified Roads**

After years of improvement the classified roads have deteriorated in 2024/25.

Very little work was carried out on classified roads between the 2023 and 2024 surveys in terms of resurfacing and surface treatment. This was due to the preparation of a 2 year contract. A new maintenance programme began towards the end of 2024 but this would not be picked up until the 2025 survey. This has led to slightly more than the deterioration we'd expect if we had carried out a resurfacing programme during that period. More schemes are being completed in 2025/26 on classified roads which should prevent further deterioration in the year. Future funding however is anticipated to be insufficient to prevent deterioration.

### **Condition: Unclassified Roads**

Between 2020/21 and 2022/23 additional investment reduced the quantity of unclassified roads requiring treatment to below 20%. Prior to the investment this was greater than 50%. 21% of unclassified roads are now in a condition where treatment is desirable.

### **Historical Investment**

Between 2020/21 and 2022/23 the investment was significantly above the steady state. This allowed much needed improvement of the condition of unclassified road.

Prior to 2020/21 the level of investment was only above the steady state in 1 of the preceding 5 years.

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# **Footway ASOR summary**

**March 2025**

## **Purpose**

This report summary describes the status of the Council's footways in terms of condition and investment as of March 2025

## **The Asset**

The council manages 820km of footways, ranging from busy footways in the town centre to lightly used footways in residential areas.

## **Investment**

Between 2020/21 and 2022/23 £1.5m of the additional funding was used on footways. Prior to this funding had been well below steady state levels. Current investment levels approximate to steady state. Future investment at £250k pa is at a deteriorating level.

## **Projection**

Future funding is at a level insufficient to prevent deterioration. The extent of footway deterioration is difficult to predict due to the inherent variability of the visual condition rating method used.

## **Customer Satisfaction**

RBC's level of satisfaction with footways using the NHT (National Highways and Transport Network) survey compares well to other authorities, all indicators are above average. The quantity of customer contact about footways reduced to 69, the lowest recorded in the last four years.

2024 NHT results - Footways						
Ref	Indicator	RBC 2020	RBC 2022	RBC 2023	RBC 2024	National Ave 2024
HMBI23	Speed of repair to damaged pavements	42%	39%	36%	37%	33%
HMBI24	Quality of repair to damaged pavements	49%	45%	42%	45%	39%
HMBI25	Weed killing on pavements	52%	49%	47%	44%	36%

## **Customer Contact / Potholes**

In 2024/25 there were 69 public enquiries relating to the footway. This is the lowest quantity over the last four years.

### **3rd Party Claims**

18 3<sup>rd</sup> party claims were received during 2024/25. The level of claims has increased by a small amount every years since 2020 when there were 10 3<sup>rd</sup> party claims.

### **Condition**

145 footway safety defects were recorded in 2024/25. The numbers are increasing. In 2024/25 a total of 1,012 maintenance defects were recorded. The quantity of defects over the last four years has remained steady.

### **Backlog**

The total cost of repairing all the lengths of footways identified as deteriorating is £1.5m.



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# **Structures ASOR summary**

## **March 2025**

### **Purpose**

This report summary describes the status of the Council's structure in terms of condition and investment at March 2025.

### **The Asset**

The Council manages 275 highway structures including 46 road bridges and 21 footbridges

### **Condition (inspection results)**

Out of the stock of 275 highway structures, 19 structures are in need of strengthening and 16 are currently rated to be in a poor condition.

### **Backlog**

The estimated cost of repairing all the defects identified on the structures "total backlog/workbank" is £11.4m. Within this there are £6.5m worth of works required to strengthen structures and a further £2.6m required to refurbish structures that are in a "poor" condition.

### **Steady State**

It is estimated that on average approximately £2.4m pa is required to counteract ongoing deterioration, in addition to any investment made in refurbishing structures in a deteriorated (very poor or poor state).

### **Routine, Reactive and Cyclic Maintenance**

The current level of revenue investment of £135k should be retained. The estimated cost of these revenue works for a stock of this size is between £100k and £130k.

### **5 year Investment**

Over the next 5 years £1,430k pa is to be invested in structures maintenance which will enable 9 structures to be strengthened and 3 poor structures to be refurbished. The investment will address 12 structures and reduce the current structures backlog to approximately £4.3m

### **DfT Investment**

From time to time the department of Transport release funds that the council can bid for structures works. The Council will continue to bid for those when they are available. #

### **Future Investment**

Further investment of £2.5m will be required from 2029/30 to undertake works on the remaining 10 structures which are in need of strengthening. There will be other structures requiring works which are in 'poor' or 'very poor' condition at that time.

# The prediction in this report do not assume any DfT monies are available. An updated report will be produced should DfT structures funding become available to the council

## Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

12 November 2025



<b>Title</b>	Winter Maintenance Service Plan 2025-2026
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report</b>	Emma Gee, Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhoods Services
<b>Report author</b>	Sam Shean, Highways & Traffic Services Manager
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Karen Rowland, Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety
<b>Council priority</b>	Deliver a sustainable & healthy environment & reduce Reading's carbon footprint
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That the Committee note the outputs delivered by the Winter Service Plan 2024/2025.</li> <li>That the Committee note the outcome of the review carried out on the Winter Service Plan to ensure compliance with the Highways Act 1980 and the 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice'.</li> <li>That the Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee approve the Winter Service Plan 2025/2026.</li> </ol>

### 1. Executive Summary

- To inform the Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee of the outputs delivered by the Winter Service Plan 2024/2025.
- To inform the Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee of the Winter Service Plan review carried out to ensure compliance with the Highways Act 1980 and 'Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice'.
- To inform and seek approval from the Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee for the Winter Service Plan 2025/2026.
- Appendix 1: Winter Service Plan 2025/2026.

### 2. Policy Context

- The Council approved Shaping Reading's Future – Our Council Plan 2025/26 to 2027/28. The Plan 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) and updated to include to current Year 3 priorities.
- The aim of the Winter Service Plan is to provide a service to reduce, as far as reasonably possible, the effects of adverse weather on the public highway during the winter period.

2.3 To make travel more secure, safe and comfortable for all users of the public highway and to provide conditions that are as safe as reasonably practical having regards to financial constraints and statutory duties.

### 3. The Proposal

#### BACKGROUND

##### Overview of Winter Service delivery during 2024/2025

3.1 The 2024/2025 winter season was relatively mild overall although there were numerous occasions when the temperature reached the trigger point for precautionary salting action, (below 1°C and predicted to go below freezing), resulting in 54 primary runs and 4 secondary runs. The colder spells were not severe nor prolonged enough for activation of the Snow Plan. By comparison there were 34 primary runs and 3 secondary runs during the previous winter season 2023/2024.

3.2 There were no issues with salt supply / delivery which enabled the contractor to maintain stock levels throughout the winter season.

3.3 There were no issues with the contractor replenishing the grit bins as and when required.

3.4 The winter decision making process to determine when to salt worked well. There is a joint Berkshire Wide winter forecasting service led by West Berkshire which includes Vaisala weather stations that provide weather data for MeteoGroup to make accurate prediction forecasts, enabling informed decisions to be made by the Berkshire Local Authorities on when to grit.

3.5 There is also a joint arrangement/agreement with Wokingham Borough Council, through their Consultants, Volker Highways, to provide gritting decision making. This worked well and delivered against the set key performance indicator.

3.6 The Winter Service Plan 2024/2025 provided a robust service for the duration of the Winter period with no disruption to the primary and secondary road network.

3.7 With the changing climate leading to milder wetter winters, the Highways & Drainage Team reviewed the gully emptying regimes to ensure that they are clear and running to avoid localised flooding issues.

#### Options Proposed:

3.8 A review of the Winter Service Plan 2024/2025 has been undertaken. The main points, including updates for the Winter Service Plan 2025/2026, are summarised below:

- All 48 highway grit bins, remain necessary and form part of the Winter Service Plan 2025/2026.
- No new grit bin requests were received for public highway roads.
- The contractual salt stock held by the Council's contractor will remain at 900 Tonnes throughout the 2025/2026 winter service period up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. All salt stock is stored by the contractor at their Aldermaston site, (under sheeting cover), as set out in Section 8 of the Winter Service Plan.
- Confirmation has been obtained from Compass Minerals (the salt supplier) that there are adequate National salt stocks available to cope with a severe winter season.
- Review has shown that the spread rates introduced in the 2018/2019 winter season following the National Salt Supply Review continue to prove successful and will continue for the 2025/2026 winter season.
- Bus routes continue to be on primary or secondary precautionary salting routes.

- There are no changes to the primary and secondary precautionary salting routes for the 2025/2026 winter season. Any bus route changes will be accommodated during the winter season.
- All cross-boundary primary and secondary precautionary salting routes correspond with neighbouring authorities precautionary salting routes.
- When the Snow Plan is activated (during prolonged adverse weather events), footway/pavement snow ploughs continue to be available for use in the Town Centre and on primary pedestrian routes such as the Reading / Caversham Bridges and Christchurch footbridge. The Snow Plan is available as a background paper.
- The Town Centre 'core area' footways will be treated with a proprietary material when snow is predicted to lay for a prolonged period. Traditional grit/salt may also be used on these Town Centre footways, as an alternative, when snow is predicted to lay for a prolonged period. The Town Centre footways are listed in Appendix E of the Winter Service Plan 2025/2026 and shown on a plan 'Town Centre Winter Maintenance - Treated Footway Areas' (Drawing Number RBC/WM/001A) which forms part of this Appendix.
- The Council's advice for cyclists using the Borough's public highway network during the winter season remains the same as for last winter season. Section 7 'Footways and Cycleways' (paragraph 7.5) in the Winter Service Plan 2025/2026 refers as follows:

*Cyclists can continue to cycle in winter but are advised to dress appropriately, use mudguards and lights, consider tyres (the wider the better) and commuting by bicycle can be comfortable and efficient. It is important to make a safety assessment particularly during periods of prolonged hazardous conditions, (refer to Council's Snow Plan). The Council does not precautionary grit / salt shared footways and remote cycleways when frost, ice or prolonged hazardous conditions are forecast, with the exception of shared carriageway / cycleway routes on the primary and secondary salting network. Being part of the carriageway, shared carriageway/cycleway routes on the primary and secondary precautionary salting route networks will be salted by default in accordance with the Winter Service Plan.*

*Should individuals make the decision to cycle during hazardous winter conditions the Council recommend that they take the necessary precautionary measures for the prevailing conditions.*

- 3.9 The updated Winter Service Plan 2025/2026 and map showing the primary/secondary precautionary salting routes and grit bin locations are available in Appendix 1 and on the Council's website.
- 3.10 The Berkshire Winter Service Consortium (includes all six Berkshire Unitary Authorities) agreed to jointly tender the 'winter forecasting' service and the supplier was appointed in 2021/2022. West Berkshire Council continues to be the lead Local Authority for the administration of this contract on behalf of the Consortium. This is entering into the final year of the contract.
- 3.11 Risk assessments and method statements will, if required, be further updated and agreed with the Council's gritting contractor J. H. Cresswell and Sons Ltd, to take account of any new associated risks and any Government updated advice.
- 3.12 A review of the proposed 'Active Travel Plan' schemes has shown that they are primarily situated on the existing 'primary/secondary' precautionary salting routes. Any future Active Travel Plan schemes brought forward will be evaluated to determine whether they should be added to the precautionary salting route.
- 3.13 A Berkshire Wide Road Senior Temperature data collection trial was carried out during last winter 2024/2025, funded by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Reading has 2

No. fixed sensor stations collecting a continual stream of data and 1 No. sensor attached to a gritting vehicle.

The results are with the scheme promotor Visala who are working with MeteoGroup to take the learning and adjust the algorithm accordingly. More data will be gathered this winter to enable more accurate temperature predictions on the network.

This scheme will improve road temperature data knowledge which will provide better decision making, leading to reduced numbers of gritting runs and provide further opportunities to only grit / treat those colder areas during certain circumstances, thereby further reducing the overall number of precautionary gritting runs, reducing the amount of grit / road salt use, reduced vehicle use and less waste that will ultimately lead to lower carbon emissions and efficiency savings in future winter seasons. It is noted that there have been some challenges in calibrating the sensor technology and the Berkshire Low Bandwidth Network (LoRaWAN) data transfer system will be improved during the winter months.

The Council do expect to start seeing the benefits of this project during the coming winter and we will provide the outcome and actual saving that this system is expected to generate at a future Committee meeting.

### **Other Options Considered**

3.14 The Highways Team have explored options to join an existing framework contract with nearby Local Authorities to deliver the Winter Maintenance Service within the Borough, however, the framework access fee and high delivery costs are in excess of what we currently have secured with our term gritting contractor J. H. Cresswell & Sons Ltd.

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

4.1 Reading Borough Council's vision is:

To help Reading realise its potential – and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

4.2 The Council's Corporate Plan has established five themes for the years 2025/28. These themes are:

- 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

4.3 These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:

- Putting Residents first
- Building in strong foundations
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading

4.4 Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on [Reading Council Plan 2025-28 FINAL.pdf](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

4.5 The delivery of the Highway Winter Maintenance Service will meet the Council's stated aims by providing:

- A safe, secure and affordable public Winter Maintenance Service for all residents and users of the public highway.
- Maintaining a safe Primary and Secondary highway network to support journeys, which in turn will maintain economic growth in Reading and the wider region.
- Support the Council's carbon reduction pledge by reducing unnecessary salting runs which will reduce waste, using less materials and lower carbon products, reducing energy consumption with lower energy gritting vehicles, also by moving to electric vehicles / plant and tools.
- Delivering the Social Value requirements set out in the tendered contracts to promote local employment and opportunity for residents of Reading.

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

5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

5.2. The Berkshire Wide Road Sensor Temperature collective trial will improve local road temperature data to provide better decision making. This will lead to reduced numbers of gritting runs and provide further opportunities to only grit / treat those colder areas during certain circumstances, thereby further reducing the overall number of precautionary gritting runs, reducing the amount of grit / road salt use, reduced vehicle usage and reduce waste that will ultimately lead to lower carbon emissions and efficiency savings.

5.3. The Winter Service Term Contract 2022-2027 requires the incumbent contractor to consider Environmental Implications and social value.

5.4. The contract includes carbon reduction targets and improved sustainability. The intent is to reduce the amount of carbon used to produce the materials at source, using recycled materials, reducing the uncontrolled waste in the environment, to reduce pollution of the natural environment, use of electric vehicles and plant, sourcing green energy alternatives, carbon off-setting, as well as how they will achieve their own carbon on-going reduction targets.

5.5. A Climate Impact Assessment has been conducted, which considers a net 'low-positive' impact as a result of the Winter Service Term Contract 2022-2027. There will be a decrease in the amount of carbon compared with the previous Winter Service Term Contract 2016-2022.

5.6. The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council in November 2020, highlights the importance of adapting to climate impacts as well as reducing the emissions which are driving climate change

## **6. Community Engagement**

6.1. Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".

6.2. The public and national bus operators can report accumulations of snow and ice on the public highway and strategic network and all requests for additional grit bins and roads to consider for gritting will be brought to Committee for consideration and approval should they meet the assessment criteria.

6.3. This report and the Winter Service Plan 2025/2026 will be available on the Council's website following Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committees approval.

## **7. Equality Implications**

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
  - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. The proposed Winter Service Plan 2025/2026 consists of precautionary salting of the Council's existing public highway network. There is no overall change to service delivery at this time, and all users will have a safe public highway. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

## **8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1. The Borough Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 Section 41 (Clause 1A) and Section 150 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice

## **9. Financial Implications**

- 9.1 The proposed Winter Service Plan 2025/2026 will be fully funded from the existing Environmental & Commercial Services Streetcare Revenue Budget.

## **10. Timetable for Implementation**

- 10.1. The Winter Maintenance Service is a continuous service throughout the lifetime of the contract and will deliver throughout the winter service period

## **11. Background Papers**

- 11.1. There are none.

## **Appendices**

### **1. Winter Service Plan 2025/2026**

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

### 1. Revenue Implications

Use this Table in the report or as an Appendix to set out the revenue implications:

	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
Employee costs (see note1)			
Other running costs	415	431	439
Capital financings costs			
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>415*</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>439</b>
Income from:	0	0	0
Fees and charges (see note2)			
Grant funding (specify)			
Other income			
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Cost (+)/saving (-)</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>439</b>

\* Denotes Actual spend 2024/25

The net cost of the proposal can be funded from existing Revenue Highways & Traffic Services Budgets and capitalisation.

### 2. Capital Implications

Capital Programme reference from budget book: page line	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure	0	0	0
Funded by			
Grant (specify) DfT LTP Award			
Grant DfT Additional Road Resurfacing Fund			
Section 106 (specify)			
Other services (National Highways Grant)			
Capital Receipts/Borrowing			
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Note:** where more than one option /proposal is being made it may be easier to set out the above information in an Appendix.

### 3. Value for Money (VFM)

This is a statutory service provision.

The existing contract has shown to be competitive. Term Contract awarded October 2022 for 3-years with an option to extend for a further 3-years subject to contract compliance and meeting

the contractual KPI criteria. The extension for the final 3-years has been completed and contract extended.

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

The Council has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the public highway, including winter maintenance. The winter service plan and associated treating of primary and secondary routes, with the provision of strategically placed grit bins will continue to reduce the risk to the Council and the public. The on-going maintenance costs will be absorbed within existing revenue budgets for highway maintenance. Method statements agreed with the existing contractor will continue to ensure delivery during the current financial position and climate changes challenges (flood / heat / drought), as well as ensuring that disruption is minimised. Supply chain for products risk mitigated by the contractor buying large volumes & stockpiling materials based on the size of the winter service programme.

Risk Assessments and Snow Plan included within the Winter Service Plan 2025/2026

Increasing fuel costs is and will remain a risk pressure, which will need to be managed throughout the programme.



**Reading**  
Borough Council

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**Working better with you**

## **WINTER SERVICE PLAN 2025 - 2026**

**Directorate of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services  
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**October 2025**

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# READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## WINTER SERVICE PLAN 2025 - 2026

### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document has been produced in association with the documents “Well Maintained Highways” Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance (Published July 2005, revised 2009, 2010 & 2011) and “Lessons learned from the severe weather February 2009” report (revised 2010 & 2011), ‘Quarmby Report’ December 2010 and the ‘Well-managed Highway Infrastructure - Code of Practice’ October 2016, to describe the Council’s proposals for dealing with ice/snow deposits on the highway network over the winter period. It details information regarding the winter service, such as the roles and responsibilities of Reading Borough Council and the joint arrangement with Wokingham Borough Council, its Consultant Volker Highways (Wokingham Highways Alliance) and Winter Maintenance Contractor J H Cresswell and Sons Ltd.
- 1.2 Roads forming the Primary and Secondary precautionary salting networks are shown in Appendix A. These are the most heavily used strategic roads in the Borough, including the main bus routes and routes to the Royal Berkshire Hospital.
- 1.3 A winter service will be provided by the Council for 26 weeks of the year, starting on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025 and ending on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. The formal winter service with Wokingham Borough Council and their Consultant, Volker Highways, commences on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2025. However, as agreed at the pre-winter season meeting, Volker Highways provides an informal weather data monitoring service from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025. Should salting action be required during October, Reading Borough Council will be advised and the Winter Maintenance Contractor, J H Cresswell and Sons Ltd, will be instructed accordingly. Although the formal winter service ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, a similar arrangement will be in place to extend the weather data monitoring service to the end of April 2026 if unfavourable conditions persist.
- 1.4 Precautionary salting of the Primary network (refer to 1.12) and snow clearance on the Primary routes will be carried out based on information received from the weather forecasting service. The Secondary precautionary salting network (refer to 1.13) will only be salted and/or cleared of snow during particularly severe and prolonged hazardous winter weather conditions. The decision to instigate such action will be taken by the Winter Duty Officer based on information received from the weather forecasting service at the time. The primary precautionary salting network is risk assessed and comprises of principal roads, including main bus routes and routes to the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Likewise, the secondary precautionary salting network is risk assessed and comprises of the remaining bus route network and roads linking strategic routes.
- 1.5 Where the Council has been made aware of water being deposited on the highway as the result of an unforeseen incident, for example fire, road traffic accident, burst water main etc, salt shall be applied, during freezing conditions, to reduce

as far as reasonably possible the effects of frost, ice and other severe winter weather conditions on the highway.

- 1.6 Where water is being deposited on the highway from a watermain and Thames Water is aware of the problem, Thames Water will begin to salt the area affected until the issue has been resolved. Thames Water will continue to salt any visible leaks of their own plant whether or not the leak is on a Council salting network. Thames Water provides the Council with a list of known leak sites to be salted by their own contractor.
- 1.7 Spreading of a proprietary material/grit/salt on Town Centre footways, as detailed in Appendix E, will be carried out based on forecast information received from the weather forecasting service at the time. The decision to spread a proprietary material/grit/salt in the town centre is made and carried out by the Council.
- 1.8 For Primary and Secondary precautionary salting routes, response and treatment times are 1 hour and 3 hours respectively. This means that the Contractor must commence salting within 1 hour of receiving the winter gritting decision/instruction and complete all of the salting routes within 3 hours of leaving their depot.
- 1.9 As the Highway Authority, Reading Borough Council has a legal duty under Section 41 (Clause 1A) and Section 150 of the Highways Act 1980 to remove accumulations of snow, if causing a highway to become obstructed. Roads will therefore be cleared of snow in descending order of priority commencing with the First Priority network as described in Section 9 of this document.
- 1.10 In accordance with the recommendations of the “Lessons learned from the Severe Weather February 2009” report, the Council has introduced a Contingency Salting Network to cover the prolonged periods and heavy accumulations of snow and national salt shortages as described in 6.8.
- 1.11 Salt spread rates, where possible, will be adjusted to meet the directives set out as described in the “Quarmby Audit” report and adopted by Highways Authorities in December 2010.
- 1.12 The Primary precautionary salting network is approximately 120 km in length, represents approximately 30% of the total road network and comprises principal roads, including main bus routes and routes to the Royal Berkshire Hospital.
- 1.13 The Secondary precautionary salting network is approximately 42.02 km, represents approximately 11% of the total road network and is comprised of, the remaining bus route network and roads linking strategic routes.
- 1.14 There will be 48 grit bins provided at locations throughout the Borough for public use, with the inclusion of an additional grit bin on Christchurch Footbridge. The grit bins are maintained by the Contractor and are detailed in Appendix G. The provision of grit bins on the Borough’s public highway network has been reviewed and risk assessed. A grit bin has to achieve a minimum score of 60 points, using the Council’s approved grit bin risk assessment pro-forma, to qualify; 48 grit bins continue to meet these criteria. The grit bins are repaired and replenished throughout the

winter period as necessary. At the end of the winter, all grit bins are collected, cleaned and stored away during the summer months.

- 1.15 All cross-boundary primary and secondary precautionary salting routes correspond with neighbouring authorities precautionary salting routes, refer to paragraph 6.7.
- 1.16 The treatment of the M4 motorway and the on/off 4 slip roads at Junction 11 is the responsibility of Highways England and their agent. The Junction 11/A33 gyratory, A33 carriageway and bus lanes within the Borough boundary are included within the Council's Primary Salting Network.

## 2 POLICY STATEMENT

Reading Borough Council aim to provide a winter maintenance service to reduce so far as is reasonably practicable the effects of frost, ice and snow and other severe winter conditions on the public highway. The Council aim to provide travelling conditions as safe as reasonably practicable having regard to the road hierarchy detailed in Section 6 of this document, 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure - Code of Practice' October 2016, as well as the Highways Act 1980 Section 41 (Clause 1A) and Section 150.

### 3 CLIENT/CONSULTANT/CONTRACTOR RELATIONSHIP

3.1 The Winter Maintenance Contract (2022/23-2027/28) specifies the Winter Service operations to be carried out within the Borough. The term contractor is J. H. Cresswell and Sons Ltd.

3.2 Innovative ideas proposed by the Client, Consultant, Contractor or DfT that provide improvements in quality of service and/or cost benefits will be adopted during the course of the winter season. An example would be adjusting salt spread rates during prolonged cold periods to maximise coverage and maintain adequate stock levels and the Winter Road Temperature Sensor Trail continues.

3.3 The following table indicates how the principal Winter Service responsibilities between Reading Borough Council, Wokingham Borough Council and its Consultant and the Contractor are split.

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>RESPONSIBILITY</u>
Preparation of Winter Service Plan	Reading Borough Council
Road hierarchy priorities	Reading Borough Council
Salt purchase & storage	Contractor - J. H. Cresswell and Sons Ltd
Route mapping for precautionary salting network	Contractor - J. H. Cresswell and Sons Ltd
Route mapping for snow Clearance	Reading Borough Council / Contractor - J. H. Cresswell and Sons Ltd
Vehicles/plant and	Owned and routinely maintained by Contractor - J. H. Cresswell and Sons Ltd Accreditation
Winter Service Manager/ Decision making	Wokingham Borough Council (Volker Highways)
Day-to-day operations	Mainly Contractor - J. H. Cresswell and Sons Ltd with central co-ordination by Reading Borough Council/Wokingham Borough Council (Volker Highways) staff
Manning levels	As defined in the Winter Maintenance Contract (2022/23-2027/28).
Performance monitoring	Wokingham Borough Council (Volker Highways)/Reading Borough Council

<u>ACTIVITY (CONT'D)</u>	<u>RESPONSIBILITY (CONT'D)</u>
Opening of Emergency Operations Centre and Emergency Planning Room	Reading Borough Council
Approval to commence Operations in extreme Snow conditions	Reading Borough Council
Weather Forecasting Service	Vaisala / MeteoGroup

3.4 The Contractor will provide the Council with a list of any wet spots identified during each salting run, for the Council to investigate further. The Contractor will also provide the Council with a list of roads that have not been salted and the reason why e.g. road works/traffic management.

## 4 DECISION MAKING

4.1 Decision making is the responsibility of the Consultant's (Volker Highways) appropriate Duty Officer (**except in the cases detailed in paragraphs 4.11 and 4.12**). Each 24-hour period, during the winter service period, the Duty Officer will be on standby.

The Duty Officer also has a specific responsibility for liaising directly with the MeteoGroup duty forecaster and for disseminating information as described in Section 15.

4.2 The Duty Officer is responsible for receiving and taking the appropriate action on information relating to the winter service within the Borough. Using the forecast data provided, the Duty Officer will make his/her decision regarding precautionary salting as appropriate. To assist with this process, call out guidance notes are as detailed in Appendices B and C. The Winter Service Manager will also be available to give advice to the Duty Officer when required.

4.3 At approximately midday the Duty Officer logs on to MeteoGroup web page and inspects the rolling 36-hour forecast, graphs and appropriate maps. It is likely that the decision will be made at this time. If it is not possible to make a decision at midday the contractor is advised at this time that he is to wait for a decision following the evening update.

4.4 At approximately 1800 hours the Duty Officer logs on to MeteoGroup web page and inspects the forecast graph and text for any updated information. The forecast graph continues to have actual road surface temperatures plotted every hour for a rolling 36-hour period. This information can be obtained at any time by the Duty Officer by logging on to the web page. If a decision still cannot be made it may be necessary for the Duty Officer to consult the weather forecaster.

4.5 It is the responsibility of each Duty Officer to record all action taken on the justification forms and file for future reference.

4.6 The Duty Officer's decision is recorded on a decision sheet as shown in Appendix D, which is disseminated and filed for future reference.

4.7 When snow is forecast the snow clearance strategy is to be controlled by the Council in consultation with Volker Highways. In times of prolonged severe weather staff from the Council will liaise directly with the contractor in order to direct operations in the most effective way possible.

4.8 The Contractor is contacted via email and mobile phones, which are manned 24 hours per day. The daily decision sheets are emailed to the contractor by Volker Highways to confirm the instruction.

4.9 The daily decision sheets are provided by Volker Highways to the Council, electronically. The decisions are also disseminated within the Council and placed on the appropriate social media platform to inform the public.

- 4.10 Appropriate training is provided regularly for all Duty Officers, particularly with regard to technological improvements in forecasting techniques and the ice prediction system.
- 4.11 Where one of the emergency services contacts the Council requesting a one off gritting following either a road traffic accident, a fire resulting in localised excess water or a water leak, Highway Services will instruct during normal working hours or, if out of hours, The Answering Service (TAS) will instruct accordingly.
- 4.12 The Town Centre footway / pavement areas, listed in Appendix E, are treated by the Council's Streetscene Services. The decision whether to treat these is taken by Highway Services as outlined in Section 7.

## 5 ROSTERING OF SUPERVISORY AND OPERATIONAL STAFF

- 5.1 Wokingham Borough Council has employed Volker Highways to act as Highways and Transportation Consultant's whose role is to act as the Winter Service Manager. As part of the above agreement Reading Borough Council have a joint arrangement for Volker Highways to provide a winter decision making service.
- 5.2 The Consultant's team of Duty Officers is rostered to be on standby for the winter period, which is generally November to March inclusive. However, as agreed at the pre-winter season meeting, Volker Highways will be providing an informal weather data monitoring service/Duty Officer standby arrangement from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025 with a similar arrangement in place extended through to the end of April 2026 if unfavourable weather conditions persist.
- 5.3 A Winter Service Duty Officer is available 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week during his/her duty period. During normal office hours all Winter Service enquiries from members of the public should be directed to the Highways and Traffic Services - Highways Maintenance & Asset Management Team at Reading Borough Council, disseminated, and where the policy applies, information forwarded onto the Consultant's (Volker Highways).
- 5.4 Outside normal office hours, enquiries should be directed to the call out facility listed in Appendix F. (Officers' home telephone numbers will not be released to members of the public).
- 5.5 To continually improve the service, all public requests for salting and grit bins will be logged by the Council and forwarded to the Highways and Traffic Services - Highways Maintenance & Asset Management Team for assessment at the end of the winter season. Only in circumstances where emergency services make a request for salting will the Council's Winter Maintenance Contractor be mobilised before an assessment is completed. Further information concerning weather forecasts and the decision-making process are provided in Sections 4 and 13.
- 5.6 Rosters of all of the Contractor's staff involved in winter service operations are requested and made available by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025.
- 5.7 All operators of salt spreading equipment are in possession of The City and Guilds Institute (scheme 6159) 'Winter Maintenance Operators Qualification' and all gritting plant conforms to current Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) Quality Assurance certification and accreditation. The Winter Maintenance Contractor provides the gritting vehicle calibration certificates to the Council in advance of the winter season.
- 5.8 Prior to the commencement of the winter period, each Duty Officer is provided with an information pack, which includes details of all appropriate telephone / mobile contacts, together with any additional information that may be appropriate.

## 6 ROAD HIERARCHY

6.1 The Primary precautionary salting network comprises all Category 1 and Category 2 roads and some heavily trafficked Category 3 roads which are defined as follows:

Category 1: The most important roads in the Borough in terms of volume of traffic carried, the proportion of heavy goods vehicles and their strategic function as principal links.

Category 2: The main distributor roads carrying significant volumes of traffic and public transport services. These are important thoroughfares distributing traffic from the strategic routes to residential and commercial areas.

Category 3: All other roads being roads providing local access within and between residential and commercial areas.

The total length of the Council's Primary Salting Network is approximately 120 km which represents approximately 30% of the highway network (excluding the motorway) within the Borough area.

6.2 The Secondary precautionary salting network is approximately 42.02 km in length and represents approximately 11% of the highway network. It is comprised of the remaining bus route network and roads linking strategic routes, which become hazardous if left untreated during prolonged periods of particularly severe weather conditions.

6.3 The Primary precautionary salting network is broken down into 3 individual salting routes. Each route is efficiently designed in order to comply with the maximum treatment time of 3 hours. In the event of the Snow Plan being activated the Primary precautionary salting network is broken down into 3 individual salting routes. The Primary precautionary salting routes to be treated by the Contractor are detailed in Appendix A.

6.4 The Secondary precautionary salting network is broken down into 3 salting routes. The Secondary salting routes to be treated by the Contractor are detailed in Appendix A.

6.5 The snow clearance routes comprise of 3 priority groups.

First All of the Category 1 network which are all the A Class roads in the Borough.

Second All of the Category 2 network which includes all of the B Class roads and some of the heavier trafficked C Class roads.

Third The remaining C class roads.

Snow clearance shall commence with the 'first priority' network and only when this has been cleared shall resources cascade to the 'second priority' followed by the 'third priority' networks. Page 98

Roads will therefore be cleared of snow in descending order of priority until such time as the ‘first priority’ network is clear. Only when this is clear shall resources cascade to the ‘second priority’ followed by the ‘third priority’ networks (see Section 9).

- 6.6 Performance of the Contractor in relation to response and treatment times is monitored to ensure satisfactory service delivery and KPI contract compliance, where appropriate.
- 6.7 By agreement no cross Borough boundary salting and snow clearance will take place between Reading Borough Council and adjoining Unitary Authorities or vice versa, (refer to Appendix I).
- 6.8 In accordance with the recommendations of the “Lessons learned from the Severe Weather February 2009” report, the Council will introduce a Contingency Salting Network to cover any prolonged periods and heavy accumulations of snow and national salt shortages. The length of network to be treated will be determined based on the Council’s salt stocks, the national salt stock situation and the anticipated period of severe weather.
- 6.9 The “Quarmby report” from 2010 gives guidance on efficient spread rates for preserving salt stocks. This is used when determining the rate at which salt is spread over the public highway during different weather conditions and salt levels.
- 6.10 The treatment of the M4 motorway and the on/off entry and exit slip roads at Junction 11 is the responsibility of the National Highways and their agent. The M4 Junction 11/A33 gyratory, A33 carriageway and bus lanes within the Borough boundary are included within the Council’s Primary Salting Network.

## 7 FOOTWAYS AND CYCLEWAYS

- 7.1 The Council does not precautionary salt any of its footway network, however if snow is predicted to lay for a prolonged period, then the Town Centre area, as detailed in Appendix E, will be treated with a proprietary material/grit/salt to prevent snow and ice forming. The footways listed in Appendix E are treated with a proprietary material/grit/salt as they have a high pedestrian footfall.
- 7.2 The decision to treat the footways listed in Appendix E is taken by the Council's Highways & Traffic Services. This work is also directly carried out by Streetscene Services.
- 7.3 Streetscene Services usually require approximately 3 hours' notice to prepare the equipment, product and staff for the works. Once the spreading of a proprietary material/grit/salt has started it takes approximately 1.5 hours to cover the route.
- 7.4 The Council has 2 hand operated snow ploughs which will be deployed on town centre footways, over Reading and Caversham Bridges and over the Christchurch Bridge, in the event of heavy accumulations of snow. On completion of these locations a decision will be made on cascading down to other high footfall areas based on a dynamic risk assessment reflecting conditions prevailing at the time.
- 7.5 Cyclists can continue to cycle in winter but are advised to dress appropriately, use mudguards and lights, consider tyres (the wider the better) and commuting by bicycle can be comfortable and efficient. It is important to make a safety assessment particularly during periods of prolonged hazardous conditions, (refer to Council's Snow Plan). The Council does not precautionary grit / salt shared footways and remote cycleways when frost, ice or prolonged hazardous conditions are forecast, with the exception of shared carriageway / cycleway routes on the primary and secondary salting network (including Shinfield Road Active Travel Cycle Lane). Being part of the carriageway, shared carriageway/cycleway routes on the primary and secondary precautionary salting route networks will be salted by default in accordance with the Winter Service Plan.

**Should individuals make the decision to cycle during hazardous winter conditions the Council recommend that they take the necessary precautionary measures for the prevailing conditions.**

## 8 SALTING OPERATIONS AND SALT

### Response time

- 8.1 Throughout the winter service period the Contractor must start salting within 1 hour of receiving the instruction from the Duty Officer or at the time specified.
- 8.2 Each primary precautionary salting route is designed so that treatment can be completed in a maximum of 3 hours from the time of leaving the depot.
- 8.3 Salt complying with BS3247 shall be supplied by the Contractor and stored at Aldermaston. It is a contractual requirement that appropriate salt stockpiles are in place by 1<sup>st</sup> October each year.

	Minimum Quantity	Minimum Quantity	Minimum Quantity	Minimum Quantity
Quantity	1 <sup>st</sup> October (100%)	31 <sup>st</sup> December (100%)	28 <sup>th</sup> February (100%)	31 <sup>st</sup> March (66%)
Salt Total	900 tonnes	900 tonnes	900 tonnes	600 tonnes

- 8.4 All of the salt stock is stored in the open at Aldermaston, covered by proprietary sheeting.
- 8.5 Salt shall normally be applied in accordance with the “Quarmby Report” unless there are severe prolonged periods of snow or low national salt stocks. In such situations an appropriate spread rate will be implemented by the Contractor as agreed by the Council in consultation with the Consultant, Volker Highways, the Contractor and the salt supplier.
- 8.6 Bridge decks are given a double precautionary salting as the surface temperatures get much colder than those of regular roads. The bridges that are given a double precautionary salt are listed in Appendix H.

### Motorways

- 8.7 The treatment of the M4 motorway and the on/off slip roads at Junction 11 is the responsibility of National Highways and their agent. The M4 Junction 11/A33 gyratory, A33 carriageway and bus lanes within the Borough boundary are included within the Council’s Primary Salting Network.

## 9 SNOW CLEARANCE

- 9.1 When conditions are such that snow clearance becomes necessary, an instruction will be given by the Duty Officer to the Contractor to commence the snow clearance operation. It is essential that snow ploughs are fitted without delay.
- 9.2 During prolonged severe weather when snow clearance becomes necessary, the Emergency Planning Officer will implement the Council's Snow Plan and open the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) which will be staffed until conditions abate. During this time, all incoming calls relating to winter service operations will be directed by the EOC. Responsibility for instructing the Contractor will be passed from Volker Highways Duty Officer to the appropriate Council Officer.
- 9.3 The Council provides snow clearance routes for the Contractor to treat in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Snow Plan. The highway (carriageway) network is cleared in descending order of priority, concentrating on the clearance of the first priority network followed by other priority networks in accordance with the agreed policy. Certain highway (footway) areas in the Town Centre that are block paved will be treated using a proprietary material/grit/salt, these are shown in Appendix E.

The snow clearance route priorities are:

<b>First</b>	A33, A329 (including IDR), A4, A4074, A4155, A327.
<b>Second</b>	B3270, B480, B3031.
<b>Third</b>	All other remaining roads.

- 9.4 Following snow clearance operations, the routes will be inspected for damage. Details of the damage will be passed to Highways & Traffic Services for preparation of estimates and damage repair.
- 9.5 In the case of prolonged periods and heavy accumulations of snow and/or a national salt shortage, the Council will implement a Contingency Salting Network. The network will be designed to deliver a risk based contingency service in line with the UK Road Groups Report "Lessons from the Severe Weather February 2009" report and new Code of Practice.

### Motorways

- 9.6 The treatment of the M4 motorway and the on/off slip roads at Junction 11 is the responsibility of National Highways and their agent. The M4 Junction 11/A33 gyratory, A33 carriageway and bus lanes within the Borough boundary are included within the Council's Primary Salting Network.

## 10 GRIT BINS

10.1 Grit bins are provided on the Borough's public highway network but only where they have achieved a minimum score of 60 out of a total of 85 points as previously assessed, using the grit bin risk assessment pro-forma (Appendix G refers to the approved grit bin locations). The grit bins are repaired and replenished throughout the winter period as necessary. At the end of the winter, all grit bins are collected, cleaned and stored away during the summer months.

Grit bin requests are evaluated on a risk-based scoring system using the following criteria in the risk assessment pro-forma:

- Not on roads already on the gritting network or nearby grit bin
- Gradient greater than 10%
- Severe bends not including junctions
- Close proximity to and falling towards a heavily trafficked main road
- Number of premises for which the road is only access
- Traffic density at peak times
- Roads with high vehicle usage and a gradient of 10% or more
- Shaded carriageways with a minimum gradient of 10%
- Side road leading onto a main road
- Known problem with water and/or frost hollows
- Access available from carriageway for filling

(To qualify, a grit bin requires a minimum score of 60 out of a total of 85 points).

10.2 Requested locations for grit bins on the public highway will be reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis before the start of the winter season. Any new requests will be required to achieve a minimum score of 60 out of a total of 85 points to qualify. (Grit bin locations which have been assessed previously will not be reassessed).

10.3 For non-public highway areas, stakeholders and other Council Directorates/Teams are advised to purchase their own grit bins and salt stocks, as well as to make their own arrangements to spread the salt, prior to the winter season. Stakeholders and Council Directorates/Teams can choose to contact Highways & Traffic Services for a quote to supply grit bin(s) and/or salt. The stakeholder / Council Directorate/Team will need to make their own arrangements for salt spreading as appropriate.

10.4 The Council will support community groups & individuals who express an interest to fund the installation of additional grit bins and take on the maintenance liability by way of an appropriate Highway Licence.

**It should be noted that Highways & Traffic services and its Winter Maintenance Contractor/Consultant will give priority to delivering the winter service for the Borough's public highway network.**

## 11 PLANT AND VEHICLES

- 11.1 The Council's Winter Maintenance Contractor owns and maintains all the equipment used for Winter Service operations with the exception of the footway ploughs and proprietary material hand-spreaders (Refer to 11.8).
- 11.2 Prior to the operational winter service period the Contractor will carry out a 'dry' run of each precautionary salting route, attach/remove snow ploughs to/from each vehicle and carry out calibration test to the equipment.
- 11.3 To be effective, salt must be spread evenly and at rates to suit prevailing weather conditions. Excessive salt spreading is undesirable on both environmental and economic grounds. To this end, it is essential that the spreading equipment is calibrated annually in accordance with BS 1622 and the controls marked accordingly for spreads of 8g/m<sup>2</sup> for normal pre-salting and 11g/m<sup>2</sup>, 15g/m<sup>2</sup>, 16g/m<sup>2</sup>, 20g/m<sup>2</sup> and 40g/m<sup>2</sup> for more severe conditions in line with recommendations outlined in the Quarmby Report December 2010.
- 11.4 All winter service vehicle drivers are issued with mobile phones for communication.
- 11.5 All of the Contractor's staff are qualified to City and Guilds Local Government Management Board 6157 now superseded by City and Guilds 6159 for salting and snow clearance operations.
- 11.6 Details of all routes including maps are kept in each vehicle.
- 11.7 A small, towable salt spreader can be used on narrow roads where the larger winter service vehicles cannot manoeuvre or travel along due to road widths, parked vehicles etc.
- 11.8 The Council own two hand operated footway snow ploughs and several proprietary material hand-spreaders to reduce the effects and lower the risk of snow and ice accumulations in the Town Centre block-paved areas (refer to Appendix E).

## **12 OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS**

- 12.1 All winter service vehicle drivers are in contact with the Contractor's depot via mobile phones in order that instructions can be passed and current information relayed back directly from the vehicles.
- 12.2 The Contractor is required to provide the Council with a list of the contact details that are to be used by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025.
- 12.3 The Contractor is required to provide the Council with a copy of the Daily Winter Service Action report after each salting run. This records details of each vehicle, driver, route number, start time, finish time, rate of spread and any other remarks.
- 12.4 In emergency situations when mobile phone networks are not available, the Council and Volker Highways have the use of airwave radios for communication purposes.

## 13 WEATHER FORECASTS

During the winter period, the Council will use the 'Roadmaster' forecasting service provided by MeteoGroup, from their UK HQ in Victoria, London. The information received each day includes the following:

- (i) detailed rolling 36-hour forecast
- (ii) evening update forecast
- (iii) site specific temperature graphs (three sites)
- (iv) early morning summary and preliminary forecast
- (iv) 2 - 10 day forecast

The 36-hour forecast is received at approximately midday each day. The main features of this forecast are as follows:

(i) **Readiness Colour**

This is based on the traffic light system of colours; green, amber or red. The definitions are:

Green	No hazard expected.
Amber	RSTs below zero but road dry
	RST between 0 and +1C (inclusive)
Red	RST > +1C and < +2C with low confidence
	RSTs below zero with a hazard.

(i) **Hazards**

This section includes the hazards causing the red or amber readiness colours as well as other weather hazards such as heavy rain, high winds or fog, which could accompany a green readiness colour. A qualifying time will be given for all hazards.

(iii) **Minimum temperatures**

Minimum air and road temperatures for urban and rural areas are provided.

(iv) **Confidence statements**

This consists of high, moderate or low confidence for each of the hazards described above, together with a qualifying statement. For example: low confidence regarding extent of showers this evening but high regarding road temperatures falling below zero.

(v) **36-hour weather summary**

This is a general summary of the forecast for a rolling 36-hour period.

At approximately 1800 hours each evening, a forecast update is issued by MeteoGroup and can be viewed by the Duty Officer at home on a portable laptop computer. "If further information is required, the Duty Officer can make use of the 24-hour consultancy service provided by MeteoGroup - 0845 603 0563"

Example of a typical 24-hour summary forecast is shown overleaf on Pages 21 & 22.

**24 HOUR SUMMARY FORECAST FOR Berkshire**  
**FORECAST FOR MONDAY 11/10/2010 12:00 TO TUESDAY 12/10/2010 12:00**

Headline	RSTS ABOVE ZERO
Confidence	HIGH

**General Synopsis**

This afternoon, it will be dry and bright with long periods of sunshine. Tonight, dry with the chance of some clearer breaks at first, but mist and low cloud will become extensive. Tomorrow morning, dry but with cloudy skies. RSTs above zero throughout the period.

**Hazards and temperatures (Example)**

Berkshire		
Readiness Colour	GREEN	
Hoar Frost	N	HIGH
Ice	N	HIGH
Snow	N	HIGH
Snow Level (m)	N/A	
Drifting	N	HIGH
Heavy Rain	N	HIGH
Fog	N	HIGH
Freezing Rain	N	HIGH
Minimum Air Temp		7.5
Bridgedeck min temp		9.0
Urban Min RST		10.0
Urban RST period < 0		N
Min RST		9.0
RST period < 0		N

**Snow Summary**

None

## Wind Table (Example)

		Mon 11/10 12-18				Mon 11/10 18-00				Tue 12/10 00-06				Tue 12/10 06-12				
Domains	Dir	Avg mph	Exp Gust mph	Ext Gust mph	Dir	Avg mph	Exp Gust mph	Ext Gust mph	Dir	Avg mph	Exp Gust mph	Ext Gust mph	Dir	Avg mph	Exp Gust mph	Ext Gust mph		
		Berkshire County Wide	NE	13	28	31	NE	11	22	25	NE	9	20	23	NE	9	20	24
MeteoGroup UK.																		
Forecaster																		
Produced at			11-10-2010 10:38:39															
			BST															
Issued at			11-10-2010 12:31:12															
			BST															
Telephone			0845 603 0563															
Fax			020 7963 7579															
<u>Visit RoadCast at</u>																		
<u><a href="http://www.roadcast.co.uk">www.roadcast.co.uk</a></u>																		

## 14 THERMAL MAPPING AND ICE PREDICTION

### Reading Roads

- 14.1 Vaisala Ltd has undertaken thermal mapping across Berkshire, a technique for measuring and analysing the thermal characteristics of road surfaces. It is normally carried out under three different weather conditions, one of which is the extreme condition or night when skies are clear and winds light. The other weather conditions are known as intermediate and damped. Under extreme conditions, the maximum variation in road surface temperature is produced, this, together with the coldest absolute temperatures, leads to potentially hazardous road conditions. Under such conditions it is most important to be able to accurately predict road surface temperatures.
- 14.2 The information yielded from thermal mapping is used in conjunction with site specific forecasts to predict accurately the minimum temperature of road surfaces across the road network. This allows accurate decisions to be made not only about whether to salt or not but whether to salt only those roads that require treatment.
- 14.3 Thermal mapping has been used to produce data, which allows the pre-salting routes to be analysed objectively and to ensure the optimum location of road surface and atmospheric condition sensors.
- 14.4 Annual calibration checks on sensors are undertaken by the equipment supplier(s).
- 14.5 Every hour, information from these sensors is fed automatically into the Central Processing Unit at Vaisala's offices in Birmingham. The parameters recorded are, air temperature, humidity, precipitation, wind speed and direction, road surface condition (wet or dry) and depth temperature. Forecasts are produced by MeteoGroup based on this information. These forecasts when used in conjunction with the thermal mapping data forms one of the most sophisticated ice prediction systems in the U.K.
- 14.6 West Berkshire Council acts as lead authority on behalf of the Berkshire Unitary Authorities in respect of the co-ordination and procurement of contracts with Vaisala and MeteoGroup Ltd. The formulation of this alliance between the authorities is known as the Berkshire Consortium.
- 14.7 All six members of the Berkshire Consortium (consisting of the six Unitary Local Authorities within the former Berkshire County Council administrative area) have access to the ice detection equipment described above.
- 14.8 The Berkshire Consortium own weather stations situated within Berkshire and have a contract with Vaisala Ltd. Once the data is in a usable format it is passed on to MeteoGroup who will make the weather predictions. The nearest weather station for Reading is on the A329 Oxford Road (located outside Battle Library).

## 15 MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

15.1 Liaison with the news media, including social media platforms, the local radio stations is of the utmost importance and will be maintained during periods of severe snowfall. This is to notify the public of any driving advice or road closures etc that will affect their journeys or safety. This contact will normally be directly with the Council's Press Office who will be fed information from Highways & Traffic Services.

15.2 It is also desirable that communications with the local Police force is maintained. To this end, whenever an instruction to salt is issued by Volker Highways, a copy of the decision sheet will be emailed to the Thames Valley Police Headquarters at Kidlington who will then distribute the notification accordingly. Additional information will also be provided as appropriate to the motoring organisations during periods of snow clearance when it is essential that the travelling public are advised of current road conditions and cleared routes.

15.3 Information on winter gritting / salting and guidance on safer driving this winter on Reading roads together with a plan showing the roads that will be treated is published on the Council's website.

15.4 Information on the current policy and precautionary salting plans is available on the Council's website.

15.5 The 'Winter Service Plan 2025/2026' Committee Report, presented to the Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee, is available on the Council's website. This Report includes details on the review process carried out following the 2024/2025 winter season and updates to this Winter Service Plan for the 2025/2026 winter season.

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## SUMMARY OF ROADS ON PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PRECAUTIONARY SALTING NETWORK

TABLE 1 - COUNCIL'S PRIMARY SALTING NETWORK

ROAD NAME	SECTION
A33	ALL - INC MRT BUS LANES / BYPASS - SOUTH OAK WAY R/BOUT
ALEXANDRA ROAD	PART - UPPER REDLANDS ROAD TO ADDINGTON ROAD
ADDINGTON ROAD	PART - REDLANDS ROAD TO CRAVEN ROAD
B3270	ALL
BAGNALL WAY	ALL
BASINGSTOKE ROAD	ALL
BATH ROAD	ALL
BEDFORD ROAD	PART - OXFORD ROAD TO CHATHAM STREET
BERESFORD ROAD	ALL
BERKELEY AVENUE	ALL
BLAGRAVE STREET	ALL
BRIANTS AVENUE	ALL
BRIDGE STREET, CAVERSHAM	ALL
BRIDGE STREET, READING	ALL
BUCKINGHAM DRIVE	ALL
BURGHFIELD ROAD	ALL
CASTLE HILL	ALL
CASTLE STREET	ALL
CAVERSHAM PARK ROAD	ALL
CAVERSHAM ROAD	ALL
CHAPEL HILL	ALL
CHATHAM STREET	ALL
CHEAPSIDE	ALL
CHRISTCHURCH GARDENS	PART - NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE TO BASINGSTOKE ROAD
CHRISTCHURCH ROAD	ALL
CHURCH ROAD, CAVERSHAM	ALL
CHURCH STREET, CAVERSHAM	ALL
CITY ROAD	ALL
CORWEN ROAD	ALL
COW LANE	ALL
CRAVEN ROAD	ALL
CRESSINGHAM ROAD	ALL
CROWN STREET	ALL
DEE ROAD	ALL
DONKIN HILL	ALL
DUKE STREET	ALL
DWYER ROAD	ALL
ELDON ROAD	ALL
ELM ROAD	ALL
EVESHAM ROAD	PART - SOUTHDOWN ROAD TO BUCKINGHAM DRIVE
FORBURY ROAD	ALL
FRIAR STREET	ALL
GEORGE STREET, CAVERSHAM	ALL

## SUMMARY OF ROADS ON PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PRECAUTIONARY SALTING NETWORK

TABLE 1 - COUNCIL'S PRIMARY SALTING NETWORK CONT'D...

ROAD NAME	SECTION
GILLETTE WAY	ALL
GOSBROOK ROAD	PART - PROSPECT STREET TO BRIANTS AVENUE
GREAT KNOLLYS STREET	PART - CAVERSHAM ROAD TO NORTH STREET
GREYFRIARS ROAD	ALL
GROVELANDS ROAD	ALL
GUN STREET	ALL
GWEAL AVENUE	ALL
HARTLAND ROAD	ALL
HEMDEAN ROAD	PART - CHURCH STREET TO OAKLEY ROAD
HENLEY ROAD	ALL
HIGH STREET	ALL
HILDENS DRIVE	ALL
HOLYBROOK ROAD	ALL
HONEY END LANE	ALL
IDR INNER RELIEF ROAD	ALL
KENDRICK ROAD	ALL
KENTWOOD HILL	ALL
KING STREET	ALL
KING'S ROAD, READING	ALL
LIEBENROOD ROAD	ALL
LINDISFARNE WAY	ALL
LONDON ROAD	ALL
LONDON STREET	ALL
LOWER ELMSTONE DRIVE	ALL
LOWER HENLEY ROAD	ALL
LOWFIELD ROAD	ALL
MANOR FARM ROAD	PART - GWEAL AVE TO GILLETTE WAY
MARKET PLACE	ALL
MAYFAIR	ALL
MILL LANE	ALL
MINSTER STREET	ALL
MOUNT PLEASANT	ALL
NORCOT ROAD	ALL
NORTH STREET, READING	ALL
NORTHERN WAY	ALL
NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE	ALL
OVERDOWN ROAD	ALL
OXFORD ROAD	ALL
PARK LANE	ALL
PELL STREET	ALL
PEPPARD ROAD	EXCLUDING LOOP LOWFIELD ROAD TO BUCKINGHAM DRIVE
PEPPER LANE	ALL
PIERCES HILL	ALL

## SUMMARY OF ROADS ON PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PRECAUTIONARY SALTING NETWORK

TABLE 1 - COUNCIL'S PRIMARY SALTING NETWORK CONT'D...

ROAD NAME	SECTION
PORTMAN ROAD	ALL
PRIEST HILL	ALL
PROSPECT STREET, CAVERSHAM	ALL
QUEEN'S ROAD, READING	ALL
READING BRIDGE	ALL
REDLANDS ROAD	ALL
RICHFIELD AVENUE	ALL
ROSE KILN LANE	ALL
ROTHERFIELD WAY	ALL
SOUTHDOWN ROAD	PART - ROTHERFIELD WAY TO EVESHAM ROAD
RUSSELL STREET	ALL
SCHOOL ROAD	ALL
SHEPHERDS LANE	PART - UPPER WOODCOTE ROAD TO WOODCOTE WAY
SHINFIELD ROAD	ALL
SIDMOUTH STREET	PART - LONDON ROAD TO QUEEN'S ROAD
SILVER STREET	ALL
SOUTHAMPTON STREET	ALL
SOUTHCOTE LANE	ALL
ST MARYS BUTTS	ALL
ST PETERS HILL	ALL
ST SAVIOURS ROAD	PART - BERKELEY AVENUE TO HOLYBROOK ROAD
STANSHAWE ROAD	ALL
STATION HILL	ALL
STATION ROAD	ALL
THE FORBURY	PART - VALPY STREET TO MARKET PLACE
THE MEADWAY	ALL
THE TRIANGLE	PART - ST MICHAELS ROAD TO WALNUT WAY
TILEHURST ROAD	ALL
TROOPER POTTS WAY	ALL
TUDOR ROAD	ALL
UPPER WOODCOTE ROAD	ALL
VALPY STREET	ALL
VASTERN ROAD	ALL
WATER ROAD	ALL
WATLINGSTON STREET	PART - QUEEN'S ROAD TO KING'S ROAD
WELDALE STREET	PART - CAVERSHAM ROAD TO NORTH STREET
WENSLEY ROAD	PART - HOLYBROOK ROAD TO HOSPITAL ROUNDABOUT
WEST STREET	ALL
WHITLEY STREET	ALL
WHITLEY WOOD LANE	ALL
WHITLEY WOOD ROAD	ALL
WIGMORE LANE	ALL
WOKINGHAM ROAD	ALL
WOODCOTE ROAD	ALL
WOODCOTE WAY	ALL

## SUMMARY OF ROADS ON PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PRECAUTIONARY SALTING NETWORK

TABLE 2 - COUNCIL'S SECONDARY SALTING NETWORK

ROAD NAME	SECTION
ACRE ROAD	ALL
ADDINGTON ROAD	PART - CRAVEN ROAD TO ERLEIGH ROAD
ALBERT ROAD	ALL
ALL HALLOWS ROAD	ALL
ALPINE STREET	ALL
AMERSHAM ROAD	ALL
ARMOUR HILL	ALL
ARMOUR ROAD	ALL
ASHAMPSTEAD ROAD	ALL
BEECH ROAD	ALL
BENNET ROAD	ALL
BERKSHIRE DRIVE	ALL
BLAGDON ROAD	ALL
BLENHEIM ROAD (CAVERSHAM)	ALL
BUCKLAND ROAD	ALL
CHURCH END LANE	ALL
CIRCUIT LANE	PART - SOUTHCOTE LANE TO SILCHESTER ROAD
COCKNEY HILL	ALL
COLEY AVENUE	ALL
CONISBORO AVENUE	PART - ALBERT ROAD TO UPLANDS ROAD
CONNAUGHT ROAD	PART - TILEHURST ROAD TO PRINCE OF WALES AVENUE
CORBRIDGE ROAD	ALL
COURTENAY DRIVE	ALL
CRANBURY ROAD	PART - TILEHURST ROAD TO PRINCE OF WALES AVENUE
CRESCENT ROAD	ALL
EASTERN AVENUE	PART - CRESCENT ROAD TO WHITEKNIGHTS ROAD
ELGAR ROAD	ALL
ELGAR ROAD SOUTH	ALL
ELMHURST ROAD	ALL
ELMSTONE DRIVE	ALL
ERLEIGH ROAD	ALL
EVESHAM ROAD	PART - SOUTHDOWN ROAD TO GROVE ROAD
GOSBROOK ROAD	PART - BRIANTS AVENUE TO STAR LANE
GROVE ROAD	ALL
HEXHAM ROAD	PART - NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE TO CORBRIDGE ROAD
HIGHMOOR ROAD	PART - ALBERT ROAD TO WOODCOTE ROAD
HOGARTH AVENUE	ALL
HUNTERS CHASE	ALL
IMPERIAL WAY	ALL
ISLAND ROAD	ALL

## SUMMARY OF ROADS ON PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PRECAUTIONARY SALTING NETWORK

TABLE 2 - COUNCIL'S SECONDARY SALTING NETWORK CONT'D...

ROAD NAME	SECTION
KENAVON DRIVE	ALL
KENSINGTON ROAD	PART - TILEHURST ROAD TO PRINCE OF WALES AVENUE
KIDMORE END ROAD	ALL
KIDMORE ROAD	ALL
KILN ROAD	PART - CAVERSHAM PARK ROAD TO MARCHWOOD AVENUE
KINGS MEADOW ROAD	PART - VASTERN ROAD TO NAPIER ROAD
LINDEN ROAD	ALL
MICKLANDS ROAD	ALL
NEW LANE HILL	PART - HOGARTH AVENUE TO THE MEADWAY
NAPIER ROAD	ALL
NEWCASTLE ROAD	PART - NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE TO CORBRIDGE ROAD
NORTHBROOK ROAD	ALL
OAKLEY ROAD	ALL
OAK TREE ROAD	ALL
OLD HONEY END LANE	ALL
PROSPECT STREET, READING	ALL
RICHMOND ROAD (CAVERSHAM)	ALL
SHEPHERDS LANE	PART - WOODCOTE WAY TO KIDMORE ROAD
SILCHESTER ROAD	PART - CIRCUIT LANE TO FAIRCROSS ROAD
SPEY ROAD	ALL
ST. ANNE'S ROAD	ALL
ST. MICHAEL'S ROAD	ALL
STAR ROAD	ALL
SURLEY ROW	PART - ROTHERFIELD WAY TO ST. BARNABAS ROAD
SWALLOWFIELD DRIVE	ALL
TAY ROAD	PART - DEE ROAD TO SPEY ROAD
TREDEGAR ROAD	ALL
THE MOUNT, CAVERSHAM	PART - ALBERT ROAD TO PRIEST HILL
UPLANDS ROAD	ALL
USK ROAD	ALL
WAVERLEY ROAD	ALL
WENSLEY ROAD	PART - HOSPITAL ROUNDABOUT TO END/LOOP
WESTERN ELMS AVENUE	ALL
WESTWOOD ROAD	ALL
WESTWOOD GLEN	ALL
WHITEKNIGHTS ROAD	ALL
WILSON ROAD	ALL
WOLSELEY STREET	ALL

## WINTER SERVICE 2025/2026

### GUIDANCE NOTES FOR DUTY OFFICERS

#### 1. FORECAST INFORMATION

- (i) At approximately midday log on to MeteoGroup web page and inspect rolling 36-hour forecast, graphs and appropriate maps. It is likely that your decision will be made at this time. If it is not possible to make a decision at midday the contractor must be advised at this time that he is to wait for a decision following the evening update.
- (ii) At approximately 1800 hours log on to MeteoGroup web page and inspect forecast graph and text for any updated information. The forecast graph will continue to have actual road surface temperatures plotted every hour for a rolling 36-hour period. This information can be obtained at any time by logging on to the web page. If a decision still cannot be made it may be necessary to consult the weather forecaster.
- (iii) It is the responsibility of each Duty Officer to record all action taken on the justification forms and file for future reference.

#### 2. COMMUNICATIONS

- (i) If the Duty Officer needs to communicate with the Duty Manager, then contact should initially be made by mobile phone.
- (ii) The Duty Officer and the Duty Manager should keep each other aware of their movements if they are likely to be unable answer the mobile phone for any length of time.
- (iii) The Duty Officer will also be responsible for sending a fax/email message to the Police, local radio stations and neighbouring authorities informing them of the decision made concerning precautionary salting.

#### 3. ROLE OF THE DUTY MANAGER

The Duty Manager will be available to give advice to the Duty Officer when required.

## WINTER SERVICE CALL OUT GUIDELINES

## FORECAST ROAD CONDITIONS

1. Road Surface Dry
2. Wet patches due to seepage etc.
3. Road surface wet but may dry
4. Road surface wet
5. Road surface dry but may become wet

## FORECAST WEATHER

- A. Road Surface Temperature (RST) above freezing
  - (i) +4°C or above
  - (ii) above 0°C, below +4°C
- B. RST at or below 0°C
  - (i) 0°C to -3°C
  - (ii) below -3°C
- C. B(i) or B(ii) with rain beforehand
- D. Hoar Frost.
- E. Freezing fog
- F. Freezing rain
- G. Snow
  - (i) light falls up to 30mm
  - (ii) falls over 30mm

## RECOMMENDED ACTION

- a) No precautionary salting.
- b) Partial salt: wet patches, major structures, high ground etc.
- c) Inspection at a time to enable any necessary action to be taken before conditions become critical.
- d) Full pre-salt to be completed before onset of freezing conditions.
- e) Full pre-salt after rain has finished.
- f) Salting crews to remain in Depot awaiting instructions.
- g) Road conditions to be monitored by Duty Officer using ice prediction system.

ROAD CONDITIONS	FORECAST									
	A (i)	A (ii)	B (i)	B (ii)	C	D	E	F	G (i)	G (ii)
1	a	a	a	b		d	d		d	df
2	a	g	b	b		d	d		d	df
3	a	g	c	bc		d	d		d	df
4	a	g	d	d	e	d	d	df	d	df
5	a	g	g	b	e	d	d		d	df

**DUTY OFFICER TO DETERMINE TIMING OF SALTING RUNS AND RATES OF SPREAD DEPENDING ON FORECAST DETAILS**

**THE ABOVE TABLE IS FOR GUIDANCE ONLY**

DUTY FORECASTER SHOULD BE CONSULTED AS NECESSARY.

## SAMPLE DECISION SHEET



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**



**WINTER SERVICE DECISION SHEET 2013/14 - Ref 201314/089**

Date Decision made: Wednesday 19th December 2013

Time Decision made: 12.46hrs

Winter Duty Officer:

Contact No.

	Wokingham Borough Council Network		Reading Borough Council Network	
Routes	Time Action Required	Spread Rate Required	Time Action Required	Spread Rate Required
<b>Primary Routes</b>	21:00	7gm/2	21:00	10gm/2
<b>Secondary Routes</b>	<b>N/A</b>	No Action	<b>N/A</b>	No Action
<b>Third Tier</b>	<b>N/A</b>	No Action	<b>N/A</b>	No Action
<b>Footways/Cycletracks</b>	<b>N/A</b>	No Action	<b>N/A</b>	No Action

Readiness Colour Alert	Green	Amber	Red
			-1.5

**COMMENTS:**

Action required for both Wokingham and Reading BC areas

**EXTRACT FROM 24HR WEATHER FORECAST:**

Sunny spells this afternoon. This evening, cloud will increase with a band of showers spreading from the west - some of them heavy. These showers should move away to the east by approximately 2000-2100 to leave it dry with largely clear skies through the remainder of the night. RSTs dropping quite quickly after the showers, falling below zero with ice. Tomorrow, it will be bright and breezy.

## APPENDIX E

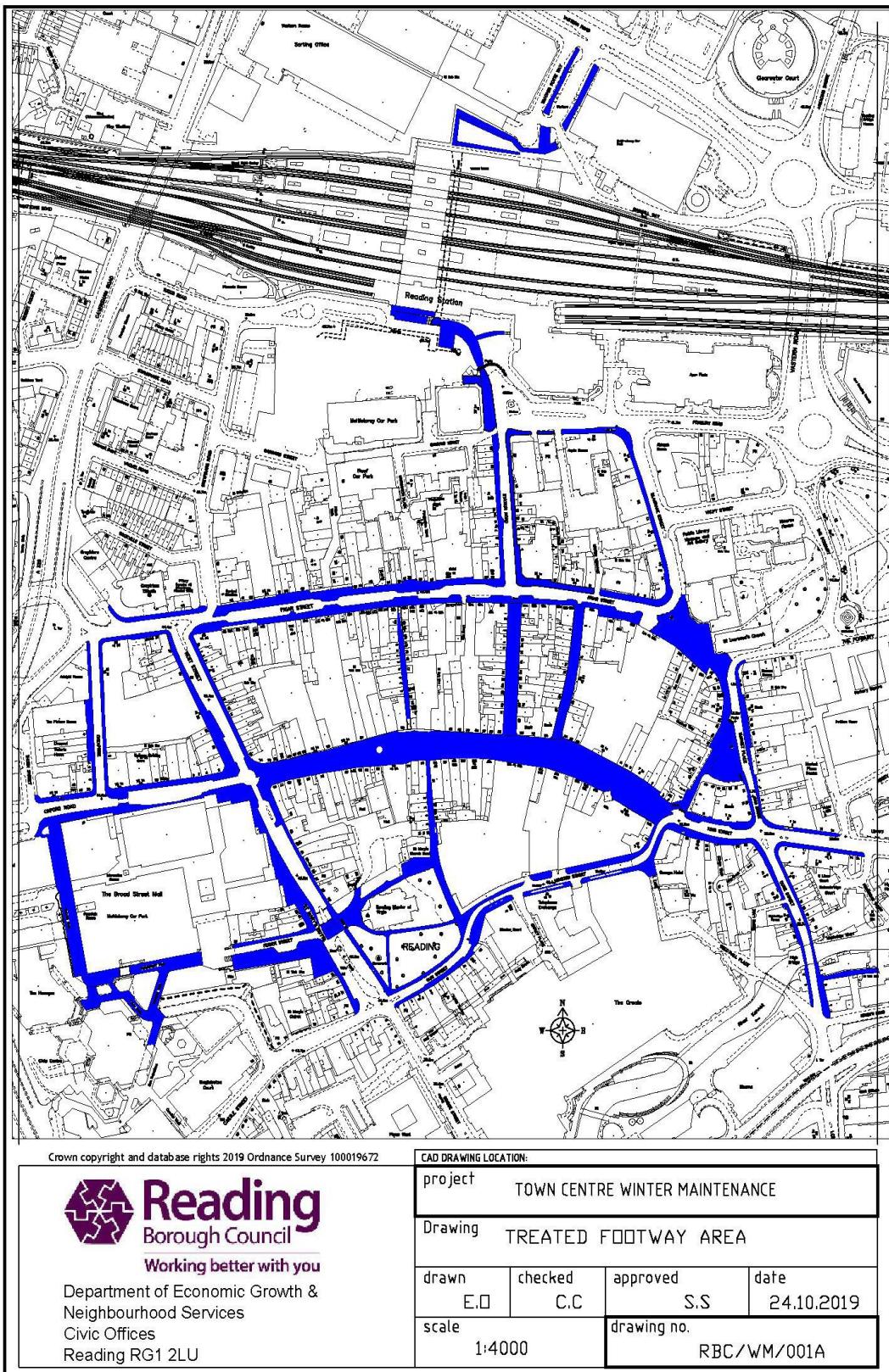
### FOOTWAYS - SNOW CLEARING/ PRE-SALTING

**READING TOWN CENTRE BLOCK PAVED AREAS (TREATMENT WITH PROPRIETARY MATERIAL/SALT/GRIT) AS SHOWN ON DRAWING NO. RBC/WM/001A INCLUDED IN THIS APPENDIX.**

STREET NAME	SECTION
Broad Street	All
Butter Market	All
Chain Street	All
Cheapside	All
Cross Street	All
Duke Street	King Street to Star Lane
Dusseldorf Way	All
Friar Street	Part - Block Paved Areas only
Gun Street	All
Hosier Street	All
King Street/Kings Road	Part - Minster Street to Abbey Square
Minster Street	All
Market Place	All
Queen Victoria Street	All
Queen's Walk	All
Reading Station	Part - Defined pedestrian route swathe on public highway from Station Road to Station Hill (Taxi Rank shelter) via pedestrian ramp and continuing to pedestrian underpass (south side). Also from pedestrian underpass (north side) to Trooper Potts Way (bus shelters).
St Mary's Butts	All
Station Road	All
Union Street	All
West Street	All

## FOOTWAYS - SNOW CLEARING/ PRE-SALTING CONT'D...

## DRAWING NO. RBC/WM/001A - TREATED FOOTWAY AREAS



## APPENDIX F

### READING BOROUGH COUNCIL CALL OUT FACILITIES

#### OUTSIDE OFFICE HOURS

**Call 0118 937 3787** (*Calls are charged*)

## GRIT BIN LOCATIONS

AREA	ROAD	LOCATION	BINS
North	Blenheim Road, Caversham	Facing junction with Oakley Road	1
North	Brill Close	Top of Close. Outside No. 25	1
North	Christchurch Footbridge	South side of footbridge	1
North	Crawshay Drive	Junction with Kidmore End Road. Adjacent to Street Nameplate	1
North	Eliot Close	Junction with Grove Hill	1
North	Fallowfield Close	End of wooden fence part way down Close	1
North	Glenrhondda	Near No. 14	1
North	Gravel Hill	Opposite Numbers 31 & 33 near Merthyr Vale junction.	1
North	Grove Hill	Mid way. Against high wall	1
North	Hemdean Road	Near Badgers Rise	1
North	Highdown Hill Road	Junction with Soane End (Private Drive)	1
North	Horse Close	On island near No. 26	1
North	Hunters Chase	Adjacent to lamp column No. 12	1
North	Keston Close	Junction with Donegal Close. (Right hand side)	1
North	Luscombe Close	Back against picket fence line. Right hand side	1
North	Picton Way	Junction mid-way up hill. Adjacent to Street Nameplate	1
North	Ruskin	On bend	1
North	Russet Glade	Mid-way at brow of hill	1
North	Scott Close	Adjacent to lamp column. Against brick wall	1
North	Sheriden Avenue	Outside No. 2 at junction with Hemdean Road	1
North	Surley Row	Junction with Sheep Walk	1
North	Tredegar Road	By railings	1
North	Tredegar Road	Junction with Glenrhondda	1
North	Tymawr	Opposite No. 21 (Off Hunters Chase)	1
North	Upper Warren Avenue	Near junction with St Peters Avenue	1
West	Brooksby Road	Junction with Juniper Way. Outside No. 110 in grass verge	1
West	Calder Close	On corner of junction	1
West	Carlisle Road	Junction with A329	1
West	Dudley Close	Near junction with Armour Hill	1
West	Dulnan Close	Near Elderly Persons flats	1
West	Elsley Road	Junction with Oxford Road. In grass verge at end of footway	1
West	Oak Tree Road	Opposite Numbers 49 & 51	1
West	Little Oaks Drive	At junction with Oaks View	1

West	Pottery Road	Near junction with Dresden Way	1
West	Rissington Close	By lamp post outside No. 5	1
West	Rodway Road	At corner of Derwent Avenue	1
West	Romany Lane	Junction Romany Close	1
West	Sandgate Avenue	Near junction with Grasmere Avenue	1
West	Taff Way	Near junction with Dee Road	1
West	Thurso Close	Dee Road Estate. In grass verge opposite block of flats	1
West	Ullswater Drive	Junction with Elsley Road	1
South	Alpine Street/Elgar Road	Back against gable wall of No. 25 Elgar Road	1
South	Barnsdale Road	Opposite Windermere Road junction in grass verge	1
South	Birdhill Avenue	Junction with Cressingham Road	1
South	Blagdon Road	i) 1no. near Cherry Grove junction. ii) 1no. opposite Bankside Close. Both i) & ii) secured to single steel posts	2
South	Brybur Close	Junction with Winton Road	1
South	Ennerdale Road	Corner Northcourt Avenue	1

(All of the above grit bins have achieved a score of at least 60 out of a total of 85 points to qualify).

## LOCATION OF STRUCTURES TO RECEIVE 'DOUBLE PRE-SALT' SALTING

ROAD NO	LOCATION	STRUCTURE
A329	Watlington Street	River Kennet Overbridge
A329	King's Road	River Kennet Overbridge
A329	Watlington Street Northbound	Kennet Canal Overbridge
A329	Watlington Street Southbound	Kennet Canal Overbridge
A329	IDR Eastbound	Mill Lane Flyover
A329	IDR Westbound	Mill Lane Flyover
A329	Chatham Street Eastbound	IDR Overbridge
A329	Chatham Street Westbound	IDR Overbridge
A329	Castle Hill Eastbound	IDR Overbridge
A329	Castle Hill Westbound	IDR Overbridge
A33	A33 Northbound	River Kennet Overbridge
A33	A33 Southbound	River Kennet Overbridge
A33	A33 Northbound	Foundry Brook Overbridge
A33	A33 Southbound	Foundry Brook Overbridge
A33	M4 Junction 11 West	Motorway Overbridge
A33	M4 Junction 11 East	Motorway Overbridge
A4	Berkeley Avenue	A33 Relief Road Overbridge
A4	Bath Road	Rail Overbridge
A4155	Bridge Street Caversham	River Thames Overbridge
B3345	George Street Caversham	River Thames Overbridge

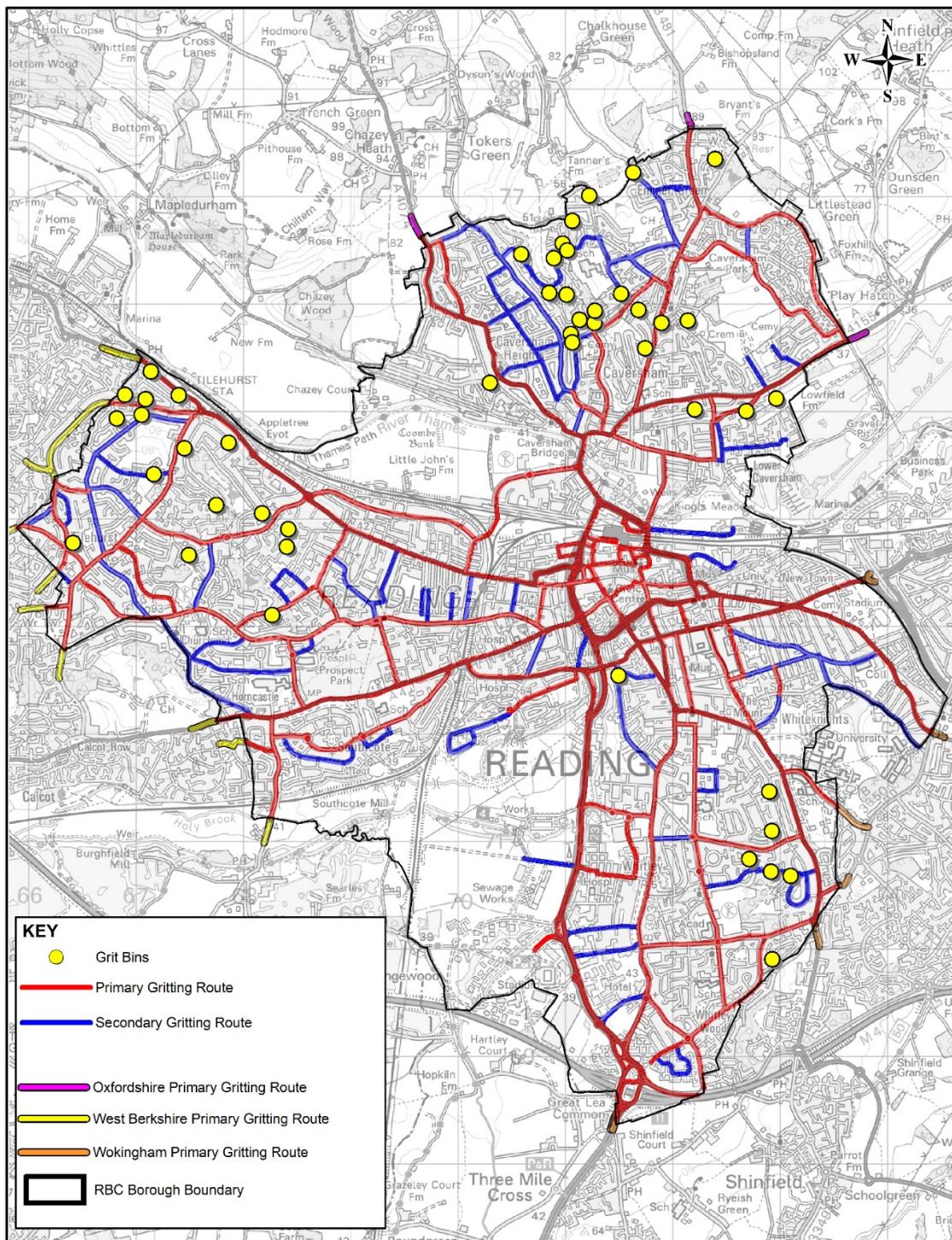
## WINTER SERVICE CROSS BOUNDARY ARRANGEMENTS

The cross-boundary arrangements have been reviewed and risk assessed.

Reading Borough Council will salt up to a point beyond the Borough boundary where it is safe for the gritter vehicle to turn around. With agreement, the neighbouring Councils are similarly working to ensure that all of the cross-boundary highway network is treated.

This does not constitute any form of agreement or responsibility for the treatment of the highway network outside the Borough boundary, it is merely to ensure full coverage of the Council's salting network.

## PLAN SHOWING SALTING NETWORK/ROUTES AND LOCATION OF GRIT BINS



Title: Winter Salting Routes 2022/2023.

Drg.No.:

Produced by GIS & Mapping Services

Date: 26/10/2022

Scale at A4: 1:46000

Ref: G:Winter Gritting\_2022.WOR



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**CIRCULATION LIST****1 Adjoining Highway Authorities**

- 1.1 Wokingham Borough Council  
Shute End  
PO Box 153  
Wokingham  
RG40 1WL  
0118 9746000
- 1.2 West Berkshire District Council  
Council Offices  
Market Street  
Newbury  
RG14 5LD  
01635 551111
- 1.3 Oxfordshire County Council  
Director of Environmental and Economy  
Speedwell House  
Speedwell Street  
Oxford OX1 1NE  
01865 815700

**2 Emergency Services**

- 2.1 Thames Valley Police  
Police Headquarters  
Kidlington  
Oxford  
OX5 2NX
- 2.2 Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service  
Newsham Court  
Pincent's Kiln  
Calcot  
Reading  
RG31 7SD  
0118 945 2888
- 2.3 Royal Berkshire Ambulance NH Trust  
44 Finchampstead Road  
Wokingham  
Berkshire  
RG40 2NN  
0118 9365  
500

**CIRCULATION LIST CONT'D.****3 National Highways Agents**

EM Highway Services Ltd.  
 Rosalind House  
 Jays Close  
 Viables Business Park  
 Basingstoke  
 Hampshire. RG22 4BS

**4 Media Organisations**

4.1 BBC Radio Berkshire  
 550 Thames Valley Park Drive  
 Reading. RG6 1PT  
[radio.berkshire.news@bbc.co.uk](mailto:radio.berkshire.news@bbc.co.uk)

4.2 Heart FM  
 PO Box 2020  
 Reading  
 Berkshire. RG31 7FG  
[thamesvalley.news@heart.co.uk](mailto:thamesvalley.news@heart.co.uk)

4.3 The Breeze (Radio Station)  
 Suite 2  
 Paddington House  
 Festival Place  
 Basingstoke. RG21 7LJ  
[tvnews@celador.co.uk](mailto:tvnews@celador.co.uk)

**5 Motoring Organisations**

5.1 RAC  
 Public Affairs Dept  
 114 Rochester Row  
 London

5.2 Automobile Association  
 Fanum House  
 52 London Road  
 Twickenham  
 Middlesex

**6 Councillors Suite**

Reading Borough Council  
 Civic Offices  
 Bridge Street  
 Reading. RG1 2LU

## REFERENCES

- Highways Act 1980.
- Highways Winter Maintenance, ICE 2000.
- Well Maintained Highways - Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management 2005 (revised 2009, 2010 & 2011).
- Lessons from the Severe Weather February 2009.
- The Resilience of England's Transport Systems in Winter Interim Report July 2010.
- Quarmby Audit Report December 2010 (revised 2011).
- Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice - October 2016.
- Winter Service Plan 2024/2025 - Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee Report - 8<sup>th</sup> November 2024

## Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

12 November 2025



<b>Title</b>	RBC Landlord Services – April to July 2025 Performance Report
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Natalie Waters - Interim Assistant Director for Housing Landlord Services
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Cllr Matt Yeo, Lead Councillor for Housing
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Thriving Communities
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee note the Housing Landlord Service Performance and key achievements delivered year to date, up to and including July 2025</li> <li>That Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee endorse the themes and programmes of the Service Improvement Plan against the Consumer Standards, (Appendix 1).</li> </ol>

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the performance of Reading Borough Council's Housing Landlord Service delivered year to date, up to and including July 2025 following the inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). The Inspection, concluded in April 2025, resulting in a C3 grading for three of the four Consumer Standards. In response, the Service has taken decisive action to address the findings and drive service improvement.
- 1.2. At the time of the Inspection the Service met expectations under the Tenancy Standard, demonstrating strong performance and delivering positive outcomes for tenants. This reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to providing high-quality housing management and tenancy support.
- 1.3. The Housing Landlord service is working with the RSH under Provider Improvement, and it is anticipated that regular meetings with the RSH will continue for a minimum of 12 months, after which the Regulator may consider reinspection or regrading. The Service needs to demonstrate sustained change that is embedded across the service achieving positive outcomes for tenants.
- 1.4. The Service has received positive feedback from the RSH in relation to progress made on the Service Improvement Plan to date. The Regulator has complimented the Service on the volume of the work in progress to address the root cause of issues and ensure sustainable change.

- 1.5. The Housing Landlord Service remains committed to continuous improvement and regulatory compliance, ensuring that tenants receive safe, secure, and high-quality housing services.

## 2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The report is presented to provide assurance to Members that the Service is delivering against the strategic objectives of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, with a clear focus on improving outcomes for current and future tenants of social housing.
- 2.2. Landlord performance is monitored against the four Consumer Standards:
  - Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard (including Tenant Satisfaction Measures)
  - Tenancy Standard
  - Safety and Quality Standard
  - Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- 2.3. To meet these new standards, housing providers are required to ensure that performance is reported transparently and subject to robust oversight through their established governance structures. In the last period an additional 'cross party working group' has been formed to provide further opportunities to share progress and encourage scrutiny of performance and key issues. This report is also regularly presented to the HNL Committee to provide clear insight into performance, support informed scrutiny, challenge, and strategic discussion.
- 2.4. A comprehensive Service Improvement Plan has been developed to address the root causes identified during the inspection alongside wider service improvements. The Plan is being actively monitored and delivered through cross-service collaboration, with a focus on ensuring that all actions are delivered, achieve the desired outcomes, embed sustainable change and are aligned to the Consumer Standards.

### Service Improvement Plan

- 2.5. Robust oversight is maintained through:
  - Regular cross-service meetings to monitor progress against the Improvement Plan.
  - Monthly engagement with the Regulator, providing evidence of improvement and maintaining transparency.
  - Ongoing review and refinement of service delivery to ensure continued alignment with regulatory expectations.
  - Quarterly cross-party Regulator Improvement Plan Working Group.
  - Quarterly landlord performance reports submitted to HNL Committee.

### 3. The Proposal

#### Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard – Tenant Information

The activity to date is detailed within the report below:

- 3.1 A revised Tenancy agreement was implemented from 15 September 2025. The previous Tenancy Agreement was last updated in 2016 and was due for renewal in light of legal changes, sector wide learning and best practice. The revised Agreement better protects tenants, and reflects modern expectations and responsibilities, particularly in areas such as damp and mould, tenancy fraud and gang related activity. Importantly, most of the new responsibilities, fall on the Council as a landlord rather than tenants themselves.
- 3.2 Following the implementation of the new Tenancy Agreement an Officers working group has been established to undertake a tenant census by the end of the financial year, this will update/capture information held for our tenants. Following the implementation of the new Tenancy Agreement an Officers working group has been established to undertake a tenant census by the end of the financial year, this will update/capture information held for our tenants. We are currently working on an option for tenants who have a Housing online account to be able to respond to the census directly into NEC Housing.
- 3.3 The aim of the tenant census is to ensure that we have up to date information on our tenants including protected characteristics to ensure that any additional needs or reasonable adjustments are recorded and used to inform service delivery and achieve equitable outcomes. An outcome of the census will be a targeted recruitment campaign from underrepresented groups to join our Tenants Voice Panel ensuring fair presentation of our tenant demographic.
- 3.4 The new Tenant Accessibility Policy was approved at HNL in July 2025 and will be rolled out to all staff by the end of September 2025.
- 3.5 From 1 September 2025, we have moved to collecting and recording key tenant data in a newly configured region of NEC Housing (Person Attributes). All information captured at sign up has a dedicated field in NEC Housing which can be updated (and history/audit seen), reported on and used to flag vulnerabilities and disabilities automatically if appropriate (e.g. wheelchair users will automatically have a disability indicator against their record). Review dates can be added for certain attributes (e.g.: expected due date for pregnant tenants) and it is expected that all Officers will maintain the data going forward.

#### Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard – Tenant Engagement & Scrutiny

- 3.6 During July 2025 the Tenant's Voice Panel reviewed the following engagement fact sheets: Tenant Voices Panel, Building Cleaning Panel, Complaints Panel, Readers Panel/Tenant Quality Mark and TACT (Tenant Scrutiny Panel) these fact sheets were updated based on their feedback, and new versions were publicised as part of the Housing Information Day and have been added to the

website.

- 3.7 The Tenant Voices Panel were involved in the planning and production of the comms material for the Housing Information Day which was held on 11 September 2025. This also included co-producing the leaflet, poster and social media advert that publicised the event. The aim was to ensure that communications were engaging and effectively conveyed the intended message to tenants. This was hugely successful, with over twice as many than expected tenants attending the event.
- 3.8 The Housing Information Day was planned to relaunch the Tenant Engagement Strategy and offer tenants a face-to-face opportunity to engage with the Housing & Communities Team. Our aim was to encourage tenants to explore the various engagement opportunities available, with the ultimate goal of involving them in service scrutiny. The event was a great success, featuring 17 information stalls including representation from emergency services—and attracting around 200 tenants. The event was well received with numerous tenants signing up to be part of the Sounding Board. The Tenant Engagement Team will follow up with those that registered with the hope that they will engage further in scrutinising our performance and making recommendations for service improvements.
- 3.9 The latest edition of “Your Housing” was posted to all tenants at the beginning of September and was dedicated to tenant engagement. It featured details of the Tenant Engagement Strategy (TES) and the menu of engagement that is on offer and highlights the various opportunities tenants have to get more involved.
- 3.10 The Tenant Engagement Team in partnership with New Directions College has delivered media training to members of Tenant Voices Panel. This included the use of social media, writing articles, taking photos and videos and producing posts for various social media platforms. The training had a positive outcome with our engaged tenants coproducing all the promotional material of the housing information day and assisting the Hexham Community Team to produce a social media video to promote their community centre.
- 3.11 The Tenant Voices Panel have also recently been involved in formatting and agreeing the content of our annual report to tenants for 2024/25 which is due to be published Autumn 2025. Members of the Tenant Voices Panel have reviewed our annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) submission to provide valuable feedback. To build on this, we will be delivering training sessions throughout the remainder of the financial year to help tenants better understand the data and feel more confident in holding us to account. In May 2026, we will also carry out a benchmarking exercise with tenants, using early TSM submission data from Housemark to support their understanding of what ‘good’ performance looks like in these returns.

### **Transparency Influence & Accountability – Complaints & Housing Ombudsman**

- 3.12 The Housing Ombudsman’s Complaints Handling Code (CHC) for all Social Landlords requires the Landlord to report its performance in relation to complaints to a ‘Governing Body’ on an annual basis. In Reading the Complaints performance is reported to the Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee 3 times per year in order to adhere to this requirement.

3.13 There have been 177 complaints between April 2025 to July 2025, and a total of 208 complaints that have been responded to. The outcomes are listed in Table 1 below. The figures for complaints received and responded to will not align as there are complaints that were responded to from the previous periods, and there are open complaints at the time of writing this report that are in the process of being investigated and therefore remain open with a target response time that falls within the next reporting period.

**Table 1. Outcome of complaints year to date 2025-26:**

<b>Stage 1</b>					
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>Total</b>
Upheld	35 (68.7%)	32 (69.6%)	25 (50%)	34 (55.74%)	91 (61%)
Partially Upheld	5 (9.8%)	1 (2.2%)	5 (10%)	7 (11.48%)	13 (9%)
Not upheld	3 (5.9%)	8 (17.4%)	12 (24%)	10 (16.39%)	30 (16%)
No Outcome <sup>1</sup>	1 (2%)	1 (2.2%)	2 (4%)	1 (1.64%)	4 (2%)
Multiple Outcomes	7 (13.6%)	4 (8.6%)	6 (12%)	9 (14.75%)	19 (13%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>208</b>

3.14 The number of upheld complaints increased slightly in July 2025, compared to June (50%), however the % has reduced significantly when compared to May (69.6%) and April (68.7%). A substantial proportion of these upheld complaints relate to the Repairs Service, however historically and commonly with most social housing landlords, repairs complaints received are always at a higher volume compared to our other landlord services. When looking at day to day responsive repairs, there has been an increase in tenant satisfaction since last year – 87.67% satisfaction in June 25, compared to 73.8% for June 2024.

3.15 The most common themes for the complaints are listed in Table 2 below, in decreasing order of quantities received:

**Table 2. April – July complaint themes across Housing & Communities.**

<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2024-25</b>
Failure to resolve issue	Quality of service
Quality of Service	Failure to resolve issue
Staff training or conduct issue	Time taken to resolve issue
Communication	Communication

<sup>1</sup> Not enough evidence to make decision

3.16 The top themes for complaints mirror those from same period in 2024-25 in the 3 of the 4, the only difference being Staff related issues replacing the Time Taken to Resolve issues from last year's top themes. As part of the Service Improvement Plan, and our focus on learning from complaints, a full review of all upheld / partially upheld complaints is being completed quarterly, to identify specific themes where there has been service failures and dissatisfaction. We have implemented a quarterly learning from complaints report, which is reviewed by HCMT and recommendations for improvement are discussed and agreed

3.17 The timeliness of managing complaints has improved since the beginning of the financial year as outlined in Table 3. Performance in July 2025 has improved when compared to June's with 75% of stage 1's & 86% of stage 2 going out on time. The actions to further improvement our performance are outlined in 3.18.

**Table 3. Complaints responded to on time.**

Complaints	Target	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25
Percentage of Stage One Complaints responded to on time	100%	24%	17.4%	50%	75%
Percentage of Stage Two Complaints responded to on time	100%	33%	0%	100%	86%

3.18 A number of improvements have been implemented to ensure that we maintain the improvements made with complaints handling:

- The Housing Policy Team continue to support Customer Relations and Housing colleagues in the management of complaint cases, including quality checking responses, plugging gaps, chasing updates and responses from the service to ensure timescales are met.
- Service managers are now required to review and sign off all stage 1 responses to ensure their quality and reduce the risk of unnecessary stage 2 escalations. This also includes a complaints commitment tracker that is reviewed monthly by the Housing and Communities Management Team (HCMT) to ensure visibility and monitor completion of agreed actions arising from complaints.
- Training will be delivered during Autumn 2025 to Officers completing stage 2 responses to improve their quality and completeness to encourage a right first-time approach.
- The daily stand ups held across the Service together with Customer Relations have been successful in the day-to-day resource management ensuring responses are quality checked and sent out in time.
- We have recently recruited an additional Disrepair and Customer Complaints Lead, to assist the Teams at Bennet Road to improve complaints performance.

- The Customer Relations Team have recruited an additional temporary member of staff who is supporting the quality checking of responses, and general case management to ensure targets are met.
- Complaints is now a standard agenda item on HCMT weekly meetings to guarantee that complaints remain a priority across the Service, that deadlines are met and that any issues are flagged at the earliest opportunity.
- A weekly dashboard of all complaints in the service is sent to service managers on a Monday for oversight and action.

3.19 The complaint statistics for Affinity (Reading) Ltd who manage 1248 units as part of the PFI arrangement are captured separately. During Q1 of 2025-26, Affinity have reported not logging nor responding to any Stage 1 or Stage 2 complaints. This is a similar performance to Q1 of 2024-25, with only one Stage 1 complaint being logged, and responded to within time scale.

3.20 In response to the Regulator for Social Housing's (RSH) recommendations work is progressing with Affinity to align the services tenants receive specially in relation to complaints. This has included Affinity updating the information on their website, and in the information tenants receive regarding their rights to complain. This work also focusses on ensuring the correct time scales are used for formal acknowledgement, and in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

**Housing Ombudsman**

3.21 The Housing Ombudsman (HO) makes findings against housing providers following an investigation of a case brought to them by a tenant or following a referral from the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH). Case information is shared retrospectively and there is currently a 6–8-month delay with the HO responding to cases and therefore impacting the production of their end of year report. Once this is received it will be reported on at the next available HNL Committee.

3.22 In the year to date, the Housing & Communities Service has been notified of 10 cases that have been referred to the Housing Ombudsman, with one case being closed with no further action required. At the time of writing this report, we are awaiting information back from the Housing Ombudsman on the remaining 9 cases.

3.24 The Service worked with the Customer Relations Team in responding to the HO audit in July 2025 relating to our Complaints Policy complying with the Complaints Handling Code. The audit required 23 minor changes to the Policy, adding additional information or clarification within the existing context. No major changes or non-compliance were found, and these minor changes have been completed.

**Transparency Influence & Accountability - Tenant Satisfaction Survey and Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)**

3.25 Reading Borough Council (RBC) Housing Services has again commissioned NWA Social and Market Research to undertake a satisfaction survey with a random sample of tenants to collect the 12 Tenant Perception Measures (TP01-TP12) as required by the Housing Regulator for the financial year April 2025 – March 2026.

3.26 This survey will consist of a random sample of 600 Tenants, including tenants managed under the PFI contract, and will be completed via telephone interviews between October 25 and February 26 to achieve the sample, this follows best practise guidelines for collecting Tenant Satisfaction data from Housemark. Once the survey is completed the report will be sent back to the service in March 2026, and the findings and next steps will be reported at the next available HNL Committee.

3.27 Tenant Satisfaction Measures are a mandatory set of performance indicators set by the Regulator for Social Housing. They are made up of two elements, a set of prescribed management information to cover key areas such as decent homes, compliance and complaints, and mandatory satisfaction questions which must be answered by tenants, which is known as the Tenant Satisfaction Survey. This data is used by the Regulator to judge Housing Providers performance and relates specifically to work undertaken by Landlord Services. You will note the statistics for complaints in the table below are different from those specified above, as the complaints that do not relate to Landlord Services have been removed from the TSM.

**Table 4. Tenant Satisfaction Measures**

Tenant Satisfaction Measures – Performance Information 2025–26 RBC & PFI Properties	April	May	June	July
<b>TSM - RP01 - Homes that do not meet Decent Homes Standard (percentage)</b>				
Percentage not meeting decent homes	6.81%	13.71%	13.71%	10.27%
No of homes that did not meet decent homes in period	469	944	944	707
<b>TSM - RP02 - Repairs completed within target timescale</b>				
Percentage - Non-Emergency in timescale (40 Days)	77.33%	76.45%	88.47%	86.62%
Number of Non-Emergency repairs completed in timescale	969	854	1327	1249
Number of Non-Emergency repairs completed in period	1253	1117	1500	1442
Percentage - Emergency in timescale (3 Hours)	89.30%	81.79%	91.59%	71.13% <sup>2</sup>
No of emergency repairs completed in timescale	317	229	283	170
Number of emergency repairs completed in period	355	280	309	239
<b>TSM - BS01 - Gas safety checks</b>				
Percentage of gas safety checks completed	100%	100%	100%	100%
No of dwellings owned that have received gas safety checks that required them	5497	5497	5497	5497
<b>TSM - BS02 - Fire Safety checks</b>				
Percentage of fire safety checks completed	100%	100%	100%	100%
No of dwellings owned that have received fire safety checks that needed them	995	995	995	995

<sup>2</sup> See point 3.29

<b>TSM - BS03 - Asbestos Safety checks</b>				
Percentage of Asbestos checks completed	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100%
No of dwellings owned that have received an asbestos survey that need one	345	345	345	345
<b>TSM - BS04 - Water Safety Checks</b>				
Percentage of Legionella Risk Assessments completed	100%	100%	100%	100%
No of dwellings owned that have received a legionella risk assessment that need one	68	68	68	68
<b>TSM - BS05 - Lift Safety Checks</b>				
Percentage of Communal Passenger Lift Safety checks completed	88.57%	94.30%	94.30%	94.30%
No of dwellings owned that have received a lift safety check that need one	695 (31/33)	695 (32/33)	695 (32/33)	695 (32/33)
<b>TSM - NM01 - Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord (per 1000 properties)</b>				
total cases opened per 1000 properties	1.16	2.47	3.34	4.21
total number of ASB cases opened	8	17	23	29
total hate crime cases per 1000 properties	0.15	0	0	0
* of total ASB opened - how many are hate crimes	1	0	0	0
<b>TSM - CH01 - Complaints relative to size of landlord (per 1000 properties)</b>				
No of Stage 1 per 1000 properties	6.39	5.67	5.81	4.50
No of Stage 1 complaints received	44	39	40	31
No of stage 2 per 1000 properties	0.29	0.44	0.87	1.02
No of Stage 2 complaints received	2	3	6	7
<b>TSM - CH02 - Complaints responded to within Handling Code guidelines (percentage)</b>				
Stage 1 - percentage responded to on time	11%	8%	50%	77%
No of Stage 1 complaints responded to on time (by complaint start date)	5	3	20	24
Stage 2 - percentage responded to on time	50%	0%	50%	86%
No of Stage 2 complaints responded to on time (by complaint start date)	1	0	3	6

## Quality & Safety Standard - Housing Repairs

3.28 The Improvement Plan for Repairs and Property Services focuses on 10 key workstreams. Four working groups have been established to oversee the workstreams and fortnightly operational meetings monitor and track progress against the Plan. Quarterly updates are presented to a Cross-Party Working Group alongside updates to this Committee.

3.29 The working group has reviewed the emergency KPI data and determined that the drop in performance reported for July was the result of an issue with the retrospective data entry for the emergency, out of hours jobs. The system allows for the raised, and completed, date and time of these jobs to be entered retrospectively, however it defaults to the current time and date. Where the time

is not changed to reflect the actual time, the job was completed, the job can show as late, as the target is within 3 hours. The process has been reviewed, and a detailed procedure has been delivered to staff to highlight the importance of entering the correct times against the job creation and completion.

3.30 Significant focus has been on the Works in Progress (WIP) which has now stabilised month on month. Continued work is focussing on how we can bring it down in line with the target, including a deep dive into open jobs, looking at numbers of new jobs raised within a month, and the number completed each month, as well as aged tickets. The Service is developing a timeline and a plan to reduce the WIP to circa 1000.

**Table 5. Outstanding Works In Progress**

Timely & Efficient Repairs Service - Repairs Performance KPIs	Target	Apr 25	May 25	Jun 25	Jul 25
<b>Outstanding Repairs (WIP)</b>	1000	4050	2647	2800	2650
<b>Customer satisfaction (%)</b>	90.00	83.76%	82.81	87.67	87.57

3.31 Updates for each workstream up to the end of July are noted below:

**Workstream 1 -Transition of service to DCASC** – this has now been completed.

#### **Workstream 2 – Embedding Culture Change**

Culture workshops were delivered to all managers and supervisors, focusing on onboarding, learning and development, performance management and organisational culture. Action points to take forward have been agreed, with the issues/topics raised and grouped into themes. The Executive Director and Assistant Director are holding workshops every 6 weeks, to work through the issues, covering:

- Staff retention
- Bullying & harassment
- Respect
- Office environment
- Shadowing trades/back office to understand roles

#### **Workstream 3 - Review of Roles, Responsibilities and Operating Model**

The comprehensive review of roles and responsibilities has been broken down into smaller areas, focusing initially on Job Description (JD) reviews of the Back Office and Senior Management team. A time in motion study has been completed across several teams to identify areas of significant pressure. A proposed structure for the Back Office including dedicated JDs for works planners and schedulers together with proposed standard operating procedures is being drafted and will be finalised by the end of October 25 with the aim of starting consultation with staff in November and implementation from January 2026.

#### **Workstream 4 - Recruitment and Retention**

Following approval for vacancies across repairs and property services to be advertised on social media, we have attracted an increase in interest which has seen at least 2 applicants being received for each role (an improvement on the previous rounds).

Approval has been given to pilot a refer a friend scheme for vacancies across repairs and property services which will commence on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2025 with meetings in place with an approved supplier to discuss and agree the designs and adverts for vacancies to be used on our fleet vehicles, community and trade notice boards.

We are reviewing options for the gas and plumbing teams which make up 10 of the current vacancies whilst this service is externally delivered on a temporary basis.

## **Workstream 5 - Procurement**

Due to the number of contracts required across the service, the procurement of these contracts was initially prioritised based on cost and risk, and a time frame pulled into a procurement program. There are 16 priority 1 contracts, split into the 12 original contracts assigned as Priority 1 and 4 Priority 1b contracts which have arisen since the initial programme was agreed. To date the following original P1 contracts have been awarded:

Lot 1 Reactive Repairs and Voids and Planned Works, Interim Gas Waiver, Lift Maintenance and Decent Homes Surveys and Fire Compliance (in standstill period).

An update on the remainder is below:

**Priority 1 - Scaffolding:** call-off has been found allowing the Council to set a max value, mini-competition for scaffolding - The specifications have been drafted by the team, and a procurement strategy is being prepared for Procurement Board. This will be ready for the 19 September.

**Priority 1 - Pest control:** Discussions around internal delivery of this service have changed our approach; we will be entering a short-term agreement with extension options (2+2) to allow us to flex with the Council's decision on how the service is provided in future. The framework has been identified, specifications have been drafted by the team, terms are being drafted, and a procurement strategy is required for Procurement Board. This will be ready for the 19 September.

**Priority 1 - Managed Stores:** This contract is out to framework tender, with an end date for submissions of 24 September. We are planning a quick turnaround, aiming to have the contract issued by 17 October and a mobilisation period to start by 20 October.

**Priority 1 - Gas Servicing:** Drafting a case for the next steps whilst the 6 month waiver is in place. Meeting scheduled for week commencing 14 September to pull the case together.

**Priority 1 - Asbestos Surveys:** Contract being drafted by legal, direct award approved at procurement board - contract to be signed by the end of September.

**Priority 1 - Wensley phase 2:** Waiver has been completed for small building control consultant and approved. Direct awards for consultants already working on the project have also been approved, and the legal team have drafted the contracts which have now been issued to the contractors (x3) for signing, week commencing 8 September.

**Priority 1b - Heating Installations:** Contract is out to framework tender, and the end date for submissions was 8 September. These will be sent to the moderation panel by 12 September, and we intend to issue the contract by 7 November.

**Priority 1b - Lot 2 re-procurement (voids and planned):** Terms and conditions to have been reviewed, contract will be drafted by the framework provider. Meeting with CLC this week to look at implementation plans and integration with NEC is scheduled, with a provisional signature date of 19 September.

With the increased scope, and addition of Wensley Road phase 2, the team have been working with Procurement to remain on track for the end September 2025 deadline but there is a risk this could slip which is being monitored closely.

### **Workstream 6 - IT Usage System**

The Contractors Portal in NEC Housing has been tested by our largest contractor, MD Group for reactive repairs which went live on 8 September. This will allow for efficient job allocation, management and reporting of jobs allocated to this contractor. An NEC consultant/developer visited Bennet Road in August to shadow the works planners and understand where there are issues. A full report has been received documenting the visit and enhancements that the Council would find useful have been added to the NEC enhancement list for consideration in future developments of the product.

Process mapping has identified key areas to focus attention, and the tasks have been documented to ensure the most efficient processes are consistently being followed by all users.

Trial is underway with a new, higher specification device for trade operatives, as well as streamlined schedule of rates (SORs) available for selection, limiting to specific SORs per trade. The results are being reviewed.

Agency staff have been allocated handheld devices to allow direct access to jobs logged in NEC Housing, allowing for efficient job management.

#### **Housing Online – reporting repairs:**

- The NEC Housing Online (HOL) portal has been configured to allow tenants to request repairs online, at their own convenience.
- All new sign-ups from June were advised to create a HOL account (if they did not already have one for choice based letting) and use this to raise any repair requests going forward.
- From 1st July 2025, tenants having face to face contact with an officer were also advised of the new functionality and provided with information on how to raise a repair online.
- From 14 July 2025, details on raising repairs online was added to the repairs appointment confirmation letters, sent for every appointment.
- From Mid-August 2025, the caller waiting message was changed to advise of the new functionality when tenants call the Customer Fulfilment Centre to request a repair.
- From Mid-August 2025, our website has been updated to include details of how tenants can set up a Housing online account and then how to log a repair via this process.

- A flag has been added to the NEC Housing system, to show officers whether a tenant has a HOL account when they are looking in their records.
- An article has been included in the latest edition of “Your Housing” to highlight this new functionality.

### **Workstream 7 - Closure of Wokingham Borough Council Repairs Service**

This workstream is almost complete. The final step is to make all WBC properties non-current in the NEC Housing system. All the properties have been identified, and we are looking at how best to carry out this task in bulk.

### **Workstream 8 - Contract Management**

- We continue to embed good contract management across the service, and standard agendas and minutes have been introduced.

Ongoing spot checks of contract monitoring have been introduced to audit robustness.

### **Workstream 9 - Policies, Procedures and Processes**

We have identified the full list of policies required by the service. 13 policies have been completed by a dedicated Policy Officer to an agreed standardised template and format. These are now in final drafting stages prior to passing the policies for sign off via the relevant processes. We identified and prioritised a full list of 35 processes that are required across the service that needed to be mapped and document. 16 of these processes have been mapped and these have/are being reviewed prior to management sign off and staff distribution by November 2025. These processes will allow the foundations to become more stable, provide local procedures that all staff members will be expected to follow and provide clarity on roles and responsibilities. We aim to have these policies and processes signed off and implemented by February 2026.

### **Workstream 10 - Damp and Mould**

At the end of July there were 173 properties where mould and damp had been identified. To manage the repair works linked to damp and mould cases, a dedicated Technical Support Officer (TSO) is managing all jobs raised and communicating directly with tenants. The TSO is also working with the Housing Energy Support Team to ensure that tenants receive a whole service when reporting damp and mould – this will include energy support and advice on how to heat homes sufficiently.

**Table 6, Damp and Mould progress and performance**

<b>Damp &amp; Mould</b>	<b>Apr 25</b>	<b>May 25</b>	<b>Jun 25</b>	<b>Jul 25</b>
Number of D&M repairs cat 1 & 2 / repairs within 24 hrs (emergency)	0	2	2	0
Urgent repairs	3	8	8	2
Routine	63	111	123	73
Decant required			0	0

	0	0		
Number of D&M cases open to the service	163	167	170	173

3.32 Following the publication of draft guidance for Awaab's Law, process mapping for the new procedure is underway to ensure that the Service complies with the new regulations. This will also support the move towards having an end-to-end case management function for damp and mould cases on NEC Housing with the aim to be live by the end of October 2025.

In preparation of Awaab's Law coming into effect on 27 October 2025, we have arranged for key staff to receive training in Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which took place during September 25 and included surveyors and key repairs staff, as well as members from the Housing Energy Support Team.

### **Quality & Safety Standard - Decent Homes**

3.32 The percentage of stock failing the standard has decreased this month compared to the previous month. This is due to the completion of further detailed inspections of failing elements, together with completion of outstanding works.

**Table 7. Decent Homes progress April – July**

<b>RBC Only</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>April 2025</b>	<b>May 2025</b>	<b>June 2025</b>	<b>July 2025</b>
Percentage not meeting decent homes	0%	8.1%	16.3%	16.79%	12.57%
Total number of properties not meeting decent homes	0	469	944	944	707

3.34 Decent Homes surveys of our stock continues with 1377 completed by Ridge & partners LLC to date. Key themes identified include front door replacement, extractor fans, kitchen and bathroom replacements, and heating upgrades. The data is being cross-referenced against our 25/26 programme of works to ensure maximum delivery of required works.

3.35 26 Category 1 and 2 jobs have been raised following the completion of surveys and 89% have been completed with the remaining 11% being appointed or having further works carried out.

## **Quality & Safety Standard - Update on completion of overdue fire remedial actions**

- 3.36 At the time of the inspection, the RSH noted that outcomes across health and safety compliance areas were broadly being met. However, they identified some weaknesses with the completion of overdue fire remedial actions. It is important to note that all Fire risk assessment ratings in our buildings are either moderate or tolerable.
- 3.37 There are no high priority actions outstanding. We have struggled with our internal resource to complete the 571 medium priority actions and 168 low priority actions, and have therefore sourced 2 contractors via waivers to carry out this work on our behalf with a completion date of 30 September 2025
- 3.38 There are additional monthly KPIs that we collate and deliver to the corporate management team to track our progress. We have established monthly meetings to track the progress of performance against our overarching Housing and Committee's improvement plan via the Building Communities, Empowering Lives Working Group which oversees our service improvement plan.

## **Neighbourhood and Community Standard – Anti Social Behaviour**

- 3.39 Improvements have been made on recording and reporting data around Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) and Hate Incidents. We have implemented an updated Policy to include Hate Incidents, the ASB and Hate Policy which was approved at HNL in July 2025.
- 3.40 An online reporting tool has now been developed and is accessible via the Council's website. This is now live and will be reflected in a refreshed factsheet for tenants when publicised in January 2026. .
- 3.41 The ASB Team Leader and Safer Public Realm Team Leader are working on a sign off process to ensure that there is management oversight of cases that are being closed. This is to ensure that they are closed in line with the procedure. This will be in place to start from quarter 4 of 2025/26.

## **Tenancy Standard**

- 3.42 The Tenancy Standard is one of the consumer standards set by the Regulator for Social Housing and relates to how registered providers of social housing must allocate their tenancies and dictates the type of tenancies that they can offer. This area during our recent inspection was one that had no failings found, but there have been updates within this area in the work delivered by the service.

During this period, we have delivered positive outcomes for tenants as outlined below:

- Year to date, there has been a 10% reduction on the number of legal notices served on our tenants for rent arrears compared to the same period for 24-25. There have been two evictions carried out year to date for arrears. This is owing

to tenancy sustainment work taking place within the recovery teams, maintaining a standard of low number of evictions due to our ongoing preventive work.

- There has been a reduction in rent arrears of £95,000 since the end of the 2024/25 financial year.
- A new under occupation scheme was implemented in June 2025 and it is projected that this will help facilitate 21 moves. The new package offers:
  - £1,000 per empty room becoming available
  - Up to £1,000 to assist with removals, reconnection and disconnection of white goods and flooring and a decoration package.

3.43 The Service is currently managed by referrals from front line officers across Housing & Communities to the Under Occupation Officer with the aim to encourage tenants to move out of their larger properties into alternative suitable accommodation that meets their needs and free up larger properties to support those in need of larger accommodation. This scheme will be advertised on the website by the end of October 2025, and a targeted letter with accompanying leaflet will be sent out by the end of December 2025.

## 4 Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1 The work of the Housing & Communities service contributes to the Council's Plan themes around:

- **Promote more equal communities in Reading** - by introducing new meaningful ways for our tenants to engage with and scrutinise the services they receive from Reading the Council's Housing & Communities Service, ensuring their voice is heard and represented
- **Secure Reading's economic and cultural success** - by seeking to let contracts for major projects to contractors who provide a level of social value to the town including opportunities for education, skills and training
- **Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint Environment** - by retrofitting existing homes with low carbon initiatives to improve thermal efficiency and ultimately contribute to Reading becoming a carbon neutral town by 2030

4.2 The programme of works to Council homes makes a difference to our residents by:

- Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable; and
- Providing homes for those in most need.

4.3 The Housing & Communities service aspires to deliver a common purpose of 'supporting the life that matters to you'. This aims to ensure we tailor our services to meet the individual needs and aspiration of our tenants. Ensuring our Council stock is safe, efficient and well maintained aligns with this ambition.

## 5 Environmental and Climate Implications

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

## **6 Community Engagement**

6.1 The Housing Service has an engagement approach that enables consultation with tenants on a range of issues and through different means including, surveys, focus groups, a tenant scrutiny panel and formal consultation, the results of which drive service improvement.

6.2 Details of engagement with tenants via complaints and surveys is included in the body of the report alongside references to the planned improvements around tenant engagement.

## **7 Equality Implications**

7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 There are no proposed changes to services that will negatively impact on the way people access and experience services therefore there is no requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment for the purposes of this report.

## **8 Other Relevant Considerations**

8.1 N/A

## **9 Legal Implications**

9.1 The 2006 Decent Homes Standard is a government-set standard for council housing. The standard describes a Decent Home as one that is fit to live in, in a reasonable state of repair, having reasonably modern facilities and services, and being insulated to a reasonable standard and weatherproof. The standard was updated in 2006 to include the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

9.2 In addition, work outlined in this report is covered by the following legislation, which gives councillors a flavour of the highly regulated nature of the service:

- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985
- Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023
- Housing Act 2004
- Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994
- Defective Premises Act 1972

- Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Building Regulations Act 1984
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Sections 2, 3 and 4
- Equality Act 2010
- HCA – The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Awaabs Law (27 October 2025)

## **10 Financial Implications**

10.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the information outlined in this report. The additional post supporting the improvements in the Service were previously agreed by Council in February 2025 as part of the Housing Revenue Account budget setting.

10.2 The Programme of works for 2025-26 report was approved by this Committee on the 11th of March 2025, which included budgeted provision of circa £3.7 million to address the remedial works identified through Decent Homes surveys.

## **11 Timetable for Implementation**

11.1 Not applicable.

## **12 Background Papers**

12.1 Appendix 1 - RSH Consumer Standards April 2024



Regulator of  
Social Housing

Annex 3

# Safety and Quality Standard

## Consumer standards

1 April 2024



# 1. Required outcomes

## 1.1 Stock quality

- 1.1.1 Registered providers must have an accurate, up to date and evidenced understanding of the condition of their homes that reliably informs their provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for tenants<sup>1</sup>.

## 1.2 Decency

- 1.2.1 Registered providers must ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard unless exempted by the regulator.

## 1.3 Health and safety

- 1.3.1 When acting as landlords, registered providers must take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas.

## 1.4 Repairs, maintenance and planned improvements

- 1.4.1 Registered providers must provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible.

## 1.5 Adaptations

- 1.5.1 Registered providers must assist tenants seeking housing adaptations to access appropriate services.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the consumer standards 'tenants' means tenants and other occupiers of social housing which includes licensees and shared owners (unless explicitly stated).

## 2. Specific expectations

### 2.1 Stock quality

- 2.1.1 Registered providers must have an accurate record at an individual property level of the condition of their homes, based on a physical assessment of all homes and keep this up to date.
- 2.1.2 Registered providers must use data from across their records on stock condition to inform their provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for tenants including:
  - a) compliance with health and safety legal requirements
  - b) compliance with the Decent Homes Standard
  - c) delivery of repairs, maintenance and planned improvements to homes, and
  - d) allocating homes that are designed or adapted to meet specific needs appropriately.

### 2.2 Health and safety

- 2.2.1 Registered providers must identify and meet all legal requirements that relate to the health and safety of tenants in their homes and communal areas.
- 2.2.2 Registered providers must ensure that all required actions arising from legally required health and safety assessments are carried out within appropriate timescales.
- 2.2.3 Registered providers must ensure that the safety of tenants is considered in the design and delivery of landlord services and take reasonable steps to mitigate any identified risks to tenants.

### 2.3 Repairs, maintenance and planned improvements

- 2.3.1 Registered providers must enable repairs and maintenance issues to be reported easily.
- 2.3.2 Registered providers must set timescales for the completion of repairs, maintenance and planned improvements, clearly communicate them to tenants and take appropriate steps to deliver to them.
- 2.3.3 Registered providers must keep tenants informed about repairs, maintenance and planned improvements to their homes with clear and timely communication.
- 2.3.4 Registered providers must understand and fulfil their maintenance responsibilities in respect of communal areas.

2.3.5 Registered providers must ensure that the delivery of repairs, maintenance and planned improvements to homes and communal areas is informed by the needs of tenants and provides value for money, in addition to the requirement at 2.1.2.

## **2.4 Adaptations**

2.4.1 Registered providers must clearly communicate to tenants and relevant organisations how they will assist tenants seeking housing adaptations services.

2.4.2 Registered providers must co-operate with tenants, appropriate local authority departments and other relevant organisations so that a housing adaptations service is available to tenants where appropriate.



Regulator of  
Social Housing

# Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

Consumer standards

1 April 2024



# 1. Required outcomes

## 1.1 Fairness and respect

- 1.1.1 Registered providers must treat tenants<sup>2</sup> and prospective tenants with fairness and respect.

## 1.2 Diverse needs

- 1.2.1 In relation to the housing and landlord services they provide, registered providers must take action to deliver fair and equitable outcomes for tenants and, where relevant, prospective tenants.

## 1.3 Engagement with tenants

- 1.3.1 Registered providers must take tenants' views into account in their decision-making about how landlord services are delivered and communicate how tenants' views have been considered.

## 1.4 Information about landlord services

- 1.4.1 Registered providers must communicate with tenants and provide information so tenants can use landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account.

## 1.5 Performance information

- 1.5.1 Registered providers must collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in delivering landlord services.

## 1.6 Complaints

- 1.6.1 Registered providers must ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly.

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout the consumer standards 'tenants' means tenants and other occupiers of social housing which includes licensees and shared owners (unless explicitly stated).

## 2. Specific expectations

### 2.1 Diverse needs

- 2.1.1 Registered providers must use relevant information and data to:
  - a) understand the diverse needs of tenants, including those arising from protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional support needs; and
  - b) assess whether their housing and landlord services deliver fair and equitable outcomes for tenants.
- 2.1.2 Registered providers must ensure that communication with and information for tenants is clear, accessible, relevant, timely and appropriate to the diverse needs of tenants.
- 2.1.3 Registered providers must ensure that landlord services are accessible, and that the accessibility is publicised to tenants. This includes supporting tenants and prospective tenants to use online landlord services if required.
- 2.1.4 Registered providers must allow tenants and prospective tenants to be supported by a representative or advocate in interactions about landlord services.

### 2.2 Engagement with tenants

- 2.2.1 Registered providers must give tenants a wide range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services. This includes in relation to the neighbourhood where applicable.
- 2.2.2 Registered providers must assist tenants who wish to implement tenant-led activities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services. This includes in relation to the neighbourhood where applicable.
- 2.2.3 Registered providers must provide accessible support that meets the diverse needs of tenants so they can engage with the opportunities in 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.
- 2.2.4 Registered providers must support tenants to exercise their Right to Manage, Right to Transfer or otherwise exercise housing management functions, where appropriate.
- 2.2.5 Registered providers, working with tenants, must regularly consider ways to improve and tailor their approach to delivering landlord services including tenant engagement. They must implement changes as appropriate to ensure services deliver the intended aims.

2.2.6 Where a registered provider is considering a change in landlord for one or more tenants, or a significant change in management arrangements, it must consult affected tenants on its proposals at a formative stage and take those views into account in reaching a decision. The consultation must:

- a) be fair and accessible
- b) provide tenants with adequate time, information and opportunities to consider and respond
- c) set out actual or potential advantages and disadvantages (including costs) to tenants in the immediate and longer term, and
- d) demonstrate to affected tenants how the consultation responses have been taken into account in reaching a decision.

## 2.3 Information about landlord services

2.3.1. Registered providers must provide tenants with accessible information about the:

- a) available landlord services, how to access those services, and the standards of service tenants can expect
- b) standards of safety and quality tenants can expect homes and communal areas to meet
- c) rents and service charges that are payable by tenants, and
- d) responsibilities of the registered provider and the tenant for maintaining homes, communal areas, shared spaces<sup>3</sup> and neighbourhoods.

2.3.2 Registered providers must provide tenants with accessible information about tenants' rights in respect of registered providers' legal obligations and relevant regulatory requirements that registered providers must meet in connection with the homes, facilities or landlord services they provide to tenants. This must include information about:

- a) the requirement to provide a home that meets the government's Decent Homes Standard;
- b) the registered provider's obligation to comply with health and safety legislation;
- c) the rights conferred on tenants by their tenancy agreements including rights implied by statute and/or common law, in particular—
  - (i) the right to a home that is fit for human habitation; and

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<sup>3</sup> 'Shared spaces' are those spaces associated with a registered providers' homes and used by their tenants that are not the responsibility of the landlord, as opposed to communal areas where landlords have direct responsibilities for ensuring their safety and maintenance.

- (ii) the right to receive notice of a proposed visit to carry out repairs or maintenance or to view the condition and state of repair of the premises; and
- d) the rights of disabled tenants to reasonable adjustments.

- 2.3.3 Registered providers must communicate with affected tenants on progress, next steps and outcomes when delivering landlord services.
- 2.3.4 Registered providers' housing and neighbourhood policies must be fair, reasonable, accessible and transparent. Where relevant, policies should set out decision-making criteria and appeals processes.
- 2.3.5 Registered providers must make information available to tenants about the relevant roles and responsibilities of senior level employees or officers, including who has responsibility for compliance with the consumer standards.

## **2.4 Performance information**

- 2.4.1 Registered providers must meet the regulator's requirements in relation to the tenant satisfaction measures set by the regulator as set out in Tenant Satisfaction Measures: Technical requirements and Tenant Satisfaction Measures: Tenant survey requirements.
- 2.4.2 Registered providers must:
  - a) collect and process information specified by the regulator relating to their performance against the tenant satisfaction measures. The information must be collected within a timeframe set by the regulator and must meet the regulator's requirements in Tenant Satisfaction Measures: Technical requirements and Tenant Satisfaction Measures: Tenant survey requirements
  - b) annually publish their performance against the tenant satisfaction measures. This should include information about how they have met the regulator's requirements set out in Tenant Satisfaction Measures: Technical requirements and Tenant Satisfaction Measures: Tenant survey requirements. This information must be published in a manner that is timely, clear, and easily accessed by tenants; and
  - c) annually submit to the regulator information specified by the regulator relating to their performance against those measures. The information must be submitted within a timeframe and in a form determined by the regulator.
- 2.4.3 In meeting 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 above, registered providers must ensure that the information is an accurate, reliable, valid, and transparent reflection of their performance against the tenant satisfaction measures.
- 2.4.4 Registered providers must provide tenants with accessible information about:

- a) how they are performing in delivering landlord services and what actions they will take to improve performance where required
- b) how they have taken tenants' views into account to improve landlord services, information and communication
- c) how income is being spent, and
- d) their directors' remuneration and management costs.

## **2.5 Complaints**

- 2.5.1 Registered providers must ensure their approach to handling complaints is simple, accessible and publicised.
- 2.5.2 Registered providers must provide accessible information to tenants about:
  - a) how tenants can make a complaint about their registered provider
  - b) the registered provider's complaints policy and complaints handling process
  - c) what tenants can do if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or how a complaint was handled, and
  - d) the type of complaints received and how they have learnt from complaints to continuously improve services.

## **2.6 Self-referral**

- 2.6.1 Registered providers must communicate in a timely manner with the regulator on all material issues that relate to non-compliance or potential non-compliance with the consumer standards.



Regulator of  
Social Housing

# Neighbourhood and Community Standard

Consumer standards

1 April 2024



# 1. Required outcomes

## 1.1 Safety of shared spaces

- 1.1.1 Registered providers must work co-operatively with tenants<sup>4</sup>, other landlords and relevant organisations to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of shared spaces<sup>5</sup>.

## 1.2 Local cooperation

- 1.2.1 Registered providers must co-operate with relevant partners to promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they provide social housing.

## 1.3 Anti-social behaviour and hate incidents

- 1.3.1 Registered providers must work in partnership with appropriate local authority departments, the police and other relevant organisations to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and hate incidents in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.

## 1.4 Domestic abuse

- 1.4.1 Registered providers must work co-operatively with other agencies tackling domestic abuse and enable tenants to access appropriate support and advice.

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout the consumer standards ‘tenants’ means tenants and other occupiers of social housing which includes licensees and shared owners (unless explicitly stated).

<sup>5</sup> ‘Shared spaces’ are those spaces associated with a registered providers’ homes and used by their tenants that are not the responsibility of the landlord, as opposed to communal areas where landlords have direct responsibilities for ensuring their safety and maintenance.

## 2. Specific expectations

### 2.1 Local cooperation

2.1.1 Registered providers, having taken account of their strategic objectives, the views of tenants and their presence within the areas where they provide social housing, must:

- a) identify and communicate to tenants the roles registered providers play in promoting social, environmental and economic wellbeing and how those roles will be delivered; and
- b) co-operate with local partnership arrangements and the strategic housing function of local authorities where they are able to assist local authorities in achieving their objectives.

### 2.2 Anti-social behaviour and hate incidents

2.2.1 Registered providers must have a policy on how they work with relevant organisations to deter and tackle ASB in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.

2.2.2 Registered providers must clearly set out their approach for how they deter and tackle hate incidents in neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.

2.2.3 Registered providers must enable ASB and hate incidents to be reported easily and keep tenants informed about the progress of their case.

2.2.4 Registered providers must provide prompt and appropriate action in response to ASB and hate incidents, having regard to the full range of tools and legal powers available to them.

2.2.5 Registered providers must support tenants who are affected by ASB and hate incidents, including by signposting them to agencies who can give them appropriate support and assistance.

### 2.3 Domestic abuse

2.3.1 Registered providers must have a policy for how they recognise and effectively respond to cases of domestic abuse.

2.3.2 Registered providers must co-operate with appropriate local authority departments to support the local authority in meeting its duty to develop a strategy and commission services for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation.



Regulator of  
Social Housing

# Tenancy Standard

Consumer standards

1 April 2024



# 1. Required outcomes

## 1.1 Allocations and lettings

- 1.1.1 Registered providers must allocate and let their homes in a fair and transparent way that takes the needs of tenants<sup>6</sup> and prospective tenants into account.

## 1.2 Tenancy sustainment and evictions

- 1.2.1 Registered providers must support tenants to maintain their tenancy or licence. Where a registered provider ends a tenancy or licence, they must offer affected tenants advice and assistance.

## 1.3 Tenure

- 1.3.1 Registered providers shall offer tenancies or terms of occupation which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of their housing stock.
- 1.3.2 They shall meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the form and use of tenancy agreements or terms of occupation.

## 1.4 Mutual exchange

- 1.4.1 Registered providers must support relevant tenants living in eligible housing to mutually exchange their homes.

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout the consumer standards 'tenants' means tenants and other occupiers of social housing which includes licensees and shared owners (unless explicitly stated).

## 2. Specific expectations

### 2.1 Allocations and lettings

- 2.1.1 Registered providers must co-operate with local authorities' strategic housing functions and assist local authorities to fulfil their duties to meet identified local housing need. This includes assistance with local authorities' homelessness duties, and through meeting obligations in nominations agreements.
- 2.1.2 Registered providers must seek to allocate homes that are designated, designed, or adapted to meet specific needs in a way that is compatible with the purpose of the housing.
- 2.1.3 Registered providers must develop and deliver services that seek to address under-occupation and overcrowding in their homes. These services should be focused on the needs of tenants.
- 2.1.4 Registered providers must take action to prevent and tackle tenancy fraud.
- 2.1.5 Registered providers must have a fair, reasonable, simple and accessible appeals process for allocation decisions.
- 2.1.6 Registered providers must record all lettings and sales as required by the Continuous Recording of Lettings (CORE) system.

### 2.2 Tenancy sustainment and evictions

- 2.2.1 Registered providers must provide services that support tenants to maintain their tenancy or licence and prevent unnecessary evictions.
- 2.2.2 Registered providers must provide tenants required to move with timely advice and assistance about housing options before the tenancy or licence ends.

### 2.3 Tenure

- 2.3.1 Registered providers shall publish clear and accessible policies which outline their approach to tenancy management, including interventions to sustain tenancies and prevent unnecessary evictions, and tackling tenancy fraud, and set out:
  - (a) The type of tenancies they will grant.
  - (b) Where they grant tenancies for a fixed term, the length of those terms.
  - (c) The circumstances in which they will grant tenancies of a particular type.
  - (d) Any exceptional circumstances in which they will grant fixed term tenancies for a term of less than five years in general needs housing following any probationary period.

- (e) The circumstances in which they may or may not grant another tenancy on the expiry of the fixed term, in the same property or in a different property.
- (f) The way in which a tenant or prospective tenant may appeal against or complain about the length of fixed term tenancy offered and the type of tenancy offered, and against a decision not to grant another tenancy on the expiry of the fixed term.
- (g) Their policy on taking into account the needs of those households who are vulnerable by reason of age, disability or illness, and households with children, including through the provision of tenancies which provide a reasonable degree of stability.
- (h) The advice and assistance they will give to tenants on finding alternative accommodation in the event that they decide not to grant another tenancy.
- (i) Their policy on granting discretionary succession rights, taking account of the needs of vulnerable household members.

- 2.3.2 Registered providers must grant general needs tenants a periodic secure or assured (excluding periodic assured shorthold) tenancy, or a tenancy for a minimum fixed term of five years, or exceptionally, a tenancy for a minimum fixed term of no less than two years, in addition to any probationary tenancy period.
- 2.3.3 Before a fixed term tenancy ends, registered providers shall provide notice in writing to the tenant stating either that they propose to grant another tenancy on the expiry of the existing fixed term or that they propose to end the tenancy.
- 2.3.4 Where registered providers use probationary tenancies, these shall be for a maximum of 12 months, or a maximum of 18 months where reasons for extending the probationary period have been given and where the tenant has the opportunity to request a review.
- 2.3.5 Registered providers shall grant those who were social housing tenants on the day on which section 154 of the Localism Act 2011 comes into force, and have remained social housing tenants since that date, a tenancy with no less security where they choose to move to another social rented home, whether with the same or another landlord. (This requirement does not apply where tenants choose to move to accommodation let on Affordable Rent terms).
- 2.3.6 Registered providers shall grant tenants who have been moved into alternative accommodation during any redevelopment or other works a tenancy with no less security of tenure on their return to settled accommodation.

## 2.4 Mutual exchange

- 2.4.1 Registered providers must offer a mutual exchange service which allows relevant tenants potentially eligible for mutual exchange, whether pursuant to a statutory right or a policy of the registered provider, to easily access details of all (or the greatest practicable number of) available matches without payment of a fee.
- 2.4.2 Registered providers must publicise the availability of any mutual exchange service(s) it offers to its relevant tenants.
- 2.4.3 Registered providers must provide support for accessing mutual exchange services to relevant tenants who might otherwise be unable to use them.
- 2.4.4 Registered providers must offer tenants seeking to mutually exchange information about the implications for tenure, rent and service charges.



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**The Regulator of Social Housing regulates registered providers of social housing to promote a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver and maintain homes of appropriate quality that meet a range of needs.**