

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 27 JANUARY 2026

Present: Councillor Mpofu-Coles (Mayor);

Councillors Gittings (Deputy Mayor), Asare, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Cresswell, Davies, Dennis, Eden, Emberson, Ennis, Gavin, Griffith, Hacker, Hornsby-Smith, Hoskin, Keane, Keeping, Lanzoni, Leng, Lovelock, Magon, McCann, McElroy, McEwan, McGoldrick, McGrother, Mitchell, Moore, Naz, Nikulina, O'Connell, Rowland, R Singh, DP Singh, Stevens, Tarar, Terry, Thompson, White, Williams, Woodward and Yeo

Apologies: Councillors Ayub, Cross, Edwards, Goss and Juthani

34. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor reported that the Monitoring Officer had exercised her delegation, on the recommendation of the Conservative Group Leader, to appoint Councillor Ballsdon to a vacancy on the Audit & Governance Committee.

35. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 14 October and 25 November 2025 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Mayor.

36. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Eleonora Galli	Kings Road Crossing	Cllr Ennis

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

37. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr White	Homes for Reading 'No Fault' Evictions	Cllr Terry

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

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38. **APPROVAL OF THE LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME AND THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2026/27**

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Base calculation for 2026/27.

The report noted that the Council was required to calculate a Council Tax Base for its area annually in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base (England)) Regulations 2012 and notify Major Precepting Authorities (the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service) by 3 January 2026. The Tax Base for 2026/27 was calculated for the above purposes as being 60,353.38 (band D equivalent) properties which was an increase of 1.32% on the 2025/26 Tax Base of 59,566.99. The report also set out details of the estimated deficit on the Council Tax Collection Fund balance which was paid out/recoverable by the Collection Fund in full in the following financial year. The estimated balance as at 31 March 2026 on the Council Tax Collection Fund was a projected net deficit of £2.092m of which the Council's overall share was £1.781m.

The report explained that the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and Local Government Finance Act 2012 had replaced the Council Tax Benefit scheme with a locally determined Council Tax Reduction Scheme (also known as a local Council Tax Support Scheme), which was effectively a type of Council Tax discount. The legislation required the Council to approve a Scheme, including amendments to an existing scheme, by the end of January preceding the start of the financial year. The recommended Scheme for 2026/27 was unchanged from the Scheme agreed by Council for 2025/26.

The report noted that each year the Government amended the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 to ensure that pension-age Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) schemes were updated in line with changes in the wider benefits system. The annual update also provided an opportunity to ensure that the residency requirements for accessing both pension-age and working-age LCTS remained consistent with the UK's immigration policy. These updates would be incorporated into the Council's 2026/27 Scheme in accordance with the principles of the Council's original Local Scheme agreed following consultation in the Summer/Autumn of 2012.

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

Resolved –

- (1) That the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme be retained for 2026/27;**
- (2) That the Tax Base calculation for 2026/27 of 60,353.38 band D equivalent properties be approved;**
- (3) That the following be noted:**

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- a) The assumed Council Tax collection rate of 98.50% for 2026/27;
- b) That the 2026/27 Council Tax Reduction Scheme would be updated in line with the Scheme's regulations;
- c) That the estimated balance of the Council Tax Collection Fund as at 31 March 2026 was an overall net deficit of £2.092m and that the Council's overall share of this deficit was £1.781m.

39. COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2026/27

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report setting out a scheme of Councillors Allowances for 2026/27 as recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel. Attached to the report at Appendix A was a report on the Panel's consideration of the scheme and at Appendix B their recommended scheme.

The report explained that the Panel had met on 19 November 2025 for their annual review of the scheme. No significant changes were recommended for the final year of the current four-year scheme which was in place until April 2027.

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

Resolved –

That the Councillors Allowances Scheme 2026/27, as recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel and set out at Appendix B to the report, be adopted.

40. APPOINTMENT OF ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER AND RETURNING OFFICER

The Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services submitted a report setting out a recommendation made by the Personnel Committee at its meeting on 20 November 2025 (Minute 10 refers), to appoint the Executive Director of Resources as Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer. An Appendix to the report set out consequential amendments to the Council's Constitution to reflect the proposed changes.

The report noted that, following the previous postholder's departure from the Council in December 2025, the post of Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services was filled by an interim officer pending permanent recruitment. With local elections scheduled for May 2026, it was not considered appropriate for them to be managed by an interim officer, and therefore Personnel Committee had been asked to recommend that the Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer roles be reallocated to the Executive Director of Resources. It was essential for the Council to have both an Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer in place to ensure the smooth running of electoral processes and uphold democratic integrity. These statutory roles were crucial for overseeing the organisation of elections, maintaining accurate electoral registers, and guaranteeing that all legal requirements were met. The Executive Director of Resources had experience of managing local elections and had undertaken relevant training.

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

Resolved –

- (1) That the appointment of Louise Duffield, Executive Director of Resources, as Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer, be approved;**
- (2) That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the consequential amendments to the Council's Constitution as set out in the Appendix to the report.**

(The meeting closed at 6.57 pm)