

Summons and Agenda 24 June 2025

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



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Jackie Yates
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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To: All Members of the Council

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16 June 2025

Your contact is: Simon Hill – Acting Democratic Services Manager

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Reading Borough Council to be held in the **Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Reading**, on **Tuesday, 24 June 2025 at 7.00 pm***, when it is proposed to transact the business specified in the Agenda enclosed herewith.

***(or on the rising of the Special Council meeting, whichever is later)**

Yours faithfully

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A G E N D A

1. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive Mayor's Announcements.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

9 - 20

The Mayor to sign the Minutes of the proceedings of the previous Council Meeting.

4. PETITIONS

To receive petitions in accordance with Standing Order 8.

5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Questions in accordance with Standing Order 9.

6. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Questions in accordance with Standing Order 10.

Reports and Recommendations from Committees

7. RBC CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT BOARD

21 - 28

Report by Chief Executive

Motions

8. ADDRESSING DELAYS TO DRIVING TESTS

Councillor Moore to move:

This Council notes:

- That learner drivers in Reading and across the country are facing unacceptably long delays in securing driving test appointments, with average waiting times far exceeding the DVSA's target of nine weeks.
- That this is causing significant distress and disruption to young people, students, apprentices, and those seeking employment who rely on obtaining a driving licence for work or education.
- Reports from the BBC and other media highlight that the Reading test centre has among the worst delays in the country, with some learners waiting over six months for a test slot.
- That concerns have been raised in both the last and current Parliaments by MPs of many parties, who have challenged Ministers on both the long delays and the role of third-party booking services in worsening availability.

- That parliamentary questions have highlighted the Government's limited action to address these issues and the lack of regulation or enforcement around third-party software tools that snap up appointments to resell them.

This Council believes:

- That the Government must take urgent action to bring down waiting times for practical driving tests and ensure fair access for all learners.
- That the practice of third-party software companies bulk-booking or reselling test slots is exploitative and undermines the integrity of the DVSA booking system.
- That local young people in Reading are being unfairly disadvantaged, with consequences for education, employment, and social mobility.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Call on the Government and the Department for Transport to publish a clear action plan to reduce waiting times for driving tests nationwide, specifically in Reading.
2. Call for urgent reform of the DVSA booking system to prevent third-party software from monopolising test appointments and to protect access for ordinary learners.
3. Request the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Transport, and to Reading's Members of Parliament, urging them to take immediate steps to resolve this growing crisis for learner drivers.
4. Promote awareness of this issue locally and support efforts by MPs and Councillors to campaign for fair access to driving tests for all.

9. **CONTRIBUTION TO READING OF SIR JOHN MADEJSKI AND SUPPORTERS TRUST AT READING**

Councillor Ennis to move:

This Council is pleased that the ownership of Reading Football Club has been secured and we place on record our thanks and appreciation to the supporters, local MPs and organisations, such as the Sell Before We Dai campaign, led by Caroline Parker and Sarah Turner, Chair of STAR. It is their sheer commitment and energy that has saved our football club and it is right and fitting that we have a civic reception for the leaders of the campaign to save Reading Football Club as a thanks from the people of Reading.

We should also place on record our thanks to Sir John Madejski, a Freeman of the Borough, for his philanthropic work over the decades to make Reading a better place. Reading has benefitted from the work and generosity of Sir John Madejski with the building of the new football stadium in 1998, the establishment of the John Madejski gallery at the Reading Museum in 1999 and the creation of the John Madejski Academy in 2006.

This Council notes with dismay the announcement by the Greenshaw Trust to remove Sir John's name from the Academy that he funded and of which he is rightly proud. It strongly disapproves of this attempt to airbrush from history the contribution to Reading of Sir John Madejski and resolves to seek alternative means by which his legacy to our town can be preserved.

WEBCASTING NOTICE

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Members of the public seated in the public gallery will not ordinarily be filmed by the automated camera system. However, please be aware that by moving forward of the pillar, or in the unlikely event of a technical malfunction or other unforeseen circumstances, your image may be captured. **Therefore, by entering the meeting room, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes.**

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 21 MAY 2025

Present: Dennis (Mayor);

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

Apologies: Councillors Goss, McElroy and R Singh.

1. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor informed the Council of the passing of two former Councillors, Andrew Cumpsty and Mike Townend. Andrew Cumpsty represented Caversham ward from 2004 to 2014 and was Leader of the Council for the 2010-11 Municipal Year. Mike Townend represented Church ward between 2007 and 2011 and was appointed Lead Councillor for Development & Performance in May 2010. At the invitation of the Mayor, Councillor Ballsdon addressed the Council in memory of the two former councillors.

The Council stood for a minute's silence in Andrew Cumpsty and Mike Townend's memory and as a mark of respect.

2. ELECTION OF MAYOR

The first business to be transacted being the election of the Mayor, it was moved by Councillor Leng and seconded by Councillor Eden and CARRIED:

"That Councillor Alice Mpofu-Coles be elected Mayor of this Borough."

No other candidate having been nominated Councillor Mpofu-Coles was duly declared elected.

3. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MAYOR

It was moved by Councillor Terry and seconded by Councillor Emberson and CARRIED:

"That Councillor Paul Gittings be appointed Deputy Mayor of this Borough for the Municipal Year 2025-26."

4. ADDRESS BY THE MAYOR

Councillor Mpofu-Coles addressed the Council.

5. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

6. VOTE OF THANKS TO COUNCILLOR GLENN DENNIS AND LUKE DENNIS

It was moved by Councillor Keeping and seconded by Councillor Emberson and CARRIED:

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 21 MAY 2025

“That the Council record their sincere appreciation of the ability, courtesy and diligence with which Councillor Glenn Dennis has discharged his duties attached to the office of Mayor since 22 May 2024. They also record their grateful thanks to Luke Dennis for the support and assistance he rendered in the capacity of Mayor’s escort throughout the Mayor’s term of office.”

7. ADDRESS BY RETIRING MAYOR

Councillor Glenn Dennis addressed the Council.

8. APPOINTMENT OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

It was moved by Councillor Leng and seconded by Councillor Ennis and CARRIED:

“That Councillor Terry be appointed Leader of the Council for the Municipal Year 2025/26.”

9. CONSTITUTION; POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES; SCHEME OF MEMBERS’ ALLOWANCES; AND DELEGATIONS

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report making recommendations for the Municipal Year 2025/26 to:

- (1) appoint the Committees of the Council: the allocation of seats between Groups had to be calculated in accordance with Sections 15-17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and details had been circulated to Group Leaders before the meeting;
- (2) appoint a local Standards Committee for the authority;
- (3) agree the powers and duties of committees, sub-committees, partnerships and consultative Working Parties (Appendices 1 and 2);
- (4) agree the general dispensation granted to all Members as set out in para. 3.17 of the report.
- (5) amend the Council’s scheme of Councillors’ Allowances, and confirm those Councillors who met the definition of Members having significant responsibilities in relation to the discharge of the Council’s functions in terms of entitlement to Special Responsibility Allowance at Tier 4 for the financial year 2025/26;
- (6) re-establish the Remuneration Panel for the Municipal Year 2025/26;
- (7) agree Lead Councillor portfolio titles.

It was moved by Councillor Terry and seconded by Councillor Leng and CARRIED:

Resolved –

That recommendations 3.1 to 3.19 in the report by the Monitoring Officer be approved.

10. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY LEADER AND LEAD COUNCILLORS AND

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 21 MAY 2025

ALLOCATION OF PORTFOLIOS

It was moved by Councillor Terry and seconded by Councillor Leng and CARRIED:

Resolved –

- (1) That Councillor Leng be appointed the Deputy Leader of the Council for the Municipal Year 2025/26;
- (2) That for the Municipal Year 2025/26, the following Councillors be appointed as Lead Councillors for the services listed below:

Adult Social Care	Councillor Gittings
Children	Councillor Griffith
Education and Public Health	Councillor Eden
Environmental Services and Community Safety	Councillor Rowland
Housing	Councillor Yeo
Leisure and Culture	Councillor Barnett-Ward
Corporate Services and Resources	Councillor Emberson
Climate Strategy and Transport	Councillor Ennis
Planning and Assets	Councillor Leng

11. APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

The Monitoring Officer addressed the Council.

It was moved by Councillor Terry and seconded by Councillor Leng and CARRIED:

Resolved -

- (1) That, subject to the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act, 1989, and Regulations made thereunder, the following Councillors be appointed to serve on Committees in the Municipal Year 2025/26:

Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education Committee

<u>Labour</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Conservative</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Liberal Democrat</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Green</u> <u>Councillors</u>
Asare	Ballsdon	O'Connell	Cresswell
Eden			Keane
Gittings			Magon
Griffith			
Lanzoni			
McEwan			
Mpofu-Coles			
Naz			
D Singh			
Woodward			

Audit & Governance Committee

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 21 MAY 2025

Labour
Councillors

Asare
Dennis
McGoldrick
McGrother
Stevens

Conservative
Councillors

Mitchell

Liberal Democrat
Councillors

Moore

Green
Councillors

Keane
Williams

Health & Wellbeing Board

Leader of the Council

Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health

Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care

Lead Councillor for Children

Named Substitutes: Councillors Asare, Lanzoni, Leng, and McEwan

Observers: Group Spokespersons

Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee

Labour
Councillors

Ayub
Barnett-Ward
Cross
Dennis
Gavin
Hoskin
McEwan
Naz
Rowland
Stevens
Yeo

Conservative
Councillors

Ballsdon

Liberal Democrat
Councillors

Thompson

Green
Councillors

Cresswell
Keane
Nikulina

Independent
Councillor

Hacker

Licensing Applications Committee

Labour
Councillors

Asare
Dennis
Edwards
Leng
Rowland
D Singh
Stevens
Tarar
Woodward

Conservative
Councillors

Mitchell

Liberal Democrat
Councillors

Thompson

Green Councillors

Keane
Magon

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 21 MAY 2025

Personnel Committee

<u>Labour</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Green</u> <u>Councillors</u>
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Emberson	Keane
Ennis	
Mpofu-Coles	
Terry	
(or nominees)	

Investigating & Disciplinary Committee

<u>Labour</u> <u>Councillors</u>

Barnett-Ward
Emberson
Ennis
Leng
(or nominees)

Appeals Committee

<u>Labour</u> <u>Councillors</u>

Eden
Edwards
Terry
Yeo
(or nominees)

Planning Applications Committee

<u>Labour</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Conservative</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Liberal Democrat</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Green</u> <u>Councillors</u>
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Davies	Goss	Moore	McCann
Ennis			Williams
Gavin			
Hornsby-Smith			
Leng			
Lovelock			
Rowland			
Tarar			
Yeo			

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 21 MAY 2025

Policy Committee

<u>Labour</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Conservative</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Liberal Democrat</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Green</u> <u>Councillors</u>
Barnett-Ward Eden Emberson Ennis Gittings Griffith Leng Rowland Terry Yeo	R Singh	Thompson	Nikulina White

Standards Committee

<u>Labour</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Conservative</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Liberal Democrat</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Green</u> <u>Councillors</u>
Ayub Eden Edwards Gavin Keeping Terry	Mitchell	Moore	Keane Williams

(Together with an independent member: Currently vacant)

Named Substitutes

<u>Labour</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Liberal Democrat</u> <u>Councillors</u>
Emberson Leng	Thompson

Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee

<u>Labour</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Conservative</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Liberal Democrat</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Green</u> <u>Councillors</u>
Cross Davies Ennis Hornsby-Smith Juthani Keeping Lanzoni Leng McGoldrick McGrother Rowland	Ballsdon Goss	Moore	McCann McElroy Magon

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 21 MAY 2025

- (2) That the following Councillors be appointed to serve on other bodies in the Municipal Year 2025/26:

Access and Disabilities Working Group

<u>Labour</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Conservative</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Liberal Democrat</u> <u>Councillors</u>
Hornsby-Smith Naz Rowland	Goss	Thompson

Adult Safeguarding Board

Membership to be drawn from the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee on an ad hoc basis.

Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality

<u>Labour</u> <u>Councillor</u>	<u>Conservative</u> <u>Councillor</u>
Asare	R Singh

Arts & Heritage Forum

<u>Labour</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Conservative</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Liberal Democrat</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Green</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Independent</u> <u>Councillor</u>
Barnett-Ward Rowland Stevens McGrother	Ballsdon Goss	Thompson	Nikulina	Hacker

Children's Safeguarding Partnership

Membership to be drawn from the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee on an ad hoc basis.

Civic Board

<u>Labour</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Conservative</u> <u>Councillors</u>	<u>Liberal Democrat</u> <u>Councillors</u>
Eden Gavin Leng Rowland Stevens Terry Yeo	Ballsdon	Thompson

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 21 MAY 2025

Cleaner Air & Safer Transport Forum

<u>Labour Councillors</u>	<u>Conservative Councillors</u>	<u>Liberal Democrat Councillors</u>	<u>Green Councillors</u>
Ayub Barnett-Ward Cross Ennis Hornsby-Smith Lanzoni McGrother Rowland	Goss	O'Connell	Magon

Community Safety Partnership

Councillors Leng, Rowland and Terry
Observers: Other Group spokespersons

Cycle Forum

<u>Labour Councillor</u>	<u>Conservative Councillors</u>	<u>Liberal Democrat Councillors</u>	<u>Green Councillors</u>
Cross Ennis Gittings Griffith Lanzoni McGrother	Goss	Moore	White

Foster Panel

Councillors Asare, Edwards and Griffith

Joint Health & Overview Scrutiny Committee

Councillors Eden and Gittings

Local Joint Forum

<u>Labour Councillors</u>	<u>Conservative Councillors</u>
Emberson Ennis McGrother Terry	Mitchell

(or nominees)

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 21 MAY 2025

Older People's Working Group

Labour Councillors

Gittings
Hornsby-Smith
Hoskin
Leng
D Singh

Parenting Panel

Labour Councillors

Asare
Eden
Griffith
Terry

Conservative Councillors

Ballsdon

Liberal Democrat Councillors

O'Connell

Planning Management Panel

Labour Councillors

Davies
Gavin
Lovelock

Conservative Councillors

Goss

Liberal Democrat Councillors

Moore

(or nominees)

SACRE

Labour Councillors

Ayub
Eden
Juthani

Conservative Councillors

Goss

Liberal Democrat Councillors

O'Connell

Safer Reading Neighbourhood Forum

Labour Councillors

Asare
Ayub
Griffith
Hornsby-Smith
Leng
McGrother
Rowland

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 21 MAY 2025

Town Twinning Group

Labour Councillors

Eden
Terry

Conservative Councillors

Mitchell

(Mayor – ex-officio)

- (3) That the terms of reference of the above bodies be as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to the Monitoring Officer's report on the Constitution, Powers and Duties of the Council and Committees etc;
- (4) That the following Councillors be appointed/nominated as appropriate as Chairs/Vice-Chairs of the bodies listed at (2) above:

Working Party etc	Chair/Vice Chair
Access & Disabilities Working Group	Councillor Hornsby-Smith (Chair) Councillor Naz (Vice-Chair)
Adult Safeguarding Board	Ad hoc
Arts & Heritage Forum	Councillor Barnett-Ward (Chair) Councillor Stevens (Vice-Chair)
Children's Safeguarding Partnership	Ad hoc
Civic Board	Councillor Terry (Chair) Councillor Leng (Vice Chair)
Cleaner Air & Safer Transport Forum	Councillor Cross (Chair) Councillor Ennis (Vice Chair)
Community Safety Partnership	Councillor Rowland
Cycle Forum	Councillor Cross (Chair) Councillor Ennis (Vice Chair)
Local Joint Forum	Councillor Emberson (Chair)
Older People's Working Group	Councillor Gittings (Chair) Councillor Leng (Vice-Chair)
Parenting Panel	Councillor Griffith (Chair) Councillor Asare (Vice-Chair)
Planning Management Panel	Councillor Gavin (Chair) Councillor Davies (Vice Chair)
SACRE	Non-Councillor
Safer Reading Neighbourhood Forum	Councillor Rowland
Town Twinning	The Mayor

12. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRS/VICE CHAIRS OF COMMITTEES

It was moved by Councillor Terry and seconded by Councillor Leng and CARRIED:

Resolved –

That the following be appointed Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the following Committees for the Municipal Year 2024/25:

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 21 MAY 2025

Committee	Chair	Vice-Chair
Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education	Councillor Asare	Councillor McEwan
Audit & Governance	Councillor Williams	Councillor McGoldrick
Health & Wellbeing Board	Councillor Eden	Ben Riley
Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure	Councillor Dennis	Councillor Hoskin
Licensing Applications	Councillor Woodward	Councillor Tarar
Planning Applications	Councillor Gavin	Councillor Davies
Personnel	Councillor Emberson	Councillor Terry
Investigating & Disciplinary Committee	Councillor Emberson	Councillor Leng
Appeals Committee	Councillor Terry	Councillor Yeo
Policy	Councillor Terry	Councillor Leng
Standards	Vacant	Councillor Edwards
Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport	Councillor Cross	Councillor Hornsby-Smith

13. DATES OF COUNCIL MEETINGS FOR 2025/26

It was moved by the Mayor and seconded by the Deputy Mayor and CARRIED:

Resolved –

- (1) That the calendar of meetings for the Municipal Year 2025/26, as attached to the agenda, be approved; and
- (2) That, before the day of the Annual Meeting in 2026, meetings of the Council be held at half-past six o'clock in the afternoon on 24 June, 14 October 2025, and 27 January, 24 February and 24 March 2026, unless the Mayor shall specify some other date and time.

(The meeting closed at 8.00 pm).

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Council

24 June 2025



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	RBC Children's Services Improvement Board
Purpose of the report	To make a recommendation to Council
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Jackie Yates, Chief Executive
Report author	Jackie Yates, Chief Executive
Lead Councillor	Cllr Liz Terry, Leader of the Council,
Council priority	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the draft Terms of Reference for the Children's Service Improvement Board as attached at Appendix 1 are agreed. 2. That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Lead Councillor for Children's Services is delegated to appoint an Independent Chair of the Improvement Board following a member appointment panel. 3. That the proposed governance structure for reporting as set out in Appendix 2 is agreed.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Council at its meeting on the 28 January 2025 agreed not to extend its contract with Brighter Futures for Children Ltd and to bring its Children's Services back in-house.

Additionally, Council agreed that the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Chair of the Board and in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services and Executive Director of Children's Services, set up an independently chaired Improvement Board in recognition that BFfC have a significant transformation programme in place to mitigate demand and manage cost pressures as well as an action plan to address issues identified in its [2024 inspection](#) of Children's Services (ILACS).

- 1.2. The findings of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse in Reading which took place in March, and were [published](#) on the 6 May 2025, further reinforce the need for an Improvement Board to be established.
- 1.3. This report sets out for Council's consideration, the proposed terms of reference for the Improvement Board, its constituent members, its governance, reporting arrangements, and the process and timeline to recruit the Independent Chair.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. Reading's Children's Services functions are currently delivered by Brighter Futures for Children Ltd, a wholly owned company of the Council under a seven-year service contract. The contract expires on 1 April 2026.
- 2.2. In accordance with the terms of the contract, Council at its meeting on 28 January 2025 agreed to serve notice on the company and bring its Children's Services back in-house no later than 1 April 2026.
- 2.3. Following transition of the Service back in-house, Council further agreed an independently chaired Improvement Board should be established. The proposed terms of reference, governance and membership of the Improvement Board have been informed by best practice examples and learning from other local authorities.
- 2.4. The findings of a recent JTAI of the multi-agency response to children in Reading who are victims of domestic abuse has resulted in the Department for Education (DfE) indicating that it will issue a non-statutory Improvement Notice to the Council, with the expectation that a DfE Improvement Advisor is appointed. Monitoring visits by OFSTED are expected to commence in the Autumn, but the start date and frequency of visits is not yet known.
- 2.5. Brighter Futures for Children have been working with Kent County Council as a Sector Led Improvement Partner (SLIP) since January 2025, focussing on the front door to Children's Services. A SLIP is a standard DfE offer to support all Children's Services. The Chair of BFfC and Executive Director of Children's Services will review with the Improvement advisor the merits of either expanding their remit or working with an additional SLIP.

3. The Proposal

Creation of a Children's Service's Improvement Board

- 3.1. In agreeing to bring Children's Services back in-house Council recognised that BFfC had not delivered the full extent of the Council's aspirations for the Service and to better meet the needs of Reading's children and families further work was required. Consequently, it was agreed that an independently chaired Improvement Board should be set up to provide advice and support to the delivery of service improvement.
- 3.2. The findings of the recent JTAI inspection identify similar weaknesses in social care practice to those identified in the ILAC, indicating insufficient pace in addressing issues and reinforcing the need for increased focus on improvement.
- 3.3. The purpose of the Children's Services Improvement Board is to:
 - i. Oversee and drive at pace the delivery of improved practice across Children's Services in Reading leading to better outcomes for children who need our help and support, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.
 - ii. Seek assurance and triangulate data that demonstrates that improvements are embedded and sustained.
 - iii. Ensure that all partners providing services for children in Reading work together effectively.
 - iv. Support the Service in focussing on 'getting the basics right' and improving the consistency and quality of social work practice within children's social care.
 - v. Ensure that Service improvements combined with the transformation programme increase quality whilst reducing cost, delivering a sustainable service that delivers value for money.
 - vi. Ensure the voice of children and young people is fully heard, considered and reflected both in social work practice and the work of the Board.

- vii. Provide assurance to the Council that appropriate scrutiny and challenge is driving sustained improvements across Children's Services.
- 3.4. Meetings of the Improvement Board will be held in person, every six weeks. An annual schedule of meetings will be agreed and circulated in advance. The full terms of reference for the Board, its proposed make up and operation are set out in Appendix 1 attached.

Appointment of an Independent Chair

- 3.5. It is proposed that an Independent Chair is appointed using a similar approach to that the Council has previously employed to appoint non-executive directors to its companies (Reading Transport Ltd and Brighter Futures for Children Ltd). This process involves (i) appointing an executive search consultant who understands the market for this role (ii) inviting applications through an open recruitment process to reach as many qualified and experienced applicants as possible and (iii) councillors and senior officers interviewing suitable candidates to make the best possible appointment.
- 3.6. A member appointment panel will be established to shortlist and interview the candidates. The Leader and the Lead councillor will be consulted on the detailed process leading to the member panel and the appointment. The Chief Executive, Chair of BFfC and Executive Director for Children's Services will support the Panel.
- 3.7. The costs of the process and the appointment will be met from current resources.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The creation of an independently chaired Children's Services Improvement Board supports the Council's Corporate Plan priority to 'Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children'.
- 4.2. Priorities of the Board will be aligned to inspection findings, progress against inspection findings and emerging risks, and will therefore change over time. Initially they will be focussed on the findings of the Ofsted ILACS (2024) and the JTAI (2025).

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. The creation of an Improvement Board for Children's social care will focus on climate on enhancing the quality and effectiveness of social work practice rather than addressing environmental issues.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. No consultation, community engagement or information is required in this instance.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is not required. Recruitment for an Independent Chair will follow the Council's established procedures to ensure that equality implications are addressed.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1. The Secretary of State for Education has broad powers to intervene in local authority children's services if they are judged to be experiencing problems. These powers can include issuing directions to local authorities and issuing warning notices.
- 8.2. The Secretary of State can direct a local authority to take specific actions deemed necessary to improve children's services, using powers in section 497A of the Education Act 1996, as applied to children's services by section 50 of the Children Act 2004.
- 8.3. This means the Secretary of State can essentially compel the local authority to implement specific reforms or take specific actions to address the issues identified.
- 8.4. The type of intervention is dependent on the severity of the situation, how long the authority has been underperforming, and the perceived capacity for improvement:

8.4.1. **Non-statutory intervention includes:** the provision of external consultancy, advisory or peer support, often from another council; the establishment of improvement boards (with or without an independent chair); enhanced monitoring and challenge; and the issuing of non-statutory Improvement Notices which have often been used to underpin a package of intervention (made up of some or all of the above).

8.4.2. **Improvement notices:** are not legal instruments, but rather formal notices designed to tackle significant or enduring underperformance in a council or partnership. Issued by the appropriate secretary of state, they specify the issues of concern, the level of improvement required, when and how this will be assessed, and subsequent steps that may be taken if improvement is not achieved. Councils who are the subject of an Improvement Notice are involved in discussions about the content of the improvement notice with the DfE before it is finalised.

8.4.3. **Statutory directions:** More critical or enduring underperformance may necessitate the use of Statutory Directions. The secretary of state is able to direct a council using powers in section 497A of the Education Act 1996 (as applied to children's social care by section 50 of the Children Act 2004) to take whatever action is deemed expedient to achieve necessary improvement. In extreme cases, the DfE can direct partial or complete outsourcing of children's services, with outsourcing to a third party. This happened to the Council previously which led to the establishment of Brighter Futures for Children Ltd. Most statutory directions will be based upon key findings arising from an Ofsted inspection, but may also include additional points for improvement, such as learning from a Serious Case Review.

8.5. The Council has powers to establish an Improvement Board and appoint an Independent Chair under the General Power of Competence (Localism Act 2011). As the Improvement Board will be comprised of officers, councillors, and independent persons, it cannot be a formal Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council (section 101 Local Government Act 1972). This means that the Improvement Board is advisory and assists the executive powers of the Council, through the powers delegated to the Executive Director, and the political and scrutiny powers of the Council, through the powers delegated to Policy Committee and the ACE Committee (Adults, Social Care and Education Committee).

9. Financial Implications

9.1. The appointment of an executive search consultant is estimated to cost approximately £10k and the cost will be met from current resources.

9.2. The appointment of an Independent Chair is expected to be paid on a day rate similar to the other arrangements which the Council has in place through its companies (approx. £7k per annum depending on time engaged).

10. Timetable for Implementation

10.1. The Improvement Board will formally convene post the transfer of BFfC staff to the Council in the autumn. The Independent Chair, once appointed, will liaise with the BFFC Board, the Lead Member for Children's Services and senior officers ahead of the transfer.

10.2. The inaugural Improvement Board will be in October/ November 2025.

11. Background Papers

11.1. There are none.

Appendices

1. **Draft Term of Reference**

2. **Governance Framework**

Reading's Children's Services Improvement Board
Delivering Good and Outstanding Services for Reading's Children
Proposed Terms of Reference

Purpose

1. Oversee and drive at pace the delivery of improved practice across Children's Services in Reading leading to better outcomes for children who need our support, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.
2. To seek assurance and triangulate data that demonstrates that improvements are embedded and sustained.
3. To ensure that all partners providing services for children in Reading are working together effectively.
4. To support the Service in focussing on 'getting the basics right' and improving the consistency and quality of social work practice within Children's social care.
5. To ensure that the Service's Improvement Plan combined with its Transformation Programme increase quality and reduce cost, delivering a sustainable Service that represents value for money.
6. To ensure the voice of children and young people is fully heard, considered and reflected both in social work practice and the work of the Board
7. To provide assurance to the Council that appropriate scrutiny and challenge is driving sustained improvements across Children's Services.
8. To provide bi-annual progress reports to Reading Borough Council's ACE Committee.

Approach

1. Priorities of the Board will be aligned to inspection findings, progress against inspection findings and emerging risks, and will therefore change over time. Initially they will be focussed on the findings of the Ofsted ILACS (2024) and the JTAI (2025).
2. The Board will provide scrutiny and independent challenge of the continuous practice improvement plan to support the development and delivery of consistently good and outstanding services.
3. The Board will identify barriers to improvement and take a solution-focused approach to aid problem solving.
4. The Board will monitor key performance data (which tells us about how services are doing, and what outcomes are being achieved) to ensure it is delivering on its objectives.
5. The Board will focus on the big picture.
6. The Board will be curious in its approach, adopting a positive learning culture.

Who will be on the Board and how will it work?

The Board will be a partnership of equals, and all members will be expected to be actively involved. Members of the Board will respect that we are all different and that we and our children must not be discriminated against because of age, sex, disability, race, religion, belief or sexual orientation.

Members of the Board must comply with the Council's code of conduct and the general principles of public life. [The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK](#)

Meetings will be held in person every six weeks (approx. 8 times a year). A schedule of meetings for the year will be agreed and circulated in advance.

Board members will be expected to have read papers in advance and to prepare for meetings

Members of the Board are asked to do everything they can to attend meetings.

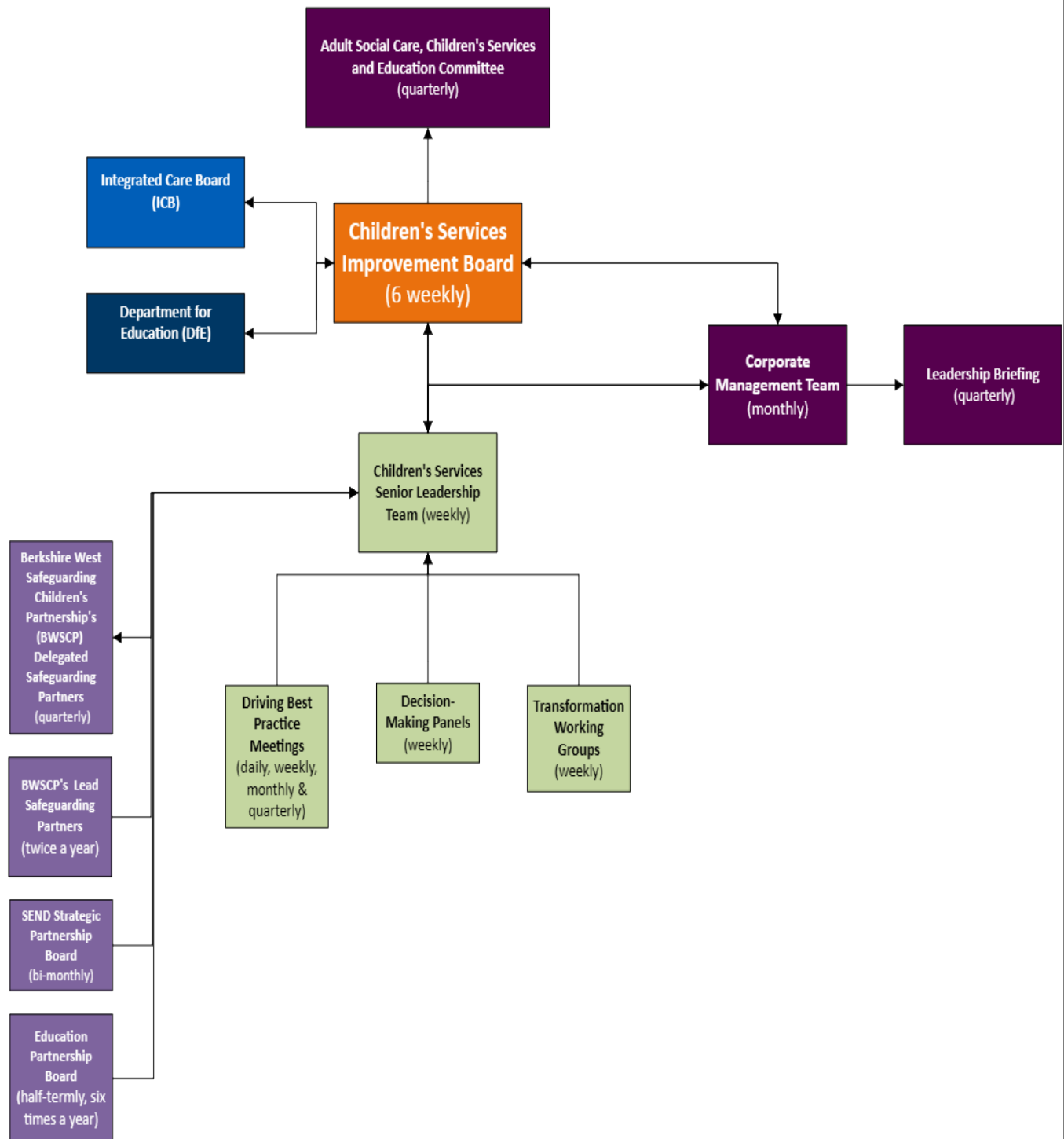
Board members

It is proposed that the Board will initially comprise the members set out below. However, additional members may be coopted in future subject to the agreement of the Leader, Chief Executive and Chair.

Members
Independent Chair (subject matter Expert)
DfE Improvement Advisor
Reading Borough Council Chief Executive
Lead Member for Children's Services
Executive Director of Children's Services (DCS)
Section 151 Officer
ICB senior representative
A.N Other member representative

1. The Chair in consultation with the CEO and DCS will agree agendas. It is anticipated that there will be standard agenda items and reporting templates in order to track progress. However, deep dives into particular issues may also be requested.
2. The Board may request relevant officers & subject matter experts to attend to brief them on specific topics.
3. Papers will be circulated electronically 5 working days in advance of meetings.
4. Action notes will be taken and circulated within 5 working days of the meeting.

Governance Structure



KEY:

- Children's Services
- Partnership Boards
- Reading Borough Council
- Department for Education
- Integrated Care Board (NHS)

Governance Structure