

To: Councillor Hoskin (Chair)
Councillors Magyarosy, Ayub, Ballsdon, Clarke,
Cresswell, Cross, Gavin, Keane, Lanzoni,
McEwan, McGoldrick, McGrother, Nikulina,
Saadat, Thompson, Walkem and Yeo

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13 July 2026

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NOTICE OF MEETING - HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 21 JULY 2026

A meeting of the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee will be held on Tuesday, 21 July 2026 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

	<u>WARDS AFFECTED</u>	<u>Page No</u>
1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST		
Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the items for consideration.		
2. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2026		5 - 12
3. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES		13 - 24
Minutes of the Community Safety Partnership meetings held on 19 February 2026 and 16 April 2026.		
4. PETITIONS		
Petitions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been received by Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.		
5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS		25 - 34

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Questions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 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.

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| 6. | DELIVERING A PARTNERSHIP RESPONSE TO ROUGH SLEEPING IN READING: COORDINATED OUTREACH, SUPPORT AND SUPPORTED HOUSING | 35 - 72 |
| | A report providing an overview of how Reading Borough Council and its partners deliver a coordinated response to rough sleeping across outreach, emergency provision, supported accommodation and longer-term recovery. | |
| 7. | GLL ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2025 | 73 - 94 |
| | A report providing an update on the performance and delivery of leisure services and development of facilities by Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL). | |
| 8. | RBC LANDLORD SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT - YEAR END UPDATE 2025/26 | 95 - 112 |
| | A report providing an update on the performance of Reading Borough Council's Housing Landlord Services delivered in the financial year 2025-2026. | |
| 9. | REFRESH OF HOUSING LANDLORD SERVICES POLICIES | 113 - 158 |
| | A report seeking agreement for the minor amendments to existing policies, that are required under the Regulator of Social Housing Standards, and their expectations of Landlords. | |
| 10. | REVIEW OF THE 'GUIDE FOR BUSKING AND STREET PERFORMANCE IN READING' | 159 - 222 |
| | A report on a review of the Council's Guide for Busking and Street Performance in Reading. | |
| 11. | HEXAGON THEATRE INVESTMENT | 223 - 226 |
| | A report on a successful bid for Arts Council England's (ACE) Creative Foundations Fund for £2,068,000 of grant funding with match funding of £230,500 being provided by the Council that will be used to make improvements to the Hexagon Theatre seating, drainage, fire stopping and fire door remedial works. | |
| 12. | READING COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (CSP) ANNUAL REPORT | 227 - 240 |
| | A report providing an overview of the work that Reading's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has carried out between July 2025 - May 2026 to meet the priorities outlined within the Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy 2023-2026. | |

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HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 10 MARCH 2026

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

Also in Attendance via Microsoft Teams: Councillor Naz

24. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Gavin declared an interest in Item 29 as she was an allotment holder. She left the room and took no part in the discussion or decision.

25 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting of 12 November 2025 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to Minute 13 being amended to reflect that it was Councillor Keane that had declared an interest in Item 19 of the previous minutes.

Resolved - That the position be noted.

26. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meeting were submitted:

Community Safety Partnership – 25 September and 27 November 2025.

Resolved - That the Minutes be received.

27. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
Cllr Ballsdon	Accessibility at Albert Road recreation Ground	Cllr Barnett-Ward
Cllr Thompson	Rough Sleepers	Cllr Yeo

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

28. ROMAN BRITAIN - REIMAGINED IN READING

The Committee received a report explaining that the Roman Britain - Reading Reimagined project was intended to transform Reading Museum's Roman gallery into the new *Discovering Calleva Gallery*, redisplaying Iron Age and Roman objects through immersive, multisensory and accessible interpretation shaped by an extensive community consultation. The project had secured a £714,785 delivery grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, £236,808.50 from other match-funding sources and a further £28,172 non-cash contribution, giving a total project budget of £979,765.50. This would enable the start of the delivery phase, following successful completion of the project's development stage.

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The report explained that the new gallery would connect more people with Reading's Roman heritage through updated storytelling, tactile interactives, recreated Roman spaces and 3D-printed handling objects. There would also be a comprehensive activity programme which would widen participation, strengthen partnerships, expand volunteering and paid placements, and enhance learning opportunities for diverse audiences.

The report also explained that £236,808.50 cash in match funding, comprising contributions from project partners and donors including the Earley Charity, Friends of Reading Museum, private donors, and non-cash support, and up to £100,000 from the Council through the Sustainability Fund would be used to progress the delivery phase. Officers were continuing to work on alternative sources of funding to reduce the need for Council match-funding.

The report informed the Committee that strong project governance would be maintained through a dedicated project management structure that would meet regularly to oversee delivery, budget, risks, and compliance with both National Lottery Heritage Fund requirements and the Council's project management standards. Regular updates would be provided through established Council reporting routes, including reports to the Committee at key milestones, ensuring robust oversight, transparency, and alignment with organisational priorities.

Resolved -

- (1) That the £714,785 National Lottery Heritage Fund delivery grant and the commencement of delivery activities, including procurement and recruitment be noted;**
- (2) That spend approval be granted and the use of £236,808.50 match funding be noted;**
- (3) That the project governance and reporting process be noted.**

29. ALLOTMENTS - FEES AND CHARGES CONSULTATION

The Committee received a report which gave an update on the responses to the consultation on allotments fees and charges and sought approval of the proposed allotment fees pricing structure set out in Section 3.28 of the report, which was designed to secure the long-term viability of the service while maintaining fairness through the continued use of concessionary discounts. The following documents were appended to the report:

Appendix 1 - Allotment Survey

Appendix 2 - Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Survey.

The report explained that the Council managed 20 allotment sites across the Borough, comprising of more than 1,600 worked plots over 41.5 hectares of land. For the financial year ending 31 March 2026, allotment rental income had been projected at approximately £66,193, against an estimated annual service cost of £167,598, equating to a subsidy of approximately £99k. For the 2026/27 financial year, allotment fees would increase by 3.25% in line with inflation.

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The report gave information on the findings from the allotment fee consultation with plot holders, as outlined in Section 3 and detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. The consultation reflected a highly engaged community, with concerns about affordability balanced by acknowledgement that the service must move towards financial sustainability. Feedback on the proposed rent increases was mixed, with respondents evenly split between supporting and opposing an increase. Affordability concerns were a recurring theme, particularly for those on low or fixed incomes, although many respondents also acknowledged the need for the service to be financially sustainable and less reliant on Council subsidy. While a majority of the respondents had indicated they were unlikely to give up their plot if the increases were implemented, around a quarter had said they might be forced to do so, highlighting the importance of maintaining concessionary support for vulnerable groups. The report noted that allotments legislation placed no obligation on councils to subsidise allotments but, stated that councils might charge a lower rent where justified by individual circumstances, such as financial hardship or disability.

The report also explained that, each year, the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) conducted a survey of local authority allotment services, providing insight into sector trends, operational challenges and emerging best practice (Appendix 2). The survey undertaken between June and August 2015 highlighted the increasing financial pressures faced by councils and the range of strategies being adopted nationally to improve cost recovery and long-term service sustainability. Over 63% of councils had reported that they continued to subsidise allotment services, despite efforts to move towards full cost recovery. Concessionary discounts remained widely available, with 60% of councils maintaining reduced rates for eligible groups. However, several authorities had indicated that these schemes were under review to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

Section 3.28 of the report set out the following proposed rent matrix for plots of 125sqm from April 2027:

Site Category	Full Fee	40% Discounted Rate
A Water supply across site	£111.50/year £2.14/week	£67/year £1.29/week
B Water supplied on site but may be a distance from the plot	£80.50/year £1.55/week	£48.50/year £0.93/week
C No water supply	£56.00/year £1.08/week	£34/year £0.65/week

The report explained that the Council was required to give plot holders 12 months' written notice of any changes to the rent and discount structure. The decision to increase rents had to be taken and communicated to plot holders by no later than 31 March 2026 in order to apply the new rent levels from 1 April 2027.

Resolved:

- (1) That the findings of the 2025 Allotment Survey, as summarised in Section 3 and detailed in Appendix 1 be noted.**

- (2) That the proposed Allotment Fees Pricing Structure set out in Section 3.29, to be implemented from April 2027 following the statutory 12-month notice period, be approved.

30. PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING: A STRATEGY FOR READING 2026-2031

The Committee considered a report seeking approval for the *Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 – 2031*, along with its accompanying Action Plan. The draft Strategy set out the Council's proposed approach to homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years. The following documents were appended to the report:

- Appendix 1 Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 – 2031
- Appendix 2 Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: An action plan for Reading 2026
- Appendix 3 Review of Reading's previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies
- Appendix 4 Understanding Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Reading: Strategic needs analysis
- Appendix 5 Consultation Review and Outcomes
- Appendix 7 Online (Go Vocal) Consultation Responses Summary
- Appendix 8 Equality Impact Assessment: Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026-31

The report explained that as part of the development of the proposed new Strategy a detailed assessment of achievements arising from Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020 – 2025 and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024 had been completed. A comprehensive Needs Analysis had also been completed, which showed continued population growth, increasing housing costs and sustained pressure on both temporary accommodation and homelessness prevention services.

The report explained that the new Strategy focused on three key priorities:

- (1) early intervention to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping;
- (2) break the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping when prevention had not been possible; and
- (3) make sure everyone could access safe, settled, and affordable housing.

The report added that the strong partnerships between the Council, health services, probation, community groups, and national agencies like prisons and the Home Office helped to prevent homelessness and support recovery. By sharing information, coordinating referrals, and offering joined-up services advice and support could be tailored to each person's needs. Improved coordination would also facilitate access to funding, and ensure support was joined-up, inclusive, and reached those who needed it most. People who had experienced homelessness would also be involved from the start, to help with making services easier to understand and access and reflect real customer journeys.

Resolved:

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- (1) That the publication of *Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 – 2031* and the accompanying Action Plan be approved;
- (2) That annual updates on delivery against the Strategy and accompanying Action Plan be submitted to the Committee for review.

31. RBC LANDLORD SERVICES -APRIL TO DECEMBER 2025 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Further to Minute 23 of the meeting held on 12 November 2025, the Committee received a report providing an update on the performance of Reading Borough Council's Housing Landlord Service delivered year to date, up to and including December 2025, following the inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) which had concluded in April 2025.

The report explained that the Service had received positive feedback via monthly meetings with the RSH regarding the progress made to date on the Service Improvement Plan. The Regulator was confident in the improvements that had been delivered so far and was assured by the actions the Service had taken to address the root causes of the issues that had been identified. Based on the evidence submissions, the Regulator had confirmed that the Service was moving closer to achieving sustainable, long-term change and they were considering reducing the frequency of meetings.

The report provided assurance to the Committee that the Service was 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.

The report explained that a working group had been established to compile and carry out a tenant census, with the aim of ensuring that the Service held up-to-date information on tenants including protected characteristics to ensure that any additional needs or reasonable adjustments were recorded and used to inform service delivery and achieve equitable outcomes. It was intended to launch the tenant census in April 2026 and this would remain open for up to six months to encourage widest possible participation. The census would initially be available online through the Housing Online Portal and officers were also exploring the option of making the census accessible via the corporate Go Vocal platform to increase digital participation. In addition, officers across the service would support data collection through door-knocking, completing the census digitally with tenants. As a final alternative, paper forms would be issued where required.

The report also stated that the Tenant Engagement Team was currently working with a group of engaged tenants to scrutinise two priority areas of the Housing Service identified by the Tenant Voice Panel, the Repairs Service and the handling of Housing Complaints. Ten tenants were taking part in this scrutiny project with six sessions, running through to April 2026. Tenants would review specific aspects of these services and produce written recommendations for service improvement. These findings would be shared with the Regulator of Social Housing and via this Committee. The tenants would be focusing their scrutiny of the Repairs Service on how the Service communicated with tenants throughout the repairs process, as well as reviewing the full tenant journey from the point a repair was first reported to the Council. For Housing Complaints, the group was examining whether there were further opportunities to reduce complaint volumes and to strengthen the way the Service managed and resolved complaints. Work was also

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underway to develop a wider Tenant Engagement programme. The project plan would be finalised in May 2026 having been agreed by the Tenant Voice Panel, with the intention of launching new engagement activities from that point including obtaining the Tenant Quality Mark on all Housing Landlord webpages. The new Tenant Engagement Programme for 2026 to 2027 would include facilitated focus groups to scrutinise key areas within Tenancy Management and Antisocial Behaviour.

The report also set out details of complaints, response times and Housing Ombudsman complaints for the period April 2025 to December 2025.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Housing Landlord Service Performance and key achievements delivered year to date, up to and including December 2025 be noted;**
- (2) That the themes and programmes of the service improvement plan against the consumer standards be endorsed.**

32. PROGRAMME OF WORKS TO COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK 2026/7

The Committee considered a report which set out the maintenance work programme for Council Homes for 2026/27. The overall work programme budget for 2026/27 was £27.95m which maintained an acceptable reserve balance in the HRA Business Plan. In addition, there were £0.255m of General Fund costs relating to Garages and Temporary Accommodation giving a total programme cost of £28.2m. The following documents were appended to the report:

Appendix 1: Works to Housing Stock 2026-2027 Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

Appendix 2: Works to Housing Stock 2026-2027 (General Fund)

Appendix 3: Works to Housing Stock by Ward 2026-2027.

The report explained that Housing Repairs and Property Services had a responsibility to ensure that the housing stock was well maintained in accordance with the Decent Homes Standard and that Council homes were safe and healthy places to live in. The Service also worked to improve the wider environment on housing estates to meet the needs and aspirations of both the Council and its tenants.

The report added that the Service continued to have a strong focus on improving the thermal efficiency of homes in line with the Council's Climate Change ambitions ensuring homes could be heated efficiently and cost effectively, thus reducing their carbon footprint and reducing fuel poverty. All options for new funding streams for further thermal efficiencies would be considered as and when they were launched.

Resolved -

- (1) That the planned maintenance work programme for Council Homes for 2026/27 be noted;**
- (2) That to the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing be authorised to:**
 - (a) tender; and (b) enter into all necessary contracts for individual**

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schemes that begin within the 26/27 work programme as set out in Appendix 1 & 2 of this report subject to sufficient funding being available in the approved Budget (£28.20m across HRA and General Fund) to meet the cost of the schemes.

33. ALLOCATIONS SCHEME UPDATE

The Committee received a report setting out proposed updates to Reading Borough Council's Allocations Scheme in response to updated Social Housing Allocations Guidance and Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse Guidance, both published in July 2025 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The proposed changes addressed specific requirements relating to Armed Forces personnel, survivors of Domestic Abuse and Care Leavers albeit they did not alter the Council's overall approach to administering lettings. Further minor amendments were also proposed to clarify wording in the Scheme ensuring it clearly laid out the Councils' responsibilities. Appendix 1 to the report provided details of the recommended amendments, and Appendix 2 set out the full Scheme with tracked changes.

Resolved - That the proposed amendments to the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme be approved, and that the revised scheme be adopted and implemented in April 2026.

34. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2026-2027 & 2025/2026 HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Further to Minute 26 of the meeting held on 11 March 2025, the Committee considered a report that provided updates on and sought scheme and spend approval for:

- The Department for Transport's (DfT's) Highway Maintenance Award 2026/27 Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement;
- The progress of year 4 (2025/26) of the Council's additional £8M 5-year (2022/23 to 2026/27) Highway Capital Roads & Pavements Investment Programme;
- The completion of the Highway Maintenance 2025/26 DfT Local Transport Block Funded Capital Works Programme.

The following documents were appended to the report:

Appendix 1: 2025/26 Programme Delivered;
Appendix 2: Proposed 2026/27 Delivery Programme.

Section 3 of the report set out details of the works that included highways maintenance, resurfacing of roads and pavements and works to bridges and other structures, plus the costs associated with these works.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Highway Maintenance Award 2026/27 Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement be noted and scheme and spend approval be granted;**

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- (2) That the progress of year 4 (2025/26) of the Council's additional £8M 5-year (2022/23 to 2026/27) Highway Capital Roads & Pavements Investment Programme be noted;**
- (3) That the completion of the Highway Maintenance 2025/26 DfT Local Transport Block Funded Capital Works Delivery Programme be noted.**

(The meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.47 pm).

Agenda Item 3

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP – 19 FEBRUARY 2026

Present:

Cllr Karen Rowland	Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety, RBC (Chair)
Professor Keith Brown OBE	Invited guest
Cllr Terry	Leader, RBC
Melissa Wise	Executive Director of Social Care and Health
Jo Middlemass	Community Safety and Enablement Manager, RBC
Sarah Gardner	Community Safety, RBC
Zoe Hanim	Prevent/Channel Lead, RBC
Amanda Nyeke	RBC
Lynne Mason	RBC
Elizabeth Palmer	TVP
Gassan Shaladan	TVP
Hannah Powell	Probation Service
Michael Greenway	OPCC
Neil Whitieman	Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service (RBFRS)
Martin Chester	South Central Ambulance Service
Lianne Lewis	Safeguarding Adults Berkshire West, BOB ICB
Rachel Spencer	RVA
Carly Newman	Young Voices (for items 7-10)
Julie Quarmby	Committee Services, RBC

Apologies:

Lara Patel	Executive Director of Children's Services, RBC
Sally Andersen	RBC
Jill Marston	RBC
Bryony Hall	RBC
Alastair Harsant	RBC
Matt Pearce	RBC
Jonny Bradish	RBC
Matt Golledge	RBC
Jason Kew	RBC
Martin White	RBC
Colin Hudson	Thames Valley Police (Vice-Chair)
Stephen Leonard	TVP
Chantal Foster	Probation Service
Gail Muirhead	Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service (RBFRS)
Kirsten Willis-Drewett	SCAS
Kathy Kelly	BOB ICB

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

2. SAFEGUARDING ADULTS - FINANCES AND WELFARE

Professor Keith Brown OBE attended the meeting to give a presentation on the effects of adult mental capacity on the ability to make decisions, particularly around financial and medical matters, and how best vulnerable adults could be safeguarded. Keith explained that

whilst many people were capable of making day-to-day decisions, they might not have the capacity to make more complex decisions. This could be important, particularly when it came to consent, medical treatment and financial matters, and the amount of assistance an individual required would be specific to each decision.

Keith explained how having a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) could help, why they could potentially reduce an individual's autonomy, and why it would be useful for all adults to have one in case of future emergencies. He set out several steps that could be taken, in consultation with banks, to help vulnerable people to stay in control of their finances while reducing their exposure to fraud, including setting daily withdrawal limits, capping international payments, spreading money across more than one account and changing bank cards yearly.

The Group discussed the presentation and noted that there was considerable advice available that could be added to, or sign-posted from the CSP website in liaison with the Safeguarding Adults Board. There would also be value in training front-line staff to be more aware of the issues.

AGREED: That Professor Keith Brown be thanked for an interesting and informative presentation.

3. COMMUNITY COHESION - HOW CAN WE SUPPORT COMMUNITIES TO FEEL SAFE?

Sarah Gardner gave a presentation updating the Group on progress that had been made to identify efficient methods of communicating with communities during high-risk events or activities. Following conversations with community leaders, Thames Valley Police, Prevent and Reading Borough Council, the following recommendations had been proposed:

- Create an effective communications process with a manageable network of representatives.
- CSP to be responsible for the management of the register of representatives.
- Organise an event with Community Leaders during Spring 2026 to start to building resilience together.

Sarah explained that reading Voluntary Action had been working with groups to promote safety at various events that would be taking place over the summer. Zoe Hanim reported that she had been delivering Prevent training to the Voluntary Sector. Gasson Shaladan added that Thames Valley Police were working to ensure that communications across Berkshire West were clear in intent and purpose.

AGREED: That the structure of the work needs to be fed to RBC Leadership for awareness of the project and that the recommendations be endorsed.

4. PREVENT UPDATE

Zoe Hanim gave a presentation giving an update on Prevent activity during January 2026 against the 2025-26 Prevent Action Plan. This included:

- Submitting a Preventing Radicalisation Fund bid,.
- A SEND specialist had joined the Channel Panel.
- Home Office training had been rolled out (special permission had been granted to allow Voluntary Sector members to be trained).
- Developing a training needs analysis template for schools.
- Updating the Safe Venue Hire checklist.

- A meeting of the Community Safety Communications Group on 21 January 2026.
- Online Safety Day on 10 February 2026.
- Development of the Sanctuary Strategy and Action Plan.
- Roll out of mandatory Prevent Awareness e-learning to Children's Services staff for completion by 31 March 2026.

Zoe added that there had been an increase in referrals, with approximately 10% going to Prevent. Rachel Spencer added that the Voluntary Sector and Prevent had discussed the impact of neurodiversity as a factor in making individuals more vulnerable to grooming.

AGREED: That the progress against the 2025-26 Prevent Action Plan be noted.

5. COMMUNITY SAFETY SURVEY AND YOUNG VOICES SURVEY

Sarah Gardner reported on the results of the 2025 Community Safety Strategy which ran between 2 July and 31 August 2025. 725 people had responded to the 2025 survey, compared to 744 in 2024, with the majority of people completing the survey online.

Sarah also reported on the Young Voices Survey which ran between 12 June and 1 August 2025. This had been split into a full and mini survey. 683 people responded to the full survey, and 54 responded to the mini survey. 200 young people were also surveyed during in-person workshop sessions, led by [Young Voices](#). In total 937 young people shared their views on safety.

The Surveys had raised several key points:

Community Safety Survey

- Town Centre issues – including aggressive begging, drug dealing, ASB and women's safety. Approval was sought for the creation of a Town Centre Safety Group to be led by Thames Valley Police's (TVP) Local Policing Team with Colin Hudson reporting back to the CSP on progress with the Group.
- Reckless and dangerous riding of e-bikes and e-scooters. A Reading borough-wide Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) was being implemented on 24 March 2026 to address ASB, including using Electric Scooters or any type of Electric Bike in an anti-social, malicious and/or dangerous manner in a public place..
- Drug dealing and related ASB. In addition to the problem-solving activity at a local level, led through Safer Neighbourhood Forums, this would be fed into the Strategic Needs Assessment as part of the development of the new Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy 2026-2029.
- Lack of Police presence in neighbourhoods. This would be considered as part of the development of the new Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy 2026-2029.
- Retail crime. There were several Retail Operations underway across Reading and the effectiveness of these would be fed into the Strategic Needs Assessment as part of the development of the new Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy 2026-2029.
- Environmental issues. Five dedicated environmental enforcement officers had been introduced in September 2025 to patrol hotspot areas daily—including weekends and public holidays—to deter environmental offences around litter, fly-tipping and waste duty of care infractions. (including issuing fines).

Young Voices Survey

- Further Young Voices Safety Summits to be held annually, bringing young people into contact with decision-makers and support services together.
- Continuing work to improve safety in public spaces:
 - Parks and Open Spaces project (building on the pilot in Prospect Park) – looking at how safe public spaces are for young people.
 - A safe shops scheme in partnership with The Oracle (based on the Ask for Angela model) to equip security guards to be safe, trusted adults for young people.
 - A ‘Safety Warden’ scheme on buses and at bus stop with Reading Buses, similar to the above.
 - Fire safety – education and communications in partnership with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service relating to recent cases of fire setting and ritualistic burning of school books at the end of the year.
- Exploring ways to make it easier for young people to report crime and feel confident of the outcomes.
- Hate Crime and ASB – misconceptions and reporting. Understanding young people’s experiences of hate crimes (and what they defined as hate crime) in collaboration with RBC’s Anti-Social Behaviour/Safer Public Realm Teams and partners.
- Further development work to explore the interplay between online harm (focus of Safety Summit 2024) and offline harm (focus of Safety Summit 2025) and how these were interlinked for young people – understanding that this relationship may be different for adults.

Recommendations on actions to improve the 2026 Surveys

Community Safety Survey recommendations

- **Improve response rate** by engaging with a wider group of people, having better engagement with communities and planning more face-to-face engagement. SNF Chairs highlighted a need for more paper surveys.
- **Improve demographic spread** by using trusted representatives (‘Champions’) who could engage with residents through their existing networks – this could include SNF Chairs, Ward Councillors, Housing Officers. SNF Chairs had previously advised that SNF distribution lists could be a way to promote the survey.
- **Review the dates of the survey** – ensuring we could meet our other statutory obligations and capture the results to feed into programmes of work. SNF Chairs had proposed a longer lead-in time that would enable better engagement and would allow us to exploit summer fetes and other activities often held in June.
- **Review questions** – ensuring we could maintain statistical robustness.

Young Voices Survey recommendations

- **School spread and non-school representation (PRU and AP etc)** – making sure young people across all schools, and in non-school/alternative settings were represented in the survey.
- **Age spread** - especially making sure older young people (i.e. 17-25) were better represented in future years via closer collaboration with colleges, workplaces, apprenticeship providers.
- **Better systems to capture and analyse data**, i.e. demographic based.
- **Increasing in-person opportunities to respond** – especially through professionals who worked with young people who would otherwise not be represented.

- **Review and refine questions to ensure they were understandable to young people and captured the experiences we wanted to hear.** Making sure set answer options were representative of the responses young people wanted to give and that 'free text' responses could be better analysed.

Longer term development:

- **Branded platform to respond.**
- **Better/quicker follow-up and 'we heard and we're doing' opportunities** - being able to 'prove' that their feedback has been heard and respected outside of YV structures (other people in power etc) to increase accountability and progress.

AGREED:

- (1) **That the position be noted;**
- (2) **That the recommendations set out above be agreed.**

6. OPCC POLICING REFORM WHITE PAPER & PARTNERSHIP FUND UPDATE

Mike Greenway (OPCC) submitted a report on the OPCC Policing Reform White Papers and the Partnership Fund.

Mike explained that the Government's had published a White Paper **From Local to National: A New Model for Policing** in late January 2026, which set out a proposed new model for policing that would be rooted in local communities and focused on their needs; be more coherent in the way it was organised; more consistent in achieving high standards; and more capable in terms of its workforce, technology, use of data and ability to prevent crime. There was also an ambition to create a national police force (National Police Service) bringing together several current national policing bodies. The focus of the NPS would be on providing a single source strategic leadership for the police service, setting stronger national standards, providing enabling and support services to local policing and a stronger ability to tackle terrorism and serious and organised crime. In addition, there would be a review of the police funding formula and the distribution of police funding once the reforms were underway.

The report explained that the move to end the roles of Police and Crime Commissioners by 1 May 2028 was part of the Government's devolution programme and the expansion of mayoral strategic authorities across the country. For areas that did not have specific mayoral arrangements established by 1 May 2028, new Policing and Crime Boards were expected to be created, led by local authority leaders covering that area. For the Thames Valley area, discussions were underway looking at the options available.

OPCC Partnership Fund

Mike also updated the Group on the **OPCC Partnership Fund**, and in particular allocations that had been provisionally approved for 2027/28. The OPCC had requested all CSPs develop and put forward proposals for their remaining notional allocations of the Partnership Fund up to March 2028 by 28 February 2026. This position had been updated as part of setting the force budget and CSPs had now been provided with a reduced allocation (40%) for financial year 2027/28, which required them to reprioritise project allocations for that year, and propose new projects for 2027/28 should there be any surplus funding following that reprioritisation. For those projects already approved, the OPCC had confirmed funding commitments for the remainder of 2025/26, and for 2026/27.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

7. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHT REPORT AND DOMESTIC ABUSE HIGHLIGHT REPORTS

Sarah Gardner gave an update on the progress of the workstreams, activities and projects since 1 December 2025. She reported that Initial scoping discussions for a Town Centre Crime and Safety Steering Group had been held on 10 December 2025 with TVP, RBC, BID, street pastor attendance. The Group would cover the BID, Night Time Economy, Violence Against Women & Girls, PSPO implementation, infrastructure/environment, support, crime/safety, communication/engagement. A copy of the proposed Terms of reference was submitted for approval.

Sarah also reported that the launch of the Public Spaces Protection Order was on track, with a five-week communications countdown in place.

Sarah presented the Domestic Abuse update report, and explained that there was one live Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) which had been commissioned for Case A and which should have a chair in place by April 2026. Case G had been submitted for clarity and did not meet the criteria for a DHR. A supplier had been procured for the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) and work was underway to collate data for the SNA.

AGREED:

- (1) That the reports be noted;**
- (2) That the Terms of reference for the Town Centre Crime and Safety Steering Group be agreed.**

8. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE EXECUTIVE GROUP MEETING AND MEMBERSHIP

Sarah Gardner submitted a report explaining that the Group had completed a trial where the Meetings had been organised in two parts: (i) a closed section for statutory partners to discuss statutory matters and (ii) an open part for community representatives to attend and share partner updates. It had been noted that, due to the importance and detail of statutory discussions in the closed part of the meeting, there had not been sufficient time left available in the 'open' part, which had reduced the value for those community representatives attending. It had also been difficult for some of the representatives to attend the meetings during the morning. The report therefore recommended that the open meetings no longer take place. To ensure community and partner voices were still heard by the Executive Group SNF Chairs would agree priorities at each Safer Reading Neighbourhood Forum, which would then be shared with the Executive Group as a written report, Young Voices representative Carly Newman would become a full member of the Executive Group with the caveat that she not attend confidential Prevent discussions and an ACRE representative would be offered the opportunity to share updates into the Executive Group.

AGREED:

- (1) That the open part of the meeting be discontinued;**
- (2) That Carly Newman become a full member of the Executive Group.**

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Jo Middlemass introduced Hannah Powell, the new Probation Services representative on the Group.

Councillor Rowland and Jo Middlemass would review the attendance at meetings to ensure that all partners were able to engage with the Group.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

10. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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

16 April 2026

Provisional dates for the 2026/27 Municipal Year:

2 July 2026

24 September 2026

5 November 2026

25 February 2027

15 April 2027

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

(The meeting closed at 11.38 am)

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COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP – 16 APRIL 2026

Present:

Cllr Karen Rowland	Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety, RBC (Chair)
Colin Hudson	Thames Valley Police (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Terry	Leader, RBC
Melissa Wise	Executive Director of Social Care and Health
Lara Patel	Executive Director of Children's Services, RBC
Sally Andersen	RBC
Sarah Gardner	Community Safety, RBC
Zoe Hanim	Prevent/Channel Lead, RBC
Matt Golledge	RBC
James Tribe	Thames Valley Police
Kathy Kelly	BOB ICB
Hannah Powell	Probation Service
Michael Greenway	OPCC
Neil Whiteman	Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service (RBFRS)
Colin Hudson	Thames Valley Police (Vice-Chair)
Rachel Spencer	RVA
Carly Newman	Young Voices (for items 7-10)
Julie Quarmby	Committee Services, RBC

Apologies:

Jo Middlemass	Community Safety and Enablement Manager, RBC
Bryony Hall	RBC
Alastair Harsant	RBC
Amanda Nyeke	RBC
Martin Chester	South Central Ambulance Service
Hayley Berrington	Probation Service
Martin White	RBC
Stephen Leonard	TVP
Gail Muirhead	Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service (RBFRS)

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

2. OPCC UPDATE & PARTNERSHIP FUND UPDATE

Mike Greenway, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) submitted a report updating the Group on the OPCC. Mike explained that the OPCC was continuing to work with Local Authority Chief Executives on the options available within Berkshire following Local Government Reform/Devolution, police reforms and the review of policing structures and that a more detailed report would be submitted to a future meeting. An overview of the OPCC's statutory duties had been produced and shared with all parties.

Mike also reported that the Police Funding Settlement was almost £9m less than had previously been indicated to the OPCC, the OPCC was reviewing and re-planning its budgets including the affordability of the Partnership Fund allocations for 2027/28. The February 2026 round of Community Funding bids had just finished with over 250 applications being evaluated and awards made to 47 organisations across the Thames

Valley. The next round would take place during September 2026 and the funding was anticipated to continue whilst the OPCC was in place.

Sarah Gardner reported on progress on the Year 1 projects. She explained that it had been agreed that some of the funding had been carried over into the next financial year for the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO), the Domestic Homicide Review and School Navigators.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

3. PREVENT

Zoe Hanim gave a presentation giving an update on Prevent activity during February and March 2026 against the 2025-26 Prevent Action Plan. This included:

- Reading had been awarded Council of Sanctuary status.
- Promotional materials, including a QR code, had been circulated to all community venues.
- A bid had been submitted for Preventing Radicalisation funding with the aim of building resilience from online harm in young and/or vulnerable people.
- Home Office Prevent live training was ongoing.
- 82% of RBC had now completed the mandatory Prevent Awareness e-learning to RBC staff compared to a target of 95%.

Zoe added that the Government's policy paper "Protecting What Matters: Towards a more Confident, Cohesive and Resilient United Kingdom" had been published in March 2026. Its key elements included actions to address the influence of online harm, monitoring of electively home educated children and investment to increase community pride and reduce the conditions that could lead to extremism.

AGREED: That the progress against the 2025-26 Prevent Action Plan be noted.

4. DOMESTIC ABUSE UPDATE

Sarah Gardner reported that funding had been made available by the OPCC and that a chairperson would be in place for Case A by the end of April 2026. Sarah added that the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) and Domestic Abuse/Safe Accommodation Strategy would be completed by the end of April and end of July respectively. The Domestic Abuse Partnership Board had met on 13 April 2026 and most of the recommendations had now been implemented, although an independent Chair had yet to be appointed.

AGREED:

- (1) **That the report be noted;**
- (2) **That Colin Hudson confirm the attendees from Thames Valley Police.**

5. TOWN CENTRE DELIVERY GROUP

Colin Hudson reported that the Town Centre Delivery Group had met on 8 April 2026. He explained that attendees had included RBC, TVP, BID and street pastors, and that he would like to extend membership to include Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service, Health and the voluntary sector.

The meeting had concentrated on the following areas:

- Night-time economy;
- Licensing matters including Ask for Angela and Operation Makesafe and test purchases;
- The future location of Safe Space once the costs would no longer be covered by the OPCC;
- Communications and Media;
- Promotion of TownSafe radio

The Group discussed the report and noted that whilst there was some overlap with Community Safety issues across the Borough, the Working Group would be concentrating on town centre specific matters such as the night-time economy, organised shoplifting etc. Colin added that the next meeting would be considering surveys to include rough sleepers and the homeless asking how safe people felt in the town centre. The survey could be informed by the questions and responses from the recent Community Safety Survey to reduce duplication.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor Rowland noted that Leadership would receive a briefing on Community Cohesion as this was key in most areas of the Borough.

Kathy Kelly reported that she and Lynne Mason would be submitting a report around homelessness and rough sleeping to a future meeting.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

7. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Provisional dates for the 2026/27 Municipal Year:

2 July 2026
 24 September 2026
 5 November 2026
 25 February 2027
 15 April 2027

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

(The meeting closed at 10.36 am)

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READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE - 21 JULY 2026

QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor Nikulina to ask the Chair of the Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee:

South Street Arts Centre

Green Party councillors believe that the redevelopment of the Hexagon, including the new Studio Theatre, is an exciting investment in Reading's cultural future. At the same time, South Street Arts Centre continues to play an important role in the town's cultural life, hosting a diverse programme of theatre, comedy, live music and community events that are enjoyed by many residents.

Could the Lead Councillor provide an update on the Council's plans for South Street Arts Centre, including any future investment or improvements that are planned, and how the Council sees the venue developing alongside the new Hexagon Theatre?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin:

I invite Councillor Lanzoni, the Lead Councillor for Leisure and Culture, to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Lead Councillor for Leisure and Culture:

Thank you for your question.

South Street Arts Centre continues to make an important contribution to Reading's cultural offer and remains a valued venue for theatre, comedy, live music, and community events. The Council recognises the role that South Street plays in supporting local artists, audiences and cultural organisations, and the contribution it makes to the town's creative life.

The programme currently at South Street Arts Centre remains a highly valued part of Reading's cultural offer and will continue to play a distinct and important role as part of the redeveloped Hexagon and new Studio Theatre.

As the new Studio Theatre is developed, it is anticipated that some commercial and community users may choose to relocate there, attracted by its modern, flexible design, larger audience capacity and significantly improved accessibility. This would enable those activities to benefit from enhanced facilities while continuing to support a diverse programme of cultural activity across the town.

The Council's immediate priority is the successful delivery of the Hexagon investment programme and construction of the Studio Theatre. This investment will provide enhanced performance facilities, improved accessibility and significant environmental benefits. An update on the progress of this project and the work of the Hexagon will be presented to this Committee in November.

The Council is continuously considering its wider cultural and property strategies in the context of significant financial pressures, the substantial investment currently being made in The Hexagon and the new Studio Theatre, as well as the changing needs and demands of the town. The performance of services is continually reviewed, with delivery models adapted to reflect the changing needs and demands of audiences and performers. No decisions have been taken at this stage and any future proposals would be subject to the Council's established decision-making processes.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE - 21 JULY 2026

QUESTION NO. 2

Councillor Walkem to ask the Chair of the Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee:

New Library and Cool Space

Green Party councillors welcome the new library and the Cool Spaces initiative. The library is a very accessible, bright and already a well-used study space. It also functions well as one of the designated Cool Spaces, a service which we hope will stay and grow in the coming years.

Regarding water: Is there existing or is there a plan for a free public drinking water fountain and refill point at these Cool Spaces, including the Library throughout its opening hours?

Regarding information about local events and services: Is there going to be facility for local organisations to place publicity leaflets in addition to the rolling big screen at the entrance?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin:

I invite Councillor Lanzoni, the Lead Councillor for Leisure and Culture, to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Lead Councillor for Leisure and Culture:

Thank you for your question and compliments about the new Reading Central Library. Over 25,000 visits have been made to the new library since it opened and we're delighted to see the library being used by so many people. Especially so during the recent warm heatwaves where we were able to make it available as a cool space.

The [Cool Spaces webpage](#) on the Council's website signposts to both Reading Central and Battle libraries, Rivermead and Palmer Park leisure centres, and Whitley Wood Community Centre. All of these sites, except Battle Library, offer free drinking water. Here at the Civic Centre the water fountain is just outside this Council Chamber. We would encourage people to bring their own refillable bottles.

With regards to information about local events and services. There are no plans to provide a facility for holding leaflets and flyers within Reading Central Library. Leaflets and flyers can be displayed at some of our branch libraries including Caversham and Battle, please speak to a member of library staff who can help.

At the Civic Centre there is a dedicated screen located in the reception for promoting local events and activities. Interested groups can email details of their events and activities to VCS@reading.gov.uk.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE - 21 JULY 2026

QUESTION NO. 3

Councillor Nikulina to ask the Chair of the Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee:

Extreme heat causes 2,700 excess deaths across the UK

The 'Today' programme reported 2,700 excess deaths in the first two heatwaves in the UK, mostly people over 65 years old with underlying health conditions.

The Committee on Climate Change has been forecasting for years that heatwaves will be the 'silent killer'.

Green councillors believe we have a duty of care to our residents, workers and visitors to adapt to our changing climate and protect ourselves from extreme heat.

Could the relevant Lead Councillor outline what work Reading Council is doing to help residents adapt to extreme heat, particularly through its housing, neighbourhoods and leisure responsibilities?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin:

I invite Councillor Yeo, the Lead Councillor for Housing, to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Lead Councillor for ?:

Reading Borough Council recognises that extreme heat is a serious and growing public health, climate adaptation and health equity issue and has already identified these risks through its Climate Change Adaptation Framework and Climate Emergency Strategy. Our local Climate Risk Assessment highlights the impacts of rising temperatures on health, wellbeing, productivity and essential services. We therefore see heat not simply as an environmental issue, but as one that affects public health, housing, neighbourhoods, leisure services, business continuity and community resilience.

The Council is already taking action across a range of services. During periods of severe heat, Public Health distributes UKHSA heat-health alerts across the organisation and works with partners to share practical advice on staying safe, recognising heat-related illness and supporting vulnerable residents. Information is promoted through our website, social media, Community Health Champions and voluntary sector networks.

During the recent red heat-health alert, we introduced a local Cool Spaces offer, including leisure centres, the Central Library and a range of voluntary, community and faith venues. This was well received and provides a strong foundation for future work with community partners.

Adult Social Care played a key role in the response, prioritising contact with vulnerable residents and monitoring pressures across the wider health and care system. Housing and outreach services also worked alongside partners to support rough sleepers and people whose health is particularly vulnerable to extreme temperatures. Our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol enables additional support, access to cool spaces and emergency accommodation when conditions require it.

The Council also continues to strengthen its resilience as an organisation. Business continuity arrangements were activated during recent heatwaves to maintain critical services, and lessons learned are informing updates to our Adverse Weather Plan and service-specific heat plans. We are also reviewing how best to protect staff, particularly those working outdoors, travelling during hot weather or working in buildings that can become excessively warm.

Longer term, planning, housing and environmental policies all have an important role to play. Through the Local Plan Partial Update, we are seeking to strengthen measures relating to climate adaptation, green infrastructure and urban greening. New Council housing developments are designed to meet overheating standards, while investment in existing homes, including insulation, windows and energy efficiency improvements, helps create more comfortable and resilient homes.

Parks, trees and green infrastructure are also a vital part of our response. Increasing canopy cover, protecting and enhancing green spaces, and supporting nature-based solutions all help cool the urban environment and improve resilience to heat.

In summary, Reading Borough Council is already taking action across public health, adult social care, housing, homelessness, planning, parks, leisure, libraries and emergency planning to respond to the growing risks of extreme heat. However, recent heat events have reinforced the need to continue strengthening our preparedness. We recognise that extreme heat will become more frequent as the climate changes and remain committed to building resilience, protecting vulnerable residents and ensuring essential services can continue to operate safely and effectively.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE - 21 JULY 2026

QUESTION NO. 4

Councillor Clarke to ask the Chair of the Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee:

Soft Plastic Recycling in Reading

Since September 2023, soft plastic recycling pilot schemes have been running in Reading. It was announced that in later 2025 that these schemes were being expanded.

As part of the governments "Simpler Recycling " plan, local authorities are required to have plans in place to collect soft plastics from households and businesses from March 2027. Green Councillors have long lobbied for improved recycling in Reading and one way to achieve this would be through collection from houses of soft plastic

Please can we get an update on trial? What measures are being used to decide if the local pilot has been a success or not?

Is the council on track to meet the government's target of collections for all household and businesses by March 2027 and what are the next steps in achieving that goal?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin:

I invite Councillor McGoldrick, the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety, to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety:

I would like to thank Councillor Clarke for his question.

The FlexCollect project was a nationally funded trial to understand how flexible plastics can be collected and processed ahead of forthcoming legislative changes. The re3 Partnership took part in the trial between September 2023 and July 2024, collecting soft plastics from around 10,000 households in Reading.

The final FlexCollect report found that flexible plastic collections are easy to implement, are popular with residents, achieve low contamination levels and deliver high recovery rates. The success of the Reading trial was assessed using measures including resident participation and satisfaction, material quality, contamination levels, recovery rates, and operational impacts on collection and processing. Reading's results were consistent with the positive findings reported nationally.

The trial also highlighted some challenges, including manual handling and storage requirements, together with a lack of UK processing capacity for the volume of flexible plastics that could be collected through a national rollout.

As Lead Member and a member of the re3 Partnership Board, I am pleased that the trial has provided valuable evidence to inform future service development. Since the

completion of the trial, the Government has recently announced that the requirement for local authorities to collect flexible plastics from households will be delayed until 2030. This reflects some of the challenges identified through FlexCollect, particularly the need for further development of national sorting, processing and end-market capacity.

The re3 Partnership will continue to review the findings from the trial and consider the infrastructure and operational requirements needed to support future collections. The evidence gathered through FlexCollect will help inform future decisions by the Partnership as we prepare for the implementation of the revised national requirements.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE - 21 JULY 2026

QUESTION NO. 5

Councillor Cresswell to ask the Chair of the Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee:

Maintaining wheelchair accessible footpaths

The council maintains the borough's footpath network and has committed to maintaining and improving disabled access to footpaths

The council's ROWIP (<https://images.reading.gov.uk/2023/03/Reading-Rights-of-Way-Improvement-Plan.pdf>) states:

5.3.4 Improving the quality of paths

Improving the quality of paths through resurfacing and signposting forms part of our improvement plan. In Reading, many footpaths are already well surfaced and accessible to everyone, however we also have a rolling programme of improving the quality of the footpath network. Users can expect all footpaths to be signposted and clear of vegetation or obstruction. We also welcome feedback from disabled users or people who would like to use the footpath network but for some reason cannot, so that we can try and make the network more accessible.

Recent experience of wheelchair and pushchair users suggests that this aim is not being met, and that wheeled access is not being seen as a priority.

Ongoing issues on footpath 15 mean that willows growing through and across the path obstruct pushchairs and wheelchairs. This path is a direct pedestrian link between Southcote and Green Park station. Despite many requests and site visits over several years to clear this, officers have concluded that these obstacles are acceptable, despite being in direct contradiction of the stated aims of the council's Rights of Way improvement plan.

Recent works at the entrance to footpath 7 alongside Fobney Marsh at Rose Kiln Lane on Council owned land prevented wheelchair access.

Despite several site meetings and emails, a regular mobility scooter user discovered the way he had used was suddenly blocked by the installation of railings. The formal gate which should be accessible with "RADAR" key had been unfit for purpose and the local collective known as the Marshians, who have taken on the maintenance of the path from the council to save council resources and protect the diverse flora that grows there, figured out a workaround. This was pointed out to officers and ward councillors on site visits and was followed up with emails yet this was ignored. The railings were installed while the kissing gate was left unusable, thus preventing a mobility scooter user from accessing the path.

Footpath 6 is a direct link between Coley, a residential area and the employment leisure and retail establishments along the A33 corridor. It would be a useful and popular walk

between them if it was in reasonable condition. Despite recent Community Infrastructure Levy funded work this path is no more accessible to wheelchair or mobility scooter users than before: all the kissing gates and radar padlocks are unusable and the new boardwalk has raised steps which are obstructing access to them. The recent work has not tackled the worst of the low lying and muddy areas which become deep puddles after rain, so does not fulfil its potential as a healthy and sustainable alternative means of travel. Why were these not addressed at the time?

The council has a duty under the Disability Discrimination Act to ensure disabled people can access facilities. It also has an inspection programme of the rights of way network. How is this programme monitored and progress scrutinised? Can a report on ROWIP progress be brought annually to HNL?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin:

I invite Councillor McGoldrick, the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety, to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety:

Thank you, Councillor Cresswell, for raising these concerns.

The Council remains committed to improving access to the Public Rights of Way network for all users, including wheelchair users, mobility scooter users and families with pushchairs. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) continues to guide our approach to maintenance and improvement.

Public Rights of Way are inspected and maintained through a combination of annual inspections, routine maintenance and responsive action where issues are identified. Rights of Way on Council-owned land have recently been inspected, with vegetation clearance and minor repairs now being programmed. Routes on highway land are inspected through the Council's highway safety inspection regime, whilst those within parks and open spaces are maintained by Neighbourhood Services teams. Annual vegetation cutback is also undertaken across the network.

Officers continue to work closely with local community groups. Following site visits by Neighbourhood Services officers on 8 July 2026 and Highways officers on 17 July 2026, including discussions with the Coley Water Meadows Friends Group, more than ten maintenance and improvement actions have been identified across the Coley Water Meadows Public Rights of Way network and are being progressed.

Community Infrastructure Levy funding has already supported improvements in Coley Water Meadows and Southcote Linear Park, with further works planned. In considering improvements to Footpaths 6, 7 and 15, officers must balance accessibility aspirations with site-specific constraints, including biodiversity, flood risk and land ownership considerations. These routes will continue to be reviewed and prioritised through the inspection and maintenance programme.

The ROWIP remains closely aligned with the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 and the emerging Local Transport Delivery Plan. Whilst we recognise the importance of Member oversight, we do not currently consider a separate annual ROWIP report to the Housing,

Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee necessary. Progress is monitored through existing service management arrangements and wider reporting on transport, active travel and infrastructure programmes, although reporting arrangements will remain under review.

Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

21 July 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Delivering a partnership response to rough sleeping in Reading: coordinated outreach, support and supported housing
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Melissa Wise – Executive Director Communities and Adult Social Care (DCASC)
Report author	Verena Hutcheson
Lead Councillor	Cllr Matt Yeo – Lead Councillor for Housing
Council priority	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
Recommendations	1. That Committee note this report for information, alongside the presentation delivered with sector partners.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of how Reading Borough Council and its partners deliver a coordinated response to rough sleeping across outreach, emergency provision, supported accommodation and longer-term recovery. It highlights the strength and depth of partnership working across statutory services, commissioned providers, and the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS). The report focuses on the partnership response to rough sleeping, rather than wider statutory homelessness duties.
- 1.2 The report demonstrates how joined-up working enables individuals to access the right support at the right time, particularly those with complex and multiple needs. Key areas of focus include coordinated outreach, partnership led emergency responses such as Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP), specialist pathways including Housing First, and wider work to support recovery, independence and long-term housing outcomes.
- 1.3 This approach is underpinned by *Reading's Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031* and associated Action Plan, which sets out a clear commitment to strengthening partnership working, improving early intervention and prevention, and supporting sustainable routes out of homelessness. The work is also aligned with the Government's national direction on tackling homelessness, including a greater emphasis on collaboration between services and shared accountability for outcomes.
- 1.4 Examples of partnership in practice provided in this report illustrate how this approach reduces risk, improves engagement with services, and supports sustained accommodation. The report also highlights ongoing work to strengthen collaboration, including co-production with people with lived experience and the development of new initiatives with partners.
- 1.5 Overall, the report shows that partnership working is fundamental to reducing rough sleeping in Reading. It enables a flexible, person-centred response that not only supports people off the streets but helps them maintain stability, improve their wellbeing and move towards independent living.

2. Context: Summary of provision

2.1. Support and accommodation for people at risk of, or currently, rough sleeping

This section outlines how the council and partner organisations provide outreach, emergency beds, supported accommodation, and ongoing tenancy support to single people and couples rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness.

2.2 Street based outreach and engagement

2.2.1 Rough Sleeping Outreach Service responds to reports of rough sleeping, engages individuals on the streets, and facilitates access to accommodation or reconnection to their home area. The team works closely with Reading's Multiple Disadvantage Outreach Team (MDOT) and Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT), both commissioned by Health to support individuals who are rough sleeping or vulnerably housed and facing challenges related to substance misuse, physical health, and mental ill health.

2.3 Emergency and seasonal provision

Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) operates regardless of local connection or access to public funds, ensuring a humanitarian response to immediate risk.

2.3.1 Cold Weather SWEP activated when temperatures fall to zero degrees or below for three consecutive nights, offering emergency accommodation to prevent deaths on the streets. When SWEP is activated, an additional 15 bed spaces become available at Willow House, which provides 24/7 staffed supported accommodation. Further capacity is then secured as needed through paid nightly placements, ensuring that all individuals who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping can be accommodated for the duration of the activation.

2.3.2 Heatwave SWEP activated during heat-health alerts, providing water, sun protection, and access to cool spaces. Emergency accommodation may be offered during extreme heat.

2.3.3 The Bed for the Night (B4N) Winter Shelter, operated and funded by FAITH with contributions from the Council, provides 20 additional winter bed spaces from January to March for people who are sleeping rough with a local connection to Reading.

2.4 Supported accommodation pathways

Reading offers a range of supported housing options tailored to different needs – there is capacity to accommodate 289 people across interventions. These comprise 280 commissioned bed spaces (referral only, not direct access) and nine bed spaces for those needing an immediate off the streets offer (direct access):

2.4.1 Nova Project: 10 bed female only service with 24/7 staffing, trauma informed and gender specific support for women with complex needs.

2.4.2 Caversham Road Pods: 40 self-contained modular units with 24/7 staffing for individuals with histories of rough sleeping and multiple complex needs.

2.4.3 Intensive and Engaging Support: 33 bed spaces (including four rooms that can accommodate couples), five direct access rooms, three emergency overnight beds, and full board catering with 24/7 staffing. It brings together multiple services in one location (a hub) to simplify access to support for people experiencing rough sleeping. There are also 20 beds in shared cluster flats, including self-catering facilities, with staff available during office hours and 24/7 on call support from the main hub service.

2.4.4 Young Person's Service: 41 units for young people aged 18 – 24, including a direct access crash pad and four young parent flats, with access to training and wellbeing facilities.

- 2.4.5 Housing First and Couples Accommodation Pathway:** 31 units, for 37 people, offering permanent tenancies with wraparound support for individuals and couples with complex needs.
- 2.4.6 Accommodation for Ex Offenders (AfEO):** Council led project supporting prison leavers into private rented accommodation with tenancy sustainment support.
- 2.4.7 Working Towards Independence Accommodation:** 100 bedspaces across 20 properties for individuals needing housing related support before moving on to independent living.

2.5 Tenancy and employment access support

- 2.5.1 Floating Support Service:** Cross tenure support for tenancy sustainment and resettlement, with tiered levels of intervention and open access drop ins.
- 2.5.2 Launchpad 135 Work and Life Skills Centre:** Fully funded by Launchpad Reading, offering training, counselling, and employment support to residents who are homeless or in supported housing.

3 Overview of the coordinated multi-agency response to rough sleeping

3.1 Shared partnerships approach and principles

- 3.1.1 Partners delivering services for people experiencing rough sleeping in Reading operate within a collaborative, multi-agency approach, where housing, health, social care, and voluntary sector organisations work together to meet complex and diverse needs.
- 3.1.2 Partnerships are underpinned by a shared commitment to a person-centred approach, prioritising individual strengths, aspirations and lived experience, with success measured by meaningful outcomes and improvements in wellbeing rather than solely performance metrics. There is a strong emphasis on achieving sustained positive change, with partners focusing on long-term outcomes such as stable housing, improved health, recovery, and improved engagement with support services.
- 3.1.3 Delivery is underpinned by shared accountability and collective ownership, with partners sharing responsibility, and working jointly to achieve the best outcomes for service users. This collaborative ethos is reflected across all relationships within the partnership, including between partners and commissioners, and is supported by a culture of open, ongoing communication. Service delivery is further strengthened by continuous reflection and dialogue, enabling services to respond flexibly to emerging needs, promote transparency, and develop creative, solution-focused efforts for people facing multiple disadvantage.

3.2 Partnership with the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS)

- 3.2.1 The voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) is a key partner in Reading's response to rough sleeping. Strengthening these relationships is a core priority within the *Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 – 2031* and accompanying Action Plan, which positions VCFS collaboration as central to prevention, early intervention and ongoing support.
- 3.2.2 The Council works closely with commissioned partners, including Launchpad Reading, St Mungo's, The Salvation Army and YMCA Reading, alongside providing ongoing support to FAITH's Winter Shelter. These commissioned partnerships within the VCFS are crucial to the delivery of frontline services, effective referral pathways and a coordinated response to emerging need.
- 3.2.3 Council officers have undertaken targeted engagement with local VCFS organisations in relation to the Government's *Ending Homelessness in Communities Fund*. This has included a well-attended workshop and ongoing officer support to develop proposals and

provide letters of endorsement to enable smaller VCFS groups to bid for funds to strengthen and expand their existing services and delivery approaches. This process has strengthened relationships across the sector and demonstrated strong local appetite for collaboration. The Council will continue to build on this engagement, ensuring that partnerships with the VCFS sector remain central to delivering an effective and coordinated response to rough sleeping in Reading.

- 3.2.4 To further strengthen partnership working, as outlined in *Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: An action plan for Reading 2026 – 2031*, a quarterly Homelessness Forum will be established to bring together statutory, commissioned and VCFS organisations to improve coordination, share intelligence and identify gaps in provision.

3.3 Partnership with statutory sector partners

- 3.3.1 Partnership with statutory organisations is central to Reading's approach to rough sleeping. The *Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 – 2031* and accompanying Action Plan highlight the need for coordinated working across housing, health, adult social care and criminal justice services to respond effectively to complex and overlapping needs.
- 3.3.2 Key partners include Adult Social Care, health services (including HOLT), substance misuse services (CGL/MDOT), Thames Valley Police, probation, and Jobcentre Plus. Together, these services support individuals with a range of needs, including mental and physical health, substance use and safeguarding concerns. Partners demonstrate strong commitment to joint working, including active and consistent attendance at multi-agency forums such as the Access Panel.
- 3.3.3 These partnerships span outreach, emergency responses such as SWEP, and supported housing pathways, continuing through to people moving on from services where support is no longer directly linked to their accommodation. Multi-agency working enables better risk management, improved decision-making and more effective outcomes.
- 3.3.4 The *Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan* for Reading also set out further planned progress to strengthen partnership working, including closer integration between housing and adult social care and improving access to health support. This aligns with the national direction set out in the Government's homelessness reform programme, including the proposed Duty to Collaborate, which will require partners to work more formally together to address rough sleeping and homelessness.
- 3.3.5 Progress in Reading includes the introduction of a dedicated Senior Social Worker role, improving coordination and safeguarding responses for individuals with complex needs. Building on this, partners will continue to develop joint approaches, strengthen shared accountability and respond collectively to emerging need. This is further supported by representation from the Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team on the Safeguarding Adults Board and Safeguarding Adults Review Panel, ensuring the needs and risks facing this cohort are reflected in wider safeguarding arrangements.
- 3.3.6 Overall, statutory partnerships support a joined-up, person-centred response, helping to reduce rough sleeping, sustain accommodation and improve long-term outcomes.

3.4 Partnership working in practice

- 3.4.1 The following sections illustrate how partnership working, across the Council, commissioned services, VCFS and statutory sectors operates in practice, focusing on the non-statutory response to rough sleeping. They provide examples of both immediate interventions and longer-term sustainable routes away from homelessness, demonstrating the breadth and resilience of Reading's local response:

3.5 Coordinated partnership response in practice: Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

3.5.1 SWEP provides a clear example of how partnership working operates at scale, bringing together services to deliver a coordinated and responsive approach. It brings together housing, outreach, health services, accommodation providers, substance misuse services, and VCFS partners to deliver a rapid, humanitarian response during extreme weather conditions.

At times of activation:

- Outreach services (St Mungo's) identify and engage individuals on the streets
- Housing teams coordinate placements and funding, including emergency accommodation
- The Salvation Army provides additional 24/7 staffed bed spaces at Willow House
- Health partners (HOLT, CGL) support individuals with physical, mental health and substance use needs
- VCFS organisations provide practical support such as food, clothing and essential supplies
- Emergency Duty Team ensures access out of hours
- Police and Adult Social Care support safeguarding and risk management
- Home Office and Prison Service colleagues, once notified of SWEP being active, commit to delaying planned releases and the ending of accommodation until after activation period has ended

3.5.2 This level of coordination demonstrates how partners share responsibility, communicate effectively, and mobilise quickly to reduce risk and save lives. It also creates a critical opportunity to engage individuals who may not otherwise access support and connect them into longer-term support / pathways. This work is further supported by a wider network of partners, including probation services, policing, Jobcentre Plus and primary care, whose involvement is essential to identifying vulnerable individuals and ensuring support is targeted by their individual service.

3.6 Partnerships delivering long-term change: Housing First

3.6.1 Housing First provides a strong example of partnership delivering meaningful impact for individuals with the most complex and entrenched needs. The model brings together housing, health, adult social care and voluntary sector partners to provide stable accommodation alongside intensive, flexible and person-centred support.

3.6.2 This approach is delivered through close collaboration between the Council's Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team and St Mungo's, with vital contributions from Tenant Services for property supply and management, support from the Anti-social Behaviour Team and from wider statutory partners. Health and substance misuse services, including HOLT and CGL, provide ongoing clinical and recovery support, while dedicated Senior Social Worker support playing a key role in safeguarding and enabling care and support for individuals who need it. Together, these services work around the individual, providing a consistent and coordinated approach that goes beyond housing alone.

3.6.3 Key partnership features include:

- Joint commissioning and delivery between the Council's Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team and St Mungo's
- Dedicated housing management from Tenant Services alongside specialist support, enabling prompt and assertive responses to anti-social behaviour or tenancy concerns, delivered through a cohesive and person-centred approach

- Engagement from the Council's Anti-social Behaviour Team, ensuring a shared understanding of the model and a supportive approach to managing risk
 - Integration with substance misuse services, health outreach and adult social care
 - A focus on sustained tenancies, recovery and improved wellbeing
- 3.6.4 Evidence from local case studies shows that this coordinated, wrap-around approach can stabilise individuals, reduce anti-social behaviour concerns, and support long-term recovery – outcomes that are difficult to achieve without consistent, cross-agency collaboration. This approach supports sustained tenancies, reduces risk and enables long-term improvements in health and wellbeing.
- 3.6.5 Helen [anonymised] describes her experience prior to Housing First. Before moving into her own accommodation, she experienced repeated cycles of homelessness. She spent periods sleeping rough but was mostly part of Reading's 'hidden homeless' cohort staying with other vulnerable adults or placing herself in vulnerable situations to avoid rough sleeping. She had previously been accommodated through the 'Everyone In' pandemic response when at risk of rough sleeping but struggled to sustain accommodation in larger supported settings – choosing not to take up these housing options. For several years, she had been known to Council, statutory and support services, but without the stability needed to break the cycle or consistently engage with support.

"It was tough sleeping in doorways, having people pushed on you, screaming abuse at you. It makes you depressed, suicidal – you don't have friends when you're homeless."

"It was hard to keep yourself clean – stuff got stolen. Every day was uncertain – if you were going to get sleep or feel unsafe. It makes you feel like you're nothing, when you're already in the gutter."

- 3.6.6 Since joining Housing First, Helen has been supported by a range of partners working together to address her needs in a coordinated way. St Mungo's have provided intensive, consistent support, while housing, health and substance misuse services have worked alongside her to stabilise her situation and support her recovery.

"Since working with Housing First – my flat's got everything, St Mungo's helped me with my housing, my debt – everything. They're great."

When asked what she is most proud of since joining Housing First, Helen said:

"Being clean off the gear, having my puppy, sorting out my debt and my mental health, I finally can deal with my mental health."

3.7 Social care and cross-sector partnerships

- 3.7.1 A significant development across overall partnerships is the introduction of a dedicated Senior Social Worker for rough sleeping and homelessness, funded from grant received from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This role strengthens integration between housing and adult social care, ensuring that safeguarding, care needs and risk management are embedded within homelessness pathways. The role works alongside outreach teams and directly with people who are rough sleeping or at risk of returning to the streets. It supports the upskilling of outreach and wider sector staff, strengthens links between services and helps create a more coordinated and consistent response for people who find it difficult to access mainstream service offers and appointments.
- 3.7.2 Appendix 1 – *Sam's Story: Coordinating social care and homelessness support* demonstrates how stronger integration between services can improve coordination for individuals with complex needs, support more effective decision-making, and enable timely, person-centred responses that reduce the risk of individuals falling through gaps in the system and sleeping rough.

- 3.7.3 This reflects wider feedback from partners that cross-sector roles, like the Senior Social Worker role for homelessness and rough sleeping, act as critical connectors, enabling more effective joint working and improved outcomes for clients, as well as upskilling other sector partners and paving the way for improved relationships across teams.

3.8 Partnership with the VCFS: Bed for the Night (B4N)

- 3.8.1 The Bed for the Night winter shelter illustrates the strength and evolution of partnership with the VCFS in Reading. Delivered by FAITH Christian Group with support from the Council and commissioned services, the model provides 20 winter bed spaces and a welcoming, community-led environment.
- 3.8.2 While the partnership is now well-established, it has developed over time. Initial relationships, over 10 years ago when the shelter first opened, were more challenging, with differing views on delivery models and referral pathways. Through continued engagement, shared learning and a focus on common outcomes, trust has been built between the Council and St Mungo's, and FAITH and the network of churches and volunteers who deliver the service.
- 3.8.3 The current winter-led model reflects both this learning and practical considerations. Operating seasonally helps sustain a large volunteer base without risking burnout, maintains the quality and consistency of provision, and avoids pressures associated with a single fixed-site, year-round model (including potential impacts on local communities such as ASB concentration). It also enables the service to act as a flexible, surge response during periods of heightened risk, particularly in colder months, complementing rather than duplicating existing and planned commissioned provision.
- 3.8.4 Over time, this model has developed into a partnership characterised by:
- Strong alignment with outreach and statutory services
 - Trusted referral pathways and coordinated support
 - A volunteer-led, relational approach that builds engagement and trust
 - Clear links into wider and recovery focused accommodation and support pathways beyond the winter period

The model demonstrates how collaboration with the VCFS can enhance flexibility, extend reach, and provide more personalised support, particularly for individuals who may not engage with statutory services.

- 3.8.5 This relationship reflects how strong, effective partnerships between the Council and the VCFS develop over time, with trust and relationships needing to be built and earned by all parties to enable any model or joint project to fully thrive. The success of co-production and joint projects depends on this trust and a shared understanding of goals, as it allows partners to work closely together and develop future projects in a meaningful way.

3.9 Co-production and lived experience

- 3.9.1 A key area of development for Reading has been the establishment of a co-production forum ("Shared Voice"), bringing together people with lived experience and cross-sector service providers to influence service design and delivery.
- 3.9.2 While still at an early stage of development, having been set up in March 2025, with further work planned to strengthen participation and outputs, this work represents a significant shift towards:
- Inclusive decision-making, ensuring services reflect real experiences
 - Building trust and accountability between services and those they support
 - Identifying practical improvements in accessibility and effectiveness
 - Actioning commitments made by the Council in their *Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: An action plan for Reading 2026 – 2031*

3.9.3 Partners have emphasised that creating a shared space for co-production – across organisations rather than within individual services – is a major step forward and will continue to shape future service development. This is complemented by partnership forums such as the Access Panel where services come together to review complex cases and support coordinated decision-making, and future Homelessness Forums where partners can share learning, strengthen relationships, and align approaches across the partnership.

3.10 Using partnerships to support recovery: Skills, employment and independence

3.10.1 Partnership working extends beyond outreach and supported accommodation and plays a key role in supporting recovery, skills development and long-term independence. The Launchpad Work and Life Skills Centre provides a collaborative space where multiple organisations support individuals to develop skills, access training, and move towards employment.

This includes:

- Joint delivery with St Mungo's employment support
- Employer engagement (e.g. Thames Water apprenticeships)
- Access to training, counselling and daily living skills
- Practical support such as travel costs and clothing
- A space for all partners to utilise for to host partnership or client events

3.10.2 This work highlights a shared commitment across partners to support meaningful move-on and long-term independence, recognising employment and life skills as key routes out of homelessness. It underlines that successful recovery is not defined by housing alone, but by a sense of wellbeing, stability, and the ability to sustain independence and progress into education, training, and employment.

3.11 Continuous learning and opportunities for innovation through partnership

3.11.1 Partnerships continue to evolve and improve through jointly delivered, evidence-led initiatives, reflecting a shared commitment to learning, adapting and improving responses to rough sleeping.

3.11.2 Key areas of focus include:

- **Weekly Access Panel meetings** bringing together statutory, commissioned, VCFS and Council partners to review referrals into supported housing, discuss complex cases, share insight, prioritise vacancies and coordinate support for individuals sleeping rough, or at risk of homelessness
- **Target Priority Group meetings** bringing homelessness sector partners together monthly to coordinate support for individuals experiencing long-term and cyclical rough sleeping
- **Enhanced outreach and encampment responses**, delivered jointly with the Council's Safer Public Realm Team, St Mungo's and health and substance misuse outreach partners
- **Scoping work with specific vulnerable cohorts**, including women and people involved in sex work, such as Reading's first Women's Rough Sleeping Census, delivered in partnership with RAHAB, CGL, YMCA Reading, Launchpad Reading, St Mungo's, the Salvation Army, The Cow Shed and Utulivu, as part of the national programme led by Solace
- **No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) project**, a 12-month pilot (April 2025 – March 2026), funded by the Centre for Homelessness Impact and delivered in partnership with Refugee Support Group, Settled, the Home Office and St Mungo's, enabled targeted support for a cohort who are not usually eligible for public funding. The

project helped to reduce long-term rough sleeping among people with no recourse. It supported several people to move off the streets into accommodation and progress their immigration status. Findings will be published later in 2026 to inform national and local next steps.

- **Targeted ‘off the street’ and rapid rehousing initiatives**, to be delivered with the VCFS, with additional units expected to become available from Summer 2026
- **Long-Term Rough Sleeping Programme and Partnership Plan**, to be developed with statutory and VCFS partners by Autumn 2026
- **Delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031 Action Plan**, including commitments to strengthen statutory, VCFS and lived experience partnerships and improve communication across the borough
- **Representation within safeguarding structures**, including the Safeguarding Adults Board and Safeguarding Adults Review Panel, ensuring the needs of people experiencing rough sleeping are reflected in wider safeguarding arrangements

3.11.3 These activities and projects show a variety of partnership efforts informed by local data, needs analysis and shared learning, with several using a ‘test and learn’ approach to develop and refine services. This enables partners to support each other in responding flexibly to emerging need, building on what works and continuously strengthening the local response. With success has come stronger relationships and a greater sense of shared purpose.

3.12 Summary of partnership approach and case study

- 3.12.1 Across all aspects of delivery, partnership working is fundamental. No single organisation can meet the breadth of needs associated with rough sleeping, so outcomes are achieved through coordinated, cross-sector responses.
- 3.12.2 Partners operate within a complex and high-pressure context, requiring ongoing review of practice and difficult decisions to respond to changing demand and risk.
- 3.12.3 This is illustrated in Appendix 2 – *John’s Story: Partnership working in practice*, which demonstrates how individuals move through multiple services – from street outreach to accommodation and into longer-term recovery, and beyond – enabled by coordinated partnership working at each stage. As John’s journey shows, sustained progress is achieved not through a single intervention, but through consistent, joined-up support over time.

4 Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 The partnerships set out in this report contribute directly to improving outcomes for residents by providing a coordinated and person-centred response to rough sleeping. By working collaboratively across services, the approach helps to reduce the number of people sleeping rough, improve access to accommodation and support, and enable individuals to move towards recovery and independence. This benefits not only those directly supported, but also the wider community by improving public spaces, reducing risk and supporting safer, healthier neighbourhoods.
- 4.2 The work aligns with the Council Plan priorities for 2025–2028:
- **Promote more equal communities in Reading** – by supporting some of the most vulnerable residents to access accommodation, health care and wider support
 - **Secure Reading’s economic and cultural success** – by enabling individuals to move towards employment, training and independence, and improving the accessibility and safety of the town centre

- **Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children** – through integrated working with health, social care and safeguarding partners
 - **Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future** – by strengthening partnership working, improving coordination and making best use of shared resources
- 4.3 The delivery of this work reflects the Council's core principles, particularly putting residents first, working collaboratively with partners, and recognising the diverse needs of Reading's communities. The emphasis on co-production and lived experience further supports the Council's ambition to involve and empower residents in shaping services.
- 4.4 The partnerships outlined in this report support the Directorate of Communities and Adult Social Care's common purpose of '*supporting the life that matters to you*' by working alongside individuals to understand their needs and goals, providing coordinated support to achieve stable housing, improved health and wellbeing, and greater independence. This approach recognises individual strengths, builds trust and enables people to make meaningful and lasting changes in their lives.
- 5 Environmental and Climate Implications**
- 5.1 Not applicable – this report is for information only.
- 6 Community Engagement**
- 6.1 Not applicable - this report is for information only.
- 7 Equality Implications**
- 7.1 Not applicable - this report is for information only.
- 8 Other Relevant Considerations**
- 8.1 Not applicable – this report is for information only.
- 9 Legal Implications**
- 9.1 Not applicable - this report is for information only.
- 10 Financial Implications**
- 10.1 Not applicable - this report is for information only.
- 11 Timetable for Implementation**
- 11.1 Not applicable - this report is for information only.
- 12 Background Papers**
- 12.1 There are none.

Appendices

1. **Sam's Story: Coordinating social care and homelessness support**
2. **John's Story: Partnership working in practice**

Appendix 1 – Sam’s Story: Coordinating social care and homelessness support

Sam had a long history of poor mental health, substance misuse and homelessness, including periods of rough sleeping. He was known to homelessness outreach and support services, often on the margins, and like many in similar situations, his needs were complex. Support was often framed around supported accommodation (large, shared, 24/7 staffed environments) as the main route away from homelessness and rough sleeping, with less consistent focus on coordinated, person-centred support and effective partnership working across services.

Following a serious assault, Sam sustained a brain injury which affected his mobility, cognition and overall wellbeing. This led to a change in his presentation and level of need. However, when hospital discharge planning began, the primary focus remained on referrals into, and acceptance for supported accommodation pathways commissioned by the Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team. The wider impact of his injury, particularly on his ability to function and live independently, was not fully understood at this time. Advocacy and input from the Senior Social Worker for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping helped inform decisions on suitable accommodation.

Concerns about Sam’s discharge were raised by Change, Grow, Live (substance misuse support service) and shared by other non-statutory partners, who felt that the proposed supported accommodation pathway did not reflect his needs. There was consensus that a more coordinated, person-centred approach was required, highlighting the importance of partnership working in identifying risks and advocating for alternatives. The Senior Social Worker role brought oversight of the wider system, knowledge of legal frameworks, and established cross-sector relationships, helping to identify gaps and coordinate a response. Concerns were escalated appropriately, supported by partners’ willingness to share information and remain engaged in achieving the best outcome. This collaborative approach helped ensure Sam did not become lost in the system during a highly vulnerable period.

Sam was being considered for an Intentional Homelessness decision, which could have significantly limited his options. Alongside this, a key issue was the proposal for Sam to move into large, shared, 24/7 commissioned ‘hostel’-type accommodation. While this reflected his previous pathway and could meet some of his needs, it did not account for the risks linked to his current condition. Through advocacy, informed challenge, and joint discussions, both the homelessness decision and housing options were reconsidered and more suitable options identified.

Using the principle of suitability, highlighted by the Senior Social Worker, professionals in Sam’s case recognised that accommodation should be based on his needs, not simply what was available. A commissioned supported housing setting presented several risks, including an inability to meet his full accessibility needs, increased safeguarding concerns, and the potential impact of a larger, shared environment on his mental health and recovery. This open, collaborative approach – combining legal knowledge, professional curiosity and judgement, and partner expertise – helped shift the focus from processes to meeting Sam’s individual needs.

Advocacy remained central and was shared across services, particularly where Sam’s voice risked being overlooked due to communication difficulties and disengagement. Rather than being seen as non-compliant, his behaviour was understood in the context of trauma, instability and bereavement. The Senior Social Worker role, alongside strong partnership working, helped maintain a consistent, person-centred and trauma-informed approach. Clear communication and coordinated roles ensured support continued during periods of disengagement, reducing the risk of gaps and helping keep Sam visible within the system.

Sam now lives in his own bedsit with minimal care and support in accommodation that is appropriate, accessible and supports his recovery.

This case highlights the importance of person-centred practice and strong partnership working, especially when supporting people with multiple disadvantage. In Sam’s case, skilled roles, legislative knowledge, strong relationships, and shared advocacy kept his voice central and enabled appropriate challenge. Without this coordinated approach, the outcome could have been significantly different, and Sam’s cycle of homelessness would have almost certainly continued.

Sam’s story reflects a broader approach being championed through new roles and ways of working across the directorate – demonstrating that when services work together with the individual at the centre, better outcomes are far more likely.

Appendix 2 – John’s Story: Partnership working in practice

John was verified rough sleeping in August 2025 by St Mungo's rough sleeping outreach team having referred himself through the Street link App. The outreach team looked for his sleep site during their next shift but were unable to locate him despite calling his name and phoning the telephone number he gave. The following day the team returned and were able to locate and verify John rough sleeping. He was allocated an outreach worker from St Mungo's and completed an initial assessment which enabled the team to identify any support needs together, identifying the best route for John to come off the streets.

During the assessment it was identified that John had lost his accommodation in the private rented sector after he lost his employment due to a decline in his mental health which led to an attempted overdose. A referral was completed by his St Mungo's worker to the NHS Health Outreach Liaison Team for support with his physical and mental health. They were able to support John to engage with his GP practice and negotiated for his medication to be administered on a weekly basis, they also completed an urgent referral to Common Point of Entry for mental health support.

John also had a history of alcohol use when his mental health declined, and he asked once accommodated for a referral to Change Grow Live (CGL the local drug and alcohol treatment agency) for support to remain abstinent. He was also seen by the Council's homelessness prevention team, and they were able to confirm John's local connection to Reading.

Within four days of being verified by St Mungo's an off the streets bed became available at Willow House, managed by The Salvation Army, and it was agreed that John could be placed there on a temporary basis. St Mungo's rough sleeping outreach workers completed a Common Assessment Form with John, and John was referred to the Access Panel for consideration for Council commissioned supported housing, it was agreed that he would be assessed by Launchpad for their Working Towards Independence supported accommodation.

Whilst waiting for this assessment John agreed to attend Reading's Shared Voice Lived Experience Forum and a referral was made to St Mungo's Employment Service Team who started to engage with John.

A vacancy became available in an Emergency and Assessment room at Willow House which John was nominated to by the Council's Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team and he was accepted – this gave him greater stability. John continued to engage with all services, becoming involved with Launchpad's Work & Life Skills Centre at 135 Cardiff Road, supporting with graphic design and the service's newsletter. John completed barista training and volunteers once a week running the barista station for professionals and clients using the Centre.

John's St Mungo's worker contacted the Volunteer, Involvement, Apprenticeships and Student Placement team to identify if there were any opportunities for John to become involved with as John was keen to use his graphic design skills and fill his time with meaningful activities. The senior graphic designer from the Graphic Design and Communications Team at St Mungo's contacted John to explore opportunities.

In October 2025 a suitable placement was identified by Launchpad for John to move into and transitional support continued from his St Mungo's worker, ensuring there was ongoing joint working with Launchpad. The client involvement worker from St Mungo's contacted John and he attended an in-person meeting at St Mungo's for the Client Involvement in Non-accommodation Settings Forum where he actively participated. After this John requested to, and joined, St Mungo's Client Advisory Board which oversees the Governance of St Mungo's. He has a formal placement with the Graphic Design and Communications team which means he has a St Mungo's laptop and ID card. More recently John trained in interview skills so he could support with undertaking interviews and in May 2026 spent two days with the outreach team interviewing and recruiting for an outreach worker position.

While accommodated with Launchpad John will be supported to explore more independent long-term housing away from supported accommodation.

All partners involved are very proud of John's progress and his continued involvement with St Mungo's Client Advisory Board, Shared Voice Reading and Launchpad's Work & Life Skills Centre. John is using his experience and voice to shape the services he has used.



Delivering a partnership response to rough sleeping in Reading

Showcasing co-ordinated outreach, support and supported housing

Janine Breakspear – Launchpad Reading (Ops Manager)

Matt Farrow – Reading Borough Council (Housing)

Pete Philp – Reading Borough Council (Adult Social Care)

Nathan Birch – The Salvation Army

Tega Okena – St Mungo's (Housing First)

Verena Hutcheson – Reading Borough Council (Housing)

Wendy Dodds – St Mungo's (Outreach)

Purpose of the presentation: Why this matters

To show:

- How partners work together to support people to come off the streets and stay off the streets
- A snapshot of key services and joint working
- Real examples of impact

Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 - 31



Priority 1: Intervene early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping



"Even getting a whiff that somebody is homeless... professionals need to be getting in earlier than early."

Priority 2: Break the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping



"You can give someone a wonderful home... but that's not enough. They need wraparound support."

Priority 3: Make sure everyone can access safe, settled and affordable housing

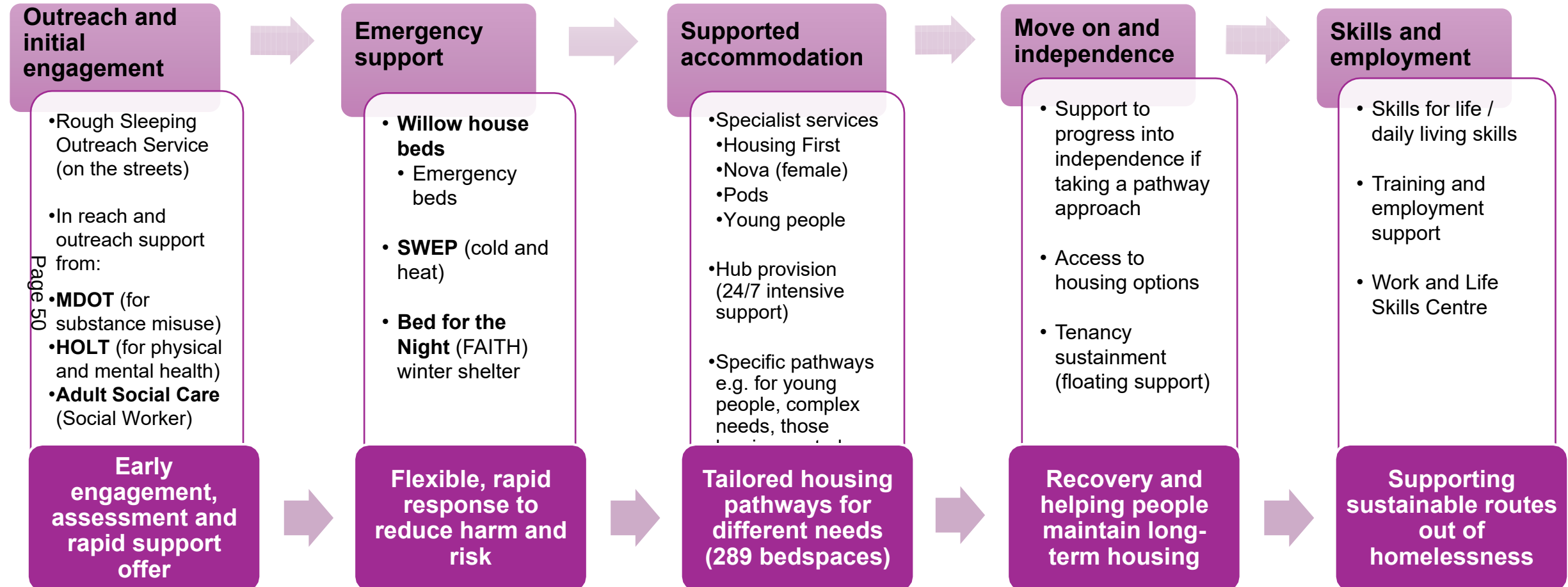


"Having a home is a basic need - even when choices are few and far between, it needs to be a place where a tenant feels respected."



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Overview: Support to those rough sleeping / at risk of it



How we work: Our shared aims

- Person centred, outcomes focused
- Shared accountability across sectors
- Focused on long-term change
- Open, daily partnership working



Coordinated partnerships in practice

Seasonal responses: SWEP and B4N

Matt Farrow

**Rough Sleeping Interventions
Coordinator at RBC**

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

What it is and why it matters:

- Immediate humanitarian response for people sleeping rough during extreme weather
- Rapid multi-agency mobilisation
- Flexible, person-centred response



Rapid, co-ordinated response

Brings together housing, outreach, accommodation and health partners to quickly identify, engage, and offer safe shelter to anyone at risk of sleeping rough during severe weather.

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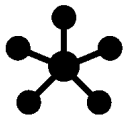
Clear access and consistent support

Defined referral routes and strong communication ensure people can access emergency accommodation quickly, including out of hours, with support in place throughout their stay.



Opportunity to engage and move forward

Creates a key opportunity to engage people who may not usually access services, supporting assessment, reconnection, and pathways into longer-term accommodation and support.



Shared responsibility across partners

Delivered through coordinated partnership working, with clear roles and information-sharing to manage risk, safeguard individuals, and respond flexibly as needs change.



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

SWEP: Who does what...

Homelessness Prevention Team (RBC)

- ♦ Assesses and makes SWEP placements for those at risk of rough sleeping
- ♦ Leads on statutory homelessness assessments, statutory duties and PHPs
- ♦ Works to identify alternative options before SWEP where possible

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Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team (RBC)

- ♦ Year-round monitoring of Met Office forecasts and weather alerts
- ♦ Commissions and funds emergency accommodation (B&B/hotels and SWEP spaces)
- ♦ Coordinates overall SWEP response and decision-making (activation/stand-down)
- ♦ Manages placements, provider relationships, and monitoring data
- ♦ Alert statutory partners to prevent ending of accommodation during SWEP periods

The Salvation Army (Willow House)

- ♦ Provides emergency bed spaces during SWEP
- ♦ Delivers 24/7 staffed, safe indoor provision
- ♦ Supports flexible access (including late arrivals, complex needs, those with dogs)
- ♦ Works with partners to manage risk, incidents, and wellbeing of guests

SWEP: Who does what...

St Mungo's (Rough Sleeping Outreach)

- ◆ Refers people in who are rough sleeping and leads outreach engagement
 - ◆ Identifies and refers individuals into SWEP accommodation
 - ◆ Provides ongoing support during and after placements to prevent return to the streets
 - ◆ Leads reconnection and longer-term move-on planning where needed
-

Launchpad Reading

- ◆ Provides personal care packs and low-facility food supplies
 - ◆ Supports access to longer-term accommodation pathways
 - ◆ Contributes to floating support and tenancy sustainment
 - ◆ Coordinates donations and practical resources
-

NHS Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT)

- ◆ Provides health advice and support for people with physical and mental health needs
 - ◆ Supports engagement with individuals less likely to access services
 - ◆ Advises on safeguarding and health risks (e.g. extreme weather, COVID)
 - ◆ Links individuals into wider health services
-

SWEP: Who does what...

Emergency Duty Team (EDT)

- ◆ Provides out-of-hours access to SWEP placements
- ◆ Makes immediate emergency accommodation decisions overnight or weekends
- ◆ Hands over cases to daytime services for follow-up support

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Substance misuse services (CGL MDOT)

- ◆ Supports individuals with substance use needs during SWEP
- ◆ Helps manage withdrawal, prescribing, and harm reduction
- ◆ Works alongside outreach and HOLT to stabilise individuals in placements

Thames Valley Police

- ◆ Supports safety, welfare checks, and incident response
- ◆ Assists with managing risk and anti-social behaviour
- ◆ Works in partnership on safeguarding and enforcement where necessary

SWEP: Who does what...

Voluntary, Faith and Community Sector

- ♦ Provide additional warming / cooling spaces (10am – 3pm) and community support
- ♦ Deliver winter night shelter during the coldest months
- ♦ Offer practical support (food, clothing, safe spaces)

Accommodation providers (Hotels and B&Bs)

- ♦ Provide self-contained emergency accommodation when needed
- ♦ Work with RBC on flexible, short-notice bookings
- ♦ Support safe placements across multiple locations
- ♦ Enable placements of couples, vulnerable females and those with complex needs

Adult Social Care / Safeguarding

- ♦ Responds to safeguarding concerns raised during SWEP
- ♦ Supports individuals with care and support needs
- ♦ Works jointly with outreach and health teams to reduce risk

An ode to heatwave SWEP...



Hot SWEP is declared – the sun's on attack,
Reading's pavements are frying like a Greggs vegan snack.
St Mungo's rolls out with a mission so grand,
"Find every rough sleeper – sunscreen in hand!"

They march like a squad with a factor-fifty plan,
Shouting, "Hydrate or evaporate – that's the rule, my man!"
They hand out cold water, they hand out cool hats,
They'd hand out a fridge if they could carry that.

So cheers to the team keeping folks safe from the burn,
While Reading pretends it's Ibiza in turn.
Hot SWEP may be chaos, but one thing is clear,
St Mungo's are legends this time of the year.

Anon – St Mungo's Client

Bed for the Night (B4N)

- Delivered by FAITH Christian Group and local churches
- Provides 20 volunteer-supported bed spaces (Jan – Mar)
- Offers a warm, safe and welcoming environment
- Seasonal winter provision focused on targeted move-on, reflecting an evolved model that reduces system pressures and risks associated with year-round shelter provision (e.g. concentration of need, client dependency, community/localised impacts, and volunteer fatigue)

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Impact...

- Creates a dignified and relational environment
- Brings people indoors who may not otherwise engage and builds trust
- Supports engagement with wider services and pathways
- Reflects strong local community commitment to tackling rough sleeping

Bed for the Night (B4N)

A partnership that has developed over time with collaboration between the Council, FAITH and commissioned services strengthening over more than 10 years.

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Partnership in action...

- Led by the faith sector, supported by the Council
- Works alongside outreach and commissioned services
- Volunteer based model enabling flexible, person-centred support



Partnerships delivering long-term change

Housing First

Tega Okena

Housing First Co-Ordinator at St
Mungo's

Housing First: Who does what...

Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team (RBC)	Commissions services, oversees referrals and decisions Ensures partnerships are sustained and work well together for tenancy success
Tenant Services (RBC)	Tenancy management Flexible, person-centred with a Housing Officer aligned to 'Housing First' principles
St Mungo's	Intensive support Low case loads, trauma-informed, personalised, flexible/creative, assertive, persistent
Change. Grow. Live	Outreach and engagement Substance misuse support, harm reduction, flexible/creative, assertive, persistent
Health Outreach Liaison Team	Health access and coordination - GP access, mental/physical health Improving health outcomes and reducing reliance on emergency services
Senior Social Worker	Safeguarding and care coordination Care Act duties, risk oversight, and coordinating and upskilling partner agencies
Community Safety Team (RBC)	Risk management and monitoring - minimising ASB and safeguarding risks Works with partners to ensure safe, suitable property locations

All partners share responsibility for sustaining tenancies through ongoing multi-agency meetings and agreed actions

Housing First: Helen's story

"It was tough sleeping in doorways, having people pushed on you, screaming abuse at you. It makes you depressed, suicidal – you don't have friends when you're homeless."

"It was hard to keep yourself clean – stuff got stolen. Every day was uncertain – if you were going to get sleep or feel unsafe. It makes you feel like you're nothing, when you're already in the gutter."

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"Since working with Housing First – my flat's got everything, St Mungo's helped me with my housing, my debt – everything. They're great."

When asked what she is most proud of since joining Housing First, Helen said:

"Being clean off the gear, having my puppy, sorting out my debt and my mental health, I finally can deal with my mental health."



Social care and cross-sector partnerships to improve outcomes

Pete Philp

**Senior Social Worker for
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping at
RBC**

Senior Social Worker for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Coordinating complex systems

Brings together housing, health and social care to ensure accommodation decisions reflect the person's full needs

Advocacy and informed challenge

Leads professional challenge and use of legal frameworks (e.g. suitability under housing legislation, Care Act) to prevent inappropriate placements and influence outcomes

Integrated safeguarding and care

Coordinates safeguarding and care across services, encouraging positive risk taking and innovation, supporting partners and maintaining a trauma-informed approach

System leadership and partner development

Builds capacity across services by upskilling others, guiding practice, sharing expertise and strengthening coordinated responses.

Sam's story: Coordinating social care and homelessness support

Client background

- History of mental health issues, substance misuse and rough sleeping, with complex, overlapping needs
- Brain injury following assault significantly impacted cognition, mobility and independence
- Initial discharge planning focused on standard supported accommodation, not fully reflecting increased needs
- Multiple partners raised concerns, highlighting risks and the need for a more coordinated, tailored approach

Partnership intervention

- Senior Social Worker provided oversight, legal insight and cross-system coordination
- Collective advocacy ensured risks were recognised and decisions challenged
- Shift to person-centred, trauma-informed thinking, with focus on suitability over availability
- Maintained engagement despite communication barriers and disengagement risks

Outcome

- Avoided unsuitable accommodation and limited risk of homelessness / rough sleeping
- Secured appropriate, accessible bedsit with minimal support, enabling recovery

Key learning

- Joined-up, cross-sector working + shared advocacy = better, safer outcomes
- Dedicated Senior Social Worker role demonstrates the value of jointly designed roles (housing-funded and embedded within Adult Social Care) in bridging systems and improving outcomes
- Keeping the individual central, as a “fresh pair of eyes”, prevents people being lost in complex systems



John's story: Partnership working in practice

Wendy Dodds
Outreach Manager at St Mungo's

John's story: Partnership working in practice

- John was found rough sleeping by **St Mungo's** after self-referring via **StreetLink**
- Assessment identified mental health crisis, overdose attempt, and loss of private rented housing
- Fast, coordinated response across partners:
 - **NHS Health Outreach Liaison Team** and **GP** (mental health, medication)
 - **Reading Borough Council Homelessness Prevention Team and Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team** (housing pathway)
 - **Change Grow Live** (substance misuse support)
- Housed within 4 days by the **Salvation Army**, then progressing to **Launchpad Reading** supported accommodation within two months
- Engaged in recovery through **Launchpad Work & Life Skills Centre, St Mungo's Employment Service**, and volunteering,
- Now contributing via **St Mungo's Client Advisory Board, Shared Voice Reading** Lived Experience Forum (co-chaired by **Launchpad and the Council's Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team**, and towards peer involvement, while preparing for independent housing

In conclusion...

- **Partnership is essential** – no single service can do this alone
- Approach supports people **from the street to independence**
- **Focus on long-term outcomes**, not short-term fixes
- **Continued collaboration is key** – including sustained efforts in partnership development with our statutory and VCFS partners

How to find out more from partners and about their work...

- **Launchpad Reading**

Janine Breakspear janine.breakspear@launchpadreading.org.uk

- **St Mungo's**

Wendy Dodds wendy.dodds@mungos.org

Tega Okena tega.okena@mungos.org

- **The Salvation Army**

Nathan Birch nathan.birch@salvationarmy.org.uk

Welcoming any comments or questions to partners

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Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

21 July 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	GLL Annual Performance Report 2025
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Emma Gee, Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services
Report author	Emma Kinghorn, Leisure Contract Manager Donna Pentelow, Director of Culture, Leisure and Skills
Lead Councillor	Cllr Lanzoni, Lead Councillor for Leisure and Culture
Council priority	Secure Reading's economic & cultural success
Recommendations	1. That Committee notes the contents of the presentation by GLL in respect of the operation of the leisure contract; 2. That Committee notes: a. the successful renovation of the athletics track at Palmer Park stadium; b. Rivermead Leisure Centre's 'Outstanding' rating from Quest, Sport England's national quality scheme, one of only seven facilities nationally; c. £12m social value from the leisure contract with GLL, a 37% increase on 2024; 3. That Committee endorses the priorities for 2026/27 as set out in section 4.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the performance and delivery of leisure services and development of facilities by Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL).
- 1.2 The leisure contract started on 1 July 2021 and GLL commenced the operational management of the Council's leisure centres at Rivermead Leisure Centre, Palmer Park Sports Stadium, South Reading Leisure Centre and Meadway Sports Centre. This is the fourth annual report that has been presented to Committee reporting on the contract's performance over the past year.
- 1.3 Overall performance during 2025 has remained strong and demonstrates the positive impact of the Council's investment in leisure provision. Resident satisfaction with sport and leisure services achieved 62%, well above the Local Government Association benchmark, while dissatisfaction reduced to 10%. Participation also continued to grow significantly, with over 1.5 million visits recorded across the leisure centres during the year.

- 1.4 Major capital improvements progressed during the year, including the completion of the athletics track at Palmer Park Leisure Centre and Stadium. Rivermead Leisure Centre was independently assessed as 'Outstanding' under Sport England's Quest quality scheme, confirming high standards of customer experience, accessibility, compliance and environmental management - one of only seven centres to achieve this standard nationally.
- 1.5 Alongside increased usage, targeted programmes have continued to support improved access to physical activity for residents who may otherwise face barriers to participation. The contract's ongoing focus is on sustaining long-term engagement while continuing to improve the quality and accessibility of leisure facilities and services.
- 1.6 This report introduces a presentation by Greenwich Leisure Limited, which will inform the Committee in more detail of the services that are being delivered, their impact, and progress of the works described above.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The Council's leisure service specification within the GLL contract defines target indicators and performance measures to deliver against the following outcomes.
 - Improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities
 - Providing local economic benefit
 - Ensuring local people have the skills to prosper
 - Supporting safe and inclusive neighbourhoods
 - Promoting community cohesion
 - Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for young people
 - Supporting and caring for vulnerable adults and older people
 - Providing high quality services
 - Sustainability/ environmental improvements.
- 2.1. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28, one of which is to secure Reading's economic and cultural success by delivering quality cultural and leisure services. The contract continues to deliver against the contract outcomes and the Council Plan priority in a variety of ways.

3. GLL Performance January 2025 - December 2025

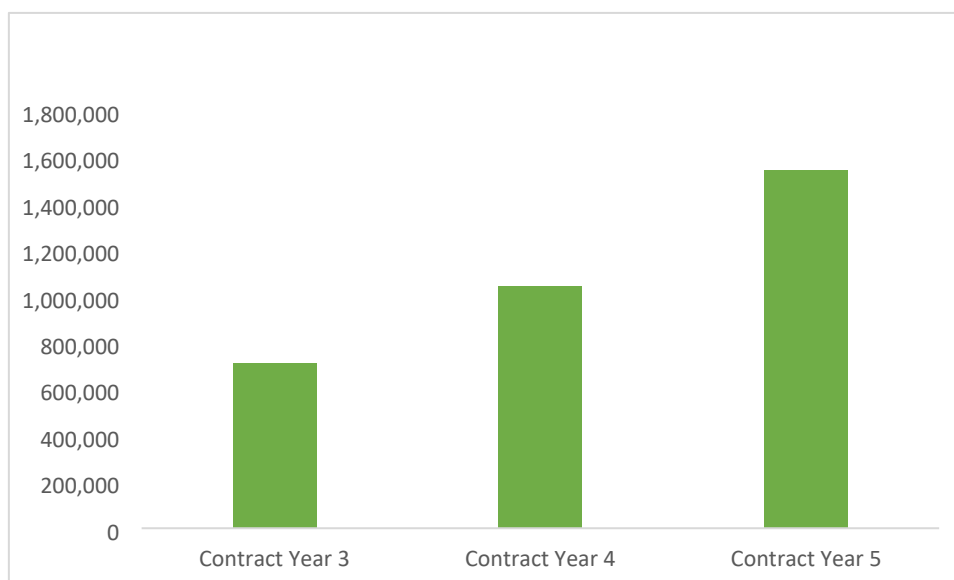
- 3.1. The Council's £40m investment programme in leisure provision included further major works last year. At Palmer Park Leisure Centre & Stadium, the athletics track was completely reconstructed in a £500,000 project funded by the Council and GLL. The track was replaced from its stone base, providing improved drainage, a smoother and flatter surface, and consistent rebound and impact absorbance. It was fitted with Polytan SMART technology for real-time performance monitoring and built using environmentally friendly materials, with an expected 30-year lifespan.
- 3.2. The track reopened in time to host the Festival of Inclusivity, welcoming a wide range of adaptive and inclusive sports and drawing strong support from local organisations and community groups. Looking ahead, the site is set for further growth, with the first triathlon event successfully launched and the upcoming Reading Schools competition expected to bring up to 800 children to the track.
- 3.3. Throughout the year, GLL has worked in close collaboration with a broad range of Council services and community partners to enhance the reach and impact of local health and wellbeing initiatives. This has included the development of bespoke activity sessions and tailored membership options designed to meet the specific needs of partner services and the communities they support. These joint efforts have contributed to the Council's wider objectives around improving health outcomes, reducing inequalities, and ensuring that leisure provision remains accessible, inclusive, and responsive to local priorities.
- 3.4. Key partners engaged during the reporting period included the Place-Based and Community Improvement Team, Age UK, Sport in Mind, This Girl Can, Get Berkshire

Active, Public Health, Reading Voluntary Action, Compass Recovery College, the Physical Activity Alliance Group (PAAG), Royal Berkshire Hospital, N3W Angle, and Berkshire Vision. Collaborative work with these organisations has enabled targeted outreach, strengthened referral pathways into physical activity, and expanded opportunities for residents who may face barriers to participation.

- 3.5. The investment into the leisure service reflects the Council's recognition that the provision of suitable and accessible leisure facilities underpins increased participation in sports and physical activity and supports the delivery of the social and economic benefits that can be attributed to an active community.
- 3.1 The Council's investment into new and improved leisure centres is clearly reflected in rising resident satisfaction with sport and leisure services, which has increased from 49% in 2020 to 62% in 2025, while dissatisfaction has fallen from 30% to just 10%. Performance has remained consistently strong since 2023, demonstrating the positive impact of upgraded facilities and expanded provision, with Reading now performing well above the LGA benchmark (50% satisfaction, 20% dissatisfaction).

Question	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024		2025		LGA Oct 24	
% satisfaction with Council Services	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dis-satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dis-satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dis-satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dis-satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dis-satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dis-satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dis-satisfied</i>
Sport and leisure services	49 %	30 %	41 %	25 %	51 %	23 %	62 %	15 %	63 %	15 %	62 %	10 %	50 %	20 %

- 3.2 Rivermead Leisure Centre was judged one of the UK's top facilities after receiving an 'Outstanding' rating from Quest, Sport England's national quality scheme. Following a mystery visit and a two-day inspection, the centre was rated 'excellent' across all areas, including customer experience, accessibility, compliance and environmental management. The award recognised the high standards delivered by the GLL management team and confirmed Rivermead as a flagship, high-quality facility for Reading residents.
- 3.3 Participation continued to grow strongly across the leisure centres, increasing from 710,542 visits in 2023 to 1,043,715 in 2024, and then to 1,542,342 in 2025. Monthly figures showed consistent year-on-year growth, with increases driven by service enhancements and the introduction of new programme offerings. This upward trend reflects the investment and improvements made across the centres and aligns with the Council's wider priorities, including public health objectives and tackling health inequalities.
- 3.4 Annual Contract Participation



- 3.5 The GLL membership base began the year in a strong position at 9,014, before reducing to 8,810 by year-end. The decline was most evident at Rivermead, where two new low-cost gyms opened nearby during the year, creating significant competitive pressure on the centre. GLL had been striving to reach 9,500 members by year-end, and this target remains the ambition for the current year, with renewed focus on recovery and growth across all sites.
- 3.6 Although this reduction is disappointing, the overall membership base remains significantly higher than in previous years, and encouragingly, numbers have begun to rise again in recent months. Membership performance is being closely monitored and targeted interventions are being implemented by GLL to mitigate further losses and support continued recovery across all sites.
- 3.7 For clarity, the membership base refers to customers who pay for their membership in advance by direct debit for services and activities across the leisure centres.
- 3.8 Officers carried out the contractual monthly inspection of the leisure centres, with GLL achieving a score of 82%, exceeding the 80% contract target and demonstrating continued strong operational performance.
- 3.9 GLL joined the Water Safety Partnership Board and is working closely with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to deliver preventative water safety education at Rivermead. This includes sessions with local schools to strengthen awareness and reduce water-related risks across the borough.
- 3.10 GLL continue to offer a range of targeted programmes to improve access to physical activity for residents who may otherwise face barriers to participation.
- 3.11 GLL offer six month, nationwide free memberships for refugees and in 2025 a total of 64 refugees took up this offer. They were provided with six-month memberships, giving them free access to our swimming pools, gyms and fitness classes. The total value of these memberships is over £25,000, reflecting the support offered to refugees settling in Reading.
- 3.12 As part of the leisure contract, GLL also offers care leavers a free six-month membership, providing access to the gym, swimming and fitness classes for eligible young people aged 16 - 25 who are Reading residents. Eligibility checks are completed by the Council before individuals are referred to GLL to finalise their membership. During the year, GLL issued 73 six-month memberships to care leavers in Reading, representing a total value of over £20,000.
- 3.13 GLL delivered a programme of junior drop-in activities and swimming sessions throughout the year for children aged 5 -16 years. The offer included Junior Football, Multi-Sports, Pickleball and Swim for All sessions. Swimming was available across all four leisure

centres, while dry-side activities were delivered at Palmer Park and South Reading. Across the programme, a total of 3,163 junior attendances were recorded, with all sessions priced at £1 per child to support affordable access to sport and physical activity for young people.

- 3.14 GLL supported 33 local schools by donating prizes and gifts to assist with their events throughout the year.
- 3.15 GLL delivered a series of open weekends throughout the year across all leisure centres as part of their national 'More Ways to Play' initiative. These events provided a wide range of free and low-cost activities, including gym and class taster sessions, £1 children's swimming, racket sport socials, café tasters, competitions and opportunities for residents to meet centre managers. GLL also strengthened community engagement by involving local schools, community groups and partner organisations. The open weekends aimed to increase participation, support healthier lifestyles and build stronger local partnerships, building on the success of the previous year's national programme, which attracted over 100,000 attendees.
- 3.16 Social value is calculated using a nationally recognised Social Value Calculator, which converts participation and activity levels into financial benefits for the community, based on established national and NHS benchmarks.
- 3.17 During 2025, GLL reported that the leisure contract generated £12.0 million in social value, a 36.9% increase on 2024, driven primarily by higher participation levels. More than 101,000 residents benefited from improved physical and mental health, enhanced wellbeing, and stronger community connections. The greatest contributions came from improved wellbeing outcomes and preventative health benefits.
- 3.18 Contract performance continues to exceed sector averages, with strong year on year growth. Rivermead generated the highest total social value, while South Reading Leisure Centre recorded the fastest growth.
- 3.19 Over 6,000 free swims have been offered to Reading residents through the continued delivery of the former Your Reading Passport (YRP) Concession Scheme, supporting improved access to leisure and helping more people stay active.
- 3.20 Active Lives is Sport England's national measure of residents' participation in physical activity, providing local data to support planning and service delivery. In Reading, the latest results (based on a sample of 374 adults) show a reduction in the proportion achieving 150+ minutes of activity per week, decreasing from 70.9% in 2023/24 to 67.7% in 2024/25. Despite this decline, Reading continues to exceed the national average (64.6%) and remains broadly consistent with the Berkshire figure (67.9%). This comes at a time when leisure centre participation numbers are at a record high and continue to rise, demonstrating strong and growing engagement with Council owned facilities.
- 3.21 In addition to growing attendance, another core element of the contract is the introduction of effectively targeted activities to improve participation in physical activity and health for key groups of Reading's communities - the Healthwise programme.
- 3.22 Across 2025, the Healthwise programme delivered strong outcomes in supporting residents to become more active, manage their weight and improve overall wellbeing. Through the Physical Activity on Referral Scheme (PARS), 43% of programme completers achieved over 150 minutes of physical activity per week, with a further 33% reaching 90 -149 minutes and 20% increasing their activity levels from baseline. Weight related outcomes were also positive, with 56% of PARS completers and 69% of those completing the Weightloss with Better programme losing weight over the 12 - week courses. The Healthwise team delivered 21 Weightloss with Better programmes during the year, providing weekly group sessions focused on motivation, nutrition and sustainable lifestyle change, supported by concessionary access to gym, swim and class activities.

- 3.23 To strengthen community engagement, the Healthwise timetable expanded to include supervised gym sessions, circuit classes and social racket sports, helping participants build confidence and maintain social connections beyond the initial programmes.
- 3.24 Mental wellbeing also remained a key focus, with 10% of PARS referrals citing mental health as the primary reason. Among completers, 60% achieved a positive wellbeing score on the Short Warwick-Edinburgh scale and showed improvement from baseline, with a further 24% also demonstrating meaningful progress. Collectively, these outcomes highlight the programme's continued impact on physical health, emotional resilience and community cohesion.
- 3.25 GLL's key Healthwise objectives and priorities for 2026 focus on expanding specialist health pathways, strengthening staff capability, and increasing opportunities for residents to engage in programmes that support long term health, wellbeing and community connection. The key areas of focus for the year are:
- Launch the new Cancer Rehabilitation pathway to support residents following cancer treatment
 - Continue delivering and strengthening specialist pathways, including Phase 4 Cardiac Rehabilitation and Better Balance
 - Upskill staff to Level 3 Exercise on Referral to enhance capacity within the PARS programme
 - Train staff to deliver Aquatics for Health sessions
 - Further expand the Healthwise timetable and increase the range of social events offered
 - Launch Better Health and Wellbeing Events across leisure centres
 - Support 12 targeted health promotion initiatives throughout the year.
- 3.26 More detail on the numbers being engaged and range of services is provided within the GLL presentation. Craig Woodward, Partnership Manager and Steph Smith, Area Community Sports Manager from GLL will present to the Committee progress made in the key streams of the leisure contract including:
- Leisure Centre Improvements
 - Usage Levels
 - Community Engagement
 - Energy & Environment
 - Targeted Health Activities.

4 Priorities for 2026/27

- 4.1 The following priorities for the partnership will remain a focus in 2026/27:
- Increase physical activity, reduce obesity and widen participation in the local population;
 - Facilities improvements at Palmer Park Sport and Leisure Centre and South Reading Leisure Centre;
 - Financial sustainability.

5 Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 5.1 The improvements to our leisure centres directly support the Council's aim to make Reading a healthier, more accessible and more active place to live. By investing in

modern, inclusive facilities and expanding the range of activities on offer, more residents can take part in affordable exercise and community programmes. This is especially important for people who may otherwise struggle to stay active, including older residents, young people, low-income households and those with health conditions.

- 5.2 Rising participation shows that our facilities are being well used and are helping to reduce health inequalities across the town. Targeted programmes like Healthwise give extra support to those who need it most, helping people build confidence, improve their wellbeing and stay active for longer. This directly supports our priority to promote more equal communities and safeguard residents' health and wellbeing.
- 5.3 Our leisure centres also contribute to Reading's wider economic and community life. They provide local jobs, attract visitors and offer high-quality spaces for clubs, schools and community groups.
- 5.4 Using sustainable design and modern technology helps ensure the centres operate efficiently and reduce their carbon footprint.
- 5.5 Overall, this work demonstrates our commitment to improving leisure services, strengthening our communities and supporting a healthier future for Reading.
- 5.6 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
- 5.7 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
- 5.8 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.

6 Environmental and Climate Implications

- 6.1 This report does not introduce any new environmental or climate impacts, as it provides an update on the ongoing leisure contract. Environmental sustainability remains a priority within the contract, with continued focus on efficient, lower-carbon facilities and responsible operations.
- 6.2 As part of this ongoing commitment, officers successfully secured a £30,000 Sport England grant to replace the swimming pool windows and pool cover at Meadway Sports Centre. These upgrades improved the building's thermal efficiency, reduced heat loss from the pool hall, and supported lower-carbon, more energy-efficient operations. Since 2019/20, a 30% reduction in energy consumption and decarbonised energy sources has been delivered at our leisure centres.

7 Community Engagement

- 7.1 No additional consultation or community engagement has been required specifically for this report, as it provides an update on the operation of the existing leisure contract rather than proposing changes to services.

- 7.2 However, community engagement remains embedded within the delivery of the contract. GLL continues to work with residents, schools, clubs and community groups to maximise participation, promote inclusion and ensure that services respond to local needs. Targeted initiatives, including concessionary access and health and wellbeing programmes, support engagement with residents who may face barriers to participation.

8 Equality Implications

- 8.1 There are no new equality or diversity impacts arising from this report, as it does not propose changes to service provision.
- 8.2 The leisure contract continues to support equality objectives through inclusive facility design, concessionary pricing schemes and targeted programmes aimed at increasing participation among under-represented groups, including older people, young people, low-income households and residents with health conditions.
- 8.3 Equality considerations remain embedded within the ongoing management and monitoring of the contract.

9 Other Relevant Considerations

- 9.1 There are no other relevant considerations arising from this report.

10 Legal Implications

- 10.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

11 Financial Implications

- 11.1 The leisure contract continues to be delivered within the approved budgets agreed by the Council and are amended annually through the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) process.
- 11.2 Since the contract began in July 2021, the management fee had been a payment from the Council to GLL. However, from 2024/25 this arrangement reversed, with the base fee becoming a payment from GLL to the Council rising to its maximum level in Year 5 (2025/26). These payments from GLL to the Council remain subject to fluctuation due to inflation and changes in utility costs, for which the Council retains responsibility under the contract. The contract also includes provision for profit share should financial performance exceed forecast levels.

12 Background Papers

- 12.1 None.

READING & GLL PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS & LEISURE COMMITTEE

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Tuesday 21 July 2026

Craig Woodward, Steph Smith & Jemma Allen

RIVERMEAD LEISURE CENTRE

GLL

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 25-year contract – commenced 1 July 2021
- Operation of 4 leisure centres
 - o Meadway Sports Centre
 - o Palmer Park Leisure Centre
 - o Rivermead Leisure Centre
 - o South Reading Leisure Centre

USAGE STATS

- Throughout 2025 we have seen positive movement on usage stats across all centres particularly when compared to previous years.
- Total usage throughout 2025 now exceeds 1 million visits with the target to see further increases in 2026
- Over 6,000 Free Swims offered to Reading Residents as part of the continuation of the YRP Concession Scheme, a similar figure to previous years.
- Over 9,000 Pre-Paid Memberships, with all centres at the highest position and an increase from 7,000 members the previous year.
- Pay & Play Memberships figures are now over 2,500
- 2,800 on the Learn to Swim Programme attending each week, again an increase from 2,500 the previous year.

PEOPLE

- GLL continues to hold Real Living Wage Accreditation.
- Total Staff Completing National Pool Lifeguard Qualifications is 17 in 2025
- 12 New Swimming Teachers introduced throughout 2025.
- Over 500 e-learning modules completed to cover a wide range of courses which include Equality & Diversity, Disability Awareness, Safeguarding & Health & Safety.
- Continue with Reward & Recognition work to ensure all staff are valued, including Staff Member of the Month and Annual Staff Awards.
- 4 Apprenticeships started throughout 2025, with all due to complete the scheme in 2026.
- Supporting young people in education with 37 work experience placements in the past 12 months.
- The workforce is made up of 203 members of staff, with over 85% being Reading Residents.
- Investors in People Gold Award.

COMMUNITY 2025

- Access and Disability Group Visit & MENCAP Engagement
 - Tours, activity & feedback
- Work Experience Placements
 - New Directions
 - Local schools & colleges
- Reading & Oxfordshire Club Games
 - Senior Competition
- GLL Sport Foundation
 - 84 Athletes
 - £55,400 support
 - 20 Sports
- Local Partnerships
 - Royal Berkshire Hospital Support - Easter Egg Collection & Christmas Gift Appeal
 - N3W Angle
 - Reading Youth Justice Service
 - Sport in Mind
 - School Support
- Dementia Friends Training
 - 82 members of staff completed training
- Breastfeeding Friendly Commitment
 - All four centres, third year running



COMMUNITY 2025

• Outreach & Events

- Restart a Heart Campaign
- Older Peoples Day
- This Girl Can (Lift The Curfew)
- National Fitness Day
- Macmillan Coffee Morning
- GLL National Open Weekends
- Carers Active April
- Children's Forbury Fiesta & Children's Festival

• Water Safety Campaigns

- Summer Water Safety
- Winter Water Safety

• Give it a Go

- Compass Recovery College
- Community Wellness Outreach Project (Reading Voluntary Action)

• QUEST

- 'Excellent' at Palmer Park Leisure Centre
- 'Outstanding' at Rivermead Leisure Centre



GLL

COMMUNITY 2026

- Give it a Go Success
 - Community Wellness Outreach
 - Compass Recovery College
 - Carers
- Free Swimming for Foster Families & Free membership for Care Leavers
- GLL Sport Foundation
 - 105 Athletes, £69,680 support
- South Reading Community Initiatives
 - £5 Family Swims
 - Family swim vouchers – food banks
- Palmer Park Triathlon Pilot
- Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Offer from Summer 2026
- Festival of Inclusivity – Thursday 23rd July 2026!

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HEALTHWISE 2025

Healthwise is an exercise referral programme, designed to introduce individuals with/at risk of a long-term health condition to the benefits of physical activity in a safe and encouraging environment, supported by our Healthwise Facilitators.

Common reasons for referral include: Obesity, Anxiety & Depression, Hypertension, Type 2 Diabetes, Asthma, and Circulatory and Respiratory diseases.

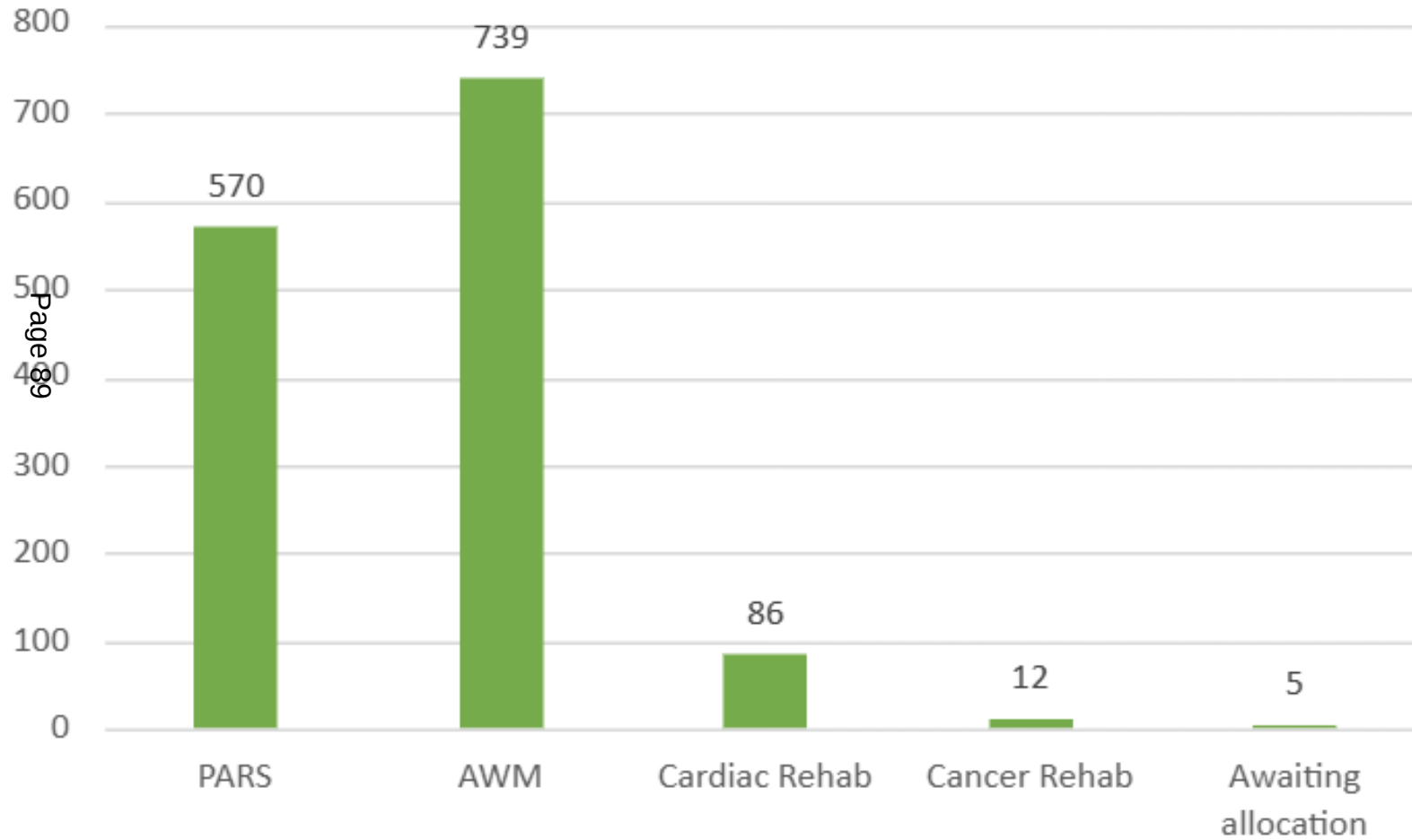
Pathways delivered in 2025:

- Adult Weight Management
- Physical Activity on Referral (PARS)
- Phase 4 Cardiac Rehab
- Cancer Rehabilitation
- Better Balance (Falls Prevention – referred from PARS)



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HEALTHWISE 2025



Total
accepted
referrals
1412

Total
rejected
referrals
80

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HEALTHWISE 2025

- **PARS, Cardiac and Cancer Rehab**

- o 43% of completers participate in +150minutes of PA per week, and a further 54% above their baseline measurement.
- o 56% lost weight, 27% losing >3%
- o 74% self-reported an improvement in overall health
- o 62% had a mental wellbeing score indicating positive mental wellbeing, and a further 25% indicating good mental wellbeing

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Adult Weight Management

- o 21 courses delivered in 2025
- o 62% completion rate, with 75% of completers losing body weight
- o 67% of completers increased their time spent physically active per week

- **General successes**

- o Achieved Quest 'Excellent' at both Palmer Park and Rivermead Leisure Centre in Tackling Health Inequalities, achieving the Exercise Referral Standard.



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HEALTHWISE 2026

- Maintain and develop clinical relationships with the GP's, the Royal Berkshire Hospital and other clinical partners.
- Continue to raise awareness of and grow all pathways.
- Relaunch and grow the Cancer Rehab programme.
- Staff upskilling in Aquatics for Health.
- Run a Health and Wellbeing Event at one of the leisure centres, in collaboration with local organisations.
- Continued development of the Healthwise timetable and general offering (classes, social opportunity etc.)
- Support 12 monthly health promotions.

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HEALTHWISE - Testimonials

HEALTHWISE

The programme was very positive and changed how I think about food and lifestyle. I enjoyed learning about nutrition and portion sizes. The instructor explained everything clearly, and the sessions were engaging. I'd recommend the programme to anyone starting their health journey. I've lost 2 stone, feel much fitter, and now understand how nutrition and activity support wellbeing.

Ashley – AWM (Adult Weight Management)

HEALTHWISE

The programme was challenging but rewarding, and I saw results early on. I felt very well supported - the instructor especially made a huge difference to my progress. My confidence and posture improved, and I found it easier to be in a busy gym. I'd tell others to join, set achievable goals, and keep showing up. Gym sessions and the instructor's encouragement have helped turn my life around; I'm now back to badminton, walking football, and aiming to jog again.

Michael – PARS (Post-liver transplant)

HEALTHWISE

The classes were fun, supportive, and left me feeling well and accomplished. I enjoyed connecting with others who had similar heart events. My confidence has grown massively; I now feel able to set bigger fitness goals. I'd tell anyone considering the programme to go for it!

Susanne – Cardiac Phase 4

QUESTIONS



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Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

21 July 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	RBC Landlord Services Performance Report – Year End Update 2025/26
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Melissa Wise, Executive Director Communities & Adult Social Care
Report author	Natalie Waters - Director of Housing Landlord Services
Lead Councillor	Cllr Matt Yeo, Lead Councillor for Housing and Communities
Council priority	Secure Reading's economic & cultural success
Recommendations	1. That Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee note the Year End position for the Housing Landlord Service Performance for 2025-26.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the performance of Reading Borough Council's Housing Landlord Services delivered within the 2025-2026 financial year following the inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) which concluded in April 2025. The inspection resulted 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 improvement.
- 1.2. The service met the 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 continues to meet monthly with the RSH under the Provider Improvement regime, with positive feedback received on progress made on our Service Improvement Plan and the outcomes delivered to date to address the root causes of the issues identified.
- 1.4. Based on our evidence submissions and the commentary received during our meetings with the RSH they have confirmed that we are evidencing our ability to deliver sustainable, long-term change and that we are moving closer to regrading or reinspection.
- 1.5. A key barrier remains the underperformance of elements of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract delivered by Affinity Reading Ltd. The Council is actively addressing this through robust governance with Affinity and the associated contractors. Meetings are focused on strengthening their improvement plan and accelerating full compliance with the four Consumer Standards.
- 1.6. 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 all current and future tenants of social housing.

Landlord Performance is currently monitored against the four Consumer Standards:

- Safety and Quality Standard
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- Transparency, Influence and Accountability (including Tenant Satisfaction Measures)
- Tenancy Standard

- 2.2. In line with these standards, housing providers are required to ensure transparent performance reporting, supported by robust governance and effective oversight. The Directorate has established strong governance arrangements, further enhanced by a cross-party working group that provides additional opportunities to review progress, scrutinise performance, and challenge key issues. This report is also presented regularly to the HNL Committee, offering clear insight into performance, delivery against the service improvement plan, and enabling effective scrutiny, challenge, and strategic discussion.
- 2.3. A comprehensive Service Improvement Plan aligned with the Consumer Standards is well established to address the root causes identified during the inspection, alongside broader service enhancements. Delivery of the plan is actively monitored through coordinated cross-service working, with a clear focus on ensuring that all actions are implemented effectively, achieve intended outcomes, and embed sustainable improvements.

3. The Proposal

Quality and Safety Standard - Housing Repairs

- 3.1. The improvement plan for Repairs and Property services focuses on 8 key workstreams. Four working groups have been established to oversee the workstreams and weekly operational meetings monitor and track progress against the plan. Quarterly updates are presented to a Cross-Party Working Group alongside updates to this Committee.
- 3.2. Significant focus has been maintained throughout the year on reducing Works in Progress (WIP). This has included detailed analysis of open jobs, monitoring volumes raised and completed each month, and reviewing aged tickets. Measures have been implemented to address identified issues and strengthen processes to prevent recurrence. The service set a target to achieve 1000 outstanding repairs by the end of March 2026. The sustained focus on this area enabled the service to achieve the 1,000 target ahead of schedule and maintain performance thereafter. Notably, the number of open repairs reduced significantly from 4,050 in April 2025 to 974 by the end of March 2026.

Table 1. Outstanding Works in Progress

	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26
Customer Satisfaction (%)	84	83	88	88	93	86	78	72	72	84	88	85
Outstanding Repairs (Works in Progress)	4050	2647	2800	2650	2599	2448	2211	1568	1239	951	982	974

- 3.3. Updates for each workstream up to the end of March 2026 are noted below:

Workstream 1 - Embedding culture change

Culture workshops continue to be delivered to all managers and supervisors, focusing on onboarding, learning and development, performance management and organisational culture. The Executive Director and Director are holding workshops every 6-8 weeks, to work through the current themes covering:

- Sickness Absence
- Performance Management
- Bullying & Harassment
- Respect
- Office environment
- Shadowing trades/back office to understand roles

Workstream 2 - Review of Roles, Responsibilities and Operating Model

This review has been structured across management groups, with initial focus on the back-office operating model and roles. Job descriptions for Schedulers, Business Support, and Team Managers have been developed and evaluated.

The Head of Service is currently working in partnership with HR colleagues to finalise proposals and initiate a formal restructure consultation.

In addition, an independent consultant has been commissioned to undertake a comprehensive review of the Housing Surveying function. This work includes an assessment of current operations, compliance, capacity, and processes, alongside benchmarking against peer authorities to inform the development of a future-fit operating model.

Workstream 3 - Recruitment & Retention

At the end of March 2026, there were 26 vacancies across Repairs & Property Services out of an establishment of 147 posts (17.7%). This represents the lowest vacancy level since January 2025, when there were 35 vacancies (23%).

Progress continues to be made in recruitment and retention. Fully structured induction processes are now in place across all service areas, with onboarding documentation centrally accessible to ensure consistency. Managers undertake periodic audits to provide assurance of compliance.

A 'refer a friend' scheme launched on 3 November 2025. Whilst no referrals have been received to date, promotion of the scheme continues through staff engagement channels. A targeted recruitment campaign was launched in January 2026 across Reading, supported by a range of promotional activity including fleet branding, depot signage, trade counter materials, and community noticeboards.

Ongoing recruitment activity is focused on strengthening in-house gas and plumbing capacity to support the transition to direct delivery. Adverts remain live, alongside targeted campaigns using industry-specific platforms to attract qualified surveyors, an area which continues to present recruitment challenges. Professional roles are being actively promoted through specialist channels including RICS, Inside Housing, social media platforms, and external recruitment agencies.

The service recognises the importance of apprenticeships to build and develop our internal resource and currently has 10 apprenticeship posts within the establishment with 8 people in post, and 2 within the recruitment process.

Workstream 4- Procurement

A number of contracts were required across the service to ensure quality and best value for externally delivered provision. These contracts have been prioritised based on cost and risk and are built into a procurement programme to ensure delivery.

There are sixteen Priority 1 contracts covered by this procurement programme of which ten have been awarded to date. These include Lot 1 Reactive Repairs*, Lot 2 Voids and Planned Works*, Interim Gas Waiver, Lift Maintenance, Decent Homes Surveys, Fire Compliance, Asbestos, Managed Stores, Windows Replacement & Door Entry Systems. All awarded contracts have been added to the contracts register.

The Procurement Programme Board meets fortnightly to review progress on the remaining six contracts, alongside weekly operational meetings designed to accelerate delivery. This focused approach will ensure that all remaining contracts will be awarded by the end of July 2026.

Workstream 5 - IT System Usage

Implementation of a Risk Management module within the Compliance Team was completed in December, followed by delivery of the associated Go Mobile functionality by the end of February. This enables Officers to undertake risk assessments and inspections via handheld devices, with real-time system updates and improved tracking of third-party compliance activities, including assessment dates and remedial actions. During the next quarter the teams will be focused on building the in-house risk inspection templates with an anticipated full rollout by the end of July.

Implementation of Go Mobile for Housing Management has also progressed, enabling Officers to carry out rents, estates, and tenancy activities in the field or remotely, with automatic system updates. Configuration has been completed, tested, and approved as 'go-live ready'. Rollout is dependent on the corporate mobile working programme, with suitable devices expected by the end of April. Supporting user guidance is being developed in readiness for deployment.

A health check of the Rents module was undertaken in November, reviewing configuration, usage, and key processes including direct debits and arrears management. The findings confirmed effective use of the system, with targeted improvements identified and subsequently implemented. A key recommendation is the transition to paperless direct debits which has been progressed, with configuration underway and engagement with banking partners in place. Delivery is being managed through a structured project approach, with go-live scheduled for the end of July.

NEC Housing continues to evolve, and options are being reviewed to further enhance functionality and ensure alignment with regulatory requirements. A system upgrade was deployed to the test environment in February, with comprehensive user acceptance testing carried out across all modules. Following successful completion, the upgrade was implemented in the live environment.

In addition, NEC will facilitate a stakeholder session in April to review future reporting solutions, ahead of the planned withdrawal of Business Objects support at the end of 2026. This will initiate a programme of work to identify and implement a suitable replacement reporting platform.

Workstream 6 -Contract Management

Contract management continues to be strengthened across the service, with standardised agendas and minutes embedded for all contract meetings. Routine spot checks of contract monitoring activity continues which provides assurance on the consistency and robustness of our approach.

A comprehensive contracts register has been developed, approved, and fully populated with current contract data. This will be maintained as a live document to support effective oversight, governance, and reporting.

A dedicated contract management resource remains in place to oversee the two largest contracts: the interim Reactive Repairs contract with Pilon and the Voids and Planned Works contract with CLC.

The Contract Management Framework has been reviewed in collaboration with the Head of Procurement, the Procurement and Contracts Spoke, and the Housing Repairs and Property Services Management Team. Implementation is scheduled from May 2026, alongside enhanced

governance arrangements for contract documentation. The contracts register is already aligned with corporate procurement pipeline requirements.

Workstream 7 -Policies, Procedures and Processes

In line with tenant expectations and regulatory best practice, which emphasise clarity, conciseness, and the removal of duplication a revised approach to our policies has been adopted. Policies covering this area have been consolidated into three overarching documents: two covering Repairs and Property Services and one addressing Damp and Mould. These are scheduled for submission to Policy Committee in September, allowing time to engage with the Tenant Voice Panel and Sounding Board in line with our commitment for co-production. It is important to note that these policies do not introduce any changes to current service delivery or operational practice.

Process mapping across Repairs and Property Services has progressed alongside policy development. Of 32 identified processes, 29 were implemented at the end of January, supported by a service-wide briefing from the Head of Service and follow-up communications. Managers have reinforced these through team meetings and one-to-one discussions, with targeted training provided where process changes directly impact teams.

The remaining three processes, lift repairs and servicing, Housing Projects programme management, and budget monitoring are more complex and require further development. Workshops are scheduled to finalise these, with implementation expected by the end of May which is on track. The Housing Projects process will also benefit from input from an external consultant commencing in May.

All approved process maps and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are centrally accessible via the Housing & Communities SharePoint site. This process mapping work forms a key component of the Continuous Improvement Plan, establishing a consistent operational framework, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and supporting improved service delivery.

Workstream 8 - Damp and Mould

The cross departmental working group continue to convene weekly to review active cases, monitor progress, and identify and address any operational barriers.

Since the introduction of Awaab's Law in October 2025, the service has received a total of 266 referrals relating to damp and mould. These have been assessed against the three defined categories within the legislation: potential emergency hazard, potential significant hazard, and cases deemed out of scope.

Of the referrals received, three were classified as potential emergency hazards and 59 as potential significant hazards. A further 128 cases were assessed as out of scope of Awaab's Law; however, 88 of these still received a visit from the Housing Energy Support Team (HEST) to ensure appropriate advice and support were provided.

To strengthen delivery, a permanent dedicated Technical Support Officer has been recruited and is responsible for overseeing cases requiring remedial works, ensuring compliance with statutory timescales, and maintaining clear communication with tenants throughout the process.

Following a post implementation review, enhancements have been made to the referral process. The updated referral form now requires both written descriptions and photographic evidence, including clear details on the size and location of damp and mould. This has improved the quality of information received, enabling HEST to triage cases more effectively and reduce delays in progressing those within scope.

In addition, updates have been implemented within the Housing IT system and associated KPIs to ensure robust monitoring, recording, and evidence of compliance with all regulatory requirements and prescribed timescales.

Further improvements are planned to the Council's website to ensure that information relating to damp and mould is more accessible, clear, and user focused.

- 3.4. The percentage of stock failing the standard has continued to reduce month on month and at the end of March 26 stands at 4.16%. This improvement reflects the completion of further detailed inspections of previously failing elements, alongside the delivery of outstanding remedial works. The 2026–27 programme of works report sets out the priority areas the service will focus on over the coming year, supporting progress towards achieving full Decent Homes compliance by March 2028.

Table 2. Decent Homes progress April – March

	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26
% of homes not meeting Decent Homes	8.12%	16.35%	16.35%	12.24%	11.10%	10.55%	9.89%	9.20%	9.00%	8.60%	8.52%	4.16%
No of homes not meeting Decent Homes	469	944	944	707	640	609	571	532	520	499	492	240

- 3.5. Our programme to gain insight behind every front door continues, with plans to appoint a new contractor to undertake a further 1,700 Decent Homes surveys during 2026/27. The recent procurement exercise was unsuccessful.
- 3.6. At the end of March 2026 there were no Health and Safety category 1 or 2 (severe or urgent) jobs outstanding.
- 3.7. The 2026/27 programme of works has been developed to support delivery of the Decent Homes Standard. Key priorities within the programme include front door replacements, installation of extractor fans, kitchen and bathroom renewals, and heating system upgrades. Options for the most appropriate contractor frameworks to deliver these workstreams are currently under assessment. To support effective delivery, fortnightly working groups have been established, alongside a programme tracker to monitor progress, key milestones, and budget performance.
- 3.8. The programme also includes external decoration works to houses and bungalows. These are currently at survey stage to re-establish a compliant and deliverable pipeline of works. Surveys are underway to validate scope, update specifications, and confirm property condition ahead of recommissioning. A structured approach has been implemented to transition stock efficiently from survey through to delivery, enabling a return to live planned works programmes.

Quality and Safety Standard - Fire Compliance contracts

- 3.9 Lot 1 contract has been awarded, mobilisation meetings held from November 2025. At the end of the financial year 39 New Fire Risk Assessments had been completed on all high risk and sheltered housing properties.
- 3.10 Lot 2 contract has been awarded, mobilisation meetings held from October 2025. At the end of financial year 32 New Fire doors had been installed and 89 doors had been repaired.
- 3.11 Lot 3 is due to be awarded, and contracts signed. Mobilisation meeting has been scheduled for early April 2026.
- 3.12 We regularly report our performance, including outstanding remedials to Councillors, Senior management and Tenant groups.

- 3.13 In addition to the above reporting, there are 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

- 3.14 The Antisocial Behaviour Service Manager is currently undertaking a comprehensive review and update of all standard operating procedures, alongside a refresh of the Officer training programme to support consistent service delivery.
- 3.15 Case audits for antisocial behaviour and hate incidents were introduced in August 2025. For the 2025/26 period, completed audits have achieved an average compliance score of 53%. These audits are designed to assess adherence to service standards, as set out in the Antisocial Behaviour and Hate Incident Policy and associated procedures. The Council set target benchmark is 90% compliance across all audits, and focused improvement activity is required to ensure this standard is achieved during the current reporting year.
- 3.16 A comprehensive programme of improvement has since been implemented to strengthen compliance and drive up audit performance. This includes the introduction of quarterly feedback to individual officers on their case audit results, enabling targeted learning where policy and procedures have not been fully followed. Governance arrangements have been strengthened, with all case closures and legal referrals now subject to Team Leader sign-off to ensure appropriate contact with complainants and adherence to required processes.
- 3.17 Individual officer performance objectives have been aligned with audit expectations, with a minimum target of 75% compliance (amber) by mid-year point and full compliance (90%) by year end. This will be alongside clear expectations around maintaining regular face-to-face contact with victims a defined number of monthly visits.
- 3.18 Policies and procedures have been refreshed and relaunched from April 2026, providing clearer operational guidance supported by the implementation of the NEC ASB case management module, which prompts and records key actions throughout the lifecycle of a case. Further improvement activity includes the development of a targeted training offer for officers, including Equality Impact Assessment training, and the rollout of tenant-facing factsheets to better manage expectations at an early stage of casework, such as the noise nuisance factsheet introduced in June 2026. The service is now fully staffed, with all wards covered, placing the team in a stronger position to embed these improvements.
- 3.19 Between April 2025 and March 2026, a total of 218 antisocial behaviour cases and 6 hate crime incidents were reported.
- 3.20 Closed case satisfaction surveys have been in place since April 2024 and continue to be undertaken, with a current response rate of 34%. The service makes up to three contact attempts with complainants, via telephone or email, before cases are closed where no response is received. The survey format is currently under review to improve accessibility and encourage higher response rates. Feedback gathered will be used to inform service improvements and ensure delivery aligns with tenant expectations and established service standards.
- 3.21 The highlights from the closed case survey are as follows:
- 77% found it easy to report ASB
 - 69% said that the Officer explained the ASB procedure to them
 - 54% said that they are updated in a satisfactory manner

- 54% felt supported by their case officer throughout the case
- 54% said that the ASB stopped as a result of reporting to the ASB team
- 77% feel confident in reporting ASB in the future
- 61% are satisfied with how their case was dealt with overall

Table 3: ASB Service and enforcement actions:

	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26
No. of new Housing ASB Enquiries	11	13	23	26	12	15	10	11	10	16	19	11
No. of Enquiries opened as cases straight away	3	1	7	8	2	6	2	5	2	3	1	1
No. of injunctions	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
No. of Notice of Seeking Possessions	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	3
No of outright possession orders granted	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

3.22 Between April 2025 and March 2026, the courts granted six outright possession orders, enabling the service to take enforcement action and evict 6 tenants for breaches of tenancy conditions relating to antisocial behaviour.

3.23 In addition, the service secured three injunctions and served 10 Notices Seeking Possession, which represent the initial legal step prior to applying for a possession order. These actions demonstrate the service's use of a range of legal interventions to address serious and persistent cases of antisocial behaviour.

Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard – Tenant Information

3.24 The working group established to compile and carry out a tenant census are currently in the final steps of ensuring that NEC can hold all required information from the survey against a tenant's record. This will assist us in better understanding our tenants. Where possible we will direct and support tenants to respond to the census digitally and for those who are unable to access this online a paper form will be sent.

3.25 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 utilised to inform service delivery and achieve equitable outcomes. An outcome of this would be to conduct a targeted recruitment campaign for engaged tenants from underrepresented groups to ensure fair presentation of our tenant demographic.

3.26 Our aim is to launch the tenant census in June 2026 via a robust communication plan which will include a letter being sent to all tenants, with follow up reminders being sent via e-mail, text and through posts on social media. The census will initially be available online via the corporate Go Vocal platform with our aim to collect and update 60% of tenant's information in the first 3 months via this method.

- 3.27 In addition, Officers across the service will support data collection through targeted door-knocking, completing the census digitally with tenants. This approach will allow information to be loaded directly into the NEC system, removing the need for separate data entry and improving data quality. As a final option, paper forms will be issued where required.
- 3.28 The census is expected to remain open for up to six months to maximise engagement and encourage the widest possible participation. Monthly progress reports will be submitted to LCB and to the next available HNL Committee.
- 3.29 The information we capture will help us to shape the services we deliver to tenants, and especially where tenants have specific needs, we can ensure that our services are still accessible to those tenants. This information will also help us to plan how we improve or change our services to suit emerging needs.

Transparency Influence and Accountability - Complaints and Housing Ombudsman

- 3.30 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.
- 3.31 During 2025/26 the Housing and Communities Service (including repairs and maintenance) received 551 complaints. 55 of these progressed to stage 2 compared to 47 in the previous year (2024-2025). These typically arise where agreed actions at Stage One have not been fully delivered by the relevant service area, highlighting a need for stronger follow-through and accountability. The breakdown of the complaints and the comparison to the previous year is outlined below.

Table 4: Total number of complaints split by Area compared to the previous year:

Area	2025-26		2024-25	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Community Partnerships	4	0.7%	9	1.6%
Housing Needs	102	18.5%	105	20.0%
Property Development	0	0%	2	0.4%
Tenant Services	90	16.3%	67	12.8%
Repairs & Property Services	355	64.5%	342	65.0%
Private Sector Housing (Adaptations)	0	0%	1	0.2%
Total	551	100%	526	100%

- 3.32 The outcomes of these complaints are listed in the table below (Table 5).

Table 5: Outcome of complaints in year compared to previous year:

Outcome	2025-26		2024-25	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Upheld	327	59.4%	250	60%
Partially Upheld	73	13.2%	37	9%
Not upheld	89	16.2%	66	16%
No Outcome	10	1.8%	23	6%
Multiple Outcomes	52	9.4%	38	9%
Total	551	100%	526	100%

- 3.33 The % of upheld decisions remain in line with the previous year. A substantial proportion of these upheld complaints relate to Repairs and Property Services, however historically and commonly with most social housing landlords, repairs complaints received are always at a higher volume compared to our other landlord services.
- 3.34 The most common themes for the complaints are listed below, in decreasing order of quantities received:

2025-26	2024-25
Failure to resolve the issue Quality of service Communication Time taken to resolve the issue	Quality of service Failure to resolve the issue Time taken to resolve the issue Communication

- 3.35 The primary themes within complaints remain consistent compared with the same period in 2024–25. The most prominent issue, failure to resolve the issue, accounting for a significant proportion of complaints, with 47% of these relating to Repairs and Property Services. Notably, there has been an increase in this theme within Housing Needs in 2025–26 compared to the previous year. In contrast, quality of service concerns are more frequently associated with Housing Management services rather than repairs.
- 3.36 Targeted improvement activity remains underway across services to address the root causes of these recurring themes. As part of this, a tenant-led scrutiny task and finish group has been established, and their report, including a set of recommendations, has now been received. Service teams are currently reviewing these findings and will engage further with the tenant group to agree how the recommendations will be implemented.

Timeliness and Performance Improvements

- 3.37 During this reporting period, 62% of complaints were responded to within Housing Ombudsman timescales, representing a notable improvement from 53% in 2024–25. Services have continued to strengthen their approach to complaint handling, focusing on both timeliness and the quality of responses to ensure they are meaningful and address customer concerns effectively.
- 3.38 To support this, a range of monitoring and oversight mechanisms are in place, including:
- Weekly performance monitoring meetings with service areas
 - Daily huddles within the Customer Relations Team
 - Daily inbox checks to ensure complaints are identified and actioned promptly
- 3.39 The complaint statistics for Affinity (Reading) Ltd. who manage 1248 units as part of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangement are captured separately. The table below (Table 6) below shows the performance for 2025-26, in comparison to 2024-25.

Table 6: PFI Complaints responded to in time

	2025-26		2024-25	
Complaints	Received	Responded in timescale	Received	Responded in timescale

Stage 1	17	100%	10	80%
Stage 2	2	100%	2	50%
Total	19	100%	12	65%

- 3.40 In response to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) recommendations, work continues in partnership with Affinity to ensure greater alignment and consistency in the services provided to tenants. This includes quarterly complaints handling reports on themes and service improvements identified from this. Affinity has updated its webpages to reflect the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, improving transparency and accessibility for tenants.
- 3.41 Progress against these actions is being actively monitored by the Council through Affinity's service improvement plan to ensure sustained compliance and delivery of expected standards.

Housing Ombudsman Findings

- 3.42 The report presented to Committee in March 2025 set out the findings from the Housing Ombudsman for the 2023–24 reporting year. The Council is still awaiting the findings for the 2024–25 period which we are actively chasing. Once received, these will be reviewed and shared with Committee as part of a future update

Transparency Influence and Accountability - Tenant Satisfaction Survey and Tenant Satisfaction Measures

- 3.43 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.
- 3.44 This survey consisted of a random sample of 600 Tenants, including tenants managed under the PFI contract, and was 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. The completed survey report was sent back to the service in April 2026 and will be published on our website by the end of June 2026 together with an article in the next edition of "Your Housing". The findings and next steps will be reported at the next available HNL Committee.
- 3.45 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 TSMs.

Table 7: Tenant Satisfaction Measures 2025 – 2026

(Arrows – green for improvement, red for decline in performance, purple remains the same)

TSM / Metric	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Trend compared to
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													previous year
Repairs and Property Condition													
Percentage of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	8.12%	16.35%	16.35%	12.24%	11.10%	10.55%	9.89%	9.20%	9.00%	8.60%	8.52%	4.16%	
Number of homes that did not meet the Decent Homes Standard in period	469	944	944	707	640	609	571	532	520	499	492	240	
Percentage of non-emergency repairs completed within target timescale	69.84%	67.79%	85.81%	82.70%	79.58%	78.90%	77.58%	73.20%	85.29%	78.56%	72.05%	81.33%	
Number of non-emergency repairs completed within target timescale	653	545	1022	894	982	987	1149	683	1096	1099	1080	1329	
Repairs and Property Condition	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Trend compared to previous year
Total number of non-emergency repairs completed in period	935	804	1191	1081	1234	1251	1481	933	1285	1399	1499	1634	
Percentage of emergency repairs completed within target timescale	85.50%	70.35%	87.06%	51.75%	90.45%	89.60%	90.91%	75.22%	86.96%	88.69%	87.96%	88.20%	
Number of emergency repairs completed within target timescale	224	121	175	74	142	155	230	170	180	290	190	142	
Total number of emergency repairs completed in period	262	172	201	143	157	173	253	226	207	327	216	161	
Building Safety	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sept-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Trend compared to previous year
Percentage of gas safety checks completed	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Number of dwellings requiring a gas safety check	4641	4636	4617	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629	
Number of dwellings that received a gas safety check	4641	4636	4617	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629	
Percentage of fire safety checks completed	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Number of dwellings that received required fire safety checks	955	955	955	955	955	955	955	955	955	955	955	955	
Percentage of asbestos safety checks completed	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Number of dwellings that received asbestos surveys	253	253	253	253	253	253	253	253	253	253	253	253	
Percentage of Legionella risk assessments completed	97.21%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Number of dwellings that received a Legionella risk assessment	1118	1107	1239	1239	1239	1239	1239	1239	1239	1239	1239	1239	

Percentage of communal passenger lift safety checks completed	94.30%	94.30%	94.30%	94.30%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Number of dwellings/buildings that received lift safety checks	695	695	695	695	737	737	737	737	737	737	737	737	
Neighbourhood Management	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Juk-25	Aug-25	Sept-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Trend compared to previous year
Total number of anti-social behaviour cases opened per 1,000 properties	2.48	2.48	5.31	6.02	2.48	3.72	2.12	2.83	2.12	3.36	3.54	2.12	
Total number of anti-social behaviour cases opened	14	14	30	34	14	21	12	16	12	19	20	12	
Total number of hate crime cases per 1,000 properties	0	0	0	0	0.18	0.35	0.35	0	0	0.18	0	0	
Number of anti-social behaviour cases that are hate crimes	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	
Complaints Handling	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sept-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Trend compared to previous year
Number of Stage 1 complaints per 1,000 properties	7.79	6.90	7.08	4.96	4.78	5.84	8.32	8.50	6.20	5.13	7.43	6.55	
Total number of Stage 1 complaints received	44	39	40	28	27	33	47	48	35	29	42	37	
Number of Stage 2 complaints per 1,000 properties	0.35	0.53	1.06	1.24	0.71	0.18	1.06	0.71	1.06	0.71	1.42	0.71	
Total number of Stage 2 complaints received	2	3	6	7	4	1	6	4	6	4	8	4	
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints responded to within timescales	11%	8%	50%	75%	74%	91%	68%	73%	89%	69%	81%	76%	
Number of Stage 1 complaints responded to within timescales	5	3	20	21	20	30	30	35	31	20	34	28	
Percentage of Stage 2 complaints responded to within timescales	50%	0%	50%	71%	0%	0%	50%	25%	33%	25%	25%	50%	
Number of Stage 2 complaints responded to within timescales	1	0	3	5	0	0	3	1	2	1	2	2	

Transparency Influence and Accountability - Tenant Engagement and Scrutiny

- 3.46 The Tenant Engagement Team is currently working with a group of engaged tenants to scrutinise two priority areas of the Housing Service identified by the Tenant Voice Panel, the Repairs Service and the handling of Housing Complaints. Ten tenants are taking part in this scrutiny project with six sessions that ran to April 2026. Tenants will review specific aspects of these services and produce written recommendations for service improvement. These findings will be shared with the Regulator of Social Housing and via this Committee once analysed.
- 3.47 The tenants will be focusing their scrutiny on the Repairs Service and how we communicate with tenants throughout the repairs process, as well as reviewing the full tenant journey from the point a repair is first reported to the Council. The tenants are also focusing on Housing Complaints and the group is examining whether there are further opportunities to reduce complaint volumes and to strengthen the way we manage and resolve complaints.

- 3.48 Beyond these targeted areas of work planning for our wider Tenant Engagement programme is also underway. The project plan is currently being developed and was finalised in May 2026 having been agreed by the Tenant Voice Panel.
- 3.49 Part of our new Tenant Engagement Programme for 2026-27 includes further facilitated focus groups to scrutinise key areas within Tenancy Management and Antisocial Behaviour. These themes have been selected in direct response to feedback from tenants who attended the Housing Information Day and expressed a desire to be more involved in shaping these service areas.
- 3.50 Following the success of the Housing information Day the Sounding Board has grown and now consists of approximately 50 registered tenants. Our hope is that as these tenants become more involved, they consider joining the Tenant Voice Panel (TVP).

Planned Tenant Engagement Activity (2026)

- 3.51 A programme of tenant engagement activity is planned over the coming months to strengthen tenant involvement and co-production across services:
- Summer 2026 – “Your Housing” publication
A themed edition focused on increasing tenant engagement and awareness of opportunities to get involved in shaping services.
 - June -July 2026 – Policy Consultation
Engagement with members of the Tenant Voice Panel on a suite of key policies. Tenants will be invited to review and provide feedback on several policies, including:
 - Housing and Estate Management Policy, Decant Policy, Repairs Policy, Compliance Policy and Compensation Policy
 - Housing Information Day (Autumn 2026)
Preparations are underway to deliver a Housing Information Day between September and October 2026, aimed at providing accessible information and direct engagement opportunities for tenants.
 - Featured Communications
A coordinated programme of communications, using a range of channels including tenant testimony videos and social media storytelling, will showcase the contributions of engaged tenants. This activity aims to promote the value of involvement and encourage increased participation in engagement opportunities.
 - Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups
Further tenant-led focus groups will be established to review antisocial behaviour and housing and estate management. These areas reflect priorities identified through the Sounding Board engagement.
 - Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy
Work is progressing to develop a co-produced Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy in line with regulatory expectations. A door-knocking exercise is planned for April 2026.

Transparency Influence and Accountability - Tenant Census

- 3.52 To ensure that the service area holds the most up to date information for tenants, there will be a tenant census starting in June 2026. This will invite tenants to complete an online survey, or if they are not online, the service area will provide paper copies of the survey. For those that need more support, there will be provisions to visit the tenant and complete it in their home.

Transparency, Influence & Accountability, New Standard - Competence and Conduct Standard

- 3.53 From October 2026, a new standard will be introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing, this will require all social housing landlords to ensure that all relevant managers who have direct

responsibility for the operational, day to day management of Tenant Services meet defined qualifications and competence requirements. The standard requires Senior Housing Executives (Directors) to hold a degree or Level 5 qualification, and Senior Housing Managers (Head of Service, Service Managers and Team Managers) to hold a level 4 qualification in housing management.

- 3.54 We have identified approximately 45 Officers who will be required to obtain a qualification in housing management. A course provider has been procured in partnership with the Learning and Development Team. The affected managers will be enrolled in three tranches; the first 15 managers will be starting in September 2026, the second 15 in September 2027 and the final 15 in September 2028. This will ensure that we meet the targets set by the Regulator; to be 50% compliant by October 2027 and 100% compliant by October 2028. Compliance is either enrolled on a relevant course, complete a prerequisite qualification or fully complete the course.
- 3.55 A survey will be carried out with the affected managers to ask a series of questions related to several areas including any support needs to help them gain the qualification, any preference as to when they start and any reasons that they would not be able to complete a level 4 or 5 qualification.
- 3.56 HR will also review the job descriptions for these roles and will be amending them to reflect this new mandatory qualification requirement. Sessions will be held with all of those who are expected to gain the qualification to offer them an opportunity to raise their own questions and concerns. Unions will also be consulted on this and invited to those sessions to ensure that there is full transparency. The costs for this training will be funded utilising the apprenticeship levy.

There will be an introductory meeting with the training provider, Kingdom, the Director of Landlord Services and the Officer's part of the first tranche in July 2026. Learning will be delivered online via Teams. The intention is to also set up a working group of the first tranche and Director of Landlord Services, to share learning and support each other through the process.

Tenancy Standard

- 3.57 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.
- 3.58 During this period, we have delivered positive outcomes for tenants as outlined below:
- Year to date, there has been a 45% reduction on the number of legal notices served on tenants for rent arrears compared to the same period for 2024-25.
 - During the year, six evictions were carried out due to rent arrears. This consistently low number reflects the effectiveness of ongoing tenancy sustainment activity delivered by the Recovery Team and Money Advice Team. Their preventative approach continues to support tenants at risk and minimise the need for eviction.
 - Reduction of £91,790 in rent arrears from the end of the 2024/25 financial year.
 - Increase of £18,000 collected in Former Tenant Arrears compared to the same period for 2024/25.
 - Following the introduction of the under-occupation scheme, 16 moves were successfully facilitated between April 2025 and March 2026, releasing 16 properties back into the housing stock. This included:
 - 9 three-bedroom properties
 - 6 two-bedroom properties
 - Engagement with tenants identified as under-occupying indicates that many prefer to remain in their current homes. The most common reasons cited include:
 - Satisfaction with their current location
 - Proximity to local services and support networks
 - Length of tenure in their existing property
 - The need to retain additional bedrooms for visiting adult children and/or grandchildren

- The service is currently delivered through referrals from frontline officers across Housing and Communities to the Under-Occupation Officer. The objective remains to encourage and support tenants to move into accommodation that better meets their needs, thereby freeing up larger homes for households requiring them.
- To strengthen this approach, the scheme is now promoted via the Council's website, and a programme of targeted communication is underway. This includes phased mailouts of letters and supporting information to tenants identified as under-occupying, aimed at increasing awareness and uptake of the scheme.

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 Councils Housing and 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 and 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 of our tenants. Ensuring our Council stock is safe, efficient and well maintained and we deliver fit for purpose and efficient Council services 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.

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
- Awaab's Law 2025

10 Financial Implications

10.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of the information outlined in this report.

10.2 The Programme of Works for 2026-27 report was approved by HNL Committee on the 10th March 2026, which included budgeted provision of circa £16 million to address major capital works programmes and the remedial works identified through the Decent Homes Surveys.

11 Timetable for Implementation

11.1 Not applicable.

12 Background Papers

12.1 There are none.

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Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

21 July 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Refresh of Housing Landlord Services Policies
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Melissa Wise – Executive Director for Communities & Adult Social Care
Report author	Natalie Waters – Director for Housing Landlord Services
Lead Councillor	Councillor Matt Yeo – Lead Councillor for Housing
Corporate priority	Thriving Communities
Recommendations	1. For the Housing, Neighbourhood and Leisure Committee to approve and endorse changes to the following policies for publication: • Rent Recovery Policy – This has been separated out from the corporate debt recovery policy to provide clarity for tenants. • The Tenancy Policy – This has been updated to reflect the types of tenancies the Council offers.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report outlines and seeks agreement for the minor amendments to existing policies, that are required under the Regulator of Social Housing Standards, and their expectations of Landlords. The policies are based on best practice examples and propose no changes to the current service offered to tenants. However, the published policies ensure the Council as a Landlord is clearly setting out their obligations to tenants, managing the expectation of tenants, and improving ease of access of information for tenants.

2. Policy Context

2.1. Regulatory Context of these Policies

- 2.2. The policies presented form a fundamental component of the Council's role as a social landlord, underpinning its tenancy and property management responsibilities and obligations to tenants.

- 2.3. In April 2024, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) introduced a revised set of Consumer Standards that all registered providers of social housing must comply with. This sets out clear expectations for how tenancies and properties are

managed and maintained. The Consumer Standards relevant to these amended policies are set out in Appendix 3.

- 2.4. The Housing and Communities Service aims to tailor services to meet the individual needs of the tenants, and provide homes that are safe, whilst aligning this with our corporate parenting responsibilities. This approach allows all tenants moving into Council stock, including those leaving child or adult social care housing provisions, to have the specific support they need to sustain their tenancies and thrive.

2.5. **Purpose of the Revised Policies**

The proposed recommendation ensures documented compliance with the updated regulatory framework and statutory obligations for social housing landlords, and to meet the expectation, as landlords, to have clear, concise policies.

These policies reflect best practice in tenancy and property/estate management, including proactive support for tenants at risk of losing their homes.

They also support the Council's broader strategic objectives, including:

- Tenancy sustainment - helping residents maintain stable housing
- Community safety - ensuring tenancies are managed in a way that promotes safe and cohesive neighbourhoods
- Housing standards - ensuring that tenancies are aligned with the Council's commitment to quality, well-managed homes.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. It is proposed that the following policies are amended to reflect best practice standards, and ensure the Council meet the requirements of the standards as set out by the Regulator of Social Housing (Appendix 3), whilst continuing to meet all current legal requirements.

- 3.2. All policies are designed to protect tenants, uphold community safety, and provide the Council with appropriate mechanisms to respond to evolving challenges. The updated policies place more responsibility on the Council as a Landlord with minimal requirements placed on tenants – all requirements on the tenant are existing.

- 3.3. The proposed changes are summarised as follows:

3.3.1 The Rent Recovery Policy (Appendix 1) has been taken out of the larger Corporate Debt Policy (2020) to form a standalone policy. This is required to reflect the detailed ways in which the Council collects rent, recovers arrears and sets out the ways in which tenants are supported early on to prevent enforcement action and help tenants to repay their rent arrears. There are no proposed changes to the way the Council will collect rent and recover arrears, but this standalone policy makes it easier for tenants to access the information.

3.3.2 The Tenancy Policy (Appendix 2) has been updated. The Council's current Tenancy Policy set out the types of tenancies offered when the Policy was written. This included fixed term tenancies and demoted tenancies which have been removed in the proposed updated version, as we no longer have

any tenants on these types of tenancies and these are no longer offered. Instead, the policy clarifies that introductory and secure tenancies are the default and this is in line with best practices. The policy also sets out how the Council manages succession, which has been updated to include assignment. Assignment is a legal process by which a tenancy is transferred to someone else, who must meet the eligibility criteria. Social housing landlords must have this in place so the inclusion of this in this policy ensures the Council aligns with its legal obligations as a landlord.

- 3.4 Once agreed the policies will be made accessible via the Council's website, under the strategies, plans and corporate policies page as well as on the Housing, council tenant web page to ensure transparency and easy access, for tenants. These policies will also be proactively advertised with tenants and shared with the teams that deliver these services or work closely with Landlord Services.
- 3.5 The policies will be reviewed every 2 years, or sooner if triggered by legislative changes, changes to consumer standards or the identification of further best practice.

4 Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 Implementing these new policies will contribute to the vision and priorities outlined in the Reading Council Plan 2025–2028, particularly under the priority to '*Secure Reading's Economic and Cultural Success*' ensuring high-quality, affordable housing, which contributes to a stable, inclusive community and a thriving local economy.
- 4.2 The publication of transparent policies adheres to Housing and Communities common purpose of 'Supporting the life that matters to you' for tenants and contributes to the objective to improve tenant satisfaction with social housing by clearly defining tenant rights, responsibilities, and service standards, fostering transparency and stronger relationships between tenants and the Council.

5 Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1 Adopting these policies will not have any environmental or climate impact or implications as they propose no change to current service delivery.

6 Community Engagement

- 6.1 These policies reflect existing practice and do not propose any changes to current service delivery. The Tenant Sounding Board have been asked to consider these policies and make suggestions in relation to the tone and language used. Suggestions received will be incorporated into the final versions for Committee approval.
- 6.2 The policies are being introduced to clearly define the Council's obligations as a Landlord and ensure transparency to tenants. They set out the ways in which we deliver services within legal parameters, the obligations we have as a Landlord, and the expectations we set out for tenants based on their tenancy agreement.

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, and no 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 There are no other relevant considerations.

9 Legal Implications

9.1 The Regulator for Social Housing has set out its requirements for Safety and Quality, Transparency, Influence and Accountability, Tenancy and Neighbourhood and Community Standards. These policies cover the Council's requirements to meet these standards.

The Policies must also align with a range of statutory frameworks, and these are all listed within each policy. The main legislation relevant to these policies is highlighted below:

- **The Housing Act 1985** and **Housing Act 1996**, which govern the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords in the social housing sector.
- **The Equality Act 2010**, ensuring that tenancy policies and practices do not discriminate and promote equality of opportunity.
- **The Rent Standard**, which regulates rent-setting to ensure affordability and fairness.
- **Decent Homes Standard 2006**, sets the minimum standard that social housing homes must meet.
- **Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018**, requires landlords to ensure that rented properties are safe, healthy, and free from hazards, with tenants able to take legal action if their home is unfit.

9.2 The Council's Senior Solicitor; Jack Biddle has reviewed the policies and provided commentary relating to the Rent Recovery Policy. These have been considered and amendments to the policies made where applicable.

10. Financial Implications

10.1 All known costs associated with the implementation of these policies are accounted for within the existing Housing Revenue Account budget as the proposals are in line with current service delivery.

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1 Once approved, these policies will be made accessible via the Council's website, under the Strategies, plans and corporate policies section, as well as on the Housing, council tenant web page and distributed to all relevant stakeholders.

12. Background Papers

12.1 There are none.

Appendices

- 1. Rent Recovery Policy**
- 2. Tenancy Policy**
- 3. Regulator of Social Housing Standards**

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Document Control

Title	Rent Recovery Policy
Responsible Officer	Housing and Income Recovery Service Manager
Author	Housing and Income Recovery Service Manager
Subject	Rent Collection for Council Tenants
Information Asset Owner	Housing and Income Recovery Service Manager
Approved by	Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee
Approved date	Planned July 2026
Review date	July 2028
Review responsibility	Housing and Income Recovery Service Manager
Applicable to	Reading Borough Council Tenants
DPIA Completion date	
EIA Completion date	July 2026

Revision History

Previously part of Corporate Debt Policy	July 2026

Consultation and Distribution

Housing, Neighbourhood and Leisure Committee	21 st July 2026
Lead Councillor for Housing	3 rd June 2026
Housing and Communities Management Team	2 April 2026
Tenant Sounding Board	3 rd June 2026

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1. Introduction

This Rent Recovery Policy sets out Reading Borough Council's clear framework to effective rent collection, arrears prevention and arrears recovery across its housing stock, providing support for tenants to manage their rent accounts, and address arrears at the earliest stage, before debts become unmanageable.

This fair approach is essential to good Landlord Services, to minimise debt and maximise rental income, which is vital in enabling the Council to manage, maintain, and improve the Council's housing stock and surrounding environment for the benefit of all tenants.

The policy supports the Council's wider strategic objectives in the Corporate Plan, Corporate Debt Policy and Allocations Policy, with a focus on promoting tenancy sustainability and preventing homelessness, against the backdrop of the cost-of-living crisis.

The Housing Income Recovery Teams, within Landlord Services, is responsible for monitoring rent accounts, and taking enforcement action against tenants when arrears occur. Reading Borough Council takes rent arrears very seriously. Rent payments are a key condition of the Tenancy Agreement, and tenants are expected to ensure that rent is paid in full and on time. It is the tenant's responsibility to make sure that the rent is paid in full when due.

We recognise that sometimes tenants will have genuine financial difficulties and will be unable to pay the rent due. Where arrears have accrued, the Housing Income Recovery Teams will attempt to intervene early by contacting the tenant, to offer support and advice, and agree a clear and affordable repayment plan to recover the arrears and sustain their tenancy. Referrals to the Council's in-house Money Advice Team may also be made when a tenant is struggling with their finances or debts, to resolve any financial difficulties.

The Council will take legal action against tenants who are either unwilling to pay arrears or receive help. After all reasonable steps have been explored, eviction will be the last resort.

2. Scope

The key strategic objectives of this policy are to maximise rental income and minimise the level of arrears. The Council aims to achieve this by:

- Collecting rent when due from tenants to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.
- Early intervention to prevent tenants from accruing arrears.
- Ensuring effective management of rent arrears to maximise income collection and minimise bad debts.
- Ensuring the treatment of tenants is equitable, accountable, fair, efficient, effective and consistent throughout the recovery processes.
- Promote Income Maximisation for our tenants.
- Only evicting a tenant as a last resort.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Tenants Responsibilities

The term 'tenant' within this policy includes sole tenants, and all joint tenants listed on the tenancy.

All Reading Borough Council tenants sign either a secure tenancy agreement for permanent accommodation and a non secure tenancy agreement for temporary accommodation and therefore have an obligation to pay their rent on time. Extracts from the Tenancy Agreement state:

"5.3 Paying rent and service charges is one of your most important responsibilities. Your rent and services charges are due every week and you must pay them on time or in advance. Rent is due from the Tenancy start date. If you have difficulty paying your rent, you should contact the Rents Team immediately."

"5.8 If this is a Joint tenancy, each named tenant is jointly responsible for paying the whole rent and any other payments due (arrears chargeable repairs and/or Service charges)."

“5.9 We can recover all the rent arrears owed on your home from either of the Joint tenants of the property.

This means that if you leave your property, you are still liable for paying the rent and for any arrears, Service charges or chargeable repairs until your tenancy comes to an end.”

3.2 Reading Borough Council's Responsibilities

The Council is responsible for setting rent and service charges in accordance with relevant legislation and government policy. Rent charges are reviewed annually, and tenants will be provided with a minimum of four weeks' written notice of any change to rent charges as stated in the tenancy agreement:

“5.1 We are responsible for setting your rent. The amount of rent you pay depends on the size, type, and location of your home. We can increase or decrease your rent at any time. We must tell you, in writing, at least 4 weeks before any rent change.

The Council also has the right to introduce additional services which must be paid for as part of rent or as an additional service charge, as stated in the Tenancy Agreement:

“5.2 We are responsible for setting your service charges. We can introduce new services which you will have to pay for. These will be charged in addition to your rent and will be collected as part of your rent. We must tell you in writing at least 4 weeks before we do this. We can also introduce Service charges for services that you already receive. These will be charged in addition to your rent and will be collected as part of your rent. We must tell you in writing at least 4 weeks before we do this.

4. Prevention

Reading Borough Council's approach to rent arrears collection places strong emphasis on the importance of early preventative actions and providing support to help tenants maintain their tenancy whenever possible.

This approach starts before tenancy sign up with pre-tenancy counselling and is promoted further at the point the tenancy agreement is signed.

Tenants will always be advised of the next course of action and the ultimate consequences of non-payment throughout the recovery process.

Preventing rent arrears is essential both for tenants and the Council. Rent arrears can have significant financial and social consequences for tenants, including the risk of homelessness and exclusion from future housing opportunities. Arrears recovery and eviction processes also place substantial financial pressures on the Council, with the cost of an eviction running into thousands of pounds.

We aim to prevent rent arrears from occurring by:

- Promoting a positive payment culture among tenants. Reminding tenants of their responsibility to pay rent when due and ensuring there are accessible methods for them to pay e.g. direct debit, standing order, automated payment line and online options.
- Exploring ways to maximise tenant's income by informing them of benefits they are entitled to.
- Promoting financial inclusion by providing budgeting advice and making referrals to the Money Advice Team to help tenants regain control of their finances. This can include applying for Crisis Resilience Fund, Household support fund, and making an application to Readifood for food parcels.
- Promoting and continuing to review and improve the availability of payment options including:
 - Payment by direct debit monthly on 2nd, 11th or 25th, weekly on a Friday or fortnightly on a Wednesday.
 - Standing Order.
 - Over the phone by Visa Debit, MasterCard, Visa, Mastercard Debit.
 - Online, using the Reading Borough Council website.
Electronic Payment Card, which can be used at Paypoint, or the Post Office.

- Providing or sign-posting advice and support regarding welfare benefits to maximise tenant's income, this includes making sure the tenant has claimed Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, and if this is the case, has returned their claim with all the accompanying documentation.
- Make a referral to the Housing Support Team if support is needed to manage the tenancy.
- Ensuring that all communications are clear and written in plain English and encourage tenants to make contact. Where English is not the first language, we will provide a translation service where possible, if required.
- Carrying out periodic rent campaigns, using a variety of publications e.g. leaflets, posters and flyers etc.

Reading Borough Council also aims to prevent arrears caused by the most common underlying contributing factors, and taking early actions to mitigate these issues, which include:

- Universal Credit issues.
- Housing Benefit issues.
- Changes in income due to personal circumstances (e.g. illness, death of a partner or relationship breakdown, increase in number of dependants).
- Low income (e.g. unemployment, low paid work, zero-hour contracts or low take-up of benefit).
- Unmanageable household debt and/or competing priorities.
- Difficulty generally in managing finances such as referrals to Readifood for food parcels or for assistance with Energy Support.

The Council makes use of IT systems to monitor and record rent payments. We will also keep a clear record of each contact with the tenant and other agencies to ensure clear case records are available.

Tenants will be kept informed of their rent account with rent statements sent by post, quarterly. Tenants are also able to view their current rent account status online.

Housing Income Recovery Officers and Specialist Housing Income Recovery Officers receive training to ensure they maximise the use of resources, including IT

systems, to provide them with the tools needed to collect income and information to complete a financial assessment, give benefit advice, and make a referral to the in-house Money Advice Team when required.

5. Early intervention

Despite preventative measures, some tenants may still fall into arrears. Early intervention is therefore essential in identifying the causes of non-payment and offering timely support. Tenants can be given advice or referred to organisations that are able to help.

Rent accounts are monitored on a weekly basis and an initial contact letter is sent to those who have missed their first weeks rent payment. This letter encourages contact and provides details of the in-house Money Advice Team. It also is a reminder that it is the tenant's responsibility to ensure that they maintain and update their Housing Benefit or Universal Credit claim if applicable.

The Council will seek to build constructive working relationships with tenants and provide support through telephone calls, text messages, emails, letters, and home visits where appropriate when a tenant falls into arrears, to offer advice. We will also work with other services that are supporting the tenant.

Where attempts to contact the tenant have failed, we will try to contact other agencies, next of kin, or in-house teams who may be able to encourage the tenant to make contact and try to prevent recovery action.

6. Vulnerable tenants

Reading Borough Council recognises that some tenants may be more vulnerable to financial hardship and at greater risk of accruing rent arrears. We will actively seek to identify vulnerable tenants through direct contact with the tenant, and by working closely with the Allocations team at the time of sign up to ensure there is an offer of support available depending on the vulnerability.

Reading Borough Council Landlord Services defines a vulnerable person as:

- Anyone aged 16/17 with a guarantor.
- Care leavers.
- Tenants with mental or physical disabilities.
- Parents who are struggling to cope.
- Anyone who needs Adult Social Care services or Supported Housing services.
- Anyone who identifies as needing additional support to manage their tenancy.

The Council keeps a record of all tenants who state they are vulnerable or have any disabilities. We will make reasonable adjustments to communication methods and service delivery where required. This may include providing information in alternative formats, arranging interpreters or sign language support, or communicating through support workers or representatives, as deemed reasonable by the Housing Income Recovery Officer.

The Council will provide a tailored case by case approach to arrears recovery for vulnerable tenants and be sensitive in dealing with vulnerable tenants who have additional needs, for example additional contacts or visits made.

Where a tenant is identified as vulnerable, Housing Income Recovery Officers will act appropriately to support the tenant, for example by making a referral to the in-house Housing Support Team. They will also demonstrate awareness that non-payment of rent could be indicator of other support needs.

The Housing Income Recovery Team will work closely with Adult and Children's Social Services throughout the arrears process if applicable to ensure that tenants needs are understood, working together to offer support and solve issues with an aligned approach.

In extremely rare circumstances, where a tenant is under 18 or is particularly vulnerable, we will consider if the tenant has the mental capacity to defend possession proceedings, or any issues under the Equality Act 2010.

7. Rent arrears recovery

Rent arrears recovery will escalate in line with a pre-court protocol. This is legislative guidance which prescribes the specific procedure that Reading Borough Council should follow before issuing possession claims. We will request payment in full. If this is not possible, recovery action can be stopped or paused at any stage, prior to asking the court for possession, by the tenant agreeing an affordable repayment plan with the Council.

A financial assessment of the tenant's ability to pay will be completed before a repayment plan is agreed to ensure that it is affordable. This will consider the tenants household income, outgoings and debts. Any repayment plan will be confirmed in writing by letter, email or text, and will confirm what payments the tenant needs to make, when to make them, and for how long. The legal implications of not keeping to the agreement will also be plainly explained to the tenant.

The recovery process can end at any time if the tenant pays their rent arrears and any court costs in full. This is known as a Paid-up Possession Order (Paid up PO).

Where a tenant informs the Council that they are experiencing problems with Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, we will work with the tenant to resolve difficulties. The Housing Income Recovery Officer will work closely with tenants in receipt of Universal Credit to ensure they have supplied all the information required to receive the Housing Costs Element, and make sure the tenant understands their responsibility to pay rent and agree a payment method.

The Council will consider the Corporate Debt Policy, which prioritises rent and rent arrears payments over some other debts owed to the Council, due to the potential risk of eviction and subsequent homelessness, arising from non-payment.

Where tenants persistently fail to pay rent and other charges, and other means of recovering rent arrears have been exhausted, Reading Borough Council will take legal action to evict, always as a last resort.

The Council will request a Money Judgment Order in the majority of cases; this specifies that the tenant has to pay the rent arrears regardless of whether they are evicted, and it could affect their housing options going forward if they fail to do so.

As per the Tenancy Agreement, that the Council will seek to recover any court costs incurred from the tenant.

8. Service of the notices /Rent Arrears Enforcement

Where tenants fail to respond to several attempts to contact for initial recovery action, or when a repayment plan has been broken by a missed, late or partial payment, and where there are no mitigating circumstances, we will attempt to visit the property with a tailor made warning letter advising the tenant of the action they need to take to prevent a legal 'Notice of Seeking Possession' (NOSP) being served.

This may be delayed where:

- The tenant has done everything they can to progress their Housing Benefit or Universal Credit claim, and/or the tenant's eligibility has been confirmed, and they are paying any short fall due.
- The tenant is vulnerable, and it may be necessary to spend more time working with the tenant to set up a repayment plan or arrange further support before taking legal action.
- The tenant is experiencing a life crisis where the Housing Income Recovery Officer decides legal action would not be appropriate and/ if referrals are necessary to another agency or in house service to aid in tenancy sustainment.

If the tenant does not make contact to provide details of mitigating circumstances, or fails to make up the missing payment, it will likely result in the service of a NOSP upon the next review of the account.

Although serving a NOSP is our first step in taking legal action against a tenant, the Council's primary aim remains to resolve issues preventing the tenant making payment without proceeding to court action

9. Notice of Seeking Possession for Introductory Tenancies (NOSP)

Reading Borough Council will serve a Notice of Seeking Possession (Section 128) if an Introductory Tenant does not clear arrears in full or make and adhere to a repayment agreement.

Tenants have the right to a review if the Council decide to serve an Introductory NOSP. Tenants are required to complete a form if they would like a review hearing. This must be submitted within 14 days of the service of the NOSP. The tenant can attend this review but will need to inform us of their intention to attend, or an internal review will be held with no representation from the tenant.

If a tenant states they want to attend the review hearing, the Council must give the tenant 5 days' notice of a review panel location, date and time. The review panel will consist of two officers who are independent from the original decision, and of a higher seniority than those who made the decision to serve the NOSP.

We will provide written confirmation of the outcome of the review panel by the date the NOSP becomes effective (i.e. the date legal proceedings can start).

10. Notice of Seeking Possession for Secure Tenancies (NOSP)

Reading Borough Council will seek possession for secure tenancies under Ground 1 of the Housing Act 1985, which refers to rent arrears or breach of any other term of the tenancy agreement.

'Any rent lawfully due from the tenant has not been paid or the obligation of the tenancy has been broken or not performed'.

The NOSP is valid for 12 months from the date it was served, unless the tenant clears the arrears in full prior to the NOSP being served.

Following the NOSP being served, before taking court action, we will make every reasonable attempt to contact the tenant to discuss:

- The amount of the arrears.
- The cause of the arrears.

- A repayment plan for the arrears.
- Any Housing Benefit/Universal Credit issues.
- The implications of the Notice being served.
- The need for accessing legal, money and housing benefit advice.

The Council will continue to inform tenants of their rent balance through quarterly rent statements and will continue to work with the tenant to resolve outstanding issues to prevent further recovery.

If the tenant sets up an affordable repayment arrangement and keeps to that arrangement, we will agree to delay taking court action for as long as the tenant keeps to the agreement.

If the tenant breaches the repayment agreement, we will inform them of our intention to take further legal action and set clear time limits for making up any shortfall in payment to prevent court action.

We will serve a new NOSP after 12 months if there are still rent arrears to safeguard the debt and reinforce that court action will be taken if the agreement is broken.

11. Court action

The Council will take court action if:

- A repayment arrangement made following the NOSP being served has been broken and the shortfall is not repaid within an acceptable timescale, or
- No satisfactory agreement has been agreed, and a valid Notice remains in place, and
- There are no alternatives to court action after we have taken steps to contact the tenant, reduce the debt and provide support.

The Council will continue to consider the individual circumstances of tenants throughout the recovery process, and the Specialist Housing Income Recovery Officer may exercise discretion where appropriate.

The tenant will be visited by a Specialist Housing Income Recovery Officer before an application is made to the court. This will be accompanied by a hand delivered letter outlining pre court protocol and will provide a final opportunity for the tenant to work with the Council to prevent court action.

The Council will contact the tenant as soon as we receive notification of a date set for the hearing and confirm the date and time of the hearing. We will explain the implications of non-payment once the court has made an order. The Court should also provide written confirmation of this.

It is not appropriate for the Specialist Housing Income Recovery Officer to help the tenant complete their defence form against the claim and if a tenant requests assistance we will direct them to an external advice agency for support.

We will always request that the judge awards us costs of taking court action, and we can request the following orders at court:

- Suspended Possession Order (SPO).
- Outright Possession Order (OPO).
- For the case to be adjourned (ADJ).

When deciding the type of order that will be requested, we will consider:

- The amount of arrears.
- Any previous adjournments.
- The circumstances of the tenant in relation to their ability to repay the debt within an acceptable time.
- Any issues with Housing Benefit or Universal Credit claims.
- The tenant's previous payment history and previous contacts.

An Outright Possession Order (OPO) gives Reading Borough Council immediate possession, or possession within a set time, normally 14 or 28 days. Occasionally we will request an OPO forthwith. This is the only outcome that the court can grant for Introductory Tenancies as possession is mandatory unless the Council are requesting an adjournment. An outright possession is a court judgement that requires a social housing tenant to leave the property by a specific date. If the tenant

fails to vacate the landlord (Reading Borough Council) can apply to the court for a Warrant of Eviction.

A Suspended Possession Order (SPO) is where possession of the property will be suspended on terms of weekly, fortnightly or monthly payments of current rent, plus an amount to repay the rent arrears on an agreed date. If the tenant breaches the order, we will contact the tenant to pay the shortfall or set up an affordable repayment arrangement to make up the shortfall within a reasonable time or we will apply to the court for a Warrant of Eviction.

If the tenant is having difficulty keeping to the terms of an SPO, the tenant may apply to court to seek a variation of the terms of the Order. It is the tenant's responsibility to do this, which may incur a court fee that the tenant will need to pay. We would only agree to this where it is the only reasonable step to repay the debt and support the tenant.

Where the tenant has complied in full with the terms of an SPO or makes a lump sum payment and all arrears and costs are cleared, the Order will cease to have effect. A letter will be sent to the tenant to confirm that this is the case.

The tenant or their representative may seek an adjournment if they feel our request for an Order is unreasonable, or there is new information that needs to be considered by the court. The Court may adjourn possession proceedings for a fixed period if we have failed to follow, or are unable to demonstrate that, the pre-action protocol has been followed. The Court could also strike the case out (Dismiss).

The court may also adjourn possession proceedings for a fixed period if there are outstanding Housing Benefit/Universal Credit or benefits issues.

The court may order an Adjournment with Liberty to Restore where there are outstanding issues which cannot be resolved at the hearing, or when the tenant has cleared the arrears, but future payments are unclear. The case will remain undecided in law but can be restored by Reading Borough Council as the claimant, without the need to pay additional court costs at a later date.

The court may order an Adjournment on terms (secure tenancies). These terms are laid down by the Judge. This is usually requested when both parties have agreed repayment terms for low level arrears before the hearing. If payments are not made as agreed, and an acceptable arrangement to make up missing payments is not made, the Council have liberty to apply to the Court for the case to be restored and relisted for further hearing.

The Court may strike out or dismiss the claim if they consider pre court protocol has not been adhered to.

We will request court costs for each case. The only exception to this is where there are exceptional circumstances, such as having to seek advice from a Solicitor or Lawyer.

The tenant will be sent a letter immediately after the Court hearing explaining the outcome, and their rent account will be closely monitored by the Specialist Housing Income Recovery Officer.

Where a court order has been breached, we will make reasonable attempts to contact the tenant to obtain details of the household income and expenditure to establish whether there has been any change of circumstances. In this case we may renegotiate the agreement to cover any shortfall. If this is not possible, the Council will take the relevant steps to seek permission to evict and carry out a further visit to the property before requesting a Warrant of Eviction.

Permission to evict can only be authorised once a written report has been checked by the Housing Income Recovery Team Leader and presented to the Housing Income Recovery Manager. This is then further signed off by the Income Recovery Service Manager. This follows an application to Court through PCOL (possession claims online) and attendance at the County Court to obtain a possession order that has not been adhered to.

When the tenant has complied with their court order and has satisfied the Court Judgement, including Court costs, the Order ends and no further possession action can be taken against the possession order.

Reading Borough Councils approach is that eviction is only used as a last resort and will only be considered when all other options for clearing arrears have been exhausted. The primary aim of this policy is to recover the debt and prevent homelessness rather than regain possession.

Tenants facing eviction are advised of their right to apply to Court to suspend the warrant. This gives the tenant an opportunity to explain the arrears to the judge or make an agreement to repay the debt.

Whilst each application is reviewed on its individual merits, the Council will generally oppose any application to suspend an eviction, and request that it is dismissed by the Judge. The only exceptions to this are where the arrears and costs have been paid in full, or there has been a significant change in the tenant's circumstances deeming it unreasonable or disproportionate to evict the tenant.

Reading Borough Council will attend the eviction with the court bailiff who is responsible for executing the eviction. A Council carpenter must be in attendance to force entry if necessary and change the locks.

If there is intelligence or evidence that the tenant may be violent or cause a risk to public safety, we will request the Police attend the eviction. This is to protect staff and minimise risk.

When tenants are notified of an impending eviction, they will be advised to remove all their possessions from the property. We will dispose of any possessions left in the property at the end of the tenancy according to the terms of the tenancy. Every effort will be made to inform the evicted tenant of this process, as well as their responsibility for meeting any reasonable costs we may have incurred.

If the tenant is not present at the eviction, the Council will store the items for a maximum of 28 days from the date of eviction, except for perishable goods, following which, we will then dispose of any items that are unclaimed.

We will notify the Housing Advice Team, Adult and Children Social services when we apply to court, and when we apply for an eviction warrant. This will allow the

relevant departments within the Council to work together to overcome any concerns, and to work with the tenant to prevent further action where this is possible.

12. Loss of rights for tenants in arrears

Tenants who apply to be on the Housing Register will be given no priority need for housing if:

- They are in arrears when they apply to be on the Housing Register
- They go into arrears when they are on the Housing Register

Discretion will be used where a case has been classified as urgent, for example medical need, or the tenant can demonstrate they are keeping to a repayment agreement or where a management transfer has been authorised.

Reading Borough Council will make the full repayment of all arrears a condition for consenting to a mutual exchange.

13. Complaints

Reading Borough Council is committed to handling complaints fairly, promptly, and effectively. We use complaints, comments, and compliments, to help us review and improve our services.

If a tenant has a complaint about any policy or procedure this can be raised through the Council's Complaints Procedure. Further information, including how to make a complaint, is available via the Council's complaints process, linked below.

[Housing complaints procedure - Reading Borough Council](#)

14. Tenant insolvencies

Where a tenant is subject to Bankruptcy, an Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA), or a Debt Relief Order (DRO) and remains in occupation, they remain liable to pay their ongoing rent as it falls due.

Any rent arrears that arise after the insolvency begins are not included in the insolvency and may be recovered through normal legal action, including possession proceedings.

Rent arrears that existed at the date of the insolvency are qualifying debts and are included within the insolvency. This means that enforcement action to recover those arrears as a debt, such as obtaining a suspended possession order or money judgment, is restricted.

However, inclusion of arrears in an insolvency does not prevent the Council from seeking possession of the property. In these cases, Possession proceedings may be taken, and the Council can rely on rent arrears as a ground, including arrears that are included in the insolvency.

Tenants are expected to maintain their ongoing rent and repay arrears included in an insolvency through an informal arrangement to avoid a breach of tenancy.

The Council does not require the court's permission to begin or continue possession proceedings and may seek possession where rent arrears are unpaid. The court may grant possession of the property, although it cannot make an order requiring payment of arrears that are included in the insolvency.

In *Sharples v Places for People Homes Ltd*, the Court of Appeal reviewed the interaction between insolvency and a landlord's right to possession. It confirmed that bankruptcy or a Debt Relief Order does not prevent a landlord from obtaining possession, and that a mandatory rent arrears ground can still be satisfied even where the arrears are included in the insolvency.

15. Monitoring

Rent arrears are monitored on a weekly basis and data (including value of arrears, geographical area, tenure) is used to inform and support the approach the Council takes for effective rent arrears management.

The Council uses several indicators, including national performance indicators, to measure rent collection and arrears to compare the service alongside other local authorities, as indicated below:

- The amount of rent arrears as a percentage of the yearly rent due on House Mark returns
- BV66a - Rent percentage collected as a proportion of rents due on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings
- BV66b - The number of local authority tenants with more than seven weeks of (gross) rent arrears as a percentage of the total number of Council tenants
- BV66c - Percentage of local authority tenants in arrears who have had Notices Seeking Possession served
- BV66d - Percentage of local authority tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears

16. Communication

Effective communication is essential to managing tenancy breaches and maintaining good relationships between tenants and Reading Borough Council as the landlord. Reading Borough Council commits to:

- **Clear Information:** Providing tenants with accessible information about their responsibilities under the tenancy agreement, and how to report concerns.
- **Responsive Contact:** Acknowledging complaints regarding tenancy breaches promptly and keeping complainants informed of the progress and outcomes of investigations.
- **Neutral and Respectful Dialogue:** Ensuring all communications with tenants are handled impartially, respectfully, and confidentially.
- **Engagement:** Encouraging open dialogue and, where appropriate, facilitating mediation between parties to resolve any disputes amicably.
- **Staff Communication:** Ensuring all staff involved in tenancy management are kept informed of procedures and updates to policy.
- **Multi-Agency Coordination:** Communicating effectively with internal and external agencies such as Environmental Health, the police, and social services when their involvement is required.

- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Providing tenants with opportunities to influence and give feedback on how their tenancies are managed to support continuous service improvement.

This policy is accessible to all tenants including lessee's, as well as Reading Borough Council (RBC) staff, and stakeholders via the Reading Borough Council website and will be updated to reflect any changes.

Internally, this policy will be available to all staff and stored on the Reading Borough Council SharePoint site for easy access.

17. Equalities, diversity and inclusion

Reading Borough Council is committed to ensuring equal and fair access to our services by considering the individual needs of our tenants, their families, and other members of their household. Whilst working with tenants we will consider these needs and make reasonable adjustments where necessary. We will always treat people with fairness, dignity, and respect.

This policy will be implemented in a way that:

- **Treats all tenants fairly and without discrimination** on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic.
- **Recognises and respects the diverse needs** of tenants, ensuring communication and support are accessible to everyone, including those with language barriers, disabilities, or other vulnerabilities.
- **Ensures reasonable adjustments** are made to accommodate tenants with specific needs or disabilities in relation to tenancy breach investigations and interventions.
- **Provides equal access** to complaint reporting mechanisms and support services for all tenants.
- **Promotes cultural awareness and sensitivity** among housing management staff to support positive and respectful interactions.
- **Monitors and reviews** the policy's impact on different tenant groups to ensure it does not disproportionately affect any particular community.

All our staff are regularly trained in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion to help them understand when and where we may need to adapt our standard policies, procedures, and working practices to accommodate the unique needs of our residents.

Our policies set out how we seek to meet the specific needs of vulnerable residents, ensuring they receive the appropriate support and adjustments that they need to sustain their tenancies.

18. Reasonable Adjustments

Reading Borough Council is committed to ensuring that all tenants, including those with disabilities or specific needs, can fully access and benefit from this policy.

To achieve this, we will:

- **Identify and respond to individual needs** by offering reasonable adjustments in communication, investigation, and resolution of tenancy breaches.
- **Provide information in accessible formats** such as Braille, audio, or translated versions, depending on tenant requirements.
- **Offer alternative methods of communication**, including email, text message, or face-to-face meetings, to suit the preferences and needs of tenants.
- **Adjust appointment times or locations** to accommodate tenants with mobility, health, or caregiving needs.
- **Work closely with support workers, advocates, or family members** where tenants require this assistance to facilitate a move.
- Ensure appropriate sensitivity and tailored support when dealing with tenants with **health conditions or disabilities**.
- **Train staff** to recognise and respond appropriately to requests for reasonable adjustments in relation to tenancy management issues.

19. Legislation

Reading Borough Council will always meet legislative and regulatory requirements, including but not limited to the:

- RSH Consumer Standards
- Housing White paper
- Housing Act 1988
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Pre-action protocol for possession claims by social landlords.
<https://www.justice.gov.uk/courts/procedure-rules/civil/protocol/pre-action-protocol-for-possession-claims-by-social-landlords>
- Local Government Act 2000
- Protection from Eviction Act 1977

- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Equalities Act 2010

20. Links to other Policies

[Allocations-Scheme-2026-final.pdf](#)

Complaints Policy

Corporate Debt Policy

Tenancy Policy

Please also refer to the individual Tenancy Agreement

21. Implementation and review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or when there are changes to best practice or statutory requirements, to ensure the policy achieves its objectives of minimising arrears levels and continuously improve services and performance.

It is the responsibility of the Housing Income Recovery Service Manager to ensure that implementation of the Rent Recovery Policy is monitored. All staff involved in rent collection and arrears recovery issues has the responsibility to read, understand and implement this policy.

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Reading Borough Council Tenancy Policy (for the Council's own housing stock)

Document Control

Title	Tenancy Policy
Responsible Officer	Housing and Estate Service Manager
Author	Housing and Estate Service Manager
Subject	Tenancies
Information Asset Owner	Housing and Estate Service Manager
Approved by	Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee
Approved date	Planned July 2026
Review date	July 2028
Review responsibility	Housing and Estate Service Manager
Applicable to	Reading Borough Council Tenants
DPIA Completion date	
EIA Completion date	July 2026

Revision History

July 2026	New document

Consultation and Distribution

Housing, Neighbourhood and Leisure Committee	21st July 2026
Lead Councillor for Housing	3rd June 2026
Housing and Communities Management Team	2 April 2026
Tenant Sounding Board	3rd June 2026

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1. Introduction

This Tenancy Policy applies to Reading Borough Council's housing stock and sets out our approach to providing an effective tenancy management service. It compliments, and should be read alongside the Housing Allocation Scheme, and other housing policies and procedures, which are listed at the end of this policy.

2. Aims and objectives

This policy supports our commitment and common purpose to '*supporting the life that matters to you*' by offering secure tenancies as our primary tenancy type. This approach provides greater stability, and peace of mind for tenants and household members. We are committed to supporting tenants to sustain their tenancies, providing security within their homes and communities. As part of our aim of fostering thriving communities and preventing homelessness, taking possession action will always be a last resort.

This policy also outlines, in a clear and accessible way, the general tenancy management approach in accordance with relevant legislation and regulatory requirements, as well as best practice. It explains how the Council meets The Regulator of Social Housing Tenancy Standard detailing the key aspects of how tenancies are managed.

3. Legal and Regulatory framework

This Tenancy Policy complies with the relevant legislation and regulatory requirements, including (but not limited to) the following:

- Land Compensation Act 1973
- Protection from Eviction Act 1977
- Housing Act 1985, 1988 & 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- Localism Act 2011
- Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013
- The Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

- HMCTS pre-action protocol for Possession Claims by Social Landlords 1996
- The Secure Tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse Act 2018)

4. Tenancy Types

Introductory Tenancies

Unless a new tenant (or one party to a joint tenancy) already holds a secure tenancy, or another social housing equivalent such as an assured (non-shorthold) tenancy, Reading Borough Council will grant new tenants an introductory tenancy for a trial period. This allows Reading Borough Council to support new tenants, identify any cause for concern early on and help tenants to understand and keep to the terms and conditions of their tenancy.

Introductory tenancies ordinarily last for a period of 12 months but may be extended to a maximum period of 18 months where there are concerns or issues that warrant further monitoring. Where an extension is considered, tenants will be notified in writing and have the right to request a review, which needs to be within the timescale stated in the written notice. This review must be requested within 2 weeks from the date the tenant is notified of the decision to extend the ordinary introductory period.

Introductory tenants have fewer rights than secure tenants, and these differences are set out in the Tenancy Agreement.

Where tenancy conditions are satisfactorily met during the introductory period, the tenancy will automatically convert to a secure tenancy at the end of the trial period. We will confirm this in writing. Where issues arise, we will work with tenants to provide support and give them the opportunity to put things right where possible.

In circumstances where an individual lacks the mental capacity to enter into a new tenancy agreement, the tenancy may only be granted if there is an appropriate legally authorised person who can sign on their behalf, such as an Attorney under a Property and Financial Affairs Lasting Power of Attorney, or a Court appointed Deputy.

Where a tenancy is transferred through statutory succession, the successor's mental capacity is not relevant to the validity of the succession, as this occurs automatically in law. However, appropriate support and safeguarding considerations will be applied where necessary.

How the Council can end your Introductory Tenancy

Reading Borough Council may service a Notice of Possession, in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). This sets out the reasons why we intend to go to court to seek possession and end your tenancy. Tenants have the right to request a review of the decision, which needs to be within the timescale stated in the written notice.

Secure tenancies

A secure (lifetime) tenancy is the main type of tenancy issued by Reading Borough Council. Secure tenants can live in their home permanently providing the terms of the tenancy are not breached.

Secure tenancies will also be granted in the following circumstances:

- Where an existing secure or assured tenant chooses to transfer to a Reading Borough Council social rented home, or because they need to move due to redevelopment works.
- Existing Reading Borough Council tenants who apply to succeed to a tenancy (and meet the legislative and RBC policy criteria) will 'inherit' the existing secure tenancy.
- Where an existing secure or assured tenant must move due to domestic abuse. This would apply to a sole tenant that had lost their security of tenure by leaving the home due to domestic abuse, or to a joint tenant, where security of tenure had been lost by the tenancy being terminated subject to appropriate evidence and safeguarding considerations.
- At the end of any introductory tenancy period, the tenancy will become a secure tenancy unless the Council has gained possession of the dwelling or is in the process of doing so.

The rights and responsibilities of secure tenants are set out in the Tenancy Agreement.

How the Council can end your Secure Tenancy

Reading Borough Council may seek possession of a secure tenancy where tenancy conditions have been breached. Where this is necessary, we will apply to the court for a Possession Order and follow due legal process. The Council may seek such an

order on any of the statutory grounds for possession set out in schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended).

5. Joint tenancies

Joint tenancies may be granted where both applicants are eligible for housing as defined by legislation. The tenancies listed above could be granted on a joint tenancy basis. The terms on which joint tenancies are granted are set out in the Housing Allocations Scheme (Section 19.1).

6. Major repairs (known as decants) or demolition

In certain circumstances tenants may need to move temporarily where major repairs or improvements are required that cannot be safely carried out while the property is occupied. In these situations, tenants will be moved to suitable temporary accommodation and will normally return to their home once the work is complete, retaining their original tenancy throughout.

In the case of repairs or improvements, if we move you to a temporary alternative property, you must return to your permanent property when we have completed the repairs. In this situation we will offer you a Decant agreement whilst occupying the temporary home. Further details can be found in our Decant Policy.

If your home must be demolished, we will offer you another suitable home. You may also be entitled to a home loss payment under the Land Compensation Act 1973 (s29).

7. Assignment and Mutual Exchange

An assignment is a legal process where a tenancy is 'transferred' to someone else.

Under section 91 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended), assignments are granted under the following three grounds:

1. Assignment by way of exchange (mutual exchange)
2. Assignment to someone who would be eligible to succeed the tenancy on the tenant's death.
3. Where a court makes an order ordering that a sole or joint tenancy be transferred to one party, for example, in connection with matrimonial or civil partnership proceedings.

Assigning your tenancy to a person who would qualify to succeed to the tenancy on your death means that there will no further right to succession upon the death of the tenant to whom the tenancy has been assigned.

Council tenants can exchange their homes (referred to as a Mutual Exchange) with another council tenant, or another tenant of an approved landlord, in specific circumstances subject to consent.

Introductory tenants do not have the right to mutually exchange but may be able to assign (transfer) the tenancy to a person who would qualify to succeed to the tenancy on the death of the tenant, in some circumstances.

Secure Tenancies

Secure tenants may be able to assign (transfer) the tenancy to a person who would qualify to succeed to the tenancy on the death of the tenant or by mutual exchange of the property, subject to approval.

Permission

Tenants must request written permission from Reading Borough Council before assigning a tenancy.

The Council can refuse permission to assign a tenancy under the grounds set out in schedule 3 to the Housing Act 1985 or in schedule 14 to the Localism Act 2011, which includes, but is not limited to, the following circumstances:

- a) The Council has started possession proceedings against you. This includes serving the tenant with a Notice of Seeking Possession.
- b) The property has been adapted for a person with disabilities and there would no longer be a person with disabilities living there.
- c) The size of the property is not reasonably suitable to the needs of the proposed assignee and their household.
- d) Consideration will be given to whether the tenant intends to occupy the property as their principal residence.
- e) Consideration will be given to whether the proposed assignee satisfies the eligibility requirements for inclusion on the housing register.
- f) If the council has reason to believe that the tenant is making the request under undue pressure or against their best interests., The Council will take appropriate steps to investigate and safeguard the tenant's rights and welfare in these instances.

8. Succession

Succession is the legal process where a tenancy may pass to another person following the death of a tenant.

Introductory tenants may only be succeeded by someone who would have been eligible for succession, and the new tenancy will also be an introductory tenancy. If someone succeeds to the Introductory tenancy and that tenancy later becomes a Secure tenancy, there will be no further succession rights to that Secure tenancy.

Secure tenancy succession depends on when the tenancy was granted and who is eligible under legislation.

If the secure tenancy was granted **before 1st April 2012** the following family members can succeed in the following circumstances:

- The spouse or civil partner – as long as they were occupying the property as their only or principal home at the time of the tenant's death.
- A member of the tenant's family (which includes cohabitees) – as long as they were occupying the property as their only or principal home at the time of the tenant's death and had resided with the tenant for a period of at least 12 months ending with the tenant's death. Please note this is succession to the tenancy, not necessarily the property.

For Secure tenancies granted on or **after 1st April 2012** the following categories of people can succeed in the following circumstances:

- The spouse, civil partner or cohabitee can succeed to the tenancy as long as they were occupying the property as their only or principal home at the time of the tenant's death.
- On the death of a Joint secure tenant, the surviving Joint secure tenant will become the Sole secure tenant through survivorship. This will be classed as a succession.

There can only be one succession to an Introductory and/or Secure tenancy.

In respect of both Introductory and Secure tenancies, if the property is larger than that reasonably required by the family member succeeding to the tenancy, Reading Borough Council will ask the successor to move to alternative accommodation which is of a size that they reasonably require. If they refuse and/or fail to do so, the Council can take legal action against them. This does not apply to succession by a spouse or civil partner.

9. Approach to Tenancy Management

Reading Borough Council has over 6,500 social rented properties and is committed to ensuring that tenants are well informed about their rights, responsibilities and how to access services. A wide range of information is available to our tenants including information on the website and regular newsletters.

New tenants are advised of expectations at the outset, and early visits are carried out to ensure tenants are supported, and settled into their new home, provided with detailed information on available services, and ensure they understand their responsibilities as tenants.

A tenancy breach may occur when a condition of the tenancy agreement is broken. In all cases our tenants are expected to comply with their tenancy conditions and to engage constructively with the Council, as the landlord, and their neighbours, to prevent and resolve tenancy related concerns. Tenants can refer to detailed guidance on each of these tenancy conditions within their Tenancy agreement.

The Council has a Policy and Procedures on Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Incidents. We work with the Police and other agencies as a core element of the service's response. This is underpinned with a three-pronged approach of prevention, intervention and enforcement to protect our tenants and foster safe connected communities.

Tenants are informed of the issues which affect them, their homes and their communities, and the Council strives to ensure tenants have a proper say in decision making. Our Tenant Engagement Strategy sets out how we engage with our tenants and what we aim to achieve through this engagement. Our goal is to ensure tenants can share their views and be involved in shaping services, trusting that they can influence decisions about their homes and communities. The strategy sets out the various ways our tenants can get involved to help improve service delivery and foster a culture where tenants feel listened to and respected.

10. Tenancy Sustainment, Vulnerable Households and Preventing Unnecessary Evictions

Every effort is made to support our tenants to sustain their tenancies.

We will provide prospective tenants with essential tenancy information through a structured pre-tenancy process, including access to a pre-tenancy questionnaire and a series of information videos. These resources are designed to clearly communicate key aspects of the tenancy agreement, responsibilities, and available support, ensuring tenants are well-informed and know what to expect prior to signing their tenancy.

Throughout their tenancies, Reading Borough Council will provide ongoing support, including working closely with support workers, assisting tenants to manage their finances through providing access to benefit support, financial advice, energy support and money advice if required. We work closely (on a case-by-case approach) with colleagues in Social Services (Occupational Therapists, Social Workers and Children's Services) and Community Mental Health to identify concerns and agree an appropriate and joined-up course of action where needed, and make referrals to external agencies as appropriate.

We recognise that some tenants may need additional support to access our services. Our Tenant Accessibility Policy sets out how we seek to meet the specific needs of vulnerable tenants, ensuring they receive the appropriate support and adjustments that they need to sustain their tenancies.

Ending a tenancy and seeking possession for a breach of tenancy conditions is always a last resort and is only ever considered after all available support has been offered but has been declined or failed. Once possession is being pursued, support will continue to be offered. Throughout possession proceedings tenants are clearly advised of the seriousness of the situation and of their legal rights.

11. Preventing and tackling Tenancy Fraud

Reading Borough Council takes tenancy fraud seriously. Fraud can result in the unlawful occupation of Council housing, and reduces the availability of homes for legitimate applicants, resulting in them staying in costly temporary accommodation and/or unsuitable housing.

Verification checks are completed when an applicant applies to join the housing register and again at the point of an offer of accommodation. Providing false information or failing to disclose relevant information is an offence under Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996. Information disclosed in applications can be subject to cross departmental verification with our Corporate Investigations Team.

A range of tools and robust processes are in place to identify tenancy fraud, including a fraud hotline (www.Reading.gov.uk/report-a-fraud), regular tenancy

checks (including via a rolling programme of Tenancy Audit Visits) ensuring tenants understand the responsibilities of their tenancy and raising awareness amongst tenants and the community (through newsletters and articles), as well as cross department working with Legal Services, the Corporate Investigation Team and the Council Tax team to investigate reports of tenancy fraud and participating in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data matching exercise. The data held by us in respect of our tenancies will be used for cross-system and cross-authority comparison purposes for the prevention and detection of fraud where requested.

Tenancy fraud can result in both criminal prosecution, fines and civil legal action being taken against tenants. The Council can take legal action to end the tenancy, including if the tenant (or somebody acting on their behalf) has been found to have made a statement they know is false or gives us misleading information to obtain a tenancy.

12. Exceptional Circumstances

There may be limited exceptional circumstances when the Director responsible for Housing or duly delegated persons, may exercise discretion in relation to the Tenancy Policy.

Any decision to do so would consider all relevant circumstances, including the demand for, and supply of, accommodation and the general housing circumstances within Reading.

13. Communication

Effective communication is essential to managing tenancy breaches and maintaining good relationships between tenants and Reading Borough Council as the landlord. Reading Borough Council is committed to:

- **Clear Information:** Providing tenants with accessible information about their responsibilities under the tenancy agreement, and how to report concerns.
- **Responsive Contact:** Acknowledging complaints regarding tenancy breaches promptly and keeping complainants informed of the progress and outcomes of investigations.
- **Neutral and Respectful Dialogue:** Ensuring all communications with tenants are handled impartially, respectfully, and confidentially.
- **Engagement:** Encouraging open dialogue and, where appropriate, facilitating mediation between parties to resolve any disputes amicably.

- **Staff Communication:** Ensuring all staff involved in tenancy management are kept informed of procedures and updates to policy.
- **Multi-Agency Coordination:** Communicating effectively with internal and external agencies such as Environmental Health, the police, and social services when their involvement is required.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Providing tenants with opportunities to influence and give feedback on how their tenancies are managed to support continuous service improvement.

This policy is accessible to all tenants, as well as Reading Borough Council (RBC) staff, and stakeholders via the Reading Borough Council website and will be updated to reflect any changes.

14. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Reading Borough Council is committed to ensuring equal and fair access to our services by considering the individual needs of our tenants, their families, and other members of their household. Whilst working with tenants we will consider these needs and make reasonable adjustments where necessary. We will always treat people with fairness, dignity, and respect.

This policy will be implemented in a way that:

- **Treats all tenants fairly and without discrimination** on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic.
- **Recognises and respects the diverse needs** of tenants, ensuring communication and support are accessible to everyone, including those with language barriers, disabilities, or other vulnerabilities.
- **Ensures reasonable adjustments** are made to accommodate tenants with specific needs or disabilities in relation to tenancy breach investigations and interventions.
- **Provides equal access** to complaint reporting mechanisms and support services for all tenants.
- **Promotes cultural awareness and sensitivity** among housing management staff to support positive and respectful interactions.
- **Monitors and reviews** the policy's impact on different tenant groups to ensure it does not disproportionately affect any particular community.

All our staff are regularly trained in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion to help them understand when and where we may need to adapt our standard policies, procedures, and working practices to accommodate the unique needs of our tenants.

Our policies set out how we seek to meet the specific needs of vulnerable tenants, ensuring they receive the appropriate support and adjustments that they need to sustain their tenancies.

15. Complaints

Reading Borough Council is committed to handling complaints fairly, promptly, and effectively. We use complaints, comments, and compliments, to help us review and improve our services.

If a tenant has a complaint about any policy or procedure this can be raised through the Council's Complaints Procedure. Further information, including how to make a complaint, is available via the Council's complaints process, linked below.

[Housing complaints procedure - Reading Borough Council](#)

16. Reasonable Adjustments

Reading Borough Council is committed to ensuring that all tenants, including those with disabilities or specific needs, can fully access and benefit from this policy.

To achieve this, we will:

- **Identify and respond to individual needs** by offering reasonable adjustments in communication, investigation, and resolution of tenancy breaches.
- **Provide information in accessible formats** such as Braille, audio, or translated versions, depending on tenant requirements.
- **Offer alternative methods of communication**, including email, text message, or face-to-face meetings, to suit the preferences and needs of tenants.
- **Adjust appointment times or locations** to accommodate tenants with mobility, health, or caregiving needs.
- **Work closely with support workers, advocates, or family members** where tenants require this assistance to facilitate a move.
- Ensure appropriate sensitivity and tailored support when dealing with tenants with **health conditions or disabilities**.
- **Train staff** to recognise and respond appropriately to requests for reasonable adjustments in relation to tenancy management issues.

17. Links to other Policies

- [Allocations-Scheme-2026-final.pdf](#)
- [Antisocial Behaviour and Hate Incident Policy - Reading Borough Council](#)

- Tenant Accessibility and Vulnerability Policy
- Tenant Engagement Strategy 2025 - 2030

18. Implementation and review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or when there are changes to best practice or statutory requirements, to ensure the policy achieves its objectives and continuously improve services and performance.

It is the responsibility of the Housing and Estate Service Service Manager to ensure that implementation of the Tenancy Policy is monitored. All staff involved in Tenancy matters have the responsibility to read, understand and implement this policy.

1. Regulator of Social Housing Standards:

1. Safety and Quality Standard (formerly Home Standard)

Landlords must ensure homes are safe, properly maintained, and of good quality:

Health and Safety Compliance: Identify and remediate hazards using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS); no Category 1 hazards allowed.

Repairs and Maintenance: Maintain structural elements (roofs, walls, windows) and essential systems (plumbing, heating, electrical).

Planned Improvements: Undertake renovations and adaptations, communicating with tenants about works.

Record-keeping: Maintain accurate property condition records for inspection and tenant review.

Fair Treatment: Respect tenants' rights and accommodate diverse needs.

2. Tenancy Standard

Covers fair and transparent tenancy management:

Allocation and Lettings: Apply clear policies for allocating homes.

Eviction Prevention: Avoid unnecessary evictions and manage tenancy breaches appropriately.

Mutual Exchange: Provide information and facilitate tenant-initiated exchanges.

Tenancy Fraud Prevention: Implement safeguards against fraudulent sub-letting or claims.

3. Neighbourhood and Community Standard

Supports secure, well-maintained communities:

Community Engagement: Collaborate with local authorities and partners to improve neighbourhoods.

Anti-Social Behaviour: Address antisocial behaviour and domestic violence in tenant areas swiftly.

Estate Management: Ensure services like waste management, grounds maintenance, and security meet tenant expectations.

4. Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

Focuses on transparency, tenant influence, and accountability:

Tenant Participation: Encourage tenant consultation and feedback in decision-making.

Information Access: Provide accurate, timely information about services and performance.

Complaint Handling: Implement accessible and responsive grievance procedures.

Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

21 July 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Review of the 'Guide for Busking and Street Performance in Reading'
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director Commissioning Report	Emma Gee
Report author	Rob Abell, Consumer Protection Group Manager
Lead Councillor	Cllr McGoldrick, Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety
Council priority	Secure Reading's economic & cultural success
Recommendations	1. That the committee note the report and that no changes are proposed to the Guide for Busking and Street Performance following the review.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. As a joint initiative between Reading Borough Council and Reading Business Improvement District ("BID"), a Guide for Busking and Street Performance ("The Guide") was produced and published in November 2024 following a resolution to adopt it at the Licensing Applications Committee ("LAC") on 14 November 2024. It was also resolved that the Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection be granted delegated authority to make future changes to the guide.
- 1.2. The Guide was produced using best practice examples which have been adopted by towns and cities across the country. The draft Guide was approved for consultation at Licensing Committee on 7 July 2024. The consultation exercise was conducted between 25 July 2024 and 15 September 2024 and the responses helped to inform the final guidance document. The guide is positive and encouraging in tone.
- 1.3. The Guide (in pdf form) is hosted on the Visit Reading website here: <https://www.visit-reading.com/business/bid/busking-guide>, and also included with this report as Appendix 1. BID paid for hard copies to be printed which have been given to individual buskers directly and provided to local businesses to use when engaging with buskers along with BID wardens and the Police.
- 1.4. At the November 2024 LAC it was resolved that a further report be submitted to a future meeting to review the success of The Guide. This committee was considered to be more appropriate as there are no licensing implications. Members of LAC and our Lead Member at the time agreed with the decision to switch this review to HNL.
- 1.5. Since the initial Guide was published, the BID has taken the lead on collating feedback, including complaints. They have provided data which is included with this report as Appendix 2.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. Section 1.9 of the Council's Street Trading Policy October 2023 – October 2028 states street trading consents on a daily rate will be required by buskers who wish to sell items associated with their performance, e.g., media containing recordings of music. Other than this the Council currently has no specific policy regarding busking or street entertainment. It can be noted that due to the limited ability to enforce and the changing nature of performances, these activities have not been consistently enforced. Unlike fixed premises seeking to put on performances or for street trading activity (the sale of goods), there is not a licensing regime for buskers.
- 2.2. Reading's Cultural and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030 vision states, "By 2030, Reading will be recognised as a centre of creativity with a reputation for cultural and heritage excellence at a regional, national and international level with increased engagement across the town. Realising the vision will require everyone involved in the cultural life of Reading to work together".
- 2.3. The BID (Business Improvement District) is a defined area where businesses have voted to invest collectively in local improvements to enhance their trading environment. The BID delivers year-round added value projects and services to maintain the vibrancy of the town centre, funded by a levy, which helps to keep Reading town centre safe, relevant and attractive for both residents and visitors. BID services and activities to improve the environment in the town central district are additional to the services provided by the Council.
- 2.4. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 the Council have a duty to investigate any complaint of statutory nuisance from a person living in its area. With statutory nuisance linked to physical premises (as opposed to transitory shoppers moving through a town centre)
- 2.5. There is no licensing regime relating to busking and local authorities take different approaches in how they seek to regulate the activity. Views on busking and individual performers are often subjective and can be polarised. There are no clear cut solutions to the problems associated with busking which cause a nuisance, but guides or codes of conduct are seen as best practice and enforcement recognised as being a challenge.

3. The Proposal

Current Position

- 3.1. Busking and other forms of street entertainment are important to the vibrancy of the Town Centre. However, at the same time, buskers and street entertainers share the streets with everyone else that lives, works, and visits the town, and certain areas of the town centre experience a high number of loud performances daily. This can have a detrimental effect primarily on the businesses and staff located near to where the performances are taking place. Despite the introduction of The Guide, complaints are still received from members of the public.
- 3.2. The location of busking and street entertainment in Reading is primarily concentrated in the centre of Broad Street but increasingly both ends of Broad Street are also being used. These areas are attractive due to the high footfall and proximity to major shops in the town.
- 3.3. Religious preachers and faith groups also operate in the town centre along areas of Broad Street. The Council recognises the right to freedom of religious belief and freedom of expression but considers that this activity should also follow the principles of The Guide to foster good community relations, especially with regards to noise levels and the use of amplification. This was reflected in the responses received during the consultation and this was therefore included in scope of the final guide.

- 3.4. In the previous report the main complaint categories were listed in relation to busking and street performance from shoppers and businesses located close to where the performances are taking place and this informed the review of the Guide taken forward:
- Unreasonable levels of noise often from the use of amplifiers and loud instruments.
 - Sound clash from multiple loud buskers and street entertainers in the same area.
 - Performance fatigue due to buskers and street entertainers performing one after another in the same place for several hours every day.
 - Limited and repetitive repertoire or frequently repeating the same song.
 - Obstructions caused by performers and audiences that can impede entrance or exit of businesses and impact street traders.
 - Acknowledging the wide variety of views, the quality of some performances can be objectionable to some and not others.
- 3.5. The Council recognises many street entertainers have built their livelihoods performing in public spaces and wants to continue to support opportunities for buskers and street entertainers in the town. At the same time, the Council also wants to protect the needs and rights of residents, visitors and businesses.
- 3.6. Reading BID have operated a registration scheme for buskers in the past but this did not deter non-registered acts from performing which undermined the scheme and thus it became ineffective. There is no enforcement mechanism to allow only registered acts to perform and remove unregistered acts that turn up.
- 3.7. Reading BID have been tracking reports using a reporting link they have been sending out on a weekly basis, recording complaints coming in via email, verbally, through social media channels, text messages and personally witnessed by BID wardens and other BID staff. This information is included alongside this report as Appendix 2.
- 3.8. The complaints, as well as feedback taken from BID when they have engaged with buskers help us form a view on whether the Guide is working.
- 3.9. In January 2026 Thames Valley Police (TVP) requested views from the public on busking via a social media post. The link to the post, image of original post, and collated comments people left on that post are within Appendix 4. People were candid, and whilst there were negative comments, on the whole the feedback demonstrated a lot of public support for busking and the performers.
- 3.10. The Council has existing enforcement powers to tackle busking and street entertainment that is causing adverse impacts on the surroundings. However, in practice only in very serious incidences would these powers be used. In line with the Regulators' Code, Officers would be required to collate strong evidence over a period that an individual is persistently causing a statutory nuisance or negative impact by acting unreasonably or refusing to co-operate. This perceived lack of enforcement results in frustration from both the responsible busking and street entertainers as well as residents and businesses, that action cannot be taken quickly or effectively.
- 3.11. The enforcement tools available and their associated challenges are detailed below:
- 3.11.1. Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA). The Council can issue Noise Abatement Notices if the performance is considered a statutory nuisance by a determining Environmental Health Officer. A statutory nuisance is an objective standard defined as having a persistent or detrimental effect on a person's quality of life. Whilst often considered unreasonably loud, these activities do not usually meet the threshold to be considered a statutory nuisance.
- 3.11.2. Section 137 of the Highways Act 1980. Enforcement officers can use this power to move people along if they are causing an unlawful obstruction to the Highway, however, it is difficult for officers to demonstrate that a busker or street entertainer has wilfully caused an obstruction and often it is not the busker or street entertainer themselves but the audience that is causing an obstruction. In addition, it does not apply to any busking that takes place in open spaces that do not constitute the highway.

- 3.11.3. Under Section 62 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 no amplification is allowed in any public street after 9pm and before 8am. In general busking activity takes place during the day when footfall is at its highest.
- 3.11.4. Community Protection Notices (CPNs) made under s.43 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. This would require both investigatory resources from RBC and/or TVP to issue the notices and legal resources to defend any challenges to the notices. CPNs can only be issued to over 16's. The Officer issuing the notice has to be "satisfied on reasonable grounds that (a) the conduct of the individual or body is having a detrimental effect, of a persistent or continuing nature, on the quality of life of those in the locality, and (b) the conduct is unreasonable". This is our most viable enforcement route for persistent detrimental busking activity by any individual offender, and it would be Reading officers who would issue them.
- 3.11.5. Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) are aimed at ensuring public spaces can be enjoyed free from anti-social behaviour and help deal with persistent issues that harm communities, by designating an area to prohibit or control activities that are detrimental. The Council have a (recently introduced) PSPO for controlling certain types of anti-social behaviour at the more serious end of the scale; these do not cover busking. There is an option to potentially include busking in the PSPO or create a new additional one just for busking.
- 3.11.6. Officers consider a PSPO established to tackle adverse impacts generated from busking would be disproportionate to address the scale of the problem experienced in Reading and would be against the spirit in which the Council are seeking to strike a balance between protecting communities from adverse impacts whilst continuing to find opportunities for busking and street entertainment to take place. These activities and those of street preaching could be incorporated in our broader PSPO but that would be dependent on a separate needs assessment process.
- 3.11.7. Two examples of where PSPOs cover these activities are: Coventry City Council who have as part of their city centre PSPO, a prohibition from performing which is contrary to the "Coventry City Centre Code of Conduct for Performers" and Leeds City Council whose city centre PSPO prohibits "Person(s) within the restricted area will not create loud and persistent amplified sound which could reasonably cause annoyance". Leeds have also developed a code of conduct for preachers to follow to remain compliant with the PSPO.
- 3.12. Further analysis of the feedback received from BID is shown in Appendix 5. A number of key themes were identified:
- Excessive noise and amplification
 - Repeated non-compliance with guidance
 - Significant impacts on businesses, staff and residents
 - Repetition, duration and lack of rotation
 - Street preachers
 - Conflict
 - Public realm impact

These issues were taken into account as part of the review of the main sections of the Guide:

3.12.1. Dedicated Pitch Areas

There is some precedent (such as in London Underground tube stations) for marking out pitches, and/or having a location map of dedicated busking areas. The aim of such an approach is to reduce clustering and prevent the sound from one performance bleeding into another. It would be seen as legitimising or authorising buskers to occupy those areas. This approach could be taken either with or without also operating an auditioning or booking process (discussed below).

By setting out areas and legitimising them the Council would be taking responsibility for any nuisance caused to neighbouring businesses. These were the circumstances when Global Radio (which owns Heart, Capital, and LBC) launched a landmark legal case against Westminster City Council, accusing it of failing to control loud buskers outside its Leicester Square offices. In March 2025, a District Judge ruled in the company's favour, declaring the music from the pitch a statutory nuisance that the Council permitted and did not abate. Westminster now has a suspension in place for [all their pitches](#) in Leicester Square, Trafalgar Square, Piccadilly Circus and other areas.

Note that London Authorities are able to have a licensing regime, with conditions attached by virtue of the London Local Authorities Act 2000 (Part V – Busking) which is not a legal mechanism available to Reading. If setting out pitches was favoured it would have to be administered by BID and positioning agreed with the town centre businesses to avoid risk of legal challenge, as well as ongoing monitoring by BID. It is unlikely businesses would agree to pitches in locations where buskers already operate and this would not prevent other buskers locating in non-dedicated pitches unless appropriately enforced. With no dedicated resource and the risk of legal challenge it is not proposed to change the guide in this respect.

3.12.2 Noise Levels/Amplification

In the previous consultation and from viewing complaints since The Guide has been in place, several residents have expressed concerns about the volume of performances suggesting specific decibel limits should be included with enforceable measures for when buskers exceed these limits. The use of amplification in general was also raised with some advocating purely acoustic performances. Many people have found amplified music too loud and intrusive leading to a negative impact on their experience in the Town Centre. Removing consent to use of speakers, or playing accompanying music from mobile phones or any amplification devices is an option. It might render some of the acts less attractive, or impossible to perform altogether (such as the performer who is accompanied by a skeleton drummer, or a violinist playing over a musical accompaniment) when playing an amplified backing track is integral to the performance.

Consideration has been given to setting a decibel level in The Guide however it was decided not to include a set specific numerical level by officers and members at the time. There are difficulties with how such a level would be measured and by whom. Environmental Protection Officers who are trained in acoustics were consulted and advised that recording accurate measurements would be problematic without setting up specialist devices. Every pitch will have a different acoustic dynamic related to the location, type of sounds and weather conditions which will all have an effect on the sound quality, travel and volume of the performance. Therefore, as a variety of factors can affect sound levels, it is difficult to provide a 'set decibel' for buskers to follow. This approach is consistent with guides and codes of practice in place in other towns and cities.

The original intention was to ask buskers to exercise common sense to avoid a disturbance however following the consultation and further consideration further clarity was added to The Guide to aid performers in setting their levels. The Guide currently states: *The performance noise level should be set just above the level of background street noise so you can be heard but not cause undue interference to others. Your performance should not be audible in nearby shops and offices and there should be no*

spill-over of noise to other buskers. It further advises: *Avoid the use of amplifiers, loudspeakers, megaphones, or any similar equipment in your activity as this may cause a nuisance. If you do have small portable amplification equipment and you are asked to turn the level down by an authorised officer, then you must comply with those instructions. Avoid any amplification after 9pm - Under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 section 62, no amplification is allowed in any public street after 9pm and before 8am.* Although the Guide needs to specify this, as it is the law, enforcement of it is again an issue, nevertheless there is no recommendation to change this content in The Guide.

3.12.3. Length of Performance

Performers prefer a longer duration allowing for more elaborate setups and to provide time to build rapport with the audience. A balance was struck in The Guide to provide opportunity, variety and interest whilst avoiding the repetitive nature of some performances. After deliberation The Guide was written to contain this wording: *Avoid repetition of songs as this is often a cause of complaint. Change locations after a maximum of two hours and avoid returning to the same location for three hours. A culture of sharing and swapping pitches with other performers is encouraged.* This has not caused an issue, the main concern from feedback is noise level (and ability) rather than length of time. There is no change proposed to the Guide on this aspect.

3.12.4 Rights of Buskers and Street Preachers

The Council have received representations asking to address the rights of buskers and street preachers. Some buskers have asked for advice on dealing with harassment or unreasonable complaints. Many people appreciate the positive atmosphere and sense of community that street speakers and performers can bring to the town. There is a suggestion that buskers should be seen as skilled professionals who contribute to public safety and vibrancy and a call for more support to get performers into venues. One respondent to the previous consultation stated that buskers were not being treated as stakeholders and The Guide implied all performers were the cause of dispute. The Guide is constructively pitched to be positive and encouraging in tone. The intention of The Guide is to create a fair balance between encouraging buskers and performers but also recognising that they can be a cause of complaint. The Guide must set out certain principles to follow but this does not take away the fact buskers have the right to perform, and The Guide is intended to help ensure this is done in a way which is not intrusive to others. The Council and Reading BID believe the balance is currently right and there is no change proposed to the Guide on this aspect.

3.12.5 Enforcement

Reading BID Wardens have been the primary resource in engaging with buskers and promoting the principles of The Guide to performers. No enforcement action has been taken since The Guide has been in place. Dealing with problem buskers who fail to adhere to The Guide remains the main area of concern. There is no enforcement team resourced to provide dedicated enforcement, and the question remains if it is in the public interest to create a resource particularly given the additional financial implications and opinions are likely to be fairly polarised in respect of formal enforcement. Some people would like to see busking banned altogether, whereas others will see it as a form of intrusion for the Council to be heavy-handed in its approach to buskers.

The existing legal tools outlined in section 3.8 above will continue to be considered in extreme and persisting cases that, following proper investigation and assessment, are of such seriousness that there remains no option other than formal enforcement action after more proportionate methods to achieve a cessation of the nuisance have been exhausted. Those rare incidents will be considered on a case-by-case basis and dealt with as any other criminal investigation undertaken by Public Protection. It is considered that the enforcement measures already available to officers are sufficient, but there is an ongoing issue that these types of cases are resource intensive. Given no dedicated resource exists, priority would need to be given to these instances at the expense of other cases being progressed within the Public Protection service area, including licensing and

Environmental Health. Kingdom enforcement, who are the Council's current contracted environmental enforcement partner have been approached but the option to include busking is not available within the current contract and there is no legal framework for them to fine buskers.

3.12.6. Scope

The scope of The Guide has been to predominantly focussed on street performance in the form of busking. Music performances account for most of the busking activity currently in Reading Town Centre. The scope of The Guide does however, also capture performances of art or theatre where it is intended to entertain or engage with the public. Additionally, The Guide is explicit in stating the principles of the guidance also apply to other activities *which may have a similar impact in the town*, including street preaching. This scope was set following the previous consultation and is still considered to be both appropriate and relevant. There is no current desire to broaden or restrict the scope.

3.12.7. Auditions/Bookings

Responses in the previous consultation, and discussions with Councillors have debated whether auditions were feasible and necessary to improve the quality of performances and attempt to exclude undesirable performers. Although a potentially appealing prospect there are no additional resources to undertake that labour-intensive work, and a system to ensure robust, objective and recorded decision-making would be required. Potentially this would also require an appeal mechanism. What constitutes a 'good' performance is highly subjective and (to some degree) a matter of personal taste. It would still fail to address the matter that there is not a straightforward and quick enforcement route if a non-approved artist turns up to perform near a sanctioned auditionee. Therefore, it is not recommended to introduce auditioning or booking artists to The Guide.

4 **Summary and Conclusion**

4.1 Complaint Summary

Complaints about buskers, street performers, and street preachers in Reading are overwhelmingly focused on excessive amplified noise, often at very high decibel levels, which disrupts businesses, staff, residents, and visitors. There is consistent evidence of repeat offenders ignoring guidance and continuing problematic behaviours such as high-volume amplification, prolonged performances, and handing microphones to members of the public (including children). The impacts include loss of trade, inability to work effectively, and a degraded town centre experience. The data suggests that voluntary guidance is ineffective in isolation without enforcement, and many stakeholders are calling for stronger regulatory controls, particularly around amplification and compliance.

4.2 Commentary from BID and Views of Buskers

BID have responded to say The Guide has worked well as a conversation piece when speaking with buskers who are willing to engage. The Guide has helped to explain the negative impact of amplification, and the printed material backs up this message. Those buskers willing to engage in the conversation about amplification have, in general, adhered to the requests of the BID Wardens. The Guide works with a willing audience but those unwilling to comply will not engage in a conversation or printed material and have not adjusted their behaviour.

4.3 Conclusion

Given the analysis of complaints, consultation, and social media comments, the view is to continue to use The Guide as a tool to help buskers self-regulate and officers will continue to look on a case-by-case basis at using available powers where offences are potentially being committed. Considerable time, debate, consultation and consideration was put into the creation of The Guide as a means of stimulating discussions with buskers

and seeking co-operation from reasonable-minded performers, with care taken to set the tone right. On the whole that works, but it is recognised there is a low-level continuance of complaints, and a handful of performers know about The Guide but choose to ignore it. The enforcement measures haven't been tested for effectiveness but will continue to be considered on a case-by-case basis. In addition, BID will issue further communication plans for continued promotion of The Guide and to engage with performers.

4.4 Conclusion regarding Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)

Controls relating to busking could be included into the recently implemented PSPO which currently covers aggressive begging, alcohol-related anti-social behaviour, dog control, anti-social use of e-bikes/e-scooters, littering and dog fouling. This is considered likely to be disproportionate, and potentially not the best use of public funds as the purpose of a PSPO is to address persistent anti-social behaviour in public areas.

The majority of busking in Reading is not akin to the threshold of the recently adopted anti-social behaviour controls for dog fouling or aggressive begging. There were no comments received on busking as part of the Community Safety Survey or when discussing the PSPO at residents' forums as an area of concern to address an anti-social behaviour issue.

The PSPO regime is rarely used by Local Authorities to control busking as it is generally seen to be too heavy handed. A few examples have been found (Coventry City Council; Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea; and Blackpool Council) where Councils use a PSPO to require that buskers comply with the Guide they have set out, but this is not widespread. The London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham set out the conditions relating to busking directly in the PSPO.

5 Contribution to Strategic Aims

5.1 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.

5.2 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

5.3 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.

5.4 A refresh and marketing of the Guide will contribute to the themes of Inclusive Economy and Healthy Environment by making Reading a nicer and more attractive place to live, by improving the town centre experience, through helping develop a vibrant, attractive, and economically successful town for residents to live in and for businesses to thrive. The policy will also improve the quality of lives of residents by reducing the impact from excessive noise.

6 Environmental and Climate Implications

- 6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 6.2 There are no environmental or climate implications arising from the decision. Many buskers and street performers are acoustic, no significant amounts of power or natural resources are used, and air quality is unaffected.

7 Community Engagement

- 7.1 Consultation or community engagement is not required at this stage, however depending on the decisions made by this Committee in terms of next steps, if there would be good value from consulting with stakeholders and there would be an expectation from those stakeholders that they would be consulted with, then we can undertake a consultation exercise if directed to and bring those results back to a future Committee.
- 7.2 It is worth noting that the original Guide was developed in partnership with Reading BID, Reading Economic Delivery Agency (REDA) and Thames Valley Police. A public consultation of the draft Guide was conducted through the Council website and promoted by Reading BID, to engage: all local businesses in the town centre, buskers and street entertainers, pro busking groups such as Keep Streets Live Campaign, the Musicians' Union and members of the public.

8 Equality Implications

- 8.1 The buskers and street performers in Reading are from a diverse range of backgrounds and a vibrant mix of ages, disabilities, races, religions and beliefs. There are no identified potentials for this matter to impact disproportionately on any specific protected characteristic.
- 8.2 It is recognised that the code of conduct will incorporate activities of faith groups and faith groups which could be from a specific racial or ethnic group. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has therefore been completed. It is not expected there will be any significant adverse impacts on specific groups due to race gender, disability sexual orientation, age or religious beliefs. At this stage the EqIA concludes that this will not have a significant impact as the code is intended to be collaborative and aims to adapt rather than restrict activities.

9 Other Relevant Considerations

- 9.1 All relevant considerations are already discussed within this report.

10 Legal Implications

- 10.1 The preparation and distribution of a Guide does not require any specific legal power. The Council has delegated powers to enforce the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, Highways Act 1980 and Control of Pollution Act 1974.

11 Financial Implications

- 11.1 There is no agreed budget provision for any work on this topic.
- 11.2 There are currently no financial implications unless a decision is taken to explore doing something significantly different from the current position. Necessary funding would need to be identified upfront to enforce busking as outlined in the report.

12 Timetable for Implementation

- 12.1 If a decision is taken to re-issue The Guide (with or without a change in content), Reading BID will take the lead role on the Guide as they have established links with the businesses in the town centre where most complaints arise. BID wardens, Police and Council officers can use it to promote our objectives by having some printed hard copies to distribute.

- 12.2 A communications campaign is also proposed. All those actions would be best achieved over the course of the Summer 2026, however if the decision is taken by Committee to conduct any consultation work now it would be likely to delay a launch of a new guide to Spring 2027 as street performances decline considerably in the Autumn/Winter periods. BID would effectively take the lead as they have done previously which would include advertising and hosting the guide.

13 Background Papers

- 13.1 There are none.

Appendices

1. Existing Guide for Busking and Street Performance in Reading, November 2024
2. Complaints Spreadsheet
3. AI Complaints Analysis & Summary
4. Facebook Comments (responding to the TVP social media post)
5. Analysis of the Complaints Spreadsheet by themes

BUSKING AND STREET PERFORMANCE IN READING

A GUIDE





Busking and street performers are a long-established tradition which add to the attractiveness and vibrancy of Reading town centre. However, on occasion some performances have been viewed as disruptive to those who live and work in the town and this guide has therefore been created to ensure street performances remain engaging and welcoming for all Reading visitors.

The terms “busking and street entertainment” in this guide refers to performances of music, art and theatre intended to entertain or engage with the public.

STREET PREACHING

The principle of the guidance also applies to other activities which may have a similar impact in the town, including street preaching. Preachers should be respectful of others in the town centre and in particular follow the guidance regarding noise levels.

These guidelines have been written and agreed by Reading Borough Council and Reading Business Improvement District (BID) to support a culture of cooperation between buskers, street entertainers, local businesses, members of the public and the council.



THIS GUIDE HAS BEEN CREATED TO:



Foster a vibrant street culture whilst making provisions for premises owners, Reading BID and the local authority to resolve issues that may occasionally arise around busking and street performances.



Provide clarity around what is reasonable in relation to busking in Reading.



Promote a positive relationship between buskers and those who share public spaces with them.



Give people confidence that most disputes can be resolved amicably through community consideration and negotiation.



Find a balance between the value that live street performances add to our town centre, while respecting the rights of people who live and work there.

ADVICE TO BUSKERS AND STREET PERFORMERS

Complaints tend to apply to a small number of groups and performers and usually relate to noise levels, repetitive performances or obstruction of the street and doorways. Buskers and street performers should consider their intended presence, performance and location carefully to avoid generating unnecessary complaints. Songs should not be repeated, and performers should be considerate with the volume used.





BEFORE PERFORMING, BUSKERS AND ENTERTAINERS SHOULD:

- ✓ Anticipate the impact that the act will have on other users of shared spaces and for people in the buildings around you.
- ✓ Where possible, introduce yourself to nearby businesses, traders and other users of the space near to where you intend to perform. By letting them know about your performance in advance you will reduce the likelihood of complaints.
- ✓ Ask businesses to speak to you directly if they have a problem or need to ask you to make any adjustments to your act.
- ✓ Try to establish a positive, co-operative relationship between you and the people around you. This will also help to make any future communications good-natured.
- ✓ Always be courteous to members of the public, members of the local business community and public officials (Thames Valley Police, Reading BID Wardens or officers from Reading Borough Council). Being calm and polite will help promote positive relationships on the street.

CHOOSING A PITCH LOCATION

As there are no fixed performance pitches in Reading, careful consideration should be given when choosing a location. As a busker or performer, you should:

- ✓ Think about how much space your equipment will take up so that you don't cause an obstruction for the public. Ensure there is plenty of space for people to walk past or around you and factor in additional space if your act is likely to draw a crowd.
- ✓ Take care not to obstruct highways or shop entrances and allow space for people to move past you with prams, wheelchairs, or emergency service vehicles.
- ✓ Be aware of the time of day and nature of the space you intend to perform in and be prepared to change location if it becomes clear your act is unsuitable for that space.
- ✓ Always choose your pitch with consideration for other buskers and allow at least 50m between you and another busker or street performer.
- ✓ Change locations after a maximum of two hours and avoid returning to the same location for three hours. A culture of sharing and swapping pitches with other performers is encouraged.
- ✗ Never use any existing street furniture as part of your act.
- ✗ Never perform your act in such a manner that could be considered dangerous, inappropriate, or likely to cause alarm, distress, or offence to members of the public. Naked flames, pyrotechnics, fireworks, knives, sharp objects, or anything similar deemed to be a risk to the public should not be used as part of the performance of your show. You should have appropriate insurance cover for your performance.





BUSKING OR STREET TRADING

Busking must not involve a formal sales transaction as donations are given to buskers by members of the public on a voluntary basis only.



Members of the public should be able to engage with your act/performance without any obligation to donate.



Buskers should not sell merchandise such as CDs, t- shirts, posters etc without an occasional street trading consent. These are available on a daily rate and details of how to apply can be found on the Reading Borough Council website. reading.gov.uk



While we welcome buskers and street traders in Reading town centre, the following guidance must be respected and adhered to...

SETTING YOUR NOISE LEVEL

The performance noise level should be set just above the level of background street noise so you can be heard, but not cause undue interference to others. Your performance should not be audible in nearby shops and offices and there should be no spill-over of noise to other buskers. As a performer, you should:

- ✓ Avoid repetition of songs as this is often a cause of complaint.
- ✓ Be aware of the acoustic context of the pitch you choose as every pitch has a different acoustic dynamic. Increasing the volume can sometimes distort the sound which may cause annoyance.
- ✓ Avoid the use of amplifiers, loudspeakers, megaphones, or any similar equipment in your activity as this may cause a nuisance. If you do have small portable amplification equipment and you are asked to turn the level down by an authorised officer, then you must comply with those instructions.
- ✓ Consider the way instruments are played as noise from louder instruments can carry further. We recommend using brushes and damping with your drum kit and dampers/mutes with brass instruments.
- ✓ Avoid using generators or large public address systems.
- ✓ Avoid running backing tracks when you are not performing.
- ✓ Avoid any amplification after 9pm - Under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 section 62, no amplification is allowed in any public street after 9pm and before 8am.







RESOLVING ISSUES – BUSINESSES/RESIDENTS

Please remember that Reading town centre is a public space, and buskers are permitted by law to perform so long as they are not doing so in a way which causes a detriment to the quality of life of the local community.

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From time to time, buskers and street entertainers can cause disruption to businesses and members of the public. If you are disturbed by a busking performance, please follow the steps bellow:

01

First make yourself known to the performer and politely let them know. It is important to wait for a suitable interval in the performance before introducing yourself to them. Interrupting performances is unlikely to lead to productive dialogue.

02

Try to reach a compromise, if possible. For example, could the busker adjust their location, or could you both agree a time period for their performance duration?

03

Feel free to refer a busker to the best practice guidance which provides examples of what is expected and reasonable. It may help to resolve the issue by referring to the relevant section.

04

If no agreement can be reached, please gather details of the busker and evidence of the nuisance and contact Reading BID to discuss what next steps could be taken. **[visit-reading.com/business/bid](https://www.visit-reading.com/business/bid)**

05

Where disputes occur, buskers and performers are also encouraged to contact Reading BID to help resolve the issue. If a busker or performer feels threatened or subject to harassment, they must decide if it is appropriate to call the Police.

06

In serious cases, where the performance causes a statutory nuisance, or has a detrimental effect of a persistent or continuing nature on those in the locality, Reading Borough Council may be able take formal action against those responsible. In such cases, the council will always endeavour to be reasonable and proportionate in balancing the rights of local businesses, residents, buskers and shoppers/visitors.

07

The Council and Reading BID will investigate complaints that are received about the activities of buskers and street performers and carry out spot checks on performers to ensure that they are complying with the guide.

This guide has been written and produced by Reading Borough Council and Reading Business Improvement District (BID), part of Reading's Economy & Destination Agency (REDA), to encourage a culture of cooperation between buskers, street entertainers, local businesses, members of the public and the Council.

For more information visit reading.gov.uk or visit visit-reading.com/business



Date	Complainant
17/05/2025	REDACTED
23/05/2025	REDACTED
24/05/2025	REDACTED
28/05/2025	REDACTED
28/05/2025	REDACTED
06/09/2025	REDACTED
06/09/2025	REDACTED
12/06/2025	REDACTED
13/06/2025	REDACTED
16/06/2025	REDACTED
18/06/2025	REDACTED
19/6/2025	REDACTED
19/6/2025	REDACTED
22/6/2025	REDACTED
05/07/2025	REDACTED
14/07/2025	REDACTED

30/7/2025	REDACTED
30/07/2025	REDACTED
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22/08/25	REDACTED
28/08/25	REDACTED
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02/09/25	REDACTED
03/09/2025	REDACTED
04/09/25	REDACTED
11/09/2025	REDACTED
13/09/25	REDACTED
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02/10/2025	REDACTED

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13/10/2025	REDACTED
15/10/2025	REDACTED
22/10/2025	REDACTED
22/10/2025	REDACTED
06/11/2025	REDACTED
11/12/25	REDACTED
13/11/2025	REDACTED

14/11/2025	REDACTED
15/11/2025	REDACTED
21/11/2025	REDACTED
24/11/2025	REDACTED
12/03/25	REDACTED
12/03/25	REDACTED
12/12/25	REDACTED
17/12/2025 11:28	REDACTED
01/03/26	REDACTED

01/07/26	REDACTED
01/07/26	REDACTED
03/02/26	REDACTED
04/10/26	REDACTED
27/4/2026	REDACTED
28/4/2026	REDACTED

What happened	Noise	Behaviour
Street as we have a paid performer. He refused to, asked the wardens to go and tell the same thing and he accused me of being racially motivated.	X	X
him a guide. Tried to explain the impact of the volume but he continues.	X	X
Reading BID website—politely engaging with the performers to express our concerns—the excessive volume of their music continues to severely impact our operations. We have repeatedly had to close our doors to reduce the noise level inside the store, which not only creates a poor customer experience but also results in a significant loss of trade.		
We are not alone in facing these difficulties; several neighbouring businesses have expressed similar frustrations. The volume and frequency of these performances are becoming untenable, with a noticeable detrimental effect on customer footfall and staff morale. The current situation compromises our ability to communicate effectively with customers and maintain a welcoming shopping	X	
Notified wardens to speak to person	X	
scream and make noise while filming them. I spoke to him and explained the noise nuisance he promised to stop doing it. He was also given a leaflet. Since this time I have spoken with him MULTIPLE times and there is no change.	X	X
talent.	X	
Group of religious rappers set up on Broad Street so incredibly loud, could not hear customers.	X	
Notified wardens to speak to 2 buskers who were very loud. Both buskers given guide.	X	
Complaint from street trader about persistent street preacher group noise levels. Guides given to XXXX to hand out. When they were confronted the group accused him of being racist.	X	X
scream and make noise while filming them. Wardens spoke to him AGAIN.	X	X
Set up outside Fat Face around 5pm, reduced levels when he saw me but still loud. Wardens spoke with him AGAIN. The noise could be heard inside John Lewis.	X	
Intensity = 7 / 10	X	
very loud. When talking to clients on the phone it is very difficult to hear and concentrate. This particular busker is rather good but it is still loud.	X	
Intensity = 9 / 10	X	
XXXX group outside John Lewis. Incredibly loud. I approached them and tried to talk with them but they could not hear me over the noise. The Wardens also asked them to reduce the noise but they did not listen. At the time we had a Children's Business Fair in the town centre, the noise affected the young people in that area being able to make the most out of the event, and for some it had an adverse effect.	X	X
Outside M&S - 92dBA - would not engage.	X	X

I was walking past Marks & Spencer when I saw a busker, well known in the town centre, repeatedly allowing young girls aged around 13-15 to use his microphone. They were screaming and creating an unpleasant noise. The performer was also taking out his phone to take photos with the girls, putting his arm around them. I approached him and told him that he shouldn't be letting other people use his microphone, and that taking photos with underage girls in	X	X
Email complaint - Who is singing in broad Street today? It's absolutely awful and with the windows open I may jump.... please don't book them again it's like karaoke but without the tune...	X	
The beggars and buskers are what's letting Reading down	X	
Outside John Lewis, recorded at 85dcbL. This is the same busker the Wardens and BID team has spoken to on numerous occasions. Guide given, but ignored.	X	
More needs to be done about busking; maybe getting them to apply for licenses where more control can be had over the buskers without a license	X	
Street preaching outside Santander, 83dcbL recorded.	X	
2 hours. "I can't do my job"	X	
This happens all the time and I can't hear clients on the phone	X	
Same busker as been spoken to loads, think his name is XXXX. Recorded 84dcbL outside John Lewis despite numerous discussions.	X	
Busker singing outside John Lewis sounds really loud	X	
BID	X	
Busker performing outside ITSU, decibel reading sent to BID	X	
Male busking with a violin on broad street outside John Lewis, decibel reading sent to BID	X	
Outside M&S - 87dBA - would not stop performing. I indicated to him to turn it down, this was ignored.	X	X
Outside John Lewis - electric guitar (and skeleton)	X	
Spoke to the guy busking and told him he isn't allowed to let kids sing or screaming into the mic	X	X
XXXX singer very loud outside Primark, I could not stop to talk but indicated he was too loud, he acknowledged this.	X	
spoke to the same busker about the volume of his speaker and he did turn it down no issues	X	
Same XXXX guy hands his mic over to the public, this time an XXXX, shouting into the mic. I approached the busker and asked him why he was not adhering to our multiple requests, he could not answer, just saying he was not giving the mic to kids.	X	
XXXX busking outside John Lewis allowing public to sing with him, decibel reading sent to bid	X	X
Noise volume complaint by a member of the public to RBC, specifically outside John Lewis.	X	
I reminded the busker he isn't allowed to let people sing on his mic. Hopefully he understands my request	X	
Outside M&S, first thing in the morning, I was unable to stop but asked our Warden XXXX to speak with him which he did.	X	
Complaint of noise outside The Ale House. Submitted by Councillor Services, responded to Cllr XXXX by XXXX	X	X

extremely loud low quality speaker and regular busk outside M&S on the high street. The singing is horrendous (basically they can't sing) and the quality of the sound is terrible. I did the chores I needed and just left town. Who is allowing this to happen? I can't remember the day but this happens regularly. I guess it might be considered non PC to ask them to stop? I certainly wouldn't dare	X	
This chap was busking outside John Lewis today. He was going from around 1145 and still at it around 1530. The songs and voice were quite good but the amplification was awful. Extremely intrusive. We sat in an office in HSBC bank for an hour. The member of staff said they hate it and often have to move to back offices to work. We were also in Trailfinders and again the noise was overwhelming. The staff tend not to complain – either they think the busking has been approved or they just don't like to complain – but they don't like it. I didn't approach the busker and ask him about the C of C – I didn't have my RBC pass with me. But personally both my wife and I found it overwhelming and we left the town centre as soon as we had concluded our business. I would support a by-law banning	X	
Around 3.30pm outside Itsu, a very loud busker. He sang really well but so loud that it made it feel uncomfortable to stand around.	X	
Visted HSBC for a business meeting. The meeting took place upstairs in their offices. He was unable to hear prpperly in the meeting room due to the amplification noise of the buskers outside.	X	
Stood on Broad Street outside Fat Face, I was unable to hear while trying to have a conversation with a colleague. The busker was situated directly outside M&S, according to Google maps that is a 21m distance. He is the XXXX busker.	X	
Outside M&S, a young guy singing very loudly. 11:30am. Decibels taken from miniso	x	
Outside John Lewis at the same time as the above, so both were deafeningly loud. XXXX – comes to Reading quite a lot with a guitar	x	
XXXX was stopped on Cross Street by the XXXX to say they have observed, on multiple ocassions, the 'XXXX' busker handing his microphone over to members of the public who then proceed to shout down the microphone, making what is already very loud music almost unbearable. They have also on a number of ocassions seen him doing this with young girls and 'acting inappropriately', hugging them.	X	X
On Broad Street at about 3.30pm the XXXX busker was stood outside Primark, he had handed over his mic to a member of the public who was singing badly at a high volume. I approached him, as I always do, and told him not to do this. He gives excuses that he is not, despite the fact that you are stood in front of it. He has absolutely no regard to anything we ask of him.	X	X
On Broad Street outside John Lewis. I approached [they] with the decibel reading, [they] smiled at me and carried on. Again, absolutely no care for what we are asking.	X	

There is XXXX who regularly stands outside M&S and has apparently been reported by a number of people. [they] is very loud and can almost drown out conversation or if anyone is listening to their own music. Not sure if [they] has a licence but there have been a number of complaints apparently (I was speaking to a member of staff in Sainsburys yesterday and she was saying many people have complained but nothing done). Is [they] able to just turn up and busk or does [them] need a permit from the Council? I tried to report [them] the other week, but couldn't find an obvious link.	X	
an area he never sets up in normally. [their] volume was so loud that it drowned out our entertainers for the event. [they] was asked to stop and he did.	X	
the XXXX busker who is often outside M&S or Sainsbury's central sometimes at lunchtime but also often around 5pm. He is very loud and sings pretty awful songs out of tune. Speaking to staff in Sainsbury's apparently a large number of people have mentioned it and said they've complained to the Council, but nothing has been done. He drowns out any conversation passers by might be having and as I often have headphones in, I can hear him over my own music.	X	
Street every evening, singing XXXX songs at a very high volume. This has become a daily occurrence, almost like a full-time activity. I live approximately 500 meters away in McIlroys Building, and the sound consistently reaches my home, making it difficult to concentrate on work (as I mostly work from home). Could you kindly request [them] to reduce the volume to a reasonable level? P.S. This is not about ethnicity—I'm XXXX myself, just concerned about the noise level and its impact on work.	X	
through the town centre, [they] did not pick out any specific buskers, just saying it was oppressive and made [them] not want to stay too long in the area.	X	
They complained that the buskers set up outside the store are so loud everytime the doors open they cannot hear their customers. Their customers have also often made comments to them about it.	X	
A busker playing loud trumpet from 9 pm onwards well beyond midnight disturbing the sleep.		
Very loud street preachers set up outside Boots on Broad St. I approached them and asks to turn it down but was ignored.	X	
XXXX with a massive speaker pounding out music and preaching .We are a medical practice trying to hear patients requests . This is very distracting while working .	X	

A busker outside M&S / Oracle entrance had a stereo playing karaoke tracks and XXXX was singing along to it using a microphone to amplify [their] voice. I didn't record the decibel level but it was very loud. If I had been accompanied whilst in town, we would have had to stop our conversation as I am sure that we wouldn't have been able to hear each other over the noise. In my opinion, busking should be strictly acoustic. The idea should be that they invite passers-by in to their space by doing a good performance, not forcing their music and singing on everyone as it is currently.		
Buskers outside M&S. Clearly these 2 buskers thought that they were performing at a stadium. It was far too loud	X	
XXXX Busker performing with amplification	X	
There was xxxx singing outside flying tiger at lunchtime today. [they] was very loud and singing out of tune. I have spoken to a number of people in nearby shops who say that they have complained about [them] several times, but XXXX always seems to come back. Earlier this week, there was a XXXX busking and sounded great outside Flying Tiger. This XXXX set up by M&S and was drowning XXXX out. XXXX singing very loudly, medium build wearing bomber jacket with logo on but couldn't read the logo	X	
Very loud busking today.	X	
Very bad busking by XXXX outside John Lewis. Very high amplification making it difficult to hear customers.	X	

Is the busker known?	Decibel Reading
Yes	
Yes	
Yes	
Yes	

Yes	
Yes	83.7
Yes	
	81.9
	87.8
	81.7
	84.8
Yes	87.1
	87.5
	82
	93
Yes	87.8
Yes	91.6
Yes	

Yes	
Yes	
Yes	
	86.4
	80.3
Yes	
Yes	
Yes	99.7

Yes	
Yes	
Yes	
Yes	
Yes	84
Yes	

Yes	
Yes	
Yes	
Yes	
Numerous	
Yes	

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Overall numbers

- **Total complaints recorded: 65**
-

Categorised complaints

(Note: one complaint can fall into multiple categories if it mentions more than one issue.)

Noise / Volume issues

- **42 complaints**
- By far the dominant issue
- Includes references to:
 - Excessive loudness
 - Amplification / speakers
 - Decibel readings
 - Impact on businesses, customers, or work

 **~65% of all complaints**

Involving the public / children (microphone use, interaction)

- **18 complaints**
- Typically:
 - Letting members of the public sing/shout
 - Encouraging young people to scream
 - Concerns about appropriateness (especially with minors)

 **~28% of complaints**

Persistent / repeat offenders

- **13 complaints**
- Mentions of:
 - “spoken to multiple times”
 - “same busker”
 - “again” / repeated behaviour
- Indicates enforcement/compliance issues

 **~20% of complaints**

Preaching / religious groups

- **5 complaints**
- Includes:
 - Street preachers
 - Religious rap groups
 - Amplified preaching

 **~8% of complaints**

Behaviour (non-compliance / confrontation)

- **4 complaints**
- Includes:
 - Refusing to move or turn down
 - Ignoring wardens
 - Accusations (e.g. racism)

 **~6% of complaints**

General dissatisfaction / quality complaints

- **6 complaints**
- Comments like:
 - “awful”, “terrible”, “out of tune”
 - Negative perception of busking overall

 **~9% of complaints**

Key insights

1. Noise is the overwhelming issue

- Nearly **2 in 3 complaints** relate directly to volume
 - Often linked to **amplification use**, not busking itself
-

2. Amplification + public interaction = biggest risks

A pattern emerges where complaints cluster around:

- Loud amplified sound **AND**
- Letting the public (especially children) use microphones

This combination appears particularly problematic.

3. Repeat offenders are a notable concern

- 20% of complaints explicitly mention repetition
 - Suggests:
 - Current guidance/enforcement may not be effective
 - A small number of individuals likely drive a large share of complaints
-

4. Business impact is a recurring theme

Across categories, complaints frequently mention:

- Inability to hear customers
 - Staff disruption
 - Shops closing doors
 - People leaving the town centre
-



About date ranges

Your data spans roughly **June 2025** → **April 2026**.

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Source L <https://www.facebook.com/TVPReading/posts/the-town-centre-neighbourhood-team-are-working-with-reading-bid-to-make-reading-/1164520242510736/>

Some Comments may not appear here because of their privacy settings

	Name	Date	Likes	Comment
1	REDACTED	2026-01-07 15:49:02	20	the attached link is not a survey its to report busking , which personally i like so i wont be filling it in clever aint they, this way they can say they did a public consultation and received numerous complaints/reports about busking. Thus painted negatively fromm the onset.
	REPLY			dirty bar stewards is what they are and im smarter as are most
	REPLY			ah, the usual fake consultation. Well there's a surprise.
2	REDACTED	2026-01-07 16:04:15	17	Let them play their music and sing.. they bring entertainment which is more than what can be said for all the ASBO behaviour in the town centre which TVP dont give a toss about. God forbid anyone wants to just enjoy themselves these days.
	REPLY			the place is full of miserable souls x
	REPLY			isn't it!!!
3	REDACTED	2026-01-07 16:36:41	20	It's not the buskers causing problems , should let them sing and play music.
4	REDACTED	2026-01-07 16:36:59	9	Leave the buskers alone, go do some 'policing'.
5	REDACTED	2026-01-07 16:37:15	2	TVP Reading PoliceYes they areCorrupt Corrupt Corrupt As they comeWhat ever you doDo not trust themRecord everything even video
6	REDACTED	2026-01-07 16:46:37	16	The beggars is the problem. Only this morning i eas sat inside McDonald's Friar Street just got my Breakfast from the staff and one if the usual beggars had the nerve to ask me if i had any spare change i said no. Its not the first time this same person has asked me. Last year the same guy asked me 2 times within a few minutes of each other at 2 different locations in the town centre.
7	REDACTED	2026-01-07 16:59:03	3	Maybe you should focus on locking up all the violent smack heads instead
8	REDACTED	2026-01-07 17:15:29	26	It's the professional begging operations that need to be stopped.
9	REDACTED	2026-01-07 17:39:59	36	Leave the Buskers alone.....it's not like they run up to people begging for money..they bring entertainment to an otherwise miserable place 🙄
	REPLY			Totally agree with you .when I'm in the town I love to hear them ,,
	REPLY			you obviously haven't heard the guy howling full volume, and out of time, outside M&S!?
10	REDACTED	2026-01-07 17:51:09		I smell pork 🤢🤢🤢
11	REDACTED	2026-01-07 17:53:26	5	RBC could do something to make the town more appealing, cleaning it would be a good start and get the overflowing litter bins emptied more regularly..we already pay more than enough council tax, we should have the cleanest town in the country instead of the dirty grimy sh*thole that it is...and get the chewing gum cleaned up, it looks like a swarm of seagulls with diarrhoea have descended on the town.
12	REDACTED	2026-01-07 17:59:15	5	I like the buskers, it's the beggars you need to get rid of .
13	REDACTED	2026-01-07 18:04:18	6	Leave those who sing positive vibes
14	REDACTED	2026-01-07 18:15:15	9	Please change this posts photo it has been established that this is not reading! This is actually Buckinghamshire and doesn't show the true likeness of our town.... thieves and beggars and all. We've already established this with XXXXXXX.
15	REDACTED	2026-01-07 18:40:26	12	I like the busking I don't see anything wrong with it.
16	REDACTED	2026-01-07 18:41:19	8	Leave the buskers alone!! They aren't doing any harm. Just concentrate on the drunks and beggars
	REPLY			they make my ears bleed
	REPLY			exactly
17	REDACTED	2026-01-07 19:07:31	11	How about some police on the streets.
18	REDACTED	2026-01-07 19:19:37	16	I like the fact we have buskers, most of them are very talented. But I do think a lot of the time they are excessively loud. (Loud is OK! It's part of the job. But the noise level is often over the top).
	REPLY			😊e have an old busker friend who really objects to buskers with PA systems. Loud isn't supposed to be part of the job
	REPLY			this I can empathise with. Sometimes they are too loud.

	Name	Date	Likes	Comment
19	REDACTED REPLY	2026-01-07 19:22:58	22	You know street busking in the town is usually really nice makes it more vibrant so tackle the druggies and thieves Especially the thieves
20	REDACTED REPLY REPLY REPLY	2026-01-07 20:09:53	9	Fewer people going into town. Night and/or day. Reading town centre will die with increased business rates. Many more shops, pubs and hospitality outlets will close. Our high streets will be deserted very soon. That said, I don't go into Reading in the evening anymore. I really don't think buskers are the problem! even worse when they close the 'hexagon/ mall car park'. Many of the older population including me will not walk through the town centre at night. Interesting to see what closure of the cat park does to hexagon evening performances. No, it's the Multi-storey above the mall right by the hexagon. Thanks
21	REDACTED	2026-01-07 20:10:33		Many have very poor diction. Sometimes I have to myself what language are they singing in.
22	REDACTED	2026-01-07 20:17:06		Buskers ain't the issue it's all the crackhead mate
23	REDACTED	2026-01-07 20:47:36	2	Good Buskers are a highlight, as long as the volume is reasonable - some of them play so loud it dominates the area.
24	REDACTED REPLY REPLY	2026-01-07 21:00:27	7	Let the buskers play. It would be better doing something about the begging and crack heads and the cyclists and food delivery people. spot on
25	REDACTED	2026-01-07 21:01:20	3	It would be nice to have a form that allows us to report lovely busking experiences as well as not nice ones. Balance is everything!
26	REDACTED	2026-01-07 21:06:36	2	This form in no way gives the opportunity for a balanced view.
27	REDACTED	2026-01-07 21:27:09	1	What town is that
28	REDACTED	2026-01-07 21:30:27	2	Buskers are fine it's the beggars, religious nutters, druggies, thieves and the unemployable working age wasters that frequent the town centre that are the problem.
29	REDACTED	2026-01-07 21:59:26	1	Where is the picture taken?
30	REDACTED	2026-01-07 22:03:21	7	Yeah, blame the buskers! Hearing music is a good thing. Why don't we ever see Police walking the streets? None of this was necessary back in the 1970s when I was a student at Reading Uni. The town was friendly, safe and clean then. What's changed???
31	REDACTED	2026-01-07 22:06:46	1	Jokers take the crack heads out first
32	REDACTED	2026-01-07 22:09:08		That aint fkin reading surely
33	REDACTED	2026-01-07 22:11:45	3	I genuinely thought it said Reading an safe place in the same sentence! 🤔🤔🤔
34	REDACTED	2026-01-08 00:55:05		Nothing appealing about it 🤔
35	REDACTED	2026-01-08 07:04:42	3	Buskers arent the problem
36	REDACTED	2026-01-08 09:07:24		Can't bear the buskers. Too loud. If it was acoustic perhaps but all use some form of amplification. I find it intrusive and puts me off visiting
37	REDACTED	2026-01-08 10:36:09	1	
38	REDACTED	2026-01-08 12:56:58	4	Buskers are not the problem with reading
39	REDACTED	2026-01-08 15:08:25	3	I live in Reading Berkshire I have done since birth 44 years now and I can't walk around the town centre without someone asking me if I have any spare change to support their drug habit the crack heads and smack heads it's beyond the joke.
40	REDACTED	2026-01-08 15:41:15	1	Where is the survey? We clearly can't trust the police...
41	REDACTED	2026-01-08 17:09:36		Leave the buskers alone a lot of them play great music
42	REDACTED REPLY	2026-01-08 18:30:45	1	👍 true leave them buskers alone and go and catch the bikes 🚲 and handbags thief's 🏴󠁧󠁢󠁥󠁮󠁧󠁿 Years ago my brother was a busker he never broke the law or got into trouble he just loved music and he's 70 now lives in Scotland and is still playing music on stage and getting paid for it now ❤️❤️❤️
43	REDACTED REPLY	2026-01-08 18:58:52		Can I make a complaint about the call to prayer, thought not. Well I've lived in Reading for nigh on 50 years and I've yet to hear a call to prayer in the town centre or indeed anywhere else in town. I also lived in Alexandria for a year, so I'm pretty familiar with what they sound like. Perhaps you are mistaking some other noise?.
44	REDACTED	2026-01-08 20:40:28	1	Yes I live on market place in Reading and this buskers create noise nuisance every now and then since past few months. I don't mind them until 10pm, but it goes on until 1am on occasion. Any action in this regard would be highly appreciated. Thanks.
45	REDACTED	2026-01-08 20:50:39		Buskers, ha ha ha. I nearly wet myself. A town full of beggars and thieves and you think the problem lies with Buskers. Please pretend that you care or stay silent is the best approach as far as I can see.

	Name	Date	Likes	Comment
46	REDACTED	2026-01-08 22:36:39	1	So we going after people who enjoy singing rather than people who commit crime.This country is backwards Absolute 🤡 show and embarrassment.
47	REDACTED	2026-01-08 22:40:40		Box tickers confirmed then
48	REDACTED	2026-01-08 23:58:15	1	All the problems that are happening and your worried about buskers.....wow
49	REDACTED	2026-01-09 08:49:58		Wait!!!!!! So you guys are going after the buskers now? .First the e-bikes, then the scooters, then the Brothels and now the buskers. Yep, Police target poor people only. Yet, they ignore the Pedophiles in The House Of Lords.
50	REDACTED	2026-01-09 15:39:22	3	I would like to see them in Broad Street stopping those cyclists in the no cycling part. also, haven't seen Police in Caversham for years.
51	REDACTED	2026-01-09 16:22:08		Maybe the noise is due to, 10 coppers to tackle one shoplifter.
52	REDACTED	2026-01-09 17:51:21		Where is the photograph taken. I've been racking my brains, but I don't recognise it.
53	REDACTED	2026-01-09 17:52:26		I like the buskers, they are (always) harmless and (usually) entertaining. No desire to report them.Now if we were talking about some of the demented preachers in Broad Street, or the chuggers, or the beggars, that is a different story.
54	REDACTED	2026-01-09 22:13:28	1	Buskers do no harmWhatsoever!! Catch the shoplifters, pickpockets and drug sellers instead
55	REDACTED	2026-01-10 08:50:48		I know I'm old and cranky but mis the Reading of the seventies nicer place.Busker can be a bit loud be then I move on they don't do any harm and they entertaine people.get prkrities right.go after the villains.
56	REDACTED	2026-01-10 14:46:08		TVP Reading still no survey, only a form to complain about buskers. What a shockingly dishonest post.
57	REDACTED	2026-01-10 20:46:29		JHC, all the other crimes getting committed and you are worried about busking? Most of the busking i hear is from very talented young people. Didn't Ed Sheeran start of busking?
58	REDACTED	2026-01-10 20:48:55		Can we stop the people who shove "Jesus will save you" leaflets in our faces? They are annoying.Can we stop the cold calling of Jehovahs witnesses?
59	REDACTED	2026-01-11 17:50:52		leave the buskers alone
60	REDACTED	2026-01-11 18:00:52		More Buskers please and keep it Free!
61	REDACTED	2026-01-11 20:56:14		This is not reading
62	REDACTED	2026-01-12 08:40:02		Far too loud for my liking and very rarely my kind of music to hear BUT better that that religious zealots shouting into p.a systems about how I'm going to be struck down for being evil person or spouting the Koran in my lughole
63	REDACTED	2026-01-12 14:13:12		Ahh yeah buskers noising up Cornwall Place has always been an issue in Readings town center 🤡🤡think it's fine anywhere else in town just not in Cornwall Place!
64	REDACTED	2026-01-14 08:33:59		That's not Reading and buskers are the least of Reading's problems
65	REDACTED	2026-01-14 18:41:15	1	Your right Durgesh buskers should switch off at ten.
66	REDACTED	2026-01-14 20:54:32		Shame they don't take a walk round the parks in caversham around 6pm drug dealers like meals on wheels trading at the playgrounds
67	REDACTED	2026-02-01 13:58:09		I would just like to say Thank You to TVP for the quick response I had from the two police that came after my call to them today,That has been twice in as many Months.Thank You TVP

TVP Reading's post



TVP Reading

7 January · 🌐

The town centre neighbourhood team are working with Reading BID to make Reading a safer and more appealing place to visit. We have received noise complaints from businesses and members of the public in relation to buskers in the town. In order to get a balanced view we would welcome feedback from visitors to the town. Please feel free to complete the attached survey to enable us to take action where appropriate.

<https://orlo.uk/6lZup>



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135



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(1) [TVP Reading - The town centre neighbourhood team are working with... | Facebook](#)



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Appendix 5 – Analysis of complaints spreadsheet, grouped by themes

Main themes

Excessive noise and amplification (by far the dominant issue). This is the core driver of almost all complaints.

Key characteristics

Frequent references to very high-volume levels, supported by readings:

- Typically, 80–90+ dBA, with peaks close to 100 dBA
- Amplification (speakers + microphones) is the main cause.
- Noise carries into shops and offices, and up to 500m away (residential impact).

Impacts described

- Cannot hear customers or colleagues.
- Telephone calls and meetings disrupted.
- Customers leaving premises.
- Staff moving to back offices.
- People leaving the town centre early.

Pattern: This is not occasional — it is persistent, daily, and predictable.

Failure to comply with guidance / repeated warnings ignored.

There is strong evidence of systematic non-compliance.

Multiple instances of:

- Buskers being spoken to repeatedly.
- Guidance leaflets issued
- Requests to reduce volume ignored.
- Some individuals identified as repeat offenders (e.g. named performers)

Typical behaviours

- Turning down volume temporarily when observed, then increasing again
- Ignoring wardens or BID staff.
- Continuing despite direct intervention

Use of microphones by the public (especially children)

A distinct and serious theme emerged from issues reported combining noise nuisance and safeguarding concerns.

One particular identified busker:

- Handing microphones to members of the public
- Encouraging shouting/screaming
- Repeated references to young girls (approx. 13–15)
- Extremely high noise spikes
- Filming and photographing young participants.
- Physical contact (e.g. hugging) described as inappropriate.

Impact on businesses and the local economy

This is a major theme throughout with reported impacts including:

- Loss of trade (customers leaving, doors closed)
- Poor customer experience
- Staff stress and reduced morale

Inability to conduct:

- Retail sales (John Lewis, M&S, Primark, etc.)
- Professional meetings (HSBC, Deloitte)
- Medical consultations (opticians)

To those static businesses experiencing nuisance, busking is being experienced not as ambient entertainment, but as a material business disruption.

Repetition, duration, and lack of rotation

Complaints highlight how often and how long performers remain in one place.

Key points:

- Same performers in the same locations daily or near-daily
- Sessions lasting several hours at a time.
- Repetitive music, same songs played on loop.

Impact:

- “Relentless” experience for workers
- Cumulative effect on wellbeing and tolerance

Street preachers / religious groups (similar issues)

Issues are not limited to buskers. Complaints include:

- Loud amplified preaching
- Groups using speakers at high volume.
- Same impacts as buskers: Cannot hear conversations, and disruption to businesses.

Additional issues:

- Refusal to engage when challenged.
- High decibel readings comparable to amplified music

Pattern: The issue is amplified sound in public space generally, not just music.

Conflict, accusations, and difficult interactions

Several incidents show escalation when challenged.

Example:

- Accusations of: Racism when asked to move or reduce volume.

Buskers:

- Refusing to engage
- Smiling/ignoring requests
- Denying behaviour despite being observed

Public realm impact / town centre experience

A broader reputational theme.

Feedback includes busking described as:

- “Oppressive”
- “Unpleasant”
- “Letting Reading down”

Visitors:

- Leaving early
- Avoiding staying in the area

Common proposals

- Licensing system
- Ban or restriction on amplification.
- Stronger enforcement powers
- Clearer rules with consequences
- There is a clear perception that current guidance alone is ineffective.

Notable clustering of complaints

The data shows:

Repeat complaints about specific individuals.

Particularly:

- One frequently referenced busker near John Lewis
- One regularly referenced busker outside M&S/Primark (with a specific description redacted for the purpose of this public report)

This indicates: A small number of performers generating a disproportionate number of complaints.

Overall synthesis

The dataset supports the following conclusions:

- This is primarily a noise control issue.
- Driven by amplification, not busking itself.
- Impacts are economic, operational, and reputational.
- Not just subjective annoyance
- There are secondary risk issues - Safeguarding (children + filming + physical contact)

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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

For advice on this document please contact Clare Muir on 72119 or email Clare.Muir@reading.gov.uk.

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

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed: Guide for Busking and Street Performance in Reading
Directorate: DEGNS
Service: Public Protection

Name: Rob Abell
Job Title: Consumer Protection Group Manager
Date of assessment: 17 June 2026

Version History

Version	Reason	Author	Date	Approved By
1.0		Rob Abell	17/06/2026	

Scope your proposal

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

The “Guide for Busking and Street Performance in Reading” (The Guide) has been in place for 18 months, and the effectiveness of The Guide is being reviewed following a period of complaint monitoring. The Guide is designed to balance the needs of performers with those of residents, workers, shoppers, visitors and other people using the town centre through adopting guidelines which are intended to encourage good community practice. It is anticipated the guidance will help manage complaints and provides a tool to resolve disputes amicably.

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

Residents, businesses, buskers, street performers, visitors, faith groups.

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

-
- improved safety for both buskers and street entertainers as well as the public
 - reduced noise nuisance for residents and businesses
 - a reduction in complaints
 - support a culture and community of considerate performers and to enable the council to keep regulation light-touch
 - improved complaint mechanisms to enable officers to take a proportionate and targeted approach
 - improved communication, updates and engagement through the BID and council websites

-
- **Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?**
-

Business in the town centre who want to reduce the negative impacts of buskers, street entertainers through a voluntary code.

Buskers and entertainers who wish to perform in the town centre.

The guide is primarily directed to performers but on occasion, religious preachers and faith groups also operate in the town centre along areas of Broad Street. The council recognises the right to freedom of religious belief and freedom of expression but considers that this activity should also follow the principles of the code to foster good community relations, especially with regards to noise levels and the use of amplification.

Assess whether an EqlA is Relevant

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

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

No

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

Yes with reference to faith groups/preaching, if perceived to breach the right to freedom of religious belief and freedom of expression.

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

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

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:

X

Completing Officer

X

Lead Officer

Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Consultation

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

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

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
Buskers and Performers Musicians Union Keep Streets Live Town Centre Businesses Reading Interfaith Group Church Groups Access and Disability Working Group	A public consultation has previously been conducted following Licensing Committee on 11 July 2024 The consultation responses were taken into account when developing the final version of The Gude which has now been in place since Licensing Committee agreed the adoption of it in November 2024. The content remains unchanged.	15 July 2024 - 9 September 2024

Collect and Assess your Data

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

(Please delete relevant ticks)

- Describe how this proposal could impact on racial groups
- Is there a negative impact? Not sure

Some faith groups could be made up of particular racial or ethnic groups.

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

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

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

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

- Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief
 - Is there a negative impact? Yes
-

The code of conduct will apply to faith groups who use amplification to preach in the Town Centre. These groups may raise concerns they are being prevented from their right to freedom of religious belief and freedom of expression.

The code of conduct is aimed at reducing the impact through a collaborative and engaging approach. This does not prevent the activity taking place but looks for those taking part to be considerate of others and to keep noise to an acceptable level.

https://archive.christianconcern.com/sites/default/files/FreedomOfSpeech_booklet.pdf

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

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

Make a Decision

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

(Delete numbers below which don't apply)

1. Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason

- How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

There will be a public consultation conducted on the draft code before adoption and following implementation the impact will be monitored and a review conducted after one year.

X

X

Completing Officer

Lead Officer

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Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

21 July 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Hexagon Theatre Investment
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Emma Gee, Executive Director Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services
Report author	Sarah Cox, Reading Arts & Venues Manager Donna Pentelow, Director of Culture, Leisure and Skills.
Lead Councillor	Councillor Lanzoni, Lead Councillor for Leisure and Culture
Council priority	Secure Reading's economic & cultural success
Recommendations	1. That Committee notes the successful grant from Arts Council England of £2.068m for investment in the Hexagon Theatre. 2. That Committee notes the update on the Studio Theatre build due to open in spring 2027.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Council has successfully applied to Arts Council England's (ACE) Creative Foundations Fund for £2,068,000 of grant funding with match funding of £230,500 being provided by the Council (consisting of: £109,000 in-kind contribution, £71,500 fundraising and £50,000 capital funding). The bid seeks funding to make improvements to the Hexagon Theatre seating, drainage, fire stopping and fire door remedial works.
- 1.2. In line with the Council's constitution and the report to Policy Committee on 13 April 2026, the Director of Culture, Leisure and Skills has accepted the grant offer. The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Director of Legal and Governance and the Director of Finance, will progress the procurement and enter into the necessary contracts to carry out the works.
- 1.3. The first phase of work will complete in winter 2026/27 with other works concluding in autumn 2027.
- 1.4. 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, providing circa 200 seating flexible theatre (circa 300 standing) with step free access, accessible toilets on all floors, and bar and catering facilities.
- 1.5. Work to install the new ground source heating system in the Hexagon is progressing with the aim for full operation by October 2026. This will replace the existing gas boilers to help meet the decarbonisation aims of the Council.
- 1.6. The operational and business planning to programme the Hexagon and Studio Theatre from 2027 as complementary venues has started.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Hexagon is Reading's cultural flagship venue, the largest in the region, welcoming over 150,000 visitors annually and hosting more than 160 performances and 80 community events. It plays a central role in Reading's cultural life, driving footfall, supporting the local economy, and providing a vital platform for community engagement.
- 2.2. The venue is currently undergoing transformation, supported by a funded decarbonisation programme and a multi-million UK Government (Levelling Up Fund) award to deliver a new studio theatre. Together, these projects will create a multi-space arts campus at the heart of a broader regeneration scheme.
- 2.3. The Hexagon is the cornerstone of Reading's cultural life — a space where professional touring work, community performance, and local participation come together. This investment will address operational issues inherent in a 50 year old venue, and secure the venue's ability to continue delivering a rich programme for audiences, artists, and community groups. The funding enables essential capital works including replacing seating, updating drainage, and carrying out fire stopping work.
- 2.4. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28, one of which is to secure Reading's economic and cultural success by delivering quality cultural and leisure services and facilitate exciting improvements to our cultural offer through grant-funded projects. Delivering improvements to the Hexagon aims to deliver against this priority.

3. The Hexagon

- 3.1. The Council has successfully applied to Arts Council England's (ACE) Creative Foundations Fund for £2,068,000 of grant funding with match funding of £230,500 being provided by the Council (consisting of: £109,000 in-kind contribution, £71,500 fundraising and £50,000 capital funding). The bid will fund improvements to the Hexagon Theatre seating, drainage, fire door and associated fire stopping remedial works.
- 3.2. The project is a programme of works designed to address the 50 year old heritage systems within The Hexagon Theatre, ensuring its continued safe operation, long-term sustainability and increasing access for audiences. The works includes replacement of the retractable seating system, fixed balcony seats and loose seating. This will improve accessibility and enhance audience experience. The venue's drainage system will be upgraded to meet future demand requirements, and fire doors and associated fire stopping will be improved and replaced, ensuring public protection and building resilience.
- 3.3. Work is progressing to implement the first phase of works to improve the auditorium flooring in summer 2026 and replace the seating in the Hexagon arena and stalls areas this winter 2026/27. The other works are being planned for 2027, to be coordinated with the theatre's established show programme.
- 3.4. **Studio theatre update**
- 3.5. Work is progressing in earnest on the new Studio Theatre at the Hexagon in accordance with the construction programme. The main structural elements of the building have been installed including the timber frame which helps meets the sustainability requirements of the design. During summer 2026 further works will continue to be undertaken to complete the building envelope. External works will also take place to install the new pedestrian footbridge that links the studio theatre with Queens Walk. This will provide step free access to the studio theatre.
- 3.6. Work to install the new ground source heating system in the Hexagon is progressing as planned with the aim for full operation by October 2026. This will replace the existing gas boilers to help meet the decarbonisation aims of the Council.

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. 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.
- 4.4. Delivering improvements to the Hexagon aims to deliver against the priority of securing Reading's economic and cultural success through grant-funded projects and seeks to ensure the theatre can continue to operate effectively.

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. This project demonstrates a strong commitment to environmental responsibility by integrating essential capital works with a wider decarbonisation programme already underway at the Hexagon as part of the Studio theatre works. By replacing outdated and inefficient infrastructure such as the 50-year-old retractable seating, failing drainage system, and fire doors, the Hexagon's environmental footprint is reduced through improved energy efficiency, reduced waste, and lower maintenance-related emissions.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. Formal consultation is not required. The project has been directly shaped by extensive user and stakeholder feedback, highlighting the need to improve accessibility, and comfort within the Hexagon. Through surveys sent to bookers, the Hexagon has had numerous comments in the past two years relating to audience experience, accessibility, and condition of seating. Feedback consistently identified the seating and outdated handrails as major barriers to comfort and access. The improved seating will benefit all users including those with disabilities, mobility needs, and visual impairments.

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 positive equalities implications arising from this project. An access review was carried out by an accredited access consultant and highlighted the inadequacy of the existing seating in meeting guidance and expectations on accessibility.
- 7.3. The project is rooted in a commitment to ensuring the Hexagon remains accessible, welcoming, and responsive to the needs of its diverse community. Informed by

audience feedback, the project directly addresses barriers to participation particularly for disabled, and older audiences through improved seating, handrails, and accessible facilities.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1. On 13 April 2026, Policy Committee approved the following recommendation:

"If the Arts Council England bid is successful for £2,068,000 of grant funding with match funding of £230,500, that Committee grants spend approval and delegates authority to the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Director of Legal & Governance and the Director of Finance to enter into all necessary contracts to deliver the outputs of the bid." [Agenda for Policy Committee on Monday, 13th April, 2026, 6.30 pm - Reading Borough Council.](#)

- 8.2 According, spend approval and delegated authority having already been granted, this report is for noting only following the successful outcome of the bid. Nevertheless, the planned programme of works will need to proceed in accordance with the provisions of the Council's [Constitution](#), including its Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules, and any conditions of the ACE grant funding.
- 8.3 The terms and conditions of the grant include the requirement for the Council to enter into a Deed of Covenant (the Deed) which will restrict any disposal, leasing or change of use of the Hexagon as a theatre, without the prior consent of ACE, for a period of 20 years. It will also include provisions enabling ACE to recover all or part of the grant in the event of a breach, such as an unauthorised disposal or cessation of the funded use. The Deed will be secured against the Council's interest in the property, thereby binding successors in title. Members should note that these obligations may limit the Council's future flexibility in relation to the Hexagon and will need to be taken into account in any future decisions affecting it.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1. As an information only report there are no direct financial implications arising. The successful grant award allows for this development to proceed in full and budgets have been built into the approved MTFS for both revenue and capital.

10. Timetable for Implementation

- 10.1. The table below shows the projected major milestones over the coming 12 months for the ACE grant and new studio theatre works.

Autumn 2026:	Hexagon ground source heating system installed
Winter 2026/27:	Hexagon arena and stalls new seating installed
	Studio theatre works envelope and interior works complete
	Studio theatre works fitout and commissioning starts
Spring 2027:	Studio Theatre opens
Autumn 2027:	Hexagon fire doors and associated remedial works
	Hexagon drainage works
	Hexagon theatre balcony area new seating works

11. Background Papers

- 11.1. None.

Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

21 July 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Reading Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Annual Report
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Executive Director Commissioning Report	Melissa Wise – Executive Director Communities & Adult Social Care
Report author	Sarah Gardner, Community Safety Manager
Lead Councillor	Councillor Finn McGoldrick - Lead Member for Environmental Services & Community Safety
Council priority	Promote more equal communities in Reading
Recommendations	That Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee: 1. endorses the annual Community Safety Partnership report outlining the activities and impact over the last year for publication; 2. notes a new Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy for 2026-2029 has been commissioned alongside an associated Strategic Needs Assessment.

1. Executive Summary

1.1. This report provides an overview of the work that Reading's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has carried out over the last year to meet the priorities outlined within the Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy 2023-2026. The report covers July 2025 - May 2026.

1.2. Key highlights from this year's activity:

- Data/insights highlights:
 - Over the last 5 years the overall crime rate spiked in 2022 and then started to fall steadily between 2022 and 2024. Crime rates were down 1.58% in 2023, and 6.05% in 2024. There has been a small increase in 2025 of 0.37%.
 - Perceptions of how safe residents feel in Reading have remained the same in 2025, in comparison to the previous year. In the 2025 Community Safety Survey 50.5% responded that they felt safe in Reading; in 2024, 51% of respondents said they felt safe in Reading.
- CSP partnership activity highlights:
 - A new Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy for 2026-2029 has been commissioned and an associated Strategic Needs Assessment has commenced.
 - A new Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) was brought into force on 24 March 2026, providing an additional partnership tool to address Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

- The expansion of the Young Voices network has continued, meaning the voice of children and young people is contributing to decision-making and shaping delivery. The lead Young Voices representative sits on the CSP Executive Group and the Young Voices Survey is now embedded as an annual survey alongside the main Community Safety Survey.
- Improved approaches to community cohesion and resilience have been implemented, including a refined process for reassuring communities during high-profile events, such as terrorist attacks, and ways to facilitate collaborative engagement with Community Leaders.
- Independently recommended improvements have been made to the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, including ways to embed the voice of the child and lived experience into decision-making.
- New processes have been created to enable better partnership working on water safety, including the creation of regular partnership patrols to address crime and ASB on Reading's waterways.
- Key community events linked to crime reduction, including the CSP's annual Domestic Abuse Conference and annual Young Voices Safety Summit, have continued to be regularly held and enhanced, using partners and participant feedback.

2. Policy Context

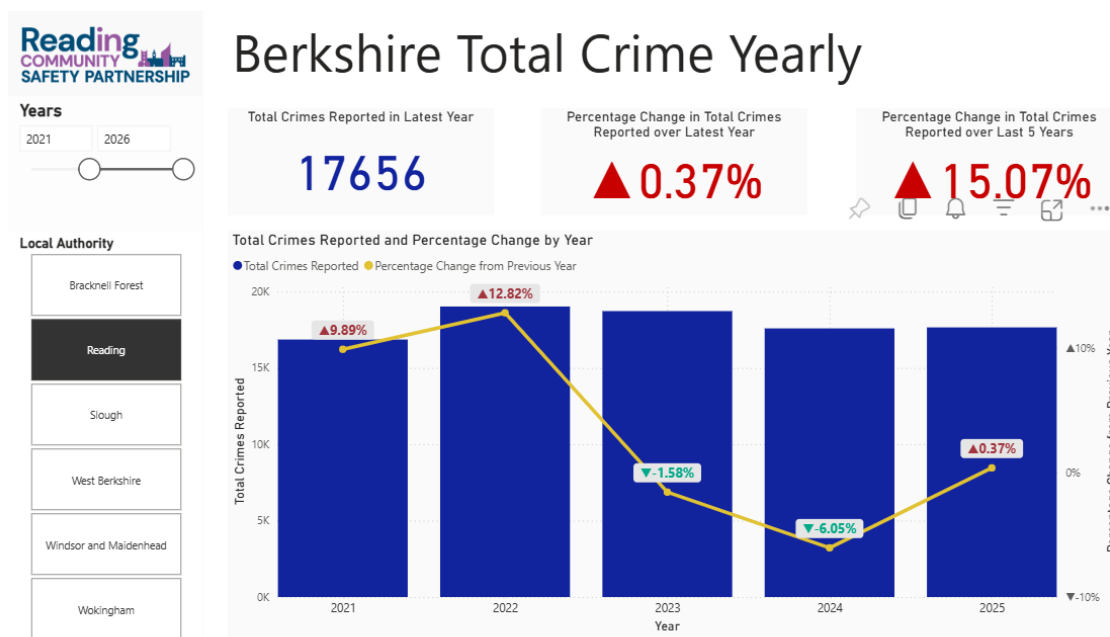
- 2.1. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 states that Community Safety Partnership (CSPs), must formulate a strategy, every 3 years, for the reduction of crime, anti-social behaviour and disorder in the area.
- 2.2. The Serious Violence Duty outlined within the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, states that relevant services (in this case Reading's CSP) must also work together and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence.
- 2.3. These statutory duties are delivered via Reading CSP's Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy, which is refreshed every 3 years.
- 2.4. The current priorities within the Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy 2023-2026 are to:
 - Reduce crime in the top crime-generating neighbourhoods
 - Improve the way the Community Safety Partnership works with communities to tackle anti-social behaviour and hate crime
 - Reduce community-based drug related activity
 - Reduce knife violence, including the carrying of blades and their use in crime
 - Tackle organised crime gangs transporting illegal drugs across Reading's borders, also known as 'county lines' offending
 - Improve safety for women in public places and reduce sexually focused crimes and anti-social behaviour.
- 2.5. Alongside this strategy sits Reading's Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation Strategy 2023-2026. Whilst the Domestic Abuse Strategy is overseen by Reading's Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, the governance for the Board and strategy sits with the CSP, therefore, key delivery updates on the work of the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board are provided in this report.
- 2.6. The strategic priorities for the Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation Strategy 2023-2026 are to:
 - Effectively commission refuge and other safe accommodation spaces

- Raise awareness about Domestic Abuse
 - Engage with diverse communities
 - Develop and support a multi-agency approach to working with an array of groups inclusive of victims, survivors and perpetrators
 - Continue to safeguard and advocate for children and young people who have experienced or witnessed Domestic Abuse.
- 2.7 A Strategic Needs Assessment and updated Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy for 2026-2029 was commissioned in May, to replace the 2023-2026 Strategy, which expires in November 2026. This is due to come to Committee for endorsement in November, following a public consultation on the strategic priorities.
- 2.8 A Strategic Needs Assessment and updated Domestic Abuse Strategy for 2026-2029 was commissioned in January 2026 and is due to come to Committee for endorsement in November, following a public consultation on the strategic priorities.

3. The Proposal

Statistics – Reading crime data

- 3.1. The data in this report is sourced from Berkshire Observatory, which collates data from national and validated data sources including the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Police data.
- 3.2. It is important to note that offence data shifts regularly as old offences come to light or longstanding investigations are completed.
- 3.3. Overall crime rates:
- Over the last 5 years crime rates in Reading spiked in 2022 with 19,024 offences and then started to fall steadily between 2022 and 2024. Crime rates were down 1.58% in 2023, and 6.05% in 2024.
 - The total volume of crime in Reading for 2025 was 17,656 offences which shows a small increase of 0.37%, compared to 2024, but still lower than the 2022 spike.
 - This can be seen in the chart below.



Single crime case data have been aggregated for Reading and rates are calculated per 1,000 population. 12-month rolling figures use an average of the population monthly figures over the same period.

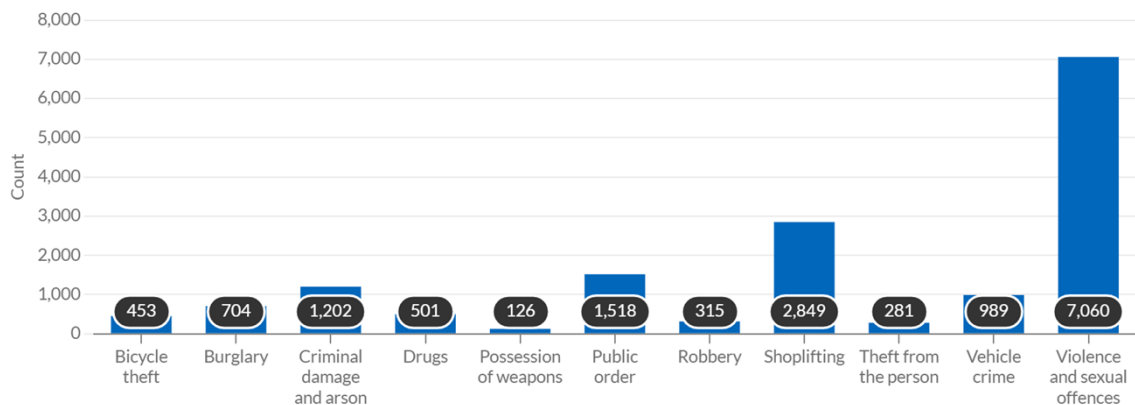
Data source: Berkshire Observatory.

3.4. Highest category of offence types:

- Violence and sexual offences remain the highest category of offence at a rate of 7,060 offences per 1,000 (40.4%), followed by shoplifting at 2,849 (16.3%). This can be seen in the chart below.
- Over the last 5 years, violence and sexual offences have remained consistently high, with a peak in 2022 (49.6%) and the lowest in 2024 (38.1%).
- During the same period, shoplifting has seen a steady increase since 2022 from 9% in 2022 to 16% throughout 2024 and 2025.

 Crime by Type

Crime count by type for Reading (Apr-25 - Mar-26)



Single crime case data have been aggregated for Reading and rates are calculated per 1,000 population. 12-month rolling figures use an average of the population monthly figures over the same period.
Data source: Berkshire Observatory.

Perceptions – Annual Community Safety Survey

- 3.5. Reading's Community Safety Survey runs every summer, with the aim to capture residents' perceptions of crime and safety. Perception of safety is an important measure to review alongside crime data, because how safe people feel is not always related to statistical crime levels and because there are recognised barriers to reporting crime.
- 3.6. The Young Voices Safety Survey is now regularly carried out alongside the Community Safety Survey, led by the Young Voices network and supported by No 5, Starting Point, Reading FC Community Trust and the Council's Children's Social Care department.
- 3.7. The 2025 Community Safety Survey ran between 2 July and 31 August 2025. 725 residents responded to the 2025 survey, compared to 744 in 2024. There was a larger response to the Young Voices Safety Survey, which ran between 12 June and 1 August 2025, with 937 young people sharing their views (compared to 250 in 2024). This higher response rate is largely due to the amount of youth services available to engage face to face with young people, compared to resources to engage with all residents. The increase between years is due to the expansion of Young Voices and more youth services being engaged to support the Young Voices work.
- 3.8. Headlines from the 2025 Community Safety Survey results (725 responses):
- In response to the question: 'Do you think Reading is a safe place?' 50.5% responded that they think Reading is a safe place. This is showing no or little change - in 2024, 51% of respondents said Reading was safe. In 2023, 44.8% of respondents felt safe in Reading.

- When asked if crime had increased in their neighbourhood, 46.2% residents reported an increase and 36.4% said no change. This shows a slight improvement in how residents feel about neighbourhood crime - in 2024, 50.0% of residents reported an increase, and 34% said no change.
- When asked if anti-social behaviour (ASB) had increased in their neighbourhood, 57.2% reported it had and 29% said no change. This shows a slight improvement in perception of neighbourhood ASB - in 2024, 62% said ASB had increased where they lived and 27.6% said no change.
- There is a free textbox for comments at the end of the survey where respondents can add any other issues or concerns. 313 comments (out of 725 responses) were submitted. Analysis of these comments into themes shows the key issues as: aggressive begging; reckless riding of e-scooters and e-bikes; retail crime; women's safety particularly in Reading Town Centre; and environmental decline/litter and fly-tipping linked to feeling unsafe. These themes are similar to those raised in Safer Neighbourhood Forums throughout the year.

3.9. Headlines from the Young Voices survey 2025:

- The top 5 safety issues facing young people were:
 - Bullying (64.9% of young people chose this as their main safety issue)
 - Experiences of racism or homophobia (51.7%)
 - Online safety (42%)
 - Issues at home (37%)
 - Exploitation (26.1%).
- The top 5 places young people feel most safe are:
 - Home (92.7%)
 - School/College/Uni/Work (23.1%)
 - Parks and Open Spaces (13.9%)
 - Online (13%)
 - Public Transport (4.1%).
- The top 5 places young people feel most unsafe are:
 - Parks and Open Spaces (31.8%). Significantly more young people feel unsafe here than safe (13.9%)
 - School/College/Uni/Work (20.8%)
 - Online (12.2%)
 - Home (3.1%)
 - Alleyways (2%).

3.10. When comparing both surveys, aside from the age differences the main issues affecting those surveyed are very similar. People felt safer in the daytime than nighttime across both surveys. Confidence in reporting crime was low across both surveys.

3.11. The key difference between the two surveys is around types of crime:

- Responses from the Young Voices Survey showed a large concern around hate crime, particularly racism and homophobia, bullying and online harm.
- Fear of serious violence, including knife crime, was high amongst young people. Online content about fights was reportedly seen by 53% of respondents –

significantly more than content about knife crime (37%). Notably 33% had seen a young person carrying a knife (in the 'real world').

- In the Community Safety Survey 14.5% said threat of violent crime including knife crime and sexual assault made them feel unsafe in the daytime; 30.8% said threat of violent crime including knife crime and sexual assault made them feel unsafe in the night-time.
- The Community Safety Survey does not specifically ask people about online safety. The free comment box included only a few references to online harm (fraud was mentioned).
- Home was the place young people feel safest (despite 37% also saying they were most concerned about issues at home). This question was not asked in the Community Safety Survey.

Activity – projects, campaigns and events

3.12. The CSP has continued to undertake several key projects, campaigns and events over the last year. This has been enabled by in-kind support across the CSP and using grant funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (OPCC) Partnership Fund, which funds 23 projects to support activity related to the CSP's strategic priorities.

3.13. Headline activity taken relating to Community Safety and Serious Violence and Domestic Abuse priorities is outlined in the table below:

Strategic Priority	Activity
Reduce crime in the top crime-generating neighbourhoods	• Reading Borough Council (RBC), in partnership with Thames Valley Police (TVP), introduced a borough wide three-year Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) on 24th March 2026. The PSPO is applicable throughout the borough but will focus on the key hotspots in crime generating areas and will be monitored by RBC. It addresses some of the key concerns raised in the Community Safety Survey particularly around town centre safety, aggressive begging and reckless riding of e-bikes and e-scooters. There is a fuller update below, as per the monitoring commitment made in November's Policy Committee when the PSPO was endorsed. • RBC and Reading Business Improvement District (BID) launched the 'Tap for Reading' Scheme as a pilot in early 2025, providing the public with an alternative means of giving to homeless people and to run alongside existing tools as a way to reduce aggressive or persistent begging. A review of the pilot was carried out in May 2026, and a full update can be found below. • Crime data shows shoplifting as being a key priority for the CSP and this was also reflected by residents in the 2025 Safety Survey. The Police and CSP partners have run a successful serious organised crime operation to target the handlers of stolen goods and working closely with the businesses to improve security at the most targeted retail venues. The operation has resulted in multiple arrests and disruption of theft in the Town Centre. Prolific retail offenders have been charged and, where necessary, referred into rapid access drug and alcohol treatment. This work has increased reporting by businesses and their confidence in the authorities and CSP partners has increased. This successful work has been recognised by the Thames Valley Police 2026 Laycock Award. • The CSP secured OPCC funding in May 2026 to expand the Reading Townsafe Radio Scheme and Reading Against Business Crime so that more businesses can benefit from shared

	intelligence on shoplifters and have access to training and guidance.
Improve the way the CSP works with communities to tackle ASB and hate crime.	• The CSP has created an improved community safety and resilience approach to reassure communities during times of high-profile incidents, such as terrorist attacks, or activities that increase community tension. This includes the introduction of a CSP Community Leaders Network, the development of a community tensions register, which will feed into the CSP, and a Community Leaders event on 25th June to collaborate and share ways to improve resilience. This has become particularly relevant as the UK Threat Level increased to 'severe' in May 2026. • The CSP secured OPCC funding to introduce a Hate Crime Helpline in Reading, with associated training to encourage reporting and provide additional resources to monitor hate crime/incidents. The Helpline will be set up over 2026 and will offer a dedicated and tailored service to improve trust amongst communities, helping to reduce barriers to accessing support. • The CSP funded a new security system at Reading Refugee Support Group in December 2025, which has reassured staff and clients, many of whom are subject to hate crime/incidents. • Young Voices continues to explore ways to encourage young people to report ASB and hate crime. As noted previously, their 2025 survey showed one of the top issues facing young people was racism and/or homophobia, and yet the majority of young people surveyed would not report hate crime due to confusion around what it is, how to report it and lack of confidence of action being taken. Workshops were held at November's Young Voices Safety Summit and promotion of Stay True to You, Fearless and It Does Matter is an ongoing piece of work. • The CSP continues to prioritise and proactively support ASB Awareness Week and Hate Crime Awareness Week as key partnership events.
Reduce knife violence, including the carrying of blades and their use in crime <i>and</i> Tackle organised crime gangs transporting illegal drugs across Reading's borders, also known as 'county lines' offending <i>and</i> Reduce community-based drug related activity.	• Crime data shows violence as one of the highest categories of offences in Reading over the last 5 years and is a key priority for the CSP. Since Thames Valley Police split into Local Command Units, the Berkshire West LCU has set up multi-agency partnership meetings to focus on knife crime and organised crime. These meetings bring together partners from Youth Justice, Children's Services and Community Safety to manage plans for habitual knife carriers in Reading and across borders, and support partnership activity around serious organised crime (including drug dealing and retail crime). • The CSP secured OPCC funding in 2025 to support the provision of boxing camps and associated mentoring, which focus on young people at risk of serious and violent crime and exploitation. The camps provide a safe, positive, and inclusive space to build confidence, and engage in pro-social activity. It is run by people with lived experience in youth exploitation and serious violence, who provide mentoring to at-risk young people. • For the third year running, the CSP funded school workshops and a theatre/parkour production focussed on the grooming of a young person into a drug gang, with awareness raising on signs of exploitation. The performance was held in Kings Academy

	Prospect, with the whole school attending (approx. 1,200 pupils) and 99% of the children who saw the performance agreed that it had taught them about county lines and signs of exploitation. A fourth performance is being planned for summer 2026 at Hartland High (formerly JMA). Locations are determined by evidence around risk of exploitation. • The Young People's Activities and Programme Group, chaired by No 5, brings together representatives from sport, culture, youth work and education settings. It was established following the tragic murder of Olly Stephens in 2021, and it builds on the installation of the Armoured Heart Sculpture, which stands on the Oracle Riverside. The CSP secured OPCC funding in May 2026 to expand on this work, including exploring a permanent space to focus on Olly Stephen's story and act as an engagement and education hub.
Improve safety for women in public places and reduce sexually focused crimes and anti-social behaviour.	• Crime data shows violence and sexual offences as one of the highest categories of offences in Reading over the last 5 years and is a key priority for the CSP. The Berkshire West LCU has set up multi-agency partnership meetings to focus on Violence Against Women and Girls and specifically the Night-Time Economy (NTE) in Reading's Town Centre. This enables key partners to share data and intelligence and identify problem-solving activity. • The Reading Safe Space has continued to play a key role in supporting the safety of women in the Town Centre. Reading's First Stop and Street Pastors use this as a base to support vulnerable NTE users, including women at risk of crime, who present to the Safe Space in consistent numbers. The CSP has funded additional lighting, better signage and increased promotion of the Safe Space to improve safety for women across Reading. • The CSP continues to work with the Reading BID and RBC Licensing and Trading Standards to encourage bars, clubs and businesses to promote the 'Ask for Angela' scheme, which offers a safe exit from risky situations in venues, alongside 'Welfare and Vulnerability Engagement' (WAVE) training for venue staff. • The CSP secured OPCC funding to enable Young Voices to adapt the 'Ask for Angela' scheme and apply it to professionals in public spaces/services to support young people if they are feeling vulnerable. This work started in late 2025 with the Oracle, who have made a range of improvements based on young people's feedback, including setting up a safe space in the Oracle. Work will continue with Reading Buses, as young people have identified ways to help make them feel safer when travelling between school and home. • In July 2025 the CSP successfully applied for OPCC funding to explore the increase in AI Chatbots being used by young people as a trusted source of relationship advice. The project resulted in a theatre play and safeguarding resources for education professionals. The CSP has successfully sought further funding to tour the play around schools in 2026-7. • OPCC funding was also secured to provide self-defence training to community representatives throughout 2026, who will then go on to train other community members in Reading, with the aim of empowering women, young people and marginalised communities to reduce violence and exploitation.

Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation priorities	• The Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (DAPB), which oversees delivery of the strategy, was reviewed independently in 2025 and several recommendations were endorsed by the CSP and have been actioned, including more effective chairing and governance and ways to embed lived experience and the voice of the child in decision-making. • Training in Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and Domestic Abuse, Stalking, and 'Honour'-based abuse (DASH) is delivered to professionals five times a year. In 2025 the training was enriched with the support of the Children's Service's Principal Social Worker to include expertise around children as victim-survivors of Domestic Abuse (as per recommendations from the DAPB independent review). • Domestic Abuse Forums for professionals are run three times a year. Over 2025, sessions on coercive and controlling behaviour; no recourse to public funds; and stalking and harassment have been delivered. • Two Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs/DARDRs) have been brought to the CSP. As per the Home Office guidance, Scoping Reviews were carried out, and one case was commissioned for a full Review by the CSP in November 2025; an Independent Chair has been appointed to identify learning. The other case did not meet the criteria for a full review, which the Home Office ratified. • One of the CSP's flagship events is the Domestic Abuse Conference which is held annually. In 2025 the Conference celebrated the 50-year anniversary of Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA). The event focused on lived experience with keynote speakers and a lived experience panel. The 2026 Conference will be held in November to coincide with White Ribbon Day. • BWA is the commissioned service to deliver refuge and safe accommodation spaces, as per the strategy, and is monitored by the CSP.
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3.14. Update on the Reading Public Space Protection Order (PSPO):

- RBC, in partnership with TVP, introduced a borough wide three-year PSPO on 24th March 2026, following approval by RBC's Policy Committee in November 2025. An update on the implementation and monitoring of the PSPO was agreed to be made as part of this report.
- The PSPO addresses anti-social behaviour, including persistent/aggressive begging, street drinking, malicious/dangerous riding of e-bikes and e-scooters, dog fouling and (lack of) dog control. It addresses some of the key concerns raised in the Community Safety Survey, particularly around town centre safety, aggressive begging and reckless riding of e-bikes and e-scooters.
- Whilst the ultimate sanction of breach of a PSPO is through the means of a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) and/or Summons to the Magistrates' Court, there is a strong focus on education and engagement to deter further ASB. Enforcement will only take place if there are persistent, repeated and/or significant breaches.
- A PSPO Implementation Project Board, made up of enforcement officers and other key partners, is managing the monitoring and measuring of the PSPO.
- Since implementation, a successful education and communications campaign has been carried out and 28 breaches for the anti-social behaviour and begging

conditions have been reported (as at May 2026). An additional 3 breaches for the dog conditions have been reported. Kingdom Enforcement has been delegated the authority to enforce breaches relating to the dog conditions, to give additional resources, however their enforcement activity will begin on 5 June 2026, so data on Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) is not available at the time of writing this report.

Numbers of breaches by condition (TVP led)

Condition	Total	Verbal Warnings / Advice	Warning Letters	Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)
Street drinking & alcohol-related ASB	15	7	7	1
On-street / persistent begging	8	6	2	0
Anti-social e-scooters & e-bikes	5	1	4	0

Numbers of breaches by condition (RBC/Kingdom Enforcement led)

Condition	Total	Verbal Warnings/Advice	Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)
Dog fouling	2	2	0
Dog control	1	1	0

3.15. Below is an update on the Tap for Reading pilot scheme:

- The CSP launched the Tap for Reading Scheme, with Reading's BID as the lead delivery partner, as a pilot in early 2025 to: (i) provide the public with an alternative means of giving to homeless people; (ii) reduce aggressive begging alongside other powers/tools; and (iii) test whether small scale, targeted funding could support people experiencing rough sleeping, at risk of homelessness, or in unstable housing to successfully move on into independent living.
- Tap Readers were installed in several locations across the town with support from engaged businesses at key hotspots for aggressive/persistent begging. These include Reading Station; the Oracle; Broad Street Mall; Purple Turtle (bar/club); Ebb and Flow (Friar Street Apartments), and, until May 2025, No 3 Forbury Place (office). In May 2025 the Tap Reader moved from No 3 Forbury Place to the Apex offices.
- As of May 2026, a total of £7,433.00 has been donated both online and through the Tap Readers, with the amount being split between the four charity partners commissioned by RBC: Launchpad Reading, The Salvation Army, YMCA Reading and St Mungo's. Donations throughout the year have remained largely consistent in regularity and amount. However, online donations have been more popular - online donations totalled £5,082.00 versus Tap Reader donations which totalled £2,351.00.
- Over 50 individuals have directly benefitted from the funding. Funding has been primarily used to provide essential household items, white goods and basic furnishings for people moving into, or sustaining, accommodation. It has also supported day-to-day living tasks and tenancy sustainment. The evidence gathered from partner charities whose clients have benefitted from donated funds demonstrates a positive impact, both in terms of reach and outcomes.
- Alongside existing powers and the newly introduced PSPO, the scheme is helping to reduce aggressive begging by providing an alternate way for people to donate.

- Based on the Review, the Tap for Reading project group propose the following next steps:
 - Extend the scheme until 2029 with a review every 12 months to ensure it is meeting all partner requirements.
 - Explore the opportunity to use the donations to support non-commissioned charities. This will include determining a selection process for these charities, to ensure a transparent and fair process.
 - Review effectiveness of current locations and decide whether a QR code (as opposed to a Tap Reader) is more suitable for some locations.

3.16. Activities relating to safety on Reading's waterways:

- The Water Safety Partnership (WSP) was set up in 2023 and is committed to prevent water-based fatalities and injuries on or around Reading's waterways. It includes core agencies and a range of other organisations, including residents, who work on the water.
- Due to the breadth of the stakeholders in the WSP and the range of complex issues being raised - which includes criminal activity, vulnerable people living on unsafe boats, illegal moorings, unregulated/unlicensed boats, sunken boats and broken or insufficient infrastructure - a smaller operational group was set up in October 2025 to focus on problem solving. It also enables key partners to resolve barriers to progress in a confidential operational space.
- This Water Safety Operations Group includes core partners Thames Valley Police, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, the Environment Agency, St Mungo's and Reading Borough Council.
- The Operations Group is tasked with carrying out water safety audits of locations, safety equipment and high-risk areas. One of the key recommendations from this group is to carry out partnership water patrols twice a year (spring and autumn to avoid flooding risk) in hotspot areas and identify priority action, given the complex issues being reported and the need for coordinated partner action. The next partnership patrol is planned on 1 June 2026 focussing on hotspot areas Scours Lane, Napier Road and Kings Meadows.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. These priorities are:

- Develop fairer communities and affordable housing
- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment
- 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. The 2023-2026 Reading Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy and Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation Strategy both directly and indirectly contribute to all the Council Plan priorities. In particular, the Partnership's efforts to create a safer Reading and respond to resident's primary concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour are compatible with:
- Promote more equal communities in Reading
 - Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
 - Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children.
- 4.4. Reading Borough Council's Council Plan for 2025-2028 includes the priority to 'promote more equal communities in Reading', setting out that the Council will 'reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, working with Thames Valley Police and other partners'. The strategic delivery of this partnership work sits within Reading's CSP, of which Reading Borough Council is a key delivery partner.
- 4.5. Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [RBC website](#). 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. There are no environmental and climate implications to specifically highlight in this report however it is worth noting that there are indirect consequences that are linked to climate change, crime prevention and community safety. For example, there is evidence of anti-social behaviour associated with the riding of e-bikes and e-scooters, and this can run counter to assumptions that their use is a preferred and sustainable travel solution – this was considered fully when introducing the PSPO.
- 5.3. The CSP continues to work with key departments and partners to ensure all options are considered when environmental and climate decisions are being made to reduce any unintended consequences. such as enhancing or mitigate opportunities for crime.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. As noted above, the CSP undertakes an annual survey of residents and, in parallel, Young Voices runs a survey aimed at young people.
- 6.2. The University of Reading Student Union and Reading College engages students concerns about safety throughout the year. These insights are shared with the CSP.
- 6.3. A network of borough-wide Safer Neighbourhood Forums, which operate throughout the year, enable residents to meet with police, council officers and ward councillors to discuss crime and safety in their neighbourhoods.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. This report is for information only, with no policy recommendations, so there are no equality implications to consider.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. There are no other relevant considerations.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder 1998 Act requires the responsible authorities - commonly referred to collectively as a Community Safety Partnership (CSP) - in a local government area to work together in formulating and implementing strategies to tackle local crime and disorder in the area.

- 9.2. The Council and other core members of the CSP must have regard to the [Police and Crime Commissioner \(PCC\) priorities](#). The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 gave a clear legal basis to the relationship between CSPs and PCCs.
- 9.3. The PCC and CSP must have regard to each other's priorities within their plans. This should encourage joint working on mutual priorities and ensure that the PCC priorities are tackled at the local level, and the CSP priorities are reflected and resourced. Secondly the PCC has a power of accountability over CSPs; they can call in representatives of CSPs in the force area to a meeting to discuss strategies to reduce crime. The PCC can request a written report from a CSP.
- 9.4. In November 2025, the Home Office announced PCCs are to be abolished by 2028, to be replaced by regional mayors or equivalent. Full details are still to be announced, including resourcing and oversight implications. Once these details are shared, they will be integrated into the CSP and its Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy 2026-2029.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. The Thames Valley PCC has set out his allocation of £1.013m to Reading's CSP between April 2025 to March 2028 in the form of a Partnership Fund, with clear guidelines on how it can be used and how it should align with the priorities with his Police and Crime Plan.
- 10.2. In November 2025, the Home Office announced PCCs are to be abolished by 2028, to be replaced by regional mayors or equivalent. Full details are still to be announced including funding arrangements. Once these details are shared, they will be integrated into the CSP and its Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy 2026-2029.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. This report is for information purposes only.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices

No appendices with this report.

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