

**HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE  
6 NOVEMBER 2019**

**Present:** Councillor Davies (Chair);  
Councillors Carnell, Ennis, Grashoff, Hacker, Hoskin, James, Leng,  
Lovelock, Manghnani, McGonigle, Rowland, R Singh, and R Williams.

**Apologies:** Councillor Gittings.

**13. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of 3 July 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**14. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

Questions on the following matters were submitted:

<b><u>Questioner</u></b>	<b><u>Subject</u></b>	<b><u>Reply</u></b>
Cllr McGonigle	Tree Planting Programme	Cllr James
Cllr R Singh	Norcot Youth & Community Centre	Cllr James
Cllr R Singh	Moped Misuse	Cllr James

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

**15. PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL & DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which sought approval of the draft updated Private Sector Renewal & Disabled Adaptations Policy for consultation. The Council's Monitoring Officer had advised that, due to the General Election being called for 12 December 2019, the start of the consultation should be delayed until January 2020, with the final report being submitted to the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee on 11 March 2020, rather than Policy Committee on 17 February 2020 as originally stated in the report. A copy of the Policy was attached to the report at Appendix A.

The report explained that the Private Sector Renewal & Disabled Adaptations Policy related to the Private Sector only, and that there was a separate Council Housing Adaptations Policy. The updates to the Policy would enable the Council to deliver Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations in the private sector in a person-centred and outcome-focused way. The updated Policy met the objectives of the Better Care Fund, to increase the uptake of Disabled Facilities Grants and work collaboratively with health and social care colleagues. It was anticipated that the Policy would enable a more proportionate and responsive service, delaying hospital admissions, falls or moves to residential or nursing homes. The measures would further support care and support services to actively promote wellbeing and independence, and would enable early intervention, thereby avoiding crisis intervention.

The following discretionary grants would be offered as part of the updated Policy:

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- Health & Wellbeing at Home Grant;
- Discretionary Professional Fees Grant;
- Discretionary Accommodation Fees Grant;
- Amended Relocation Grant;
- Disabled Facilities Grant Top up.

**Resolved:** That the draft Private Sector Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy be approved for consultation, with the final Policy being presented to Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee on 11 March 2020.

## **16. FIRE SAFETY IN TALL BUILDINGS**

Further to Minute 12 of the meeting held on 14 November 2018, the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted an update report which provided an update on the Council's response following the Grenfell Tower fire in Kensington on 14 June 2017. This included action taken in relation to the Authority's own housing stock, other corporate buildings and schools, as well as wider work in partnership with the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) in respect of privately owned high rise residential blocks within the Borough boundaries.

The Council had taken the following action post the Grenfell Tower incident:

- Instructed Fireskills, an independent fire safety specialist to audit tall buildings within the Housing Revenue Account. An action plan had been drawn up and the Council had also responded to the Government's latest guidance on issues such as fire doors.
- Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between RBFRS and the six Berkshire Unitary Authorities, to enable a partnership approach to inspections and enforcement.
- Implemented a building safety programme and started joint work, involving joint fire safety inspections of 32 of the most high risk residential buildings over 18 metres and work to meet fire safety standards had been required where necessary.
- Identified four high rise residential buildings with Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding which failed the required fire safety standards. These buildings have had interim measures installed and were being monitored in accordance with the current Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) guidance. The council and RBFRS were working with stakeholders of the buildings to support plans to remove, and in some cases replace, the cladding.
- Begun work in response to a requirement from MHCLG in July 2019 to complete a data collection exercise to identify external wall materials and insulation on all high-rise residential buildings 18 metres and over within their area. There were approximately 106 such high-rise residential buildings in Reading and legislation under the Housing Act 2004 was being used to require this information from freeholders.

The report also set out the current position with regard to the work being undertaken to meet the requirements set out in the action plan in the Council's Housing stock,

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corporate buildings and schools and interim measures that had been put into place for the four cross-tenure high rise buildings.

The report detailed the actions that Council and its partners were planning to undertake going forward:

- Communications with stakeholders on the high rise residential buildings with ACM to continue. The priority would be to secure remediation of the cladding where required as quickly as possible.
- The council would undertake steps to obtain external wall details of all applicable buildings in response to the request from MHCLG in order to submit the required data by 31 March 2020.
- The council would keep up to date with the latest Government guidance and take action where appropriate. This included any new changes derived from recommendations in the final Hackitt review.
- RBFRS were planning to release information to the media detailing the joint work that had been undertaken on the building safety programme to date.
- Regular communication and sharing of information between the council and RBFRS, plus joint meetings with relevant stakeholders where required.

**Resolved: That the action taken and planned in respect of fire safety in tall buildings, as detailed in the report, be noted.**

**17. DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY 2019-22**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which summarised the draft Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading, 2019-22 and the report on the recently completed consultation, and recommended that the draft strategy be adopted as the live Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading 2019-22. The following documents were appended to the report:

- Appendix 1 - Draft Domestic Abuse Strategy;
- Appendix 2 - Consultation Summary;
- Appendix 3 - Equality Impact Assessment.

The report explained that the existing Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading ended in 2018 and a new refreshed strategy was required. A consultation exercise on the draft Domestic Abuse Strategy 2019-22 had been carried out between 19 August 2019 and 13 September 2019. The priorities within the draft strategy had been developed via a series of workshops with members of the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group (DASG), a sub-group of the CSP. They reflected the Group's aspirations to move the practices and approach of partners in Reading forward in specific areas, and it was assumed that the progress made during the previous strategy would be embedded by agencies as part of their 'business as usual' and therefore continued. Data would continue to be monitored by the DASG and any changes in performance or outcomes would be challenged regularly. The respondents to the consultation strongly agreed with the priorities so they remained as follows:

**Priority 1 -Raising awareness about domestic abuse with a focus on:**

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- **Workforce Development** - Continue to ensure a knowledgeable and well trained workforce.
- **Healthy Relationship Education** - increasing the resilience of Young People to negative relationships and behaviour.
- **Engagement with marginalised communities** - Encouraging those experiencing abuse to seek help at an earlier stage

**Priority 2: Developing a multi-agency approach to working with perpetrators** - Working with strategic partners to create a perpetrator approach to reduce and prevent repeat Domestic Abuse.

**Priority 3 - Improving our partnership response to Coercive Control** -Training professionals to understand and identify coercive control, so as to increase and better manage disclosures.

**Resolved: That the draft Strategy be approved as the adopted Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading 2019- 2022.**

(The meeting opened at 6.30pm and closed at 7.35pm).