

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 9 MARCH 2020

Present: Councillor Brock (Chair);

Councillors Page (Vice-Chair), Duveen, Emberson, Ennis, Hoskin, James, Jones, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, Skeats, Stanford-Beale and White

Apologies: Councillors Stevens and Terry

RESOLVED ITEMS

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Stanford-Beale declared a prejudicial interest in Item 85, on the basis that she was a Non-Executive Director of Reading Transport Limited.

76. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

77. QUESTIONS

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

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Lilla Price	Reducing Carbon Emissions in Schools	Cllr Pearce
2.	Ann Dally	Council Tax Protocol	Cllr Emberson
3.	Richard Tredgett	Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health	Cllr Hoskin

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr White	Rough Sleeping on the Increase	Cllr Ennis
2.	Cllr White	Building Sustainable Housing	Cllr Ennis

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

78. READING CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY 2020-25: ENDORSEMENT OF DRAFT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking endorsement of the Reading Climate Change Partnership's draft 'Reading Climate

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Emergency Strategy 2020-25' for the purposes of public consultation. The draft Strategy was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report noted that the current Reading Climate Change Strategy, produced by the Reading Climate Change Partnership (RCCP) and covering the period 2013-20, had been due for review in 2020, but that the Climate Emergency Declaration had led to a commitment to accelerate the process by six months. The Council was an active partner in RCCP and officers had been supporting the Partnership in developing the draft Strategy, which was attached to the report at Appendix 1. The Strategy set out a vision for 2025 of a Reading which was working rapidly towards net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and being resilient to the impacts of a changing climate. It also summarised the role and resources of RCCP partners for delivering the Strategy and set out Action Plans under the themes of: Energy and Low Carbon Development, Transport, Resources, Water, Nature and Health.

To meet the accelerated timescale, and to ensure that residents and other stakeholders had the opportunity to comment on the strategy before it was finalised, it was proposed to issue the draft Strategy for consultation on 13 March for a six-week consultation period until 24 April, to be managed by the Council on behalf of RCCP. It was envisaged that the final strategy would then be formally adopted by the Council (in parallel with other partners) in June 2020 and launched at a high-profile 'Reading Climate Summit' in July 2020.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Reading Climate Change Partnership's Draft 'Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25' be endorsed for public consultation;
- (2) That the actions within the action plans for which the Council was identified as a delivery partner be noted and endorsed;
- (3) That the Council manage the consultation process on behalf of the Reading Climate Change Partnership and initiate a six week period of consultation from 13 March 2020 to 24 April 2020;
- (4) That the proposal to bring a final draft of the Strategy to the Committee's meeting in June 2020 for formal adoption be noted.

79. COUNCIL TAX PROTOCOL

The Director of Resources submitted a report proposing the adoption of a good practice protocol for the collection of Council Tax arrears produced by Citizens Advice and the Local Government Association. The Protocol was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that Citizens Advice and the Local Government Association were encouraging Councils in England to adopt the Citizens Advice Council Tax Protocol to improve Council Tax collection. The Protocol had been developed through partnership work between national bodies representing advice agencies, local government and

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enforcement agencies throughout England and Wales and aimed to help Councils in England improve the experience for residents in arrears whilst collecting what was owed. Citizens Advice reported that growing numbers of people were turning to them for help with Council Tax issues, and figures from the national charity showed that Council Tax debt had risen by a third in the last three years.

The report explained that the Council's Council Tax Recovery Team had been engaging with Citizens Advice Reading to review the processes in place for collection, and benchmarking these against the standards set out in the Protocol. Regular review meetings were underway, and several actions had already been taken to improve collection processes with more early intervention to assist residents struggling with their Council Tax payments, help prevent further charges, alleviate stress and reduce collection costs.

Resolved -

That the Citizens Advice Council Tax Protocol, as set out at Appendix 1, be adopted.

80. MODERN DAY SLAVERY TRANSPARENCY STATEMENT 2019-20

The Director of Adult Care and Health Services submitted a report setting out the Modern Slavery Transparency Statement, which outlined the approach taken to make sure that modern slavery or human trafficking was not taking place within the Council's business or supply chain, as required under the Modern Day Slavery Act 2015. The Statement was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and an Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 2.

The report explained that the 2019/20 Statement had been adopted on behalf of the Council by the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education (ACE) Committee at its meeting on 8 January 2020. The Committee had also agreed a zero tolerance approach to any form of modern slavery (slavery, servitude, human trafficking and forced labour) and authorised the Executive Director for Adult Care And Health Services to adopt and update the Modern Day Slavery Transparency Statement each year.

The report explained that the statement was now being submitted to Policy committee to note the decision taken by ACE committee and note that the Statement would apply across the whole of the Council's services. The statement committed the Council to ensure that it took a "whole council" approach to this issue.

Resolved -

- (1) That the decision taken by the Council's Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee on 8 January 2020 to approve the Modern Day Slavery Transparency statement be noted;**
- (2) That it be noted that the Statement applied across the whole council.**

81. ICT FUTURE OPERATING MODEL - PROGRESS UPDATE AND APPROVAL TO APPOINT DESIGN & TRANSITION PARTNER

The Director of Resources submitted a report setting out the proposed approach to the design and implementation of the ICT Future Operating Model which would follow the end of the current ICT outsourcing contract with Northgate Public Services. The report also sought authority to enter into a contract with a Design and Transition Partner to provide the specialist expertise and capability required to achieve the rapid transition required.

The report noted that the Council currently had a full outsourcing arrangement, under which overall responsibility for the delivery of ICT services has been transferred to Northgate Public Services, with minimal core ICT capability retained in the Council. The contract would expire in March 2021 and contained no further provision for extension. A scoping and a high-level options analysis carried out in 2019 had concluded that a like-for-like reprocurement of an outsourcing arrangement of the current broad scope was unlikely to offer value for money. It was therefore proposed to adopt a "smart-sourced" approach, in which services were grouped, and each group sourced in the way which represented best value for money, with options including commodity procurements via Government frameworks, shared resources or services with other public sector organisations, managed service procurements and insourcing where appropriate. The various services would be managed, and brought together to deliver a coherent and effective experience for users, by an in-house service integration and management team.

The report explained that the next stage of work would be a Design Stage to develop a business case making recommendations for the design of the FOM, which would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee. The design stage would also plan the procurement, implementation and transition work needed to achieve transition by 31 March 2021 and identify and initiate any work that needed to be started immediately to inform the business case and transition planning, such as pre-contract procurement activity. The Design Stage and subsequent procurement implementation and transition would require external expert support, and a mini-competition for a Design and Transition Partner (DTP), under a Government framework had therefore been launched. The report sought authority for the Executive Director of Resources, in consultation with the Assistant Director for Procurement and Chief Digital and Information Officer, to appoint a DTP through the ongoing competition and to place work with the DTP as necessary up to a value of £750k.

Resolved -

- (1) That the proposed approach to the design of, and implementation planning for, the ICT Future Operating Model be endorsed;**
- (2) That the Executive Director of Resources, in consultation with the Assistant Director for Procurement and Chief Digital and Information Officer, be authorised to enter into a contract with a Design and Transition Partner to enable the design stage of the project;**

- (3) That a detailed business case setting out the Future Operating Model be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

82. 2019-20 QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Resources submitted a report setting out the projected revenue and capital outturn positions for 2019/20 for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) as at the end of December 2019 (Quarter 3), and performance for the third quarter against the measures of success published in the Council's Corporate Plan. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 - Financial Monitoring for Quarter 3
- Appendix 2 - Performance Monitoring for Quarter 3

The report noted that the forecast outturn as at the end of Period 9 for operational service budgets (excluding the services delivered by Brighter Futures for Children) was an overspend of £0.507m. The forecast outturn for Children's Services delivered by Brighter Futures for Children was a projected overspend of £1.608m, which related predominantly to the continued increase in the number of children in care and the cost of agency workers covering vacant posts. Corporate Budgets were forecast to underspend by £5.230m and incorporating this forecast with that of the service areas resulted in a net projected underspend of £3.115m. The forecast revenue outturn position on the HRA was an underspend of £8.614m, as a result of slippage on Major Works due to two work programmes that had to be retendered, increased projected rental income, and a change in the Council's minimum revenue provision policy.

The report set out the thirty-nine measures of success in the Council's Corporate Plan, and summarised progress against targets as at the end of December 2019. Overall 23 measures were currently rated Green, six measures were Amber, and eight measures were Red.

Resolved -

That Policy Committee note:

- a) That the forecast General Fund revenue outturn position as at the end of December 2019 was a net underspend of £3.115m with weighted opportunities of £0.075m;
- b) That the forecast outturn position on the Housing Revenue Account as at the end of December 2019 was a projected underspend of £8.614m against budget;
- c) That the forecast outturn on the Capital Programme as at the 31st December 2019 was a projected underspend of £133.9m on the General Fund and a projected underspend of £4.9m on the Housing Revenue Account;

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- d) The performance achieved against the Corporate Plan success measures as set out the report and Appendix 2 attached to the report.

83. BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN 2020/21 BUSINESS PLAN

The Director of Resources submitted a report to the Committee, acting as Sole Member of Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC), setting out at Appendix 1 the 2020/21 Business Plan, at Appendix 2 the company's Transformation Programme, and at Appendix 3 a proposal to amend BFfC staff terms and conditions to support its strategic approach to improving staff recruitment and retention. Approval of the BFfC Business Plan and changes to BFfC staff terms and conditions were reserved matters, requiring the approval of Policy Committee in its capacity as sole member.

Resolved -

That Policy Committee, in its capacity as sole member for BFfC:

- a) Approve the Company's Business Plan and contract sum for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix 1 and 4.8 of the report, noting the recommendations regarding transformation funding;
- b) Agree the recommended changes to BFfC staff terms and conditions as set out in Appendix 3.

84. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved -

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of Item 85 below as it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

85. SHAREHOLDER REPORT

The Director of Resources submitted a report to the Committee, acting as the shareholder of Reading Transport Limited (RTL), setting out at Appendix 1 an Interim Review Shareholder Update report from RTL. The report summarised the key points of the Shareholder Update and the requests for shareholder approval made by RTL, including the provision of lease finance and the appointment of the Company's Service Delivery Director to the Board. The report also gave an update on discussions with the Company regarding the Local Government Pension Scheme liability.

Resolved -

That the Policy Committee, acting as Shareholder of Reading Transport Ltd:

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- a) Note the report and the Shareholder Update Report attached at Appendix 1;
- b) Agreed the approval requests set out in the Shareholder Update Report to:
 - i) Note the content of the Company's Report;
 - ii) Approve the provision of lease finance to Reading Buses by means of an extension of the existing Master Lease Agreement, should it be required to facilitate the purchase of vehicles as set out in the report, and that the Executive Director of Resources be authorised to agree terms with the Company;
 - iii) Approve the appointment of Dan Bassett into the position of Service Delivery Director;
- c) Request that the Company report back to the June 2020 Policy Committee with proposals and an action plan to reduce operating costs, realise efficiency savings and return the company to profit over the next 12 to 24 months in line with the Shareholder's dividend position;
- d) In light of the significant financial challenge, request a skills audit of the RTL Board to ensure it had the capacity to drive the requisite improvement in the trading position of the Group overall; and
- e) Note the approach being taken to addressing the Local Government Pension Fund Issue as set out in the report.

(Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3).

(Councillor Stanford-Beale declared a prejudicial interest in this item, left the meeting and took no part in the discussion or decision. Nature of interest: Councillor Stanford-Beale was a Non-Executive Director of Reading Transport Limited).

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.25 pm)