

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 25 FEBRUARY 2020

Present: Councillor Woodward (Mayor);

Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Carnell, Challenger, Davies, Duveen, Eden, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Grashoff, Hoskin, James, Jones, Khan, Leng, Lovelock, Manghnani, Maskell, McEwan, McGonigle, McKenna, O'Connell, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, Rynn, D Singh, R Singh, Skeats, Sokale, Stanford-Beale, Stevens, Terry, White, Whitham, J Williams and R Williams;

Apologies: Councillor Hacker.

39. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

40. PETITION

Carol Goddard presented a petition in the following terms:

It is with great regret that I understand you are not replacing the Bowls Hall when the new Leisure Centre is to be built.

I am currently a bowler at Rivermead Bowling Club and would like the facility to either be provided at the new Leisure Centre or at a new building close to the current one.

I will be unable to play at Whiteknights and I do not want to drive to a Club up to 30 minutes drive away from my home.

Please reconsider your current plans and provide a new facility for Rivermead Bowling Club.

RESPONSE by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

Thank you very much for taking the time to bring your petition to the Council tonight.

We do understand your disappointment that a dedicated bowls hall could not, in the end, be provided within the final plans for the new leisure centre at Rivermead. Whilst we would love to have been able to provide a new bowls hall the process to select a partner was driven by a need to secure affordability for the council tax payer. These budget constraints meant we were unable to include these facilities in the specification for the leisure contract as a minimum requirement.

As part of the process to develop the specification, the Council used Sport England modelling to review the demand and supply for indoor sports facilities, including bowls. Particular attention was paid to likely future demand including changes in population and changing trends in participation in physical activity.

This was used to produce the minimum requirements for facilities and services. The modelling indicated greater capacity than demand for indoor bowls, reflecting the membership numbers observed.

Reading is unusually fortunate to be served by two indoor bowls halls, three miles apart. Whiteknights bowls club with seven rinks has 850 to 900 members, and Rivermead with 250 to 300 members, uses the six rinks provided.

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Whilst the consideration of what facilities exist within Greater Reading was part of the considerations in terms of prioritisation, the club's aspirations and business plan was provided to the bidders to help them draw up their proposals.

Whilst the new facility at Rivermead will not include an indoor bowls centre, the aim is to create an inclusive swimming and fitness environment, including a 25m 8-lane competition pool and a 6-court sports hall.

In addition, the GLL have been tasked with increasing the number of people from priority groups participating in physical exercise. To achieve this GLL have opted to make significant improvement to facilities and provide a number of targeted activities within their programme.

For older people, this includes expanding the 60+ clubs across all leisure centres in Reading, providing more walking sports, and developing new activities with Age UK and the University of the 3rd Age.

There are plans to link to health programmes such as social prescribing, exercise referral, falls prevention, cardiac and cancer rehabilitation activities. There will also be community outreach programmes targeting priority groups delivering monthly sessions in community settings such as parks and community centres.

That said, I understand that your specific concern, and passion, is about indoor bowls. I have committed myself to working closely with Rivermead Bowls Club to explore fully all options and proposals to support both it and members over the next couple of years. A senior council officer and I have already enjoyed a productive meeting with the club and the next is in the diary. Furthermore we will increasingly include GLL in these discussions. It is also important to remember that the present bowls hall, along with the rest of Rivermead, will remain open until, at least, late summer 2022, and therefore provide a home for the winter 20/21 and 21/22 seasons.

41. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 9

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Helen Palmer	RBH Environmental Policy	Cllr Page
2.	Alice Mpofu-Coles	School Exclusions	Cllr Pearce
3.	Richard Stainthorp	Recycling Rates	Cllr James
4.	Richard Stainthorp	Food Waste Recycling	Cllr James
5.	Richard Stainthorp	School Capacity	Cllr Pearce
6.	Stuart Kinton	Climate Emergency	Cllr Brock
7.	Michael Sage	Climate Emergency - Lobbying & Cooperation	Cllr Brock
8.	Andrew Hornsby-Smith	Carbon Neutral by 2030	Cllr Page
9.	Andrew Hornsby-	Chestnut Walk	Cllr Rowland

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	Smith		
10.	Amjad Tarar	Improving Recycling Rates	Cllr James
11.	Amjad Tarar	Major Developments in Reading	Cllr Page
12.		WITHDRAWN	
13.	Stuart Kinton	Carbon Neutral by 2030	Cllr Page
14.	Roger Lightfoot	Leisure Facilities Contract	Cllr Hoskin
15.	Peter Burt	Free Swimming	Cllr Hoskin
16.	Peter Burt	Sports and Leisure Forum	Cllr Hoskin
17.	Roger Lightfoot	New Swimming Pools	Cllr Hoskin
18.	John Booth	Climate Emergency - Local Investment	Cllr Page

As there was insufficient time, pursuant to Standing Order 9(6), a written reply to Questions 8-11 and 13-18 above would be provided in accordance with Standing Order 11(3).

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

42. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER NO 10

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Cllr Duveen	Accounts for 2017/18 & 2018/19	Cllr Brock
2.	Cllr Duveen	Equal Pay Settlements	Cllr Brock
3.	Cllr O'Connell	Traveller Incursions	Cllr Page
4.	Cllr Manghnani	Travellers	Cllr Page
5.	Cllr Manghnani	Indoor Bowling at Rivermead	Cllr Hoskin
6.	Cllr White	Is Rough Sleeping on the Increase?	Cllr Ennis
7.	Cllr J Williams	Ensuring Value for Public Money	Cllr Brock
8.	Cllr McGonigle	Single use Plastics Update	Cllr Brock
9.	Cllr White	Green Road Tennis Courts	Cllr Hoskin

As there was insufficient time, pursuant to Standing Order 10(4), a written reply to Questions 8-9 above would be provided in accordance with Standing Order 11(3).

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

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43. CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER'S REPORT ON THE ROBUSTNESS OF THE COUNCIL'S 2020/21 BUDGET

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report fulfilling the requirement on her under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 as the Council's Chief Finance Officer to report on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations of the budget and the adequacy of the proposed level of financial reserves. The Council had a duty to have regard to the advice set out in the report when considering setting its 2020/21 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy for the subsequent two financial years. The Statement of Reserves and Balances, which provided a summary of estimated reserve movements from 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2023, were attached to the report for information.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor Page and CARRIED:

Resolved -

That the Chief Finance Officer's report on the robustness of the Council's 2019/20 budget and indicative budgets for the subsequent two financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22 be noted and the opinion contained therein be taken into account in making the decisions set out in Minutes 44-47 below.

44. 2020/21 BUDGET & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY TO 2023

Further to Minutes 59 and 72 of the Policy Committee meetings held on 16 December 2019 and 17 February 2020 respectively, the Executive Director of Resources submitted a report on the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the three years 2020/21 - 2022/23. The report provided an update on the results of the budget consultation exercise as well as changes arising from the publication of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement [LGFS] and other changes that had arisen since the report to Policy Committee in December.

The proposed Medium Term Financial Strategy was informed by and supported the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities including its commitment to address the climate change emergency; and sought to ensure that the Council was "fit for the future", with sound finances that would allow the Council's future funding challenges and spending pressures to be met in as sustainable a way as possible. The underpinning rationale of the Medium Term Financial Strategy was to deliver a balanced and affordable budget that ensured the Council's finances were sustainable over the medium term and that in the longer term the Council's finances were not reliant on the unsustainable use of one-off reserves or funding and that general and earmarked reserves were maintained and bolstered to meet future funding challenges and risk. The Strategy was informed by the Council's Vision: "to ensure that Reading realises its potential - and that everyone who lives and works in Reading can share in the benefits of its success", as well as its Corporate Plan priorities. The Budget assumptions were set out in the report as follows:

- a) Council Tax increases of 3.99% (including a one off 2.0% social care precept) in 2020/21 and 1.99% in both 2021/22 and 2022/23;
- b) £32.9m of efficiencies and increased income across the period;
- c) A contingency provision over the three years (£3.5m 2020/21; £4.9m 2021/22; and £5.2m 2022/23) to mitigate possible slippage or non-achievement of higher risk savings and/or income targets over the period;

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- d) General Fund capital investment of £365m over the period 2020/21 to 2022/23 of which £200m would be for invest to save purposes;
- e) £4.5m of transformation funding (over the period 2020/21 to 2021/22) to support delivery of efficiency savings assumed within the MTFS.

The report had the following documents appended: Summary of General Fund Budget 2020-21 to 2022-23; General Fund Revenue Budget by Service 2020-21 to 2022-23; Detailed General Fund Budgets 2020-21 to 2022-23; Housing Revenue Account Budget 2020-21 to 2022-23; General Fund and HRA Capital Programme 2020-21 to 2022-23; Flexible Capital Receipts Strategy; Fees and Charges; Equality Impact Assessment; Dedicated Schools Grant; and details of the Budget Consultation exercise.

A motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor Page and CARRIED as set out in the resolution below.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor White and seconded by Councillor Whitham and LOST:

'In the recommendation relating to 2020/21 Budget & Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2023 (Agenda item 8), insert "subject to an additional recommendation (i) below" after the words "...endorse the Draft 2020/21 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets, Draft Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendices 1-9, and..."

Add a new Recommendation (i) as follows:

"(i) This Council notes:

- Reading Council has declared a climate emergency.
- 39% of Reading's carbon emissions comes from housing.
- 4,000 houses per year need to be insulated.
- 7,290 of our Reading households live in fuel poverty (where they don't have enough money to heat their home) and in some parts of the town it is as high as 30% of residents (UK average is 10.9%).
- Most Council homes have had basic energy efficiency measures installed but many private rented and owner-occupied properties haven't.
- There is no government scheme of the appropriate size to insulate the number of homes needed.
- However, some government funding is available. Local Authority Flex (LA Flex), is a part of the UK Government's third phase of ECO (Energy Company Obligation) money to tackle fuel poverty.
- Neighbouring Bracknell Forest Council has a Local Authority Flex scheme. They work with local insulation companies and have insulated 1,126 private rented and owner-occupied properties under this scheme since November 2018. Bracknell also offer top up grants to pay for further insulation and energy efficiency measures.

This Council resolves to:

- Set up a Local Authority Flex scheme to use central government money to insulate qualifying Reading homes in the private rented and owner-occupied sectors as soon as possible.
- Earmark £1 million of the 19/20 General Fund revenue underspend to set up a grants fund to pay for top up housing energy efficiency measures to houses

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which qualify under the Local Authority Flex scheme. This money will also pay for an 18 month fixed term post to finalise and administer the scheme.

- The grants fund will be used for home energy efficiency measures that will help homes reach an Energy Performance Certificate level C. Priority for the grants fund will be given to helping those in fuel poverty."

Make all consequential amendments to the revenue and capital budgets arising from the above amendment.'

A recorded vote having been demanded, the voting was as follows:

For the motion: 6 Councillors Duveen, McGonigle, O'Connell, White, Whitham and J Williams.

Against the motion: 39

Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Carnell, Challenger, Davies, Eden, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Grashoff, Hoskin, James, Jones, Khan, Leng, Lovelock, Maskell, Manghnani, McKenna, McEwan, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, Rynn, D Singh, R Singh, Skeats, Sokale, Stanford-Beale, Stevens, Terry, R Williams and Woodward.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Duveen and seconded by Councillor O'Connell and LOST:

'In the recommendation relating to 2020/21 Budget & Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2023 (Agenda item 8), insert "subject to an additional recommendation (i) below" after the words "...endorse the Draft 2020/21 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets, Draft Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendices 1-9, and..."

Add a new Recommendation (i) as follows:

"(i) This Council notes from the Chief Financial Officer's Report that the current year 2019/20 will end with a projected underspend of £3.2m.

In view of this we propose that the Council add the following projects to the Recommended Actions, using money from the underspend in 2019-20.

In relation to paragraph 13.3 of the report, amend the following bullet points:

- £500,000 for electric vehicle charging points (across 2 years from 2020-21);
- £200,000 for tree planting including a new bowser and towing vehicle in 2020-21 and further annual funds of £100,000 for 2021/22 and 2022/23; and

add the following additional bullet point:

- £50,000 for a second camera van"

Make any consequential amendments to the revenue and capital budgets arising from the above amendment.'

A recorded vote having been demanded, the voting was as follows:

For the motion: 6 Councillors Duveen, McGonigle, O'Connell, White, Whitham and J Williams.

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Against the motion: 39

Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Carnell, Challenger, Davies, Eden, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Grashoff, Hoskin, James, Jones, Khan, Leng, Lovelock, Maskell, Manghnani, McKenna, McEwan, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, Rynn, D Singh, R Singh, Skeats, Sokale, Stanford-Beale, Stevens, Terry, R Williams and Woodward.

Resolved -

That, taking due regard of the results of the budget consultation exercise (as outlined in Section 3 and set out in more detail in Appendix 10 of the report), endorse the Draft 2020/21 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets, Draft Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendices 1-9, and agree the following:

- (a) the Council's General Fund Budget Requirement of £150.1m for 2020/21 and an increase in the Band D Council Tax for the Council of 3.99% (1.99% general increase and 2.00% additional adult social care precept) or £64.93 per annum representing a Band D Council Tax of £1,692.16 per annum as set out in paragraph 8.2 of the report;
- (b) the proposed efficiency savings of £6.3m together with additional income of £5.3m in 2020/21 required to achieve a balanced budget for that year as set out in Appendix 2 to the report;
- (c) the overall savings proposed within the MTFs of £32.9m (of which changes to income, fees and charges is £13.5m) and three-year growth changes to service budgets of £26.6m as set out in Appendix 3;
- (d) the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2020/21 of £40.9m as set out in Appendix 4 and an average increase of 3.3% in social dwelling rents from April 2020 giving a revised weekly average social rent of £102.57;
- (e) the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes as set out in Appendices 5a and 5b;
- (f) the Strategy for the use of flexible capital receipts to deliver future transformation and ongoing savings as set out in Appendix 6;
- (g) the changes to Fees and Charges set out in Appendix 7 of the report;
- (h) the allocation of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) as set out in Appendix 9.

A recorded vote having been demanded, the voting was as follows:

For the motion: 29

Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Ayub, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Challenger, Davies, Eden, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Hoskin, James, Jones, Khan, Leng, Lovelock, Maskell, McKenna, McEwan, Page, Pearce, Rowland, D Singh, Sokale, Terry, R Williams and Woodward.

Against the motion: 16

Councillors Ballsdon, Carnell, Duveen, Grashoff, Manghnani, McGonigle, O'Connell, Robinson, Rynn, R Singh, Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Stevens, White, Whitham and J Williams.

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45. DRAFT CAPITAL STRATEGY

Further to Minute 73 of the Policy Committee held on 17 February 2020, the Executive Director of Resources submitted a report on the Capital Strategy, which was attached as an Appendix, and provided an overview of where and how the Council intended to deploy its capital resources to support the delivery of the strategic aims set out in the Corporate Plan. The Capital Strategy should be read in conjunction with other strategic documents such as the Council's Asset Management Plan, Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) and the Commercial Investment Strategy. The Council had an ambitious Capital Programme, a key aspect of which was the commitment to invest in the acquisition of commercial property in Reading and neighbouring Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas to support its strategic objectives. The extent of the Council's investment in commercial properties and the criteria for investment were set out in section 5 of the Strategy. The Council had limited capital resources and had therefore developed a prioritisation matrix to determine how resources would be used and capital bids were assessed using this tool to highlight risks and opportunities.

The Capital Strategy had regard to prevailing Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Guidance and the Prudential Code. Compliance with government guidance was considered on a case by case basis and where permissible may be ignored if not in line with the Council's Corporate Plan. The Council had decided not to have full regard to CIPFA guidance or the Prudential Code as it related to commercial property investment and lending to housing associations. The proposed Action Plan at Appendix D of the Strategy identified four areas where work was required for the Council to become fully compliant with the CIPFA code requirements. These were:

- Developing our knowledge of the existing asset base;
- Identifying what assets we need in the future;
- Developing and implementing new systems and processes, which enable the transition to become fully compliant with the code requirements;
- Reviewing current capacity within the organisation.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor Page and CARRIED:

Resolved -

- (1) That the Capital Strategy, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;
- (2) That the updated Action Plan that formed Appendix D of the Capital Strategy be noted, together with the associated financial implications.

46. COUNCIL TAX SETTING

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking approval of the calculations for determining the Council Tax requirement for the year 2020/21, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The report also sought approval to set the Council Tax amounts for each property valuation band in the Borough including precepts from the Thames Valley Police and Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor Page and CARRIED:

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Resolved -

- (1) That the following amounts that have been calculated for the year 2020/21 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 be agreed:
 - (i) £425,131,532 being the estimated aggregate expenditure of the Council in accordance with section 31A (2) of the Act;
 - (ii) £329,116,681 being the estimated aggregate income of the Council for the items set out in section 31A (3) of the Act;
 - (iii) £96,014,851 being the amount by which the aggregate at (i) above exceeds the aggregate at (ii) above, calculated in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as the Council's Council Tax Requirement for the year (Item R);
 - (iv) £1,692.16 being the amount at (iii) above (Item R) divided by the Council's tax base 56,741 (Item T) calculated in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year, representing an increase of 3.99% in the Council's own tax;
- (2) That the net tax base of 56,741 Band D equivalent properties (being the gross tax base adjusted for an assumed collection rate) used for setting the budget requirement for 2020/21 that was agreed by Council on 28 January 2020 be noted; and
 - (i) that the Band D charge for Reading Borough Council be £1,692.16 as shown in section 4.4 of the report; and
 - (ii) that, including the Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service and Thames Valley Police precepts, Council Tax by property valuation band be as set out in section 4.8 of the report.

47. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT (2020/21); MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY (2020/21); ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY (2020/21)

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report seeking approval for a Treasury Management Strategy, which had to be in place before the start of each financial year, in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017 and the CIPFA Prudential Code. The Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS), was attached to the report at Appendix A, setting out the parameters for the Council's planned Treasury activity during 2020/21, which the Council's Treasury Team would manage on a day-to-day basis. The TMSS reflected the Council's Capital Programme 2020/21 to 2022/23 with non-treasury investments being registered in the Council's Capital Strategy, which was presented separately to the TMSS (see Minute 45 above). The report also had appended the Treasury Management Policy 2020/21; Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) 2020/21; and the Annual Investment Strategy.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor Page and CARRIED:

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Resolved -

- (1) That the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved;
- (2) That the Treasury Management Policy for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved;
- (3) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved;
- (4) That the Annual Investment Strategy for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved;
- (5) That the Prudential and Treasury Management indicators as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved.

48. RBC ACTION SINCE DECLARATION OF A CLIMATE EMERGENCY - AND FUTURE PLANS

Further to Minute 74 of the Policy Committee held on 17 February 2020, the Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on action taken on climate change since the declaration of a climate emergency at Council on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers), and to summarise future plans in this area, with a particular focus on financial commitments in the context of the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2023. The report illustrated that over the two first full financial years since the declaration of a climate emergency, 2019/20 and 2020/21, the Council had committed around £34 million to capital projects which would contribute directly to reducing emissions, in both its own operations and the wider community. The report also showed how the Council had made additional revenue commitments to develop and accelerate its response to the declaration. Additionally, the Council would ensure that all policy and spending decisions across the full range of its activities took account of their impact on emissions wherever possible, and that all staff were engaged in the process of working towards the goal of a net zero carbon Reading by 2030. A new Climate Action Programme Board had been established in January 2020 to help achieve this and to ensure good governance in this area in line with best practice advice. The report had appended a summary of the Council's action since declaring a Climate Emergency and the plans to continue this work.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor Page and CARRIED:

Resolved -

That the progress to date and the future plans as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report to take forward the Council's commitment to achieving a net zero carbon Reading by 2030 be endorsed.

(The meeting closed at 9.25pm).