

## POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 28 SEPTEMBER 2020

**Present:** Councillor Brock (Chair);

Councillors Page (Vice-Chair), Duveen, Emberson, Ennis, Hoskin, Skeats, Stevens, Terry and White

### RESOLVED ITEMS

#### 43. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 August 2020 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair.

#### 44. PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS

David McElroy presented a petition about increasing the Cycling Targets and Action in the new Local Transport Plan. Councillor Page, Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport, responded to the petition.

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

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Roger Lightfoot	Arthur Hill site	Cllr Brock
2.	Roger Lightfoot	Arthur Hill legacy	Cllr Brock
3.	Peter Burt	Arthur Hill site - conflict of interest	Cllr Brock
4.	Peter Burt	Collaboration on Sports and Leisure provision	Cllr Hoskin

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr White	Covid-19 tests for Reading residents	Cllr Hoskin
2.	Cllr White	Targeting Covid-19 communications	Cllr Hoskin

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

#### 45. DECISION BOOKS

The Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services submitted a report listing the Decision Books that had been published since the meeting of the Committee held on 24 August 2020.

**Resolved -**

**That Decision Book Nos 608-610 be noted.**

**46. SUPPORTING READING'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND RENEWAL**

The Executive Director for Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services submitted a report outlining the current economic situation in Reading as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the initial and ongoing response from the Council. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 Reading Unlock Dashboard (August 2020)
- Appendix 2 The Reading 'Powered By People' Economic Strategy
- Appendix 3 RBC Economic Recovery and Renewal Group Terms of Reference

The report proposed formal adoption of the Reading 'Powered By People' Strategy, an economic recovery strategy developed by Reading UK, the Council's outsourced economic development and marketing company. The Strategy was based on extensive research and analysis by a variety of commentators and expertise within Reading UK and partner organisations. It aimed to build back an economy that was more inclusive, smarter and more sustainable, and to continue to raise the profile of Reading as a great place to live, work, visit and do business, in line with the Council's Corporate Plan priorities.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That the 'Powered By People' Strategy be endorsed and adopted as the Council's Economic Recovery Strategy Framework;
- (2) That the Council's commitment to working in partnership with Reading UK and other key partners to ensure a sustainable economic recovery which would address the key challenges facing residents and businesses in the Borough be reaffirmed.

**47. HOUSING STRATEGY FOR READING 2020 - 2025 AND READING'S PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2020 - 2025**

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report presenting the Housing Strategy for Reading 2020-2025 and Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix A - Housing Strategy for Reading 2020 - 2025
- Appendix B - Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020 - 2025
- Appendix C - Equality Impact Assessment: Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020 - 2025
- Appendix D - Housing Strategy Consultation Feedback
- Appendix E - Preventing Homelessness Strategy Consultation Feedback

The report explained that the Housing Strategy was an overarching strategy which provided an overview of strategies and plans across the Council aimed at facilitating the Council's ambition to provide decent, sustainable affordable homes within thriving neighbourhoods. A key theme running through the Housing Strategy was embedding the

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Climate Emergency Strategy and the ambition to complete a 'deep retrofit' of existing homes in Reading alongside a programme of education and support to residents to enable energy efficient lifestyles. The report sought approval for the use of s106 contributions collected under the Council's Zero Carbon Homes Local Plan Policy to fund the retrofit schemes, and for a delegation to select the retrofit schemes to be carried out.

The Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025 outlined the Council's intentions to intervene early, prevent homelessness and ensure access to suitable alternative accommodation whenever prevention was not possible. The Strategy supported the priorities of the Housing Strategy 2020-2025.

### **Resolved -**

- (1) That the Housing Strategy for Reading 2020 - 2025 and Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020 - 2025 be approved for publication;**
- (2) That the use of s106 funds collected under the Council's Zero Carbon Homes Local Plan Policy for the purposes of local housing retrofit schemes within the Borough be approved;**
- (3) That the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services be authorised, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport, following recommendations from the Climate Programme Board, to select the 'retrofit' schemes to receive s106 funds collected under the Council's Zero Carbon Homes Local Plan Policy.**

## **48. PLANNING WHITE PAPER AND OTHER NATIONAL PLANNING CHANGES**

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the Planning White Paper ('Planning for the Future') and a number of other proposed changes to the planning system which had been published for consultation. Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was a proposed response to the Planning White Paper, and at Appendix 2 a proposed response to changes to the existing planning system.

The report explained that the main changes proposed in the White Paper had been designed to support key themes of reducing regulation in order to remove barriers to development and creating much greater certainty within the planning process. The White Paper was based around three pillars of Planning for Development, Planning for Beautiful and Sustainable Places, and Planning for Infrastructure and Connected Places, and it was proposed to form a 'zoning system', whereby the use of all land was defined at the plan-making stage. The proposals included nationally-set development management policies, national standard conditions, nationally set CIL (including affordable housing), binding nationally-set housing numbers through a standard methodology, a national design guide taking precedence where no design codes were in place, and a national body to support local design codes. As a result, there would be reduced opportunities for democratic oversight and local consultation on developments.

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The report noted that alongside the White Paper a number of other planning changes were being consulted upon, which would operate within the current system and would be introduced largely through national policy. Although these changes were not as wide-ranging as the White Paper proposals, some of the implications would be highly significant.

The Committee was recommended to approve robust responses to the consultation on the Planning White Paper, which was set out in Appendix 1 and the changes to the existing planning system attached at Appendix 2. The responses would be submitted to the Government before the deadline of 29 October 2020 for the Planning White Paper and 1 October 2020 for changes to the existing planning system. There would be an opportunity for the Planning Applications Committee to consider the responses at its meeting on 7 October 2020 and contribute to the response on the White Paper.

### **Resolved -**

- (1) That the proposed response to the consultation on the Planning White Paper, which was attached to the report at Appendix 1, be approved;**
- (2) That the proposed response to the consultation on changes to the current planning system, which was attached to the report at Appendix 2, be approved;**
- (3) That the Deputy Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services be authorised to make any amendments necessary to the response to the Planning White Paper (Appendix 1), in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, to reflect any changes agreed by Planning Applications Committee at its meeting on 7 October 2020.**

### **49. DRAFT AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPD), which would supplement policies in the adopted Local Plan that sought contributions to affordable housing from new developments. The draft SPD was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the adoption of a new single local plan to set out how Reading would develop up to 2036 required additional guidance on elements of the new Local Plan, including a new Affordable Housing SPD. Once adopted, the new SPD would be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The report was seeking permission to undertake community involvement on the Draft SPD, prior to preparing a final version for adoption.

### **Resolved -**

- (1) That the Affordable Housing SPD, which was attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved for consultation;
- (2) That the Deputy Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the SPD that did not alter the policy direction, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, prior to consultation.

#### **50. 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 items 52-54 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.

#### **51. DIGITAL FUTURES FOUNDATIONS (ICT FUTURE OPERATING MODEL) UPDATE**

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report providing an update on the ICT Future Operating Model. The report stated that the Policy Committee had endorsed the preferred option in the Outline Business Case (OBC) on 22 June 2020 (Minute 14 refers) and granted delegated authority to proceed with its procurement and implementation, subject to delivery remaining within the financial envelope set out in the OBC, and a satisfactory update report on progress to this meeting. The report summarised progress to date and set out the subsequent critical future dates. It also gave an assessment of the three bidders for the contract and the rationale for selecting the preferred bidder.

**Resolved -**

That the progress made by the ICT Future Operating Model project to date be noted and a further report on progress be submitted to the Committee on 14 December 2020.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3)

#### **52. ASSET DISPOSAL UPDATE - CENTRAL CLUB**

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on a revised offer from the preferred bidder for the vacant former Central Club building.

The report explained that, as a result of changes to market conditions being experienced everywhere as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and following pre-planning application discussions, the preferred bidder had amended the scope of its initial scheme and subsequently revised its initial offer for the site. Following an appraisal of the options facing the Council, and having taken the advice of an external valuer to ensure

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compliance with section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 in relation to Best Consideration, the recommendation was to accept the revised bid in the light of the changed market conditions and circumstances since the original bid had been submitted.

**Resolved -**

**That the preferred bidder's revised bid for the Central Club be accepted and the Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to finalise the terms of the agreement.**

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3)

### **53. BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN LIMITED - RESERVED MATTERS**

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report to the Committee in its capacity as the sole member of Brighter Futures for Children Ltd (BFfC) to make consequential decisions, following the departure of the Company's Managing Director on 7 September 2020. The report described the interim arrangements, which had been agreed with the DfE, and would be in place until 31 March 2021. Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was a summary of additional interim duties for the Chair of BFfC.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That the amended role for the Chair of the Company's Board, as described in Appendix 1 to the report, which would remain in place until 31 March 2021, be approved;**
- (2) That the interim Executive Director of Finance and Resources be appointed as a Company Director until 31 March 2021;**
- (3) That the requirement in the Articles for the interim Executive Director of Finance and Resources to be an employee of the Company be waived until 31 March 2021.**

(Exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 & 3)

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.32 pm)