



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
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## DECISION BOOK

**Issue: 615      Date: 20 NOVEMBER 2020**

Decisions set out in the book have been made under delegated powers by the Chief Executive, Executive Directors or the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, in consultation either with the relevant committee or Lead Councillor.

The Decision Book process has been altered to suspend the current Councillors' call-in arrangements within the 10-day period after its publication and replace it with the ability during that period for three Councillors to request a retrospective review of the decision in writing to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

The decision book can be accessed on the Council's website - <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/mgListOfficerDecisions.aspx?bcr=1&BAM=0>

The officer reports accompanying the decisions are attached.

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## DECISION BOOK - ISSUE 615 - 20 NOVEMBER 2020

### 1. DECISIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC

<u>DECISION</u>	<u>LEAD COUNCILLOR(S)</u>	<u>WARDS AFFECTED</u>	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
1. DECISIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC	COUNCILLOR BROCK	BOROUGHWIDE	1

This report sets out decisions that have been taken as a matter of urgency in response to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic under the Chief Executive's delegated authority to protect the Council's interest in the current emergency.

The report sets out in Appendix A the status of Council services, including any closures and changes for information, during the latest Covid-19 related restrictions due to be in place from 5 November to 2 December 2020.

It is the decision of the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to publicise the status of services, including closures and changes, as set out in Appendix A, arising from national restrictions expected to be in place from 5 November to 2 December 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is the decision of the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to extend these provisions from 3 December 2020 if the national lockdown is not lifted and until such time as a further Decision Book can be completed with further changes identified to respond the situation then in force.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

LEAD COUNCILLOR:	JASON BROCK, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL		
DATE:	20 NOVEMBER 2020		
TITLE:	DECISIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC		
SERVICE:	ALL	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out decisions that have been taken as a matter of urgency in response to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic under the Chief Executive's delegated authority to protect the Council's interest in the current emergency.
- 1.2 The report sets out in Appendix A the status of Council services, including any closures and changes for information, during the latest Covid-19 related restrictions due to be in place from 5 November to 2 December 2020.

2. DECISION

- 2.1 It is the decision of the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to publicise the status of services, including closures and changes, as set out in Appendix A, arising from national restrictions expected to be in place from 5 November to 2 December 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic;
- 2.2 It is the decision of the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to extend these provisions from 3 December 2020 if the national lockdown is not lifted and until such time as a further Decision Book can be completed with further changes identified to respond the situation then in force.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Government announced measures to address the rapid rise in COVID-19 cases in England on 30 October 2020. The new national restrictions replaced

the 'Local Covid Alert Level' measures and came into effect on Thursday 5 November 2020 and are due to continue for a four week period until 2 December 2020 at which point they will be reviewed.

3.2 The Government's key messages to tackle the increasing rate of Covid-19 infections is to: stay at home, except for specific purposes; avoid meeting people you do not live with, except for specific purposes; and to close certain businesses and venues. These restrictions have required the Council to consider the delivery of its services during this second Covid-19 related national lockdown.

3.3 In order to facilitate effective decision-making during this challenging period, the Decision Book process has been made more flexible to make it easier for the Council to take decisions urgently. The Decision Book can be used to publicise decisions being taken as a matter of urgency in response to the Covid-19 pandemic to maintain transparency in the decision-making process.

#### 4. THE DECISION

##### 4.1 Current Position:

The Council has significant duties to respond to emergencies under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. This is the most relevant legislation in relation to an emergency response to a Pandemic. This Act delivers a single framework for civil protection in the UK and establishes a clear set of roles and responsibilities for those involved in emergency preparation and response at the local level. The decisions that are recorded in Appendix A are a response to the emergency caused by the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic.

##### 4.2 Options Proposed

The Chief Executive has decided to publish the status of Council services, which includes any changes and closures in Appendix A to this report.

#### 5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 To enable the Council to fulfil its leadership role at this incredibly challenging time, and to guide its work with partners in providing the support that residents and businesses need, the Council's current Corporate Plan priorities have been reframed to provide clarity of purpose and a new three point strategic framework has been adopted as follows:

- To support and protect vulnerable children and adults by ensuring the social care system continues to function effectively;
- To support the people who are most vulnerable and isolated in our communities;
- To support businesses and the local economy, and secure Reading's economic recovery.

5.2 None of these can be achieved unless the entire Borough comes together to address this emergency and emerges strongly on the other side. Although we have taken the step of closing some of our buildings to protect staff and service users, in line with government guidance on social-distancing, we are still meeting the needs of our customers.

5.3 We are working in partnership with key partners, the business community and our vibrant voluntary and community sector to mobilise to address both the immediate and longer-term needs of the Borough.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). We have not lost sight of this imperative during the Pandemic and further progress has been made on the Climate Change Strategy. There are no direct implications as regards these changes.

## 7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way". We have consulted with the voluntary sector partners and businesses community on how we should respond to the emergency. We will continue to work to make sure that residents voices help shape our work going forward.

## 8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 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.

8.2 It is imperative, that in responding to this emergency we look to protect the most vulnerable and marginalised in our society. Our revised priorities facilitate this. We will continually review our progress to ensure that we do not leave behind any section of our community.

## 9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Chief Executive has authority to take decisions on behalf of the Council as necessary to respond to emergencies where it is not practicable to obtain the necessary urgency approvals from the Council or its committees. The Chief

Executive also has delegated authority in times of emergency to take such action as he considers necessary to protect the interests of the Council, having consulted with the Leader of the Council, and Lead Councillors where appropriate. These provisions are set out in the Council's Delegations Register.

- 9.2 The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, took a decision to amend temporarily the Decision Book process to enable decisions to be taken more flexibly during the current Covid-19 pandemic, which will enable Executive Directors and Statutory Officers, in consultation with the relevant Lead Councillor(s) to take decisions on an urgent basis to protect the Council's interests.

## 10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The combined gross revenue and capital pressures as a result of Covid-19 as at the 30<sup>th</sup> September totalled £20.350m. This was partially offset by a total allocation of (£9.775m) of Central Government general support grant, (£0.837m) furlough grant (£0.669m claimed and received to date) and an estimated (£6.000m) in income compensation. This gives a net projected pressure caused by Covid-19 of £3.738m.

- 10.2 Central Government published the final guidance document in respect of the local government income compensation scheme for lost sales, fees and charges on the 24<sup>th</sup> August. The first grant claim has been submitted for (£3.186m) of compensation for the period April to July 2020. It is anticipated that the level of compensation that the Council will receive is in line with our original estimate of (£6.000m).

- 10.3 A fourth tranche of Central Government general support grant was announced on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October with allocations published on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October. The Council's allocation was (£3.494m). This is not included within the Quarter 2 projections detailed above. Including this additional sum, and assuming no additional pressures arise, this would effectively bring the outturn position for 2020/21 near to the figure we would have expected to achieve pre-pandemic and assuming delivery of all planned budget savings. It does not address the ongoing pressure into 2021/22 arising from loss of Council Tax and Business Rates income in 2020/21 or the loss of other income streams which may or may not recover back to prior levels.

- 10.4 Changes to Services identified in Appendix A, will have an impact on the income of the Council. This will be monitored and reported via Policy Committee in the usual way.

## 11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None

SERVICE IMPLICATIONS - DUE TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS (5 NOVEMBER 2020 - 2 DECEMBER 2020)

DIRECTORATE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOODS

Housing and Communities Service

Housing and Communities Service will keep all services to customers that were running during the previous lockdown and those that were reopened as part of the original recovery process in place. All of these services will continue be delivered in a Covid Secure way.

This includes:

- Repairs and Maintenance
- Homelessness and Housing Advice
- Housing management, ASB and support services
- Allocations of accommodation
- Rough Sleepers will receive support and assistance through our usual commissioned outreach and accommodation-based services but at this stage there is no intention to provide B&B accommodation as in the first lockdown unless the Government mandates us to do so.

Housing Maintenance Services

- Continuing as normal schedule delivering reactive repairs (urgent and non-urgent), voids and planned maintenance works maintaining a Covid secure environment
- Also delivering services provided to Wokingham BC, schools and community centres

Environmental & Commercial Services

Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC)

- The recycling centres will remain open via a booking system at the current capacity of circa 10,000 visits per week
- The sites will also remain open to dispose of the waste collected by the household waste collection crews, plus cleansing, parks, trade waste etc.
- Emptying of recycling bring banks (will monitor frequency of collections in case it needs to increase in frequency)

Household Waste Collection

- Continuing to collect kerbside household waste collections inc. residual, recycling, green waste and food waste (EA areas).

- NB. In case of escalating staff absences, the service will resort to its contingency plan and prioritise residual waste and food waste, then recycling etc and draw on staff from Parks, Cleansing & Agency.
- Provide bulky waste, new bin deliveries, trade waste & clinical waste collections
- Continue to prepare for February 2021 main roll out of the food waste collection service.  
Enforcement & support of the food waste roll out will carry on..

### Parks & Open Spaces

- Play areas & outdoor fitness equipment remain open
- Continue to carry out park's maintenance related activities
- Continue to carry out tree inspections and maintenance works
- Commercial works carry on in conjunction with client's consent

### Highways

- Continue to carry out highways safety inspections
- Continue to perform highways maintenance repairs (pothole filling)
- Complete the Highways Major roads 2020 programme (mid Nov)
- Deliver commercial activities including CIL schemes, vehicle crossings etc.

### Cleansing

- Continue to deliver programmed range of cleansing inc. graffiti removal, cardboard collection (BID), litter bin emptying etc.
- Including the enhanced cleansing of the town centre/local centres
- Waste Transfer Station at Bennet Road will remain operational

### Cultural Services

The current status of Cultural services are set out below and will be reviewed in the light of formal regulations and further clarification from the Department for Culture, Media & Sport.

#### Town Hall and Museum

##### Closed:

- Museum
- Museum shop
- Town Hall reception
- Town Hall meeting rooms
- Ceremony room
- Berkshire Archaeology site visits cancelled.



### Continue to operate:

- Coroners Court & offices
- Berkshire Archaeology.
- Museum shop on-line
- Museum on-line education sessions
- Building safety and maintenance checks

### Libraries

- Central library operating for collections only, and visa checking service - Caversham library operating for collections only
- Home service operating delivering to vulnerable customers
- Public access to PCs

### Reading Sport & Leisure

#### Close:

- Leisure Centres closed to the public on Wednesday 4 November 2020.
- Centres remain open for support activities for vulnerable children
- Outdoor courts

#### GLL:

- Rivermead closed on Wednesday 4 November 2020
- Customers notified
- Direct Debits credits will be given

### Educational Play & Support

#### Continue:

- In school support to vulnerable children
- Support to children not in school - predominantly outdoor but as weather closes in may use a sports centre as a venue (not public opening)

#### Close:

- After school care

### Leisure/Open Space

#### Continue

- Twilight Trail - Due to open 8 December 2020.

#### Close:

- Bookings in open space remains unavailable
- Grass roots sports (football) suspended

## Archives

### Close:

- The Berkshire Record Office reading room closed to visitors from 4pm on 4 November 2020.

### Continue:

- Berkshire Record Office will continue to have limited staff on site.
- The Records Management Unit in Darwin Close will continue to have limited staff on site.
- Both services will continue to offer full remote enquiry services, including copies and research.
- Continue to offer face-to-face access to Darwin Close records for urgent client needs by local government officers from BFfC, Adopt TV etc.

## New Directions

### Continue:

- Will continue with existing delivery models - mixture of online and in person at South Reading site.
- The only learners to attend the South Reading site will be those participating in digital skills education, those who are digitally disadvantaged or have other learning needs that require higher levels of support.
- Delivery in outreach venues has not and will not commence for the foreseeable future.

## Hexagon and South Street

Updated to include the restrictions published on 3 November 2020 relating to Theatres/Performance

### Continue:

- Behind-closed-doors activity such as rehearsals and performances that are live streamed but no audiences. Training can also take place if requested.

### Stop:

- All indoor and outdoor performances with a socially distanced audience will stop.
- Close to the public from Thursday 5 November 2020.

## Planning & Regulatory Services

- Services generally continue where they have been assessed as Covid Secure and approved by the management team.
- Coroners will continue with inquests as set out in Government guidance.
- Regulatory Services - A focus on support to High Risk premises continues.
- First Stop Service to be suspended.

## Transport

- Civil enforcement continues (Parking and bus lanes)
- Car parks remain open.
- Continuation of NHS parking offer at Queens Road.
- Construction of Green Park Station and South Reading MRT continues as planned.

## Assets

- Services generally continue where they have been assessed as Covid Secure and approved by the management team.
- Construction sites are set up to be COVID safe and site visits will only take place where necessary and will follow Government guidelines on social distancing when doing so.

## Facilities Management / Cleaning

- Staff that are in working from Council offices can continue to do so but no new requests will be processed.
- FM/ Cleaning Teams will continue to operate
- Community Buildings -Yeomanry House, South Reading Community Hub, 330 Northumberland Ave, Emmer Green, 16 North Street, Southcote, Caversham Children's Centres and Ranikhet will remain open for limited services.. All other community buildings remain closed.
- Public toilets - those that are currently operational will remain open as they have done throughout the pandemic.

## DIRECTORATE OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH

### Adult Social Care

Adult Social Care will operate business as usual as we recognise the challenges for vulnerable residents.

The in-house service Strathy Close Learning Disabilities Day Centre and Whitley Wood Respite Care units are open and caring for our residents albeit on a reduced basis to ensure robust COVID safe practice is maintained.

Our Shared Lives carers have resumed caring and are ensuring safe practice and where this is not possible support is being offered in other ways via phone calls and video support.

Staff from the Maples will offer a home support outreach service to service users and carers at home as we know these families need some support and we cannot make the current service COVID safe due to the design of the building. We will not be able to provide personal care but the support will hopefully sustain families caring for their relative/friend.

All staff are able to access PPE to complete safe visits.

Home Care and Care Home Providers are all supporting our vulnerable residents.

We are not considering designate a care home to take COVID19 positive new residents as requested by Department of Health and Social Care residents and are working on a Home's First principle following discharge from hospital.

We are also working with health colleagues on solutions for those discharged and needing a new care home placement if COVID 19 positive.

Care Home testing of staff and residents is operating smoothly. We currently have a low number of positive cases in care homes residents and staff

We send a newsletter to all our Providers weekly.

### Public Health and Wellbeing

The Public Health and Wellbeing team will continue support residents to keep well in COVID secure ways.

Information, advice and links to support have been shared with residents through a regular Wellbeing newsletter. This was created to share essential information on COVID-19 and regulations, but also to boost morale and offer fun and creative ways to entertain and stimulate people in the safety of their own homes. The team will be running a Winter Wellness campaign to offer self-help tips on a range of topics, respond to residents' needs throughout the colder months and adapting to the latest COVID guidance.

For the latest information on courses being run by Compass Recovery College for mental wellbeing, please visit:

<https://www.compassrecoverycollege.uk/>

Many of the community services we commission and support are offering digital or telephone alternatives at this time. The latest information is collated on the Reading Services Guide at:

<https://servicesguide.reading.gov.uk/kb5/reading/directory/home.page>

For details of how to access each service please go to the specific website for the service you need, including:

- Health Visiting and School Health Nursing <https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/public-health-nursing-health-visiting-school-nursing-immunisation/>
- Sexual Health Services <https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/florey-sexualhealth.htm> and <https://www.safesexberkshire.nhs.uk/>
- Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services <https://www.changegrowlive.org/drug-alcohol-service-reading/info>
- Smoking Cessation <https://www.smokefreelifeberkshire.com/coronavirus-information/>

The team has sourced easy read & translated versions of COVID-19 guidance, and is continuing to work with communities on improving our reach, particularly across seldom heard communities. Residents and community groups can contact us at: [wellbeing.service@reading.gov.uk](mailto:wellbeing.service@reading.gov.uk)

## DIRECTORATE OF RESOURCES

### Registrars and Bereavement

Marriages - All appointments rescheduled until end of December 2020 - with guidance to the couples that this date may need to be further delayed.

Births and deaths - All other registrations are continuing as normal (via appointment) we are also trialling new ways of working (endorsed by the GRO) to speed up the registration process.

### Cemetery and Crematorium

Operational and making provision for out of hours working and shift working should it be required.

### Contact Centre Teams

- No impact on Local Contact Tracing (LCT)
- No impact on One Reading Hub - relaunched on Thursday 5 November. All Voluntary & Community Sector partners fully re-engaged and data management in place.
- No impact to general contact centre service

We are currently working with service areas to redeploy staff into the contact centre so that we can resource any increase in Local Contact Tracing. Currently implementing out of hours working to increase contact rates. Also training staff on One Reading Community Hub service.

## One Reading Community Hub

The Hub never closed so the online form and phone number are still live; from 4 November the service has again been promoted to vulnerable customers.

You can contact the Hub:

- [Fill in our online Hub form](#)
- By calling 0808 189 4325
- Via Reading Deaf Centre on SMS 07704 687298 or fax 0118 950 0507

The focus of the HUB in line with Government advice is to support independence and self sufficiency of customers. The Hub is a partnership of local voluntary organisations and customers will be signposted to the service best able to help them. The Hub will not provide any direct services (including food parcels) however if local partners are unable to meet people's needs we would step in to provide direct support if this was required in specific circumstances.

## Kennet Day Nursery

The Kennet Day Nursery will remain open at full capacity for children of RBC and BFfC parents and other public sector workers, covering usual opening times (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday).

## Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)

The EOC will continue to provide a seven-day a week service operating out of Yeomanry House, Monday to Friday (remote cover at weekends). Key tasks undertaken are:

- Managing the PPE sourcing, supply and distribution to internal services and external providers;
- Preparing Covid-Secure written guidance, support and training to services and schools;
- Providing a 7 day a week response to Covid-19 enquiries and requests;
- Co-ordinating the Council's response to outbreaks notifications from Public Health England;
- Co-ordinating Essential Worker COVID Testing.

## HR

Managing furlough of staff as a consequence of closure of leisure, museum etc.

## Revenues and Benefits

Will deal with grant payments to individuals and the business community as directed by government.

## Legal and Democratic Services

No planned changes to any services at present. An update will be provided if there is any impact to Electoral Canvass envisaged in the run-up to the publication of the register on 1 December 2020.

## BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN

Business as usual services continue for children and families. Our priority will be to support children and young people to attend their early years and school provision which will remain open unless there are cases and bubbles or schools need to close following public health or DfE advice.

Social workers will continue to support our most vulnerable children with direct and virtual visits as defined by statutory guidance. The focus will be on under 5s, adolescents and those children not attending school.

Early Help will ensure funding distributed to Early Years settings. Continue direct and virtual visits, and virtual parenting groups. Southcote, Whitley and Caversham children's centres will remain open for maternity services. Emotional wellbeing support to children, young people and professionals including schools continues