



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

## DECISION BOOK

**Issue: 628      Date: 1 APRIL 2021**

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 628 - 1 APRIL 2021

### 1. TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY - APPOINTMENT OF CONSULTANT

<u>DECISION</u>	<u>LEAD COUNCILLOR(S)</u>	<u>WARDS AFFECTED</u>	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
1. TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY - APPOINTMENT OF CONSULTANT	COUNCILLOR PAGE	ABBHEY/THAMES	1

This report sets out the decision to appoint a consultant, Urban Place Lab, to produce a Town Centre Strategy by Autumn 2021 following the completion of a procurement process.

It is the decision of the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to:

Appoint Urban Place Lab to complete the Town Centre Strategy.

Release capital funding to support the project noting the overspend set out in this report and that further Section 106 funding local CIL funding or Government funding would be used to meet the gap in funding.

**2. REPLACEMENT OF HAMMER THROW CAGE AT PALMER PARK STADIUM**

<u>DECISION</u>	<u>LEAD COUNCILLOR(S)</u>	<u>WARDS AFFECTED</u>	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
<b>2. REPLACEMENT OF HAMMER THROW CAGE AT PALMER PARK STADIUM</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR</b>	<b>BOROUGHWIDE</b>	<b>7</b>

This report sets out the decision to spend £32,270.38 on the replacement of the Hammer Throw Cage at Palmer Park Stadium

It is the decision of the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport to spend £32,270.38 on the replacement of the Hammer Throw Cage at Palmer Park Stadium.

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REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR. PAGE, LEAD COUNCILLOR FOR STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT		
DATE:	1 APRIL 2021		
TITLE:	TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY - APPOINTMENT OF CONSULTANT		
SERVICE:	DIRECTORATE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES	WARDS:	ABBAY/THAMES
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**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report sets out the decision to appoint a consultant, Urban Place Lab, to produce a Town Centre Strategy by Autumn 2021 following the completion of a procurement process.
- 1.2 The Council's Corporate Plan, 'Investing in Reading's Future' was approved at Council 23 March 2021. The Plan sets out the intention to produce a town centre strategy by the Autumn 2021.

**2. DECISION**

- 2.1 It is the decision of the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to:
- 2.2 Appoint Urban Place Lab to complete the Town Centre Strategy.
- 2.3 Release capital funding to support the project noting the overspend set out in this report and that further Section 106 funding local CIL funding or Government funding would be used to meet the gap in funding.

**3. POLICY CONTEXT**

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan, 'Investing in Reading's Future' was approved at Council 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021. The Plan sets out the intention to produce a town centre strategy by the Autumn 2021:

‘Production of a Town Centre Strategy to provide a clear and joined up approach to regenerating and developing Reading’s town centre. The strategy will support the delivery of sustainable, socially inclusive growth’.

- 3.2 The Plan sets a target to complete the Strategy by Autumn 2021.
- 3.3 The Council’s Capital Programme approved as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out capital funding of £86k for the completion of a ‘Reading Town Centre Framework’.
- 3.4 The Council has sought tenders to complete this work and having evaluated the submissions sent to the Council; Urban Place Lab’s submission was deemed to be the highest taking into account both the quality of the submission (60%) and price (40%).

#### 4. THE DECISION

##### Current position

4.1 The need for a Town Centre strategy was identified in 2020, essentially seeking a strategy which linked the adopted Local Plan (November 2019) to the Reading 2050 Vision. The below, which is set out in more detail in the tender documentation, summarises the key challenges that the town face:

- Low and unskilled people in the local labour market.
- Increased retail competition and changing consumer patterns.
- The need for regeneration, such as Broad Street Mall and the Hosier Street and former Civic Centre as part of a new ‘Minster Quarter’.
- The need to continue to promote and accelerate the growth of business
- The need for new affordable homes per year to meet housing needs.
- The condition of the public realm
- A wish to create a more liveable environment and support public health outcomes.
- Tackling anti-social behaviour
- The need to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality and ensure there are consistently high standards of environmental maintenance across the borough.
- Reduce the carbon emissions of the borough to zero by 2030.
- Promoting improved health and wellbeing
- Creating a more inclusive centre representing the town’s diverse communities

4.2 Further to these identified challenges the town now also needs to recover from the impact of Covid pandemic which makes the production and adoption of a Strategy even more important.

4.3 Given the above challenges the following objectives are to be addressed by the Strategy. It is expected that the impact of Covid will need to be considered in relation to each objective.

1. Delivering Inclusive Growth
2. Enhancing Sustainability and Liveability
3. Arrival Accessibility and Movement
4. A Great Place to Work and do Business

5. A Great Place for Shopping and Leisure
6. A Great Place to Live
7. An Enhanced Green and Blue Infrastructure and Public Realm
8. A Strong Sense of Identity Culture and Heritage
9. Driving Investment, Partnerships and Delivery

4.4 The outputs of the Town Centre Strategy commission will include the following components:

- A collated baseline set of data regarding the town centre.
- A concise report setting out the predicted changes and challenges facing the town
- A summary of relevant best practice and innovation in equivalent urban areas
- The production of a series of town centre wide strategies
- A series of more detailed area-based strategies
- A concise delivery strategy which provides a route map for implementing the Town Centre Strategy.
- A strategy for key stakeholder engagement to deliver broad based support for the proposed Town Centre Strategy.

#### **Urban Lab**

4.5 The tender submission from Urban Place Lab received the highest overall evaluation score after considering both the quality and price bid.

4.6 The submission documents received high scores, with the exception of the [topic related to 'A Strong Sense of Identity Culture and Heritage'](#) where the bid met with the Council's stated requirements but lacked some clarity.

4.7 The bid price exceeded the current budget allocation set out in the Capital Programme creating a pressure of circa £13k. It is proposed that funding to complete the study would be met by the allocation of further Section 106 or local CIL funds and it is also hoped that Government funding for the high streets and town centres may also be available to meet this shortfall.

4.8 While the budget gap identified presents a pressure and risk it is considered important to formally appoint the consultants and commence the work in order to deliver the strategy by the Autumn.

4.9 The Council will manage the project via an internal group chaired by the Assistant Director for Environmental and Commercial Services. The Vice Chair for the group will be the Executive Director Reading UKCIC. Officers from culture, planning, transport form part of the group. The Chair will provide regular updates to the Executive Director DEGNS, CMT and Deputy Leader/ Lead Councillor for SEPT.

## **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

5.1 The completion of a Town Centre strategy would support the following Corporate Plan (March 2021) priorities including the Council's response to recovery of the Borough following the Covid pandemic:

- Healthy environment
  - Climate Change
  - Transport initiatives
  - Health and Wellbeing

- Thriving communities
  - Community safety
  - Equality and inclusion
- Inclusive economy
  - Economic recovery
  - Invest in culture and heritage
  - Smart city

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019. The climate emergency declaration explicitly recognises that the ambitious target of net zero by 2030. Reading Climate Change emergency strategy 2020 -2025 identifies the areas where substantial policy changes are required to achieve this ambitious target. This includes transport, energy efficiency and production and biodiversity. The town centre strategy will propose initiatives to reduce climate change and support the Council's ambition to be carbon neutral.

## **7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

7.1 Engagement with the wider community will form an essential part of the development of the final strategy.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

8.1 The Council has reviewed the scope of the proposals as outlined within this report and considers that the decision to appoint a consultant will have no direct impact on any groups with protected characteristics. The Strategy itself will however have implications in relation to equality and will need to be accompanied by an equalities impact assessment(s).

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no direct legal implications resulting from the decision.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The available budget set out in the Capital programme is £86k. The price of the winning tender exceeds this current budget. Further funding will be taken from Section 106 agreements or local CIL funds. Alternatively further funds may become available from the Government to support the future of the town centre which would also help to meet the shortfall.

10.2 These financial implications were reviewed by Mark Jones, strategic business partner on 22/3/21.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 None.

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**REPORT TEMPLATE**

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The financial implications arising from the decision set out in this report are set out below:-

**1. Revenue Implications**

Use this Table in the report or as an Appendix to set out the revenue implications:

	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Employee costs (see note1)			
Other running costs			
Capital financings costs			
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Income from:			
Fees and charges (see note2)			
Grant funding (specify)			
Other income			
<b>Total Income</b>			
Net Cost(+)/saving (-)			

The net cost of the decision can be funded from (specify service and approved cost centre budget).

**Note 1:** Specifying any one off early retirement and redundancy costs. With regard to early retirement costs set out capitalised pension cost and pay back period in a separate paragraph.

**Note 2:** In a separate table/appendix set out detailed fees and charges decisions and sensitivity analysis.

**2. Capital Implications**

Capital Programme reference from budget book: page line	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure			
Funded by			
Grant (specify)			
Section 106 (specify)			
Other services			
Capital Receipts/Borrowing			
<b>Total Funding</b>			



**Note:** where more than one option is being made it may be easier to set out the above information in an Appendix.

**3. Value for Money (VFM)**

Given the continuing need to demonstrate VFM please include evidence that the decision offers VFM (e.g benchmarking data)

**4. Risk Assessment.**

Include relevant comments around any key financial risks associated with the decision(s)

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR HOSKIN - LEAD COUNCILLOR FOR HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SPORT</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>1 APRIL 2021</b>		
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>REPLACEMENT OF HAMMER THROW CAGE AT PALMER PARK STADIUM</b>		
<b>SERVICE:</b>	<b>LEISURE</b>	<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>BOROUGHWIDE</b>
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**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report sets out the decision to spend £32,270.38 on the replacement of the Hammer Throw Cage at Palmer Park Stadium.

**2. DECISION**

- 2.1 It is the decision of the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport to spend £32,270.38 on the replacement of the Hammer Throw Cage at Palmer Park Stadium.

**3. POLICY CONTEXT**

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2018 - 2021 sets out six priorities: securing the economic success of Reading; improving access to decent housing to meet local need; protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children; keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe; promoting health, education, culture and wellbeing; ensuring the Council is fit for future.
- 3.2 The Corporate Plan sets out a vision where all residents have opportunities to relax, learn, have fun and stay healthy. The Council aims to promote Reading as a destination for leisure. The ongoing need to invest in sports and leisure facilities across the Borough is highlighted within the Corporate Plan.
- 3.3 The provision of sporting and leisure facilities can be linked to an active community and increased participation in Physical Activity across the Borough. This aligns with other Council policies relating to tackling inequalities and wider public health objectives.

## **4. THE DECISION**

### **Current Position**

- 4.1 At present, the throws cage is out of use due to failing Unit 2 and Unit 2a in Track Mark accreditation. If the throws cage is not replaced, Palmer Park will lose Track Mark accreditation as it will no longer comply with UKA/IAAF guidelines. Furthermore, the dimensions of the existing throws cage do not comply with UKA and British Athletics requirements.
- 4.2 The Hammer Throw Cage at Palmer Park is regularly used by Reading Athletics Club (RAC) and Reading University, as well as several schools who use the facilities at Palmer Park for P.E lessons and sports days. Additionally, Palmer Park hosts Berkshire School Competition events, Wokingham and Districts School events and other events ranging from regional to county level.
- 4.3 As part of an agreement (4011) for the development works which took place at 42 Kenavon Drive, £353,509.00 leisure contribution was received by the Council. The Council would now like to allocate the remaining unapplied £32,270.38 of this S106 funding to replace the throws cage at Palmer Park.

### **Proposal**

- 4.4 The recommended proposal is to remove the existing throws cage which has reached the end of its life and replace with an upgraded Thor 9 cage, which is NCAA Compliant and IAAF Certified.

### **Other Options Considered**

- 4.5 The other options considered were: replacing the netting surrounding the throws cage or considerably modifying the existing throws cage to reinstate it. Both of these options would result in the throws cage still not meeting requirements.

## **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 5.1 This proposal is in line with the direction of Council proposed within the Corporate Plan. This proposal contributes towards two of the Councils' strategic aims - establishing 'Reading as a learning city and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit' as well as promoting a 'healthy environment for all'.
- 5.2 This proposal contributes to the safety of those who use the throws cage and facilities at Palmer Park. The throws cage promotes physical activity and therefore has a direct impact on health.

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 6.2 There are no environmental or climate implications to note as this is a like for like replacement.

## **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".
- 7.2 Members of Reading Athletics Club (RAC) have been involved in the decision to replace the throws cage at Palmer Park. RAC are supportive of the decision. Replacing the throws cage will enable the University, schools and wider local community to resume participation in the sport.

## **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 As this proposal relates to the like-for-like replacement of existing leisure equipment, there is likely to be little-no impact on equality. There is planned significant investment in the rest of the facility which will widen accessibility to the facility itself. Any impact on equality is likely to be positive and therefore an EIA is not relevant to this decision.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The legal agreement completed in relation to 42 Kenavon Drive fetters the contributions to be allocated or spent as described here: "towards the provision and /or the improvement of leisure facilities at Kings Meadow, Forbury Gardens, Kind Road Gardens and Palmer Park or any other set out in the Thames Park Plan and which are in the vicinity of the site for no other purpose".

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The funding (£32,270.38) from the Kenavon Drive development will be used to contribute to the proposal outlined in 4.4 at Palmer Park. No additional financial implications have been identified.
- 10.2 The use of the throws cage at Palmer Park generates income revenue in the region of £20,000 per year. This is an estimate as the income comes from athletic bookings as a whole, and hammer and discus are events held within wider athletics meetings. It is anticipated that the lifespan of the new throws cage will be approximately 10 years, meaning the spend of £31,985 will generate in the region of £200,000 over its lifespan. The cost of replacing the netting is anticipated to be £5,000 every five years. Overall the initial investment will generate significant net revenue for the centre.
- 10.3 These financial implications were reviewed by Mark Jones, strategic business partner, on 4/3/21.

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2018 - 20 'Shaping Reading's Future'