

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 23 MARCH 2021

Present: Councillor Stevens (Mayor);

Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Carnell, Challenger, Davies, Duveen, Eden, Edwards, Ennis, Gittings, Grashoff, Hacker, 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, Terry, White, Whitham, J Williams, R Williams and Woodward;

Apologies: Councillor Emberson.

23. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Retiring Councillors

As this was be the last meeting of the Council prior to the local elections on 6 May 2021, the Mayor invited the Leader of the Council to speak about Councillors Jones and McKenna who would not be standing for re-election. Additionally, Councillor Jones spoke about his experiences as a Councillor, since he was first elected in May 1984. Councillor Grashoff also addressed the Council to announce she would be standing down before the next election. The retiring Councillors were thanked for their service to the Council.

(b) Census 2021 Purple plaque - Councillor Stanford-Beale

Councillor Stanford-Beale had been recognised as just one of twenty-two people across England and Wales to be awarded the Census 2021 Purple Plaque for dedication to their local communities.

(c) National Day of Reflection

The Mayor announced that at 8pm he would be pausing proceedings for five minutes to allow councillors and other people attending or viewing the meeting to stand on their doorsteps and light a candle/shine a light to mark the anniversary of the first UK lockdown and to: remember all the people who had lost their lives; support those who had been bereaved; and show gratitude to essential and key workers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

(d) Deputy Director of Planning, Transport & Regulatory Services

Prior to speaking on the Council's Corporate Plan (see Minute 26 below), Councillor Brock, Leader of the Council, and Councillor Page, Deputy Leader of the Council, paid tribute to George Framalitto, Deputy Director of Planning, Transport & Regulatory Services for his service to the Council as he would be leaving his position to take up a new role with Woking Borough Council at the end of the month.

24. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Mayor.

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

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Andrew Hornsby-Smith	Coronavirus and Mental Health	Cllr Hoskin
2.	Nicholas Fudge	Food Waste and General Waste Bins	Cllr Barnett-Ward
3.	Richard Stainthorp	Public Sector Pay Awards	Cllr Pearce
4.		Withdrawn	

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

26. INVESTING IN READING'S FUTURE: READING BOROUGH COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2021-22

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report on the Council's new Corporate Plan 'Investing in Reading's Future: Reading Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2021'-22'. The report explained that the previous Plan, 'Shaping Reading's Future: Our Corporate Plan 2018-21', had been approved at Council in June 2018 with an annual refresh published in June 2019. In the context of the level of uncertainty due to the continuing pandemic, it had been decided to create a one-year corporate plan for 2021/22. The new Plan, which was appended to the report, set out:

- The Council's vision and themes which provided the context for service delivery;
- The major initiatives that supported delivery of the vision and the difference the Council wanted to see for Reading;
- How the Council would work together with partners and its contribution to Investing in Reading's Future; and
- How the Council would measure the difference that it had made.

The Corporate Plan would support the Council's vision: 'to **ensure** that Reading realises its potential - and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success' through the following three key themes: Healthy environment; Thriving communities; and Inclusive economy.

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

Resolved -

That the Council's Corporate Plan, titled 'Investing in Reading's Future: Reading Borough Council Corporate Plan 2021-22' be approved as included at Appendix 1 to the report.

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27. COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2020/21 - 2022/23

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report recommending that the Council considered the findings of the Independent Remuneration Panel and adopted a scheme of Councillors' Allowances for the financial year 2021/22 to 2022/23.

The report explained that the Council had agreed a Councillors' Allowance Scheme for the period 2019/20 to 2022/23 at its meeting on 25 June 2019 (Minute 18 refers) following a full review by the Independent Remuneration Panel. As part of that review the Panel had recommended that the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) be increased to bring the rate broadly up to the Berkshire average. It also recommended that the Basic Allowance (BA) and the SRAs should be increased at the beginning of each new financial year in accordance with the Local Government Pay Settlement (LGPS) for the remaining period of the scheme. The Panel's recommendations were attached at Appendix A to the report along with the proposed amended scheme at Appendix B.

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

Resolved -

That the Councillors' Allowances Scheme, as set out in Appendix B to the report, which included minor revisions recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel, be adopted.

28. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22

Further to Minute 12 of the Personnel Committee held on 17 March 2019, the Executive Director of Resources submitted a report outlining the draft Pay Policy Statement, which was appended to the report. The report stated that Local Authorities were required under Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 (the Act) to prepare a Pay Policy Statement that articulated the Council's policy towards the pay of the workforce, particularly senior staff and the lowest paid employees.

The report explained that each local authority was an individual employer in its own right and had the autonomy to make decisions on pay that were appropriate to local circumstances and which delivered value for money for local taxpayers. Section 40 of the Act required authorities, in developing their Pay Policy Statement, to have regard to any guidance that had been published by the Secretary of State. This included Communities and Local Government guidance on Openness and Accountability in Local Pay and the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency (as amended). The Act basically required Councils to produce a Pay Policy Statement annually that was accessible for council tax payers to be able to take an informed view of whether local decisions on all aspects of remuneration were fair.

The Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22 had been updated as follows:

- To show the updated pay multiples in section 8;
- To reflect changes agreed regarding the senior management structure of the Council, as set out in Article 12 of the Constitution (see also Minute 29 below);

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- Annex B had been reduced and provided references as to where relevant information on the governance arrangements for pay and conditions of service for Council officers could be found in the Constitution;
- Annex D (Council employees in salary bands) had been updated with data for 1 April 2020 and paragraph 10 (Pay Profile) reflected the updated information.

The report stated that further updates might be required to the Pay Policy Statement and delegated authority was sought for the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services, to make any necessary changes.

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

Resolved:

- (1) That the Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22 be approved, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report.
- (2) That the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services, be authorised to update the Pay Policy Statement with new pay scales and pay ratios if required, when the discussions between national employers and joint trade unions had been concluded, in addition to updating the current employers pension contribution figure.

29. RECOMMENDATION FROM PERSONNEL COMMITTEE: DESIGNATION OF SECTION 151 OFFICER AND CHANGES TO ARTICLE 12 OF THE CONSTITUTION

Further to Minute 8 of the Personnel Committee held on 27 January 2021, the Executive Director of Resources submitted a report to designate the newly created post of Director of Finance, the Council's Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer and make amendments to Article 12 of the Constitution to reflect this, as well as other consequential changes resulting from the senior management restructure agreed by Personnel Committee. The report had appended the Personnel Committee Minutes for information and the recommended amended version of Article 12 for approval.

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

Resolved -

- (1) That the Director of Finance be designated as the Council's Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer.
- (2) That Article 12 of the Council's Constitution be amended as set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

30. SECURITY STAFF AT THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE HOSPITAL

Pursuant to Notice, the following motion was moved by Councillor Hoskin and seconded by Councillor Eden and CARRIED as set out in the resolution below.

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The following amendment was moved by Councillor Robinson and seconded by Councillor Stanford-Beale and LOST:

‘Delete the following wording:

“Request that the Leader of the Council write to Kingdom Security urging it to consider the level of danger and risk that its staff are taking in their duties, and to adjust their profit margins to meet the reasonable case being made by the staff.”’

Resolved -

This Council notes:

- That security staff perform vital frontline tasks to protect patients and staff at the Royal Berkshire Hospital and are subject to extra pressures and dangers at this time owing to the pandemic.
- That there is ongoing industrial strike action by Royal Berkshire Hospital’s security guards, who are employed by Kingdom Security in an outsourced arrangement by the NHS hospital trust at an annual cost of over £750,000.
- That the dispute is about the terms and conditions of these staff. The current remuneration is £9.12 (£10.18 for supervisors) an hour compared to far higher rates of pay for security guards on other less dangerous local sites.
- That there are no night pay or weekend rates and, for non-TUPE’d staff, there is no sick pay. Kingdom Security has an annual turnover of over £100 million.
- That the number of security guards employed at the hospital has been cut from 31 in 2008 to 21 in 2021, equating to a ratio of 1,000 staff, 500 outpatients and 160 in-patients for one security officer per day. This has resulted in increased and more intense workloads.
- That the contract with Kingdom Security is scheduled to end later this year.
- That Kingdom Security has had to be pressurised into accepting any kind of mediation, and that ACAS is now involved.
- That during the dispute, the use of agency security staff at a premium rate are being used as a temporary measure.

This Council believes that:

- The general public, staff and patients expect that all frontline workers at our local hospital should be paid fairly for the difficult work they are doing, particularly at this time.
- The demand for £12 per hour, and £13 per hour for supervisors, is justified and equates to band 3 on the NHS pay scale.
- It is unethical to contract out to companies where the terms and conditions are so poor and not properly protected.
- The use of temporary and expensive agency staff is not in itself a solution and compromises the security of staff and patients.

Consequently, this Council resolves to:

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- Support the cause of the Security Guards and requests all the parties to arrive at a just solution in order to end the dispute.
- Welcome the involvement of ACAS in seeking to bring the parties together to end the dispute.
- Request that the Leader of the Council write to the Chief Executive Officer of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust calling on the Trust to urgently review its contracting arrangements to ensure that future contracts are ethical, to consider bringing the security staffing contract in-house when possible, and to ask the Trust to use its influence to encourage Kingdom Security to resolve the dispute.
- Request that the Leader of the Council write to Kingdom Security urging it to consider the level of danger and risk that its staff are taking in their duties, and to adjust their profit margins to meet the reasonable case being made by the staff.

(The meeting closed at 8.40 pm).