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

Councillors Page (Vice-Chair), Ennis, Barnett-Ward, Duveen, Emberson, Hoskin, McElroy, McEwan, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland,

Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Stevens, Terry and White

# 28. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

At the invitation of the Chair the Monitoring Officer made the following announcement:

'In March 2020 following the first lockdown, and the government advice not to meet in person, the Council made interim arrangements for democratic oversight of the Council. This included arrangements under the Constitution for Policy Committee to assume greater responsibility for decisions, with a smaller quorum of councillors.

In addition, Policy Committee allowed greater flexibility in the existing Decision Book process, by removing the 10-day call-in period so as to allow more urgent decisions to be made through that mechanism if necessary. In granting this greater flexibility, the Policy Committee also delegated authority to me to bring the arrangement to an end "in accordance with government guidelines and restrictions on public gatherings".

Since July 2021 the government has effectively removed all restrictions on meeting in public. In person meetings are taking place and the democratic oversight of council business is back to normal. There is greater resilience now given the Council's adoption of hybrid meetings like this. So for all these reasons, I consider that there is no longer any justification for the call-in procedure to be disapplied. I am therefore exercising my delegation to restore the Decision Book process as set out in the Constitution.'

## 29. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## 30. QUESTIONS

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

	Questioner	<u>Subject</u>	Reply
1.	J Wellum	The Council's Response to the Challenges of Home Working	Cllr McEwan
2.	R Stainthorp	London Fringe Allowance	Cllr Pearce
3.	A Dally	Council Tax collection: Best Practice guidance	Cllr McEwan

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	Questioner	Subject	Reply
1.	Cllr White	Improving road safety on Crescent Road	Cllr Page
2.	Cllr White	Transit site for the travelling community in Reading	Cllr Page
3.	Cllr White	Reading Council supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children	Cllr Terry

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

## 31. DECISION BOOKS

The Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services submitted a report listing the Decision Book reports that had been published since the report to the meeting of the Committee held on 12 July 2021.

The report also noted that a retrospective review had been requested of the Decision Book regarding the Provision of on-street and off-street Parking for the Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Trust. Attached at Appendix 1 was the original Decision Book report and at Appendix 2 a summary of the review including the questions raised and the responses from officers.

## Resolved -

- (1) That the Decision Book Reports be noted;
- (2) That the review of the Decision of the Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services regarding the Provision of on-street and off-street Parking for the Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Trust be noted.

## 32. CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM RULES AND REGULATIONS

Further to Minute 6 of the meeting held on 14 June 2021, the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report presenting the results of the Bereavement Services Public Consultation on the draft Cemetery and Crematorium Rules and Regulations. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 Cemetery and Crematorium Rules and Regulations Sept 2021
- Appendix 2 Consultation Summary Report
- Appendix 3 Equality Impact Assessment Report

The report explained that the Rules and Regulations attached at Appendix 1 set out the proposed operations and service provision for the Cemetery and Crematorium. They had been the subject of public consultation and had been updated in light of the feedback and to ensure the Council could provide a service that met the needs of the communities of Reading, where it was reasonable and practical to do so. The changes made addressed

both faith and non-faith needs. The report set out and explained the rationale for changes made following the consultation, which included changes to the following aspects of the service: Extended Opening Times, Out of Hours Service and Grave Types.

The report noted that the public consultation feedback included that inconsistent or lack of enforcement was unfair, caused issues for other users and was potentially discriminative. The approval of the revised Rules and Regulations would allow for stricter enforcement and enable the cemetery management to address some of the historic issues and attempt to mitigate the impact. On this basis, it was recommended that no further ad hoc changes be permitted and that any request that sat outside the Rules and Regulations must be either declined or submitted formally as a policy change and proceed through the formal decision-making processes. It was accepted that over time changes might need to be made and therefore the Rules & Regulations would be subject to a formal review every three years.

# Resolved -

- (1) That the revised Cemetery & Crematorium Rules & Regulations as set out at Appendix 1 be approved;
- (2) That the changes to the Service provision as summarised in the report be approved;
- (3) That the Cemetery & Crematorium Rules and Regulations be reviewed every three years with the next review to take place in September 2024;
- (4) That the Council's position, in respect of one-off requests which sat outside of the Rules and Regulations, be that no further ad hoc changes be permitted, and that if any request was received that sat outside the Rules and Regulations, it must be either declined or submitted formally as a Policy change and proceed through the formal decision-making processes;
- (5) That the Assistant Director for Corporate Improvement and Customer Services be delegated authority to make non-material changes to the Rules & Regulations, to ensure the Service could act swiftly to implement any essential operating changes.

# 33. BURIAL LAND OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report presenting options and considerations for potential land acquisition for burials. Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was a summary of Options for Burials within 20 miles of Reading.

The report noted that a new set of Cemetery and Crematorium Rules and Regulations had been drafted and consulted upon and were being considered by the Committee at this meeting (Minute 32 above refers). Adoption of the rules and regulations had implications for the types of burial services the Bereavement Service would offer, as well as the

longevity of the burial land at Henley Road Cemetery. Taking into account the new regulations and updated burial numbers the projected lifespan for burials at Henley Cemetery was five years within Westfield, and three years within Mayfield.

The report set out two adjacent land options for expansion of Henley Road Cemetery at Henley Road allotments and Caversham Park and summarised issues relevant to potential land acquisition for burials. Alternative options for Reading residents outside the Borough were also considered and set out at Appendix 1. Seven options were presented to the Committee, four of which were recommended to proceed to a comprehensive options appraisal: land acquisition in Reading, land acquisition within 10 miles of Reading, shared land acquisition with a neighbouring Local Authority and extension of Burial Land at Henley Road Cemetery - Caversham Park Only.

# Resolved -

- (1) That the currently available burial options outside of the Borough available to Residents and customers within a 20-mile radius be noted;
- (2) That officers commission a comprehensive land options appraisal considering the following options for the provision of burial land: land acquisition in Reading, land acquisition within 10 miles of Reading, shared land acquisition with neighbouring Local Authority and Extension of Burial Land at Henley Road Cemetery Caversham Park Only.

# 34. AWARD OF CONTRACT - ACCOMMODATION WITH SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE YMCA READING

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval to award a contract to YMCA Reading for the provision of accommodation with support to young people.

The report noted that the Council currently commissioned YMCA Reading to provide 40 units of accommodation to young people aged 16 - 25. This included specific vulnerable groups including unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC), homeless 16/17-year olds, Children Looked After (CLA) and those leaving care. Four units were dedicated to supporting young mothers and their babies. The current contract expired on 30 September 2021.

The report explained that, as part of a new joint commissioning exercise, the Council and Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) had undertaken a full needs analysis of the accommodation and support needs of those aged 16 - 25. This excluded those who required semi-independent living arrangements that were independently commissioned by BFfC. A review of the service provided by the incumbent provider, YMCA Reading had also been undertaken. Due to limited options for alternative accommodation provision the Council had undertaken without prejudice scoping and negotiations with YMCA Reading and subsequently a Contract Procedure Rules waiver had been approved to enter into a direct contract award with YMCA Reading. A three-year initial contract period was proposed, with an extension period of up to 24 months.

## Resolved -

That a contract award to YMCA Reading for the provision of Accommodation with Support for Young People for a period of three years, with the option to extend up to a maximum of 24 months, in accordance with the approved CPR waiver, be approved.

# 35. ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION TO REMOVE PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS THAT WOULD RESULT IN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval for a non-immediate Article 4 direction to remove certain permitted development rights that would result in new residential dwellings across the town centre, district and local centres, core employment areas and a number of other commercial areas. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2: Draft Article 4 direction
- Appendix 3: Evidence document

The report set out the background to permitted development rights (PDR) and Article 4 directions and explained that it was proposed to make a non-immediate Article 4 direction to withdraw the following PDR:

- Change of use of commercial, business and service use (use class E) to residential (Part 3, class MA);
- Change of use of hot food takeaway, betting office, payday loan shop or launderette to residential (Part 3, class M);
- Change of use of casino or amusement arcade to residential (Part 3, class N);
- Demolition of single, purpose built, detached block of flats or a single, detached office, light industrial or research and development building and its replacement with a detached block of flats or detached house (Part 20, class ZA);
- Up to two additional residential storeys on a detached commercial or mixeduse building (in use for retail, financial and professional, restaurant and café, office, research and development, light industrial, betting shop, payday loan shop, launderette) (Part 20, class AA); and
- Up to two additional residential storeys on a two or more-storey terraced commercial or mixed use building (see class AA for uses) or one additional storey on a one storey building (Part 20, class AB).

The proposed Article 4 Direction was attached to the report at Appendix 2 and would be applied to the entire town centre, district and local centres and core employment areas as defined in the Local Plan, as well as other primarily commercial or retail locations and areas with the poorest levels of air quality. The intention was not to halt all changes of use or development on commercial sites to residential use, but to give the Council more

control over relevant applications through the planning process. This would help protect the existing office and industrial supply and guard against the potential harm set out in this report. The Direction would allow the consideration of other planning matters such as affordable housing or amenity space provision to be considered with change of use applications, which would not otherwise be possible with the PDR in force. The justification for this approach is set out in full in the evidence document attached to the report at Appendix 3.

The report stated that notice of the direction would be served on relevant parties and by local advertisement and site notices. The relevant parties on whom to serve notice included every owner and occupier in the area, but it was considered that, with around 4,000 addresses within the area this was impracticable. The Council would therefore use other means to notify as many owners as possible, including through organisations representing businesses such as the Business Improvement District, Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses. There would be an opportunity for parties to make representations on the direction within a 21-day period following serving the last notice. Representations would be reported back to the Committee which would then consider whether to confirm the direction. Subject to confirmation the direction would come into force on 31 October 2022, unless modified or cancelled by the Secretary of State.

#### Resolved -

- (1) That a non-immediate Article 4 Direction be made covering the area shown in Appendix 2 to remove the following permitted development rights within Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended):
  - Part 3 class MA;
  - Part 3 class M:
  - Part 3 class N;
  - Part 20 class ZA;
  - Part 20 class AA;
  - Part 20 class AB;
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the direction that did not alter its main purpose, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, prior to serving notice of the direction;
- (3) That Committee agree that relevant groups and individuals be notified of the making of the Article 4 direction, including use of representative bodies of businesses rather than individual service on all landowners.

# 36. FLEET REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking scheme and spend approval for the Vehicle Replacement Programme (VRP)

as part of Capital Programme 2021-23. A Climate Impact Assessment was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report noted that the Council owned its fleet and that some vehicles were reaching or were past the end of their reasonable serviceable life and therefore in need of replacement. In order to meet the Council's ambitions to move towards net carbon zero by 2030, a planned approach to vehicle replacements needed to be taken which took into consideration the Government's 'Road to Zero' policy and supporting information, its capital allocation, local service needs, availability of the right fleet replacements and how vehicular fleet reductions could be made. The Council had worked with the Energy Savings Trust to consider the impact of its fleet and viable alternatives, and the findings were set out in the Climate Impact Assessment attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report stated that the VRP aimed to set out a forward plan of replacements with current market cost estimates. This approach would have financial planning benefits and would help with re-tendering of the maintenance contracts and show the journey towards greening the fleet. Multi-year contracting of vehicle acquisitions would also help to reduce administration and lead times of the procurement and generate fleet standardisation. Grouping of similar vehicles on contracts could result in savings in the procurement of vehicles, vehicle parts, repairer contracts and training of operators.

The report explained that it was proposed to access a national framework agreement to procure the vehicles, with outright purchasing considered to be the best option financially. The replacement programme would be separated into individual lots based upon the required vehicle specifications, and each lot individually procured via minicompetition through the most appropriate framework. Vehicles would not be replaced on a like-for-like basis and the programme would assess whether the service needs could be met in a different way, such as a reduction in vehicle size or electric bikes, cargo bikes or through an active transport plan. Some vehicle types that were due for replacement were not yet available as electric options; officers had investigated the options available and where possible delayed some vehicle replacements to enable the market to catch up. Electric powered vehicles were a key element for the Council meeting its carbon commitments but did need to be balanced with a vehicle's ability to undertake the required workload such as the use of auxiliary equipment powered by the vehicle.

# Resolved -

- (1) That scheme and spend approval be given for the vehicle replacement programme, as set out in the report, to be funded from the agreed Fleet capital budget set out in the Capital Programme;
- (2) That the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, and the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services, be authorised to enter into vehicle contracts as required by the vehicle replacement programme, as well as, subject to funding being available within the Fleet capital budget, any additional

vehicle purchase(s) required during the term of the replacement programme.

# 37. PROPOSED CHANGES: LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out proposed amendments to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the 2022/23 financial year to reduce administrative processes for both customers and staff and provide an increased level of support. An Equality Impact Assessment was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and a table of neighbouring local authority scheme characteristics was set out in Appendix 2.

The report summarised the following proposed changes to the scheme:

- To require persons of "Working Age" to make a minimum contribution of between 25% and 30% towards their Council Tax liability; the maximum reduction available to persons of "Working Age" would therefore be between 70% and 75% of their Council Tax liability which was an increase in support from the current 65% maximum;
- To remove the "Working Age" Council Tax Support minimum of £5 per month; removing minimum support levels would avoid claims ending thus reducing the number of re-applications and ensuring customers received the support they were entitled to no matter how small;
- To increase for Persons of Working Age the upper capital limit from £3,000 to £6,000 and remove the restriction to submit a new claim during the remainder of the billing year where capital was subsequently spent; this change would reduce administration as Department of Work and Pensions data currently available only provided capital data where it exceeded £6,000 in line with the Housing Benefit & Universal Credit Regulations;
- To allow Persons of Working Age a maximum of one month backdating provision within the scheme; this change would align with the current Housing Benefit & Universal Credit Regulations;
- To set a standard rate of £10 Non-Dependant Deduction to apply for nondependants who were both engaged and not engaged in remunerative work; in addition to providing a greater level of support this change would reduce administration for both staff and customers.

For each of the proposed changes the report set out the financial impact on the Council and the number of customers that it was estimated would be affected.

The report noted that a statutory consultation period was required for changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. It was proposed to carry out an online consultation on the options for a period of eight weeks, to allow for consideration of feedback and revised modelling ahead of the Council's Tax Base setting.

## Resolved -

That the options to amend the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for implementation from 1 April 2022 be noted and the proposals be agreed for public consultation, in accordance with the timetable set out in the report.

# 38. ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report presenting for approval a draft Accessible Information and Communications Policy. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 Accessible Information and Communications Policy
- Appendix 2 Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix 3 Implementation Plan

The report explained that an Accessible Information and Communications Policy had been developed to provide a clear, consistent, and fair approach to the way that the Council communicated and provided information, particularly considering people who were disabled, who did not speak or read English at all or very well, who had low literacy or were in digital poverty or did not have access to IT.

The report noted that, as part of the development of the Policy, a Customer Needs Analysis and a best practice review had been undertaken which had established that there was a considerable legal framework of best practice in relation to accessible and inclusive information stemming from the Equality Act 2010 and further set out in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and the NHS Accessible Information Standard. A gap analysis of the Council's current practice had identified many areas of best practice already in place including the provision of a comprehensive Interpretation and Translation Service, the involvement of target groups, and the testing of the Council's website by people with a wide range of disabilities and accreditation of the website from the Shaw Trust. However the Council's website was only partially conformant with baseline Level AA tier of the WCAG 2.1, and general staff awareness of what was required and how to meet the Guidelines was low. Use of third-party websites and portals and distribution of third-party communications was common and these were not necessarily compliant with WCAG 2.1 Level AA.

The report explained that the Policy proposed to work towards compliance with WCAG and the NHS Accessible Information Standard across all services for customers with disability, impairment or sensory loss. Best practice would be promoted through improved staff awareness and training on accessibility. The other principles and standards proposed by the Policy included presenting positive images of disabled people and ethnic diversity on the website and publications, involving target audiences through needs analysis and co-production where appropriate to understand what communication methods were effective for them, and creating a designated web page for disabled people to make it easier to access information that was most important and relevant to them. A high-level implementation plan for the Policy was set out at Appendix 3 to the report.

#### Resolved -

That the draft Accessible Information and Communications Policy attached at Appendix 1 be approved.

# 39. 2021/22 OUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE AND MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the projected revenue and capital outturn positions for 2021/22 for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Accounts as at the end of June 2021 (Quarter 1), as well as performance against the measures of success published in the Council's Corporate Plan. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 Financial Monitoring for Quarter 1
- Appendix 2 Corporate Plan Measures for Quarter 1
- Appendix 3 BFFC Covid Funding Request
- Appendix 4 DACHS Covid Funding Requests

The report stated that the forecast General Fund revenue outturn position as at the end of Quarter 1 was an overspend of £3.419m after the use of £3.844m of corporate contingencies. This forecast position included estimated gross revenue pressures of £3.175m arising as a direct result of Covid-19. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was projecting an underspend of £0.333m as at the end of Quarter 1, the General Fund Capital Programme was forecast to underspend by £11.306m in 2021/22, and the HRA Capital Programme was forecast to underspend by £8.456m in 2021/22. £4.297m of 2021/22 savings were currently categorised as non-deliverable (red) with a further £3.543m categorised as at risk of delivery (amber).

The report noted that at its meeting on 12 July 2021 (Minute 23 refers) the Committee had approved that £3.968m of un-ringfenced Covid-19 grant funding be put into an earmarked reserve to meet the ongoing financial impacts of the pandemic. Bids from demand-led services in the Directorate of Adult Care and Health Services (DACHS) and Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) had now been received, amounting to £1.986m, and the Committee was requested to consider their approval. Appendix 3 set out bids from BFfC for four proposals relating to Supporting 0-2s and Parents, Schools Recovery Resources, Adolescent Mental Health, and Children Looked After: Mental Health & Wellbeing. Appendix 4 set out bids from DACHS for five proposals relating to Reduce people waiting for Mental Capacity Assessments to move from Appointee to Court Appointed Deputy, Physiotherapist for community rehabilitation post rapid hospital discharge, Relaunch & expand NHS Health Checks Programme, Continuing Health Care Resource and Commissioning Quality Assurance.

The report also explained that there was a budget virement that required approval from the Committee as it exceeded £0.5m. The purpose of the virement was to align the electricity charges for streetlighting with other Corporate Energy Budgets, in order to make it clearer to review the Corporate Energy expenditure for forecasting/efficiency

monitoring purposes and keep the Energy Budget separate from the Maintenance expenditure.

At the meeting the Chief Executive gave an update on the potential impact on the Council's budget from the wider economic context including the anticipated increase in inflation and pressures in the labour market such as a shortage of drivers. He also summarised the ongoing and possible future impact of COVID such as increased demand for social care and mental health services and the effect of home working on the local economy and therefore business rates collection.

## Resolved -

# (1) That it be noted that:

- a) The forecast General Fund revenue outturn position as at the end of June 2021 was a net overspend of £3.419m after the use of £3.844m of contingencies;
- b) The Housing Revenue Account was forecast to underspend by £0.333m as at the end of June 2021;
- c) The General Fund Capital Programme was forecast to underspend by £11.306m;
- d) The HRA Capital Programme was forecast to underspend by £8.456m;
- e) £4.297m of 2021/22 savings were currently categorised as nondeliverable (red) with a further £3.543m categorised as at risk of delivery (amber);
- f) The performance achieved against the Corporate Plan success measures was as set out in Appendix 2 of the report;
- (2) That the budget virement relating to electricity charges be approved;
- (3) That the bids for Covid-19 funding set out in Appendices 3 and 4 attached to the report be approved.

# 40. 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 item 41 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.

# 41. CIVIL ENFORCEMENT (PARKING) CONTRACT AND PARKING (MOTOR VEHICLE) STRATEGY - UPDATE

Further to Minute 87 of the meeting held on 18 January 20201 the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing an update on the Parking Strategy and Civil Enforcement service. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 Current service
- Appendix 2 Proposed Service
- Appendix 3 The Parking Strategy
- Appendix 4 The Procurement Strategy
- Appendix 5 Procurement timeline

The report noted that work had included a review of the performance of the existing service, including both insourced and outsourced elements, and the finalisation of a new draft Parking Strategy to align with the objectives of the draft Reading Transport Strategy 2036. Approval was sought to adopt a new Civil Enforcement (Parking) procurement strategy, in-source some currently outsourced services and agree to procure a new civil enforcement service provision required to support the service, continue to review longer term partnership options for the future service, carry out a trial of paperless permits to replace the current visitor and resident permit parking scheme, apply for a designated order for Moving Traffic Enforcement, and a revised delegation to make future changes to commercial parking arrangements.

# Resolved -

That the Committee note progress made on the development of a draft Parking Strategy and a new Civil Enforcement (Vehicle Parking) Service Contract and that the following be approved:

- The Procurement Strategy (Appendix 4) setting out how the Council would procure a new Civil Enforcement contract alongside a timeline illustrated in Appendix 5;
- ii) The recommendations set out in Paragraph 6.6 of the report to in-source and let out various services relating to civil enforcement;
- iii) The option for further in-house or jointly delivered services to be considered during the next contract period 2022-2027 and investigated with a future report being presented to an appropriate Committee in 18 months following the delivery of the new contract;
- iv) The trial of a paperless visitor and resident parking permit scheme, subject to the availability of suitable IT and that the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake the necessary legislative and regulatory processes to remove the requirement to

- display a permit within the Traffic Regulation Orders (all comments and objections would be reported to Traffic Management Sub-committee);
- v) The application for a Designation Order for Civil Enforcement of Moving Traffic Contraventions' under Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004;
- vi) That the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services be delegated authority, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport and relevant Ward Councillors for the area affected to make future changes to commercial parking arrangements, both off-street and on-street, in line with the relevant adopted Parking Strategy and the MTFS.

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.00 pm)