

# Investing in Reading's Future



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# Welcome

## from the Leader of Reading Borough Council Cllr Jason Brock

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As Council Leader I have been proud and impressed by how our community has adapted and supported each other through the covid-19 pandemic.

There has been grief, tough challenges and vulnerable members of our collective family who have needed support, as well as our businesses and the wider economy.

The Council has worked hard to support people by delivering millions in funding directly to business and individuals. The voluntary and community sector have worked with our partners to ensure the timely discharge of people from hospital into the right care setting, and have targeted health and wellbeing support to those in need.

At the same time, we have continued to deliver core services to ensure our streets are safe and clean, provide temporary housing for our most vulnerable residents, and introduced innovative ways for communities to access vital library services.

Looking to the future our vision and priorities remain unchanged. We are dedicated to ensuring Reading realises its potential and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success. In other words, we want our town to prosper but for people to have their fair share. At the moment, inequalities in life chances holds too many people back and that holds our town back.

Our ambition is illustrated by our bid to have Reading recognised as a City and our investment in the future.

Our investments in modern leisure facilities, on Reading's biggest ever road resurfacing programme,

on brand new and refurbished train stations and on further energy saving measures as we all work towards our 2030 net zero carbon target, all have a pivotal role to play.

We have ambitious plans for the long-term transformation of Minster Quarter which is a significant area of the town centre and will see new homes, new jobs and growth which will benefit our residents and the local economy.

For those in our community who need our support the most, our commitment to delivering Reading's biggest council house building programme in a generation continues, as does our investment in modern new sheltered housing for older people, fit for purpose school facilities for vulnerable children and innovative new temporary accommodation for the homeless.

We are also continuing our work with the voluntary and community sector by increasing funding to them and working closely with them on their work to support people in the town.

Our Corporate Plan recognises the huge importance of partnership working. That includes businesses and employers which drive our local economy; major institutions such as Reading University and the Royal Berkshire Hospital; Reading's incredible voluntary sector; and of course, our residents. [The 2050 Vision](#) is a result of that work and it's a vision that has influenced this plan and our work renewing the town's infrastructure.

# Our Reading



Reading's population is **160,377**<sup>1</sup>



**5** neighbourhoods are within the 10% most deprived in the country<sup>3</sup>



**Top 10**

for business numbers, private sector jobs, GVA, and qualifications<sup>2</sup>



**3rd** most unequal city<sup>4</sup> in terms of wealth



**77** languages spoken in homes across Reading<sup>5</sup>



Consistently ranked 1st in 'Good Growth for Cities' index<sup>6</sup>



**7** years



**8.3** years

Difference in life expectancy between most and least deprived areas<sup>7</sup>



Covid vaccination rate:<sup>8</sup>  
75% had 1st covid dose  
69% had 2nd covid dose  
65% had booster



**9%** rise in social care referrals since 2015/16<sup>9</sup>



Unemployment down from 6.4% to 4.8%  
Nov 2020 - Nov 2021<sup>10</sup>



**76%**

Footfall increase in Broad Street Mall  
Nov 2020 - Nov 2021<sup>11</sup>



**90%**

of council maintained schools rated good or outstanding...<sup>12</sup>  
... but 4.9% of young people are not in education, employment or training - above the national average<sup>13</sup>



Reading rated one of the cities best placed for post-covid economic recovery<sup>14</sup>

1. ONS 2020 mid year estimate 2. Centre for Cities 2021 City Monitor 3. Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 ONS 4. Centre for Cities, gini co-efficient 2016 5. Census 2021 ONS 6. Demos-PWC Good Growth for Cities Index 2019 7. Institute of Health Equity/PHE 2017-2019 8. Berks West CCG, Dec 2021, caveat re denominator (which may change) 9. Reading Borough Council 10. ONS 11. Reading UK 12. Ofsted 2021 13. DfE 2020/21 14. Irwin Mitchell, Nov 2020

# Residents' survey results

We carried out our annual residents' survey. Here is a summary of the key findings:



In the residents' survey you highlighted several areas that needed improvement:

- Roads, bridges and pavements – we are delivering Reading's biggest ever highways repair scheme investing £9 million into local roads, bridges and pavements.
  - ◇ Over 400 residential roads have been resurfaced as part of year 1 and 2 (2020/21 to 2021/22) in the 3 year programme with a further 100 expected in year 3 (2022/23).
  - ◇ 34 pavements have been reconstructed as part of year 1 and 2 (2020/21 to 2021/22) in the 3 year programme with a further 50 expected to be surfaced in year 3 (2022/23).
  - ◇ An extensive bridge strengthening programme will address the poor condition of up to 12 structures and extend the life of these valuable assets.
- Levels of crime – developing a new community safety plan that is informed by best practice and what our communities have told us.
- Improved public transport – we are building a new station at Green Park and refurbishing Reading West Station as well as investing in cycling improvements.
- Playground equipment – we are investing in parks and open spaces by repairing and installing new play equipment.
- Job prospects – we are working with New Directions College who have supported young people to secure 54 jobs in the town as well as secure 80 Reading Borough Council apprentices.
- Good schools – we are continuing our investment into new school buildings and facilities.
- Affordable housing – we are investing into the delivery of new affordable homes over the next four years.
- Cleaner streets – we are introducing a free bulky waste collection service to you.
- Parking – making more resident parking zones available where you request them.

# Our Vision



*"Our Vision is to help Reading realise its potential and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success."*



*To make this vision happen, this Plan groups the Council's work into three themes:*

- *Healthy Environment*
- *Thriving Communities*
- *Inclusive Economy*



**Within the Council, we are driven by the principles of TEAM Reading:**



## Team

We work as one team with colleagues and partners to deliver great services

# Our Foundations



- Customers first: Our Customer Experience Strategy puts our customers at the heart of service design and delivery, and we seek regular feedback through consultations and our residents' survey.
- Digital transformation: Both internally and externally, we're transforming how we work using the power of digital technology. We're modernising services and harnessing new technology to make it easier for residents to interact with us. We're improving our website, streamlining processes and making more services available online.
- Building self-reliance: We work with others to build the ability of individuals and communities to solve their own problems and withstand the shocks that come their way. We provide support to those who need it – but our first priority is always to help people live independently for as long as possible.
- Getting the best value: We strive for value for money in everything we do, and we are focussed on delivering the Council's three-year Savings and Investment Programme. But the best deal is not always the cheapest – it's the one that protects people, jobs, the environment and the budget. So, we're also evolving our procurement practices to enhance the social value in all we do.
- Collaborating with others: We are stronger in partnership and we collaborate with organisations from major corporations to local groups; with the business sector, charities, education institutions, health and social care, the police, faith groups, and the voluntary sector in Reading and across the Thames Valley to achieve our vision for Reading. We will build on the work done during the pandemic to consolidate partnerships and ensure a better network and stronger funding streams to support the most vulnerable.

## Efficient

We drive efficiency and value for money in everything we do

## Ambitious

We are ambitious in our plans and in what we want to achieve

## Make a difference

We are here to make a difference to the residents, communities and businesses of Reading

# Our Achievements

We are proud of the achievements and investments we have delivered over the past 12 months and will continue to build on these successes:



Reading was added to an international 'A' list of cities taking 'bold climate action' – one of only 11 in the UK and 95 worldwide to achieve this accolade.



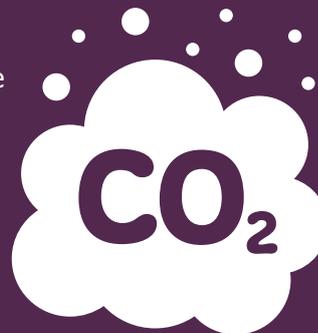
Delivered a development of 40 new modular homes with on-site support for people with a history of rough sleeping.



For the fourth year running no children from homeless families spent Christmas in shared bed & breakfast accommodation.



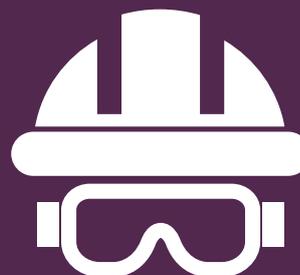
Agreed to invest £80 million for the delivery of new affordable homes to be built over the next four years.



Reduced the council's carbon footprint by 69.8% since 2008/09 and avoided costs of £15 million.



Delivered significant improvement in children's services leading to an end of Government intervention in the service.



Won Homebuilder of the Year (16,000 or under) in the National UK Housing Awards. The Council was recognised by the judges for its ambition, commitment to sustainability and strong team working.



Invested £3.75 million in repairing and improving 40 kilometers of road and pavements.



Started building Rivermead's new 25 metre, eight-lane competition pool with a combined teaching and diving pool. Started building a new six-lane community pool at Palmer Park and improvement works at South Reading Leisure Centre and Meadway Leisure Centre.



Reduced the number of children placed in care homes by 26%.



Helped around 7,700 families and 7,400 residents with food and energy vouchers and isolation support, as well as £52 million of support to businesses through the covid-19 pandemic.



We have achieved this year (2021/22) over £6m in savings so far, which is equivalent to 6.1% of Council Tax.



Provided a frontline response to the covid-19 pandemic by setting up and supporting test and vaccine centres, an enhanced local contact tracing service, and delivering over £1 million in Government support grants to the Voluntary and Community Sector.



Increased recycling rates from 35% to 42% in a single year and then pushed them above 50% - the first time Reading has achieved this.



Supported 33 care homes during the pandemic to deliver services to 400 Reading residents.



New Directions College applied for funding for over 400 jobs across Reading, leading to 54 jobs for residents aged 16-24 on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment.



Supported and advised more than 2,300 Reading residents through the Adult Social Care Advice & Wellbeing Hub.



Provided 800 people with additional support as they were discharged from hospital.



Developed a ten-bed facility to help people move from hospital quickly where we can help them recover and then move home or to a residential home that can meet their long term needs.



Invested over £330k in new play areas at Portman Road, Cintra Park and new outdoor gym and BMX track at Longbarn Lane.



Submitted a bid supported by local organisations and people in Reading for the town to be designated a city.



# Your Services

We are committed to delivering high quality public services that meet the needs of our residents and customers and demonstrate value for money. The themes outlined include major projects that drive the change we want to see in Reading's future, but the services we provide for residents today, and every day, are no less important. We will continue to make services simpler, faster and better, including:

- Delivering Reading's biggest ever road repair scheme, a £9m investment in the quality of local roads, bridges and pavements.
- Maintaining more than 100 parks and open spaces – mowing the grass, tending plants and trees and maintaining equipment.
- Looking after streets and neighbourhoods, from emptying more than 18,800 bins a day to maintaining 18,500 streetlights.
- Continuing to rewild open spaces and park areas to enhance biodiversity and improve our environment.
- Developing our library network to provide innovative local services in person and online.
- Collaborating with partners to create a cultural programme for the whole community celebrating our rich history and heritage including our historic Abbey and shaping the future of Reading's iconic Gaol.
- Providing housing advice and support to prevent homelessness.
- Helping people live independently at home for as long as possible and providing more than 36,000 homecare hours per week.
- Providing services for children and young people through Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC), including children's social care, early help and prevention, an Independent Fostering Agency a Voluntary Adoption Agency, Special Education Needs Service, the Youth Offending service and maintain more than 20 primary schools, as well as working with Early Years Providers and schools to improve the educational prospects of children and young people.
- Delivering high quality education and training for adults through New Directions.
- Administering financial support from Housing Benefit to Council Tax support.
- Responding to 250,000 enquiries a year through our customer fulfilment centre, from Council Tax enquiries to housing repairs.
- Administering important life events with around 8,000 registrations for births, deaths and marriages every year. Supporting 2,200 families to say goodbye to loved ones through our burials and cremation service.



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

# Our Themes

We've listened to what residents, businesses and our partners and stakeholders have said about their experience of Reading, and their hopes and aspirations for the town.

In this year's residents' survey we heard that residents are satisfied with how the Council runs services in Reading, but would like to see more action taken on road and pavement repairs, affordable good quality housing, tackling crime, better parking and cleaner streets. Through consultation on our major change initiatives – such as the Local Transport Plan and the Climate Emergency Strategy – we know we have the support of residents and partners to make the changes we all want to see.

We will make this change happen by focussing on three interconnected themes:





# Healthy Environment

We are working towards a clean, safe town that is easy to travel around, and where people feel the benefits of clean air and active travel like walking and cycling.

A healthy environment has a positive impact on the life of every resident – making Reading a nicer, greener, more attractive place to live, with a tangible impact on physical and mental health and life expectancy. We consider this in our town planning and built environment to ensure residents live close to services to enable active travel rather than reliance on cars.

We are investing in walking, cycling, and public transport; tackling congestion; increasing recycling rates; and improving parks and open spaces.

We are promoting the climate ambitions of our residents and have been making an impact in the global arena.

Our plans shows a roadmap to carbon neutral Reading by 2030, that will protect our residents now and in the future.

## We are:

**Listening to feedback from our residents' survey and transport consultations, and making increased investments in green infrastructure.**

**Making it easy for people to play their part through the choices they make about their home, transport and waste.**

**Committed to playing our part in tackling climate change and working towards our goal of a carbon neutral town by 2030.**

# Key initiatives:

- Reading Borough Council is a founding member and host of the Reading Climate Change Partnership who endorsed our Climate Emergency Strategy which sets out a road map and investment towards a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.
- Our Council Carbon Plan 2020-25 outlines a pathway to an 85% cut in the Council's emissions by 2025, including energy saving in our buildings, a greener vehicle fleet, and renewable energy initiatives.
- In 2021 Reading was named as one of only 11 UK local authorities, and one of just 95 across the world, to make a coveted 'A' list on environmental action for bold leadership and transparency. This accolade demonstrates our long track record of partnership working on climate change. We aim to maintain that status.
- Our priority for the coming years is to continue to reduce our carbon footprint and make our infrastructure and communities greener and more resilient.
- We are increasing our commitment to tree planting in the Borough above our plan goal of 200 trees a year (having achieved 300 for the past two years). A 50% increase to our 2030 Tree Strategy goals.
- Our Local Transport Plan prioritises investments in walking and cycling initiatives, public transport and electric vehicle infrastructure that will make it easier for residents to make healthy choices and feel the benefits of clean, green neighbourhoods. Working with schools, we have already set up some School Streets in communities to ensure children can walk to lessons safely.
- Weekly kerbside food waste collections, better information on recycling, reducing the size of 'residual waste' bins and increased enforcement has already seen an increase in recycling rates and will continue to do so. The introduction of electric vehicles in our recycling fleet will reduce our carbon emissions even further.
- Our health and wellbeing strategy provides more support for mental wellbeing for children, young people and adults. It also aims to reduce the differences in health between different groups of residents and support those who are at high risk of poor health outcomes.
- We will tackle flytipping in the borough by monitoring sites using cameras and taking action against those that flytip. We are also working with our businesses to ensure they are legally disposing of their waste.



# Thriving Communities

It's you, the people of Reading, who make our town an exciting and diverse place to live and work.

After the devastating attacks in Forbury Gardens in June 2020, we saw people unite under #ReadingTogether. Our aspiration is that this spirit of inclusivity and community is carried into every aspect of life in Reading, wherever people live and whatever their stage of life.

In public consultations and in our residents' survey, you have told us what is important, and we are prioritising the issues that matter, like good quality affordable housing, better roads and community safety.

With an increased focus on inclusion, we will focus

on the needs of the most vulnerable and excluded in our communities, ensuring young people, older people and those with long term health conditions or disabilities are supported to live their best lives.

We will ensure that what we do reflects what is needed, we want everyone to feel able to participate and feel they can influence decisions that affect their lives and local areas.

We know that where there is greater connectivity in communities, residents feel safer and are more resilient against risk, harm or emergency. We have seen this in the way communities came together around covid-19. This connectedness also enhances a sense of belonging and wellbeing.

## We are:

**Committed to tackling inequality in our society, to ensure everyone has an equal chance to thrive wherever they live and whatever their economic, social, cultural, ethnic or religious background.**

**Investing in voluntary and community organisations, building relationships and strengthening the capacity and resilience of the sector.**

**Prioritising the needs of the most marginalised groups and the most vulnerable adults and children in our communities.**

**Tackling the effects of the pandemic including employment, training and skills, mental health issues and social isolation.**

# Key initiatives:

- Our Housing Strategy will improve access to good quality housing (council owned or privately rented), creating safe, inclusive communities with easy access to schools, services and green spaces. This includes building 300 new affordable, energy efficient homes over the next four years. This £80m investment in home building will help reduce the housing waiting list and provide affordable rent properties to Reading's residents, including provision for sheltered housing, key workers and those on the housing register.
- A further £2m investment in temporary modular homes is allowing us to rehouse people who had been found sleeping rough, giving them the opportunity to rebuild their lives and receive essential support. We are also committing more than £30m to improve the buildings and facilities used by adult social care services.
- We are redeveloping the Minster Quarter, which sits in the heart of Reading town centre. This will create a major new residential led mixed-use urban and cultural quarter in the heart of Reading.
- We are working in partnership with the Department for Education in building schools and improving conditions to meet the future needs of the population and ensure access to education with over £36 million each year invested into our schools.
- We are working with our partners at Thames Valley Police to produce a new community safety plan with a focus on reducing serious violent crime and improving community engagement.
- The home first approach to our Adult Social Care provision means residents can be supported to manage their conditions and remain at home for as long as possible, including after discharge from hospital.
- We are increasing the range of Technology Enabled Care for residents to enable them to live independently in the community.
- Residents who are under the care of Adult Social Care are able to receive Direct Payment to allow them to commission their own care, which is tailored to their needs.
- The Council is funding its Children's Services provider Brighter Futures for Children to focus on earlier intervention, provide local care placements where possible, excellent teaching and learning and more local school places for children with Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities.
- Our investment in leisure services is modernising facilities and will create accessible, affordable opportunities for residents to improve their physical and mental health.
- Working to ensure that our cultural offerings are diverse to engage all our communities and that our open spaces, including new playgrounds, are inclusive and accessible.
- We will deliver key improvements to our libraries by focusing on supporting our communities, especially children and young people; improving access to online services; supporting improvements in health, wellbeing and literacy and bringing arts, culture and heritage into our libraries.



# Inclusive Economy

We're working towards a town where everyone can access education, skills and training and good jobs and where child poverty is eradicated.

An inclusive economy enhances wellbeing and enables upward mobility, with more opportunities for more people to participate in the growth and success of the town.

We will continue to work with our community and voluntary sector to ensure that we support our communities where they need us most.

The town is also recovering from the impact of covid-19 and this will be a priority for a number of years. As with any crisis, the most vulnerable have been the hardest hit. We don't know how fast the economy will recover, the extent to which people will face long term harm as a result or the impact on Council services.

Our priority is to support the most vulnerable in our communities and to lay the groundwork for a strong economic recovery and that this work continues.

## We are:

**Building on our cultural heritage to enhance our tourist industry, creating an amazing place for people to enjoy.**

**Enhancing education, skills and training opportunities, particularly for our more vulnerable residents.**

**Investing in key infrastructure to keep Reading at the forefront of advances in technology.**

# Key initiatives:

- Working with Reading UK CIC to deliver the 'Powered by People' economic recovery strategy, building back a post-covid economy that is more inclusive, smarter and more sustainable, and tackles local unemployment.
- We have listened to our vibrant Voluntary and Community Sector and are investing an additional £975k over the next three years to help build capacity and resilience in the sector. This is over and above the £1.95m already invested through our Closing the Gap initiative and our small grants scheme.
- Provide more training opportunities and building employment skills through programmes such as our Skills and Employment Youth Hub at The Curious Lounge, run by Brighter Futures for Children, in partnership with JobCentre Plus and others as well as putting additional funding into literacy and numeracy catch up lessons in schools.
- Increasing the number of apprenticeships and work experience placements within the Council and providing a new coaching and mentoring scheme for work experience students.
- Investing in the culture and heritage of our town including helping cultural venues recover after the pandemic, shaping the future of Reading Gaol and enhancing our heritage with High Street Heritage Action Zones.
- Moving Reading closer to being a 'smart city' through programmes such as the ADEPT Live Labs initiative and continued delivery of a £4.75 million grant trial to help futureproof roads and transport.
- Embedding and increasing social value through our purchasing power to ensure that the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Reading benefits through our contracts over and above the goods or services being procured.
- Installing and improving the digital connectivity of our community buildings, with Wi-Fi and new schemes to lend and use IT equipment.
- The Council has signed the Business in the Community's Race at Work Charter, and committed to working with others to promote social inclusion at the Council and across Reading.





## We'll know we're successful when:

- Reading's economy has recovered from the impact of the covid-19 pandemic, is more inclusive, and all local people can access the skills, training and jobs they need.
- Measures of inequality between groups and communities – such as life expectancy and unemployment - are declining.
- Our most vulnerable adults and children have the support they need.
- There is a reduction in the demand for children's services from Early Help and Social Care.
- More people choose to walk, cycle and use public transport because it is easy, safe and convenient and a greener, more attractive alternative.
- Carbon emissions continue to fall, and we hit our climate milestones.
- Relationships between partners in the town – businesses, local institutions, the voluntary sector and the Council – are stronger and more productive.
- Our residents tell us they are more satisfied with Reading as a place to live, and with the services and value for money delivered by the Council.



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Contact Us:

 0118 937 3787 (out-of-hours emergencies: 0118 937 3737)

 <https://www.reading.gov.uk/>