

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 7 MARCH 2022

Present: Councillor Brock (Chair);

Councillors Page (Vice-Chair), Barnett-Ward, Emberson, Ennis, Hoskin, McElroy, McEwan, Mitchell, O'Connell, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, Skeats, Terry and White

78. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

79. QUESTIONS

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

| | <u>Questioner</u> | <u>Subject</u> | <u>Reply</u> |
|----|-------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1. | Cllr McElroy | Smaller Vehicle Needed to Collect Waste from Narrow Roads | Cllr Barnett-Ward |

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

80. ALLOCATION OF THE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY 15% LOCAL CONTRIBUTION

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the proposed allocation of the 15% of collected Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which should be allocated to the local area in which development took place. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2: Summary of assessment for each nominated project
- Appendix 3: Project assessment forms for each nominated project

The report noted that allocations of 15% local CIL totalling £2.896m had already been made towards 43 projects and that progress of these would be reported to a future meeting of Policy Committee. The Council had continued to collect 15% local CIL funds as a result of development taking place; up to 31 March 2021 a total of £3.884m had been collected, with an additional £0.777m collected between 1 April and 31 December 2021. After taking account of the allocations already made this meant that there was a total of £1.765m available for allocation as at 31 December 2021. A consultation had been carried out between February and April 2021 on the priorities for use of these funds and the results had been reported to the Committee on 14 June 2021 (Minute 7 refers), with the highest ranked priority in the consultation being play areas and public open spaces.

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The report explained that it was proposed that infrastructure projects to receive 15% local CIL funds be selected from a list of nominations that had been made by ward councillors, members of the public and council officers. There had been 42 projects nominated in total which were set out in summary in Appendix 2 and in further detail in Appendix 3. Officers had reviewed the projects to provide further information including costing and delivery details wherever possible, and they had also been assessed for compliance with the CIL Regulations and against the five criteria from the CIL Spend Protocol which were: Deliverability, Financial considerations, Accordance with spending priorities outlined in consultation, Relationship with identified strategic priorities and Degree to which projects met infrastructure needs arising from or enabling development. The completed assessment forms were set out in Appendix 3.

The report recommended that, due to the number of projects that had been nominated, all 15% local CIL funds collected up to the end of December 2021 be allocated, as opposed to the funds collected up to the end of the previous financial year as would normally be the case under the CIL Spend Protocol. The proposed allocation of funds would total £1.623m. There were more nominations than could be funded, and the projects that were recommended were set out in the report (see Resolution 1 below). A number of the projects that were not recommended could be considered in the future for funding from 80% strategic CIL, including those that applied to the whole of Reading or to more than two wards, or that would provide a facility that would serve a wider catchment than the immediate neighbourhood.

The report explained that the proposed allocations would direct more than half of funds towards the three wards where the largest amount of development was taking place (Abbey, Whitley and Katesgrove), whilst still ensuring that other parts of the Borough would also receive funds. The recommended projects would also provide infrastructure across a range of different priorities to ensure that there were no delivery issues caused by capacity within specific service areas, whilst focusing on the top priority identified during the consultation with almost £1 million to be allocated towards play areas and open spaces. Information on the steps necessary for delivery of individual projects was set out in Appendix 3: in some cases there was some additional scoping work required, or a need for additional steps such as consultation or a planning application, but for other projects delivery could start almost immediately and the report sought authority for the relevant Assistant Directors to complete necessary procurement processes to deliver the programme of work.

Resolved -

- (1) That the following allocations of 15% local CIL collected up until 31st December 2022 be agreed, with a total allocation of £1.623m:**

**£0.231m for improvements to Victoria Recreation Ground
£0.020m for new street lights in town centre streets lacking
adequate lighting
£0.200m for Northcourt Avenue speed reduction
£0.200m for Waterloo Meadows playground
£0.100m for Robert Hewett Recreation Ground**

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£0.050m for traffic calming measures on Shaw Road and Boston Avenue

£0.003m for Sheeps Lane staggered barriers

£0.020m for Moriston Close playground

£0.200m for 20 is plenty zone on streets around Oxford Road

£0.075m for Palmer Park green gym equipment

£0.015m for Hexham Road Community Centre facelift

£0.033m for Lower Mount green space

£0.013m for improvements to Southcote Linear Park, Brunel Road

£0.008m for new bus shelter for Coronation Square westbound

£0.025m for lighting improvements at Coronation Square

£0.170m for improvements to South Whitley Park

£0.150m for Gateway area pedestrian crossings (Imperial Way and Basingstoke Road)

£0.110m for Lulworth Road communal area improvements

- (2) That the relevant Assistant Director(s) be authorised to complete necessary procurement processes to deliver the programme of work;
- (3) That the relevant officers be authorised to give spend approval in accordance with the funds approved at (1) above, and that the relevant officers in consultation with the Lead Members for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport and Corporate and Consumer Services and the Assistant Director of Finance be authorised to approve any variation to the allocations above;
- (4) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of Policy Committee in respect of proposed funding arrangements for the schemes identified as being eligible for the 80% Strategic CIL.

81. CREMATOR PROCUREMENT PROJECT - DELEGATED AUTHORITY

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking authority to enter a contract for the demolition and removal of two defunct cremators and the supply, installation, and maintenance of two new cremators for Reading Crematorium.

The report noted that between 2012 and March 2020 the Cremator supply and maintenance service had been provided by ATI. The contract had been for 10 years but the cremator equipment had begun to fail repeatedly in late 2019, and in early 2020 ATI had gone into liquidation. One of the cremators had failed completely at this time so independent maintenance contractors had been brought in. Many other local authorities and private sector crematoria had similarly experienced significant failure of their ATI equipment at the same time and concurrently the COVID-19 pandemic had had an impact on mortality rates. In May 2020 the Council had approved the purchase of a temporary cremator to ensure continuity of service and resilience and in October 2020 the second ATI cremator had failed completely. Since then a full cremation service had been provided using only the temporary cremator.

The report explained that in February 2021 discussions with providers had taken place to inform the future procurement strategy and specification of the new cremators. It had become apparent that the replacement of the ATI cremators would require significant work beyond simply decommissioning and replacing the original cremators, mainly because there was uncertainty about the quality and strength of the flooring beneath the cremators following the failure of the ATI equipment and the fact that new cremator designs were much larger than those supplied previously. A feasibility study had been completed and a specification produced for tender. The procurement exercise was for the decommissioning, supply, fit and maintenance of two new cremators and ancillary equipment, with all enabling works to the building to be undertaken under a different contract.

The report also noted that the implementation of two new cremators would result in an overall improvement to the carbon and environmental impacts of the service, as they were significantly more energy efficient and would fully abate emissions of mercury and NOx to the air. In addition to the proposal recommended, a range of other options had been considered, including electric cremators. Whilst these were not currently a viable option for the existing crematorium, they would be kept under review as the technology developed and considered as part of the Council's longer-term plans to meet future demand for burial and cremation.

Resolved -

- (1) That the update on the Cremator Replacement Project and options considered be noted;**
- (2) That spend approval be given for the Cremator Replacement Project;**
- (3) That the Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to enter a contract following completion of the procurement process, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, the Assistant Director for Procurement and the Director of Finance.**

82. BERKSHIRE SENSORY CONSORTIUM SERVICES CONTRACT

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report seeking approval to enter into the Berkshire Sensory Consortium Services Joint Agreement Contract for the planning and commissioning of services to support children and young people with a SEND diagnosis at a regional level as required under the Children & Families Act 2014.

The report explained that the Council had historically provided this service through a jointly commissioned contract delivered by the Berkshire Sensory Services Consortium. The requirement for regional commissioning meant the local authority must be party to the subsequent contract, so whilst Brighter Futures for Children could manage the services on the Council's behalf, the Council itself had to sign the contract and it could

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not be novated to Brighter Futures for Children as has been the case for the majority of contracts for Children's Services.

The report sought approval to enter into the Berkshire Sensory Consortium Services Joint Agreement Contract for an initial term of three years, from 2021 to 2024, and to authorise the Assistant Director of Procurement & Contracts in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Education to agree any subsequent extensions taking the contract up to five years in total. The report also requested authority to create a Shared Services Working Agreement between all Berkshire Unitary Authorities to regularise the current informal shared service arrangement.

Resolved -

- (1) That the award and completion of the Berkshire Sensory Services Consortium Joint Agreement and contract for 2021 to 2024 be agreed, and that the Assistant Director of Procurement & Contracts, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Education, be authorised to activate extensions to 2026;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Procurement & Contracts, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services, the Lead Councillor for Education and the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services, be authorised to create a Shared Services Working Agreement between all Berkshire Unitary Authorities to regularise the current informal Berkshire Sensory Consortium shared service arrangement.**

83. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report presenting the Council's Information Management Strategy and Action Plan to deliver better value from data and to ensure that the Council remained compliant with legal requirements for the processing of data. The Information Management Strategy was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and an Action Plan was attached at Appendix 2.

The report noted that across the Council information assets were used to achieve various objectives such as delivering services, formulating policy, managing projects or managing staff. Without an overarching Information Management Strategy, information systems were often not connected and possibly with duplications of data as they had evolved to respond to specific needs without being considered together as an asset. In addition, many services were now delivered in partnership or were commissioned from third parties; this required additional safeguards to ensure that information ownership was clear, the right people had appropriate access to the right information, and that it was handled correctly throughout its lifecycle. The Council was increasingly becoming an organisation driven by data insights and the Information Management Strategy would support the Connected Reading Digital Transformation Strategy and the Customer Experience Strategy.

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The proposed Information Management Strategy, attached to the report at Appendix 1, set out the Council's approach to improving the way information was created, used, managed, shared and protected to achieve the Council's objectives and effective partnership working. The report summarised the benefits to residents, staff and the Council of managing information and data well. The associated Action Plan was attached to the report at Appendix 2 and it was intended that quarterly progress reports on delivery would be submitted to the Audit and Governance Committee. The measures suggested as the basis for reporting to Audit and Governance Committee were highlighted in the Action Plan appendix. An annual report would also be provided to Policy Committee on any changes required to the Strategy and progress against the action plan.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Information Management Strategy and Action Plan be endorsed;**
- (2) That updates on the progress of the Action Plan be presented to Audit and Governance Committee on a quarterly basis.**

84. QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE AND BUDGET MONITORING

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 December 2021 (Quarter 3), 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 3
- Appendix 2 - Corporate Plan Measures for Quarter 3
- Appendix 3 - Corporate Plan Measures for Quarter 3 (Charts)
- Appendix 4 - Corporate Plan Projects for Quarter 3

The report explained that the forecast General Fund revenue outturn position as at the end of Quarter 3 was an overspend on service expenditure of £7.996m. This included net overspends of £3.148m within the Directorate of Adult Care and Health Services and £4.478m within the Directorate of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, which included £4.223m of costs that were attributable to Covid-19. It had previously been agreed that the overspend on services be funded through a combination of Covid-19 support grant that was available for 2021/22 and £3.844m of corporate contingencies. The use of this combination of contingencies and one-off resources meant that an underspend of £0.274m was now projected for 2021/22 but such an approach was not sustainable in the medium to longer term and had been addressed as part of 2022/23 budget setting.

The report also stated that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was projecting an underspend of £2.310m as at the end of Quarter 3, the General Fund Capital Programme was forecast to underspend by £45.457m in 2021/22 and the HRA Capital Programme was forecast to underspend by £16.203m in 2021/22. £6.096m (30%) of savings had been delivered to date in the financial year, with a further £4.952m (25%) of savings on track

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to be delivered by March 2022. £5.638m (28%) of savings were currently categorised as non-deliverable with a further £3.522m (17%) categorised as at risk of delivery.

Resolved -

That it be noted that:

- a) The forecast General Fund revenue outturn position as at the end of Quarter 3 was an underspend of £0.274m;
- b) The Housing Revenue Account was forecast to underspend by £2.310m as at the end of December 2021;
- c) The General Fund Capital Programme was forecast to underspend by £45.457m;
- d) The HRA Capital Programme was forecast to underspend by £16.203m;
- e) £6.096m of 2021/22 savings had been delivered with a further £4.952m of savings on track to be delivered by March 2022. £5.638m of savings were currently categorised as non-deliverable with a further £3.522m categorised as at risk of delivery;
- f) The performance achieved against the Corporate Plan success measures was as set out in Appendices 2, 3 & 4.

85. BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN 2022/2023 BUSINESS PLAN

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report to the Committee, in its capacity as sole member of Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC), setting out for approval BFfC's 2022/23 Business Plan and contract sum, as required by the company's Articles of Association. The Business Plan was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The covering report set out the key points of the Business Plan which was based around the vision of protecting and enhancing the lives of the children of Reading, helping families find long-term solutions to ensure children led happy, healthy and successful lives. Post pandemic, BFfC's focus was returning to prevention with four underpinning priorities: to work together and across local partnerships to manage the demand for services, maximise the impact and outcomes for children and families and use collective resources wisely; to deliver effective early help services which prevented the need for later, statutory involvement while contributing to increased resilience across the partnership to intervene at the earliest opportunity; to deliver a sustainable Children Social Care service through practice rooted in relational and 'earliest' statutory engagement with families; and to use its expertise to influence and support education settings to offer high quality teaching and learning for all within nurturing and accessible environments, including a relentless focus on those who required bespoke or specialised support.

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In agreeing the Business Plan the Committee was asked to note that the Council had made provision for a contract sum of £48.251m which was an increase of approximately £815k from the 2021/22 contract sum and included £6.716m for leases and services provided by the Council via Service Level Agreements. In addition to the contract sum, Policy Committee had agreed at its meeting on 23 September 2021 (Minute 39 refers) to provide a total of £1.693m over three years to enable vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people to 'catch up' and achieve long term positive outcomes post-covid. BFfC would provide monitoring of this additional funding with the quarterly budget monitoring reports that were submitted to the Committee.

The report explained that the Council had made provision of £1.5m for BFfC transformation funding within its MTFS Delivery Fund for 2021/22, and that for 2022/23 BFfC had submitted business cases totalling £1.26m for Delivery Funding. These were still subject to review and the report noted that transformation funding was separately provisioned within the Council budget, with agreement of additional funds having no impact on the overall Council budget as agreed by full Council on 23 February 2022.

Resolved -

That the Committee, in its capacity as sole member for BFfC:

- a) Note and agree the increase in the proposed contract sum for 2022/23 to £48.251m which included growth of £1.13m from the provisional contract sum included in the MTFP for FY21/22, for the reasons set out in the report;
- b) Note the Delivery Fund bids as set out in the report, which were in addition to the contract sum;
- c) Agree the Company's Business Plan as set out at Appendix 1 of the report;
- d) Note the arrangements for monitoring delivery of outcomes from the additional funding provided to BFfC by the Committee on 23 September 2021 as outlined in the report.

86. BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN LIMITED - RESERVED MATTERS

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report to the Committee, in its capacity as the sole member of Brighter Futures for Children Ltd (BFfC), setting out the outcome of the selection process for a new Executive Director of Finance and Resources for BFfC and seeking agreement to the proposed appointment.

The report explained that the Executive Director recruitment had focused on employing someone with significant finance experience and who was a qualified accountant. Following the interview process the BFfC Board had recommended that Kit Lam be appointed as the Executive Director for Finance and Resources.

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Resolved -

That the recommended appointment of Kit Lam as a new Executive Director of Finance and Resources for BFfC be agreed.

87. 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 88 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.

88. READING TRANSPORT LIMITED - SHAREHOLDER UPDATE

The Chair and Chief Executive of Reading Transport Limited (RTL) attended the meeting to brief the Committee, in its role as shareholder of RTL, on current issues including government grant funding and Bus Service Improvement Plans.

Resolved -

That the position be noted.

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.42 pm)