

**HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
9 NOVEMBER 2022**

Present: Councillor Hacker (Chair);
Councillors Ayub, Cresswell, Cross, G Dennis, Emberson, Lanzoni,
McCann, Mpofu-Coles, O'Connell, Rowland, Singh and Woodward.

Apologies: Councillor Kitchingham, Kretchmer and McGonigle

15. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of 29 June 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

16. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meeting were submitted:

Community Safety Partnership - 14 July 2022 and 15 September 2022.

Resolved - That the Minutes be received.

17. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
Cllr Singh	Public Litter Bins	Cllr Rowland
Cllr McCann	Making Our Narrow Pavements Useable	Cllr Rowland

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

18. ANNUAL UPDATE ON THE OPERATION OF LEISURE FACILITIES BY GREENWICH LEISURE LTD AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE SPORT ENGLAND GRANT

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing an update on the ongoing delivery of leisure services and development of new facilities by Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) and on progress in securing a £1.5m grant from Sport England's Strategic Facilities Fund.

The report explained that the new leisure contract had started on 1 July 2021 with GLL taking over the operational management of the Council's sports and Leisure Centres. Refurbishment works had been undertaken at the Meadway Sports Centre and South Reading Leisure Centre. A new centre was being built at Rivermead Leisure Centre, and provision of a new pool and refurbishment of the existing facilities at Palmer Park Sports Stadium was underway.

Stephanie Smith and Craig Woodward of GLL gave a presentation on progress that had been made since they had started operations in July 2021 including :

- Usage levels;
- Programmes being run/facilities available;

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- Customer feedback;
- Targeted activities;
- Improvements that had been made at South Reading and Meadway Leisure Centres;
- New Build programme update.

The report further stated that, the Council had been successful in its bid to Sport England for further £1.5million from its Strategic Facilities Fund to support the new leisure developments at both Rivermead and Palmer Park.

Resolved -

- (1) That GLL be thanked for their presentation in respect of the progress of the leisure contract;**
- (2) That the progress made in respect of the Council's bid to Sport England's Strategic Facilities Fund for a £1.5m funding contribution towards the construction costs of the new leisure facilities at Rivermead and Palmer Park be noted.**

19. WINTER SERVICE PLAN 2022-23

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Committee of the outputs that had been delivered by the Winter Service Plan 2021-22, of the Winter Service Plan review that had been carried out to ensure compliance with the Highway Act 1980 and 'Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice' and sought approval for the Winter Service Plan 2022-2023. A copy of the Winter Service Plan 2022-2023 was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and a Financial Implications Report was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The report stated that the 2020/2021 winter season had been relatively mild overall although interspersed with colder spells. However, there had been numerous occasions when the temperature had reached the trigger point for precautionary salting action, this had resulted in 54 primary runs and no secondary runs. The cold spells were not severe or prolonged enough for activation of the Snow Plan. There had been no issues with salt supply and delivery which had enabled the contractor to maintain stock levels throughout the winter season and there had been not issues with the contractor replenishing the grit bins as and when had been required. The winter decision making process to determine when to salt had worked well during the previous winter season and the Vaisala weather stations had provided the correct data for informed decisions to be made. The joint arrangement/agreement with Wokingham Borough Council, through their consultants, Volker Highways, for providing the decision-making service had worked well and had delivered against the set key performance indicators during the 2021-2022 winter season. The Winter Service Plan for 2021-2022 had provided a robust service for the duration of the winter period with no disruption to the primary and secondary road network during the season.

A review of the Winter Service Plan 2021-2022 had been carried out and the main points, including updates for the Winter Service Plan 2022-2023 were summarised in the report. A review of the proposed Active Travel Plan schemes had shown that they

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were primarily situated on the existing primary/secondary precautionary salting routes and any future Active Travel Plan schemes brought forward would be evaluated to determine whether they should be added to the precautionary salting route.

Resolved -

- (1) That outputs delivered by the Winter Service Plan 2021-2022 be noted;**
- (2) That the outcome of the review carried out on the Winter Service Plan to ensure compliance with the Highways Act 1980 and the 'Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice' be noted;**
- (3) That the Winter Service Plan 2022-2023 be approved.**

20. LOCAL AUTHORITY NEW BUILD PROGRAMME PHASE 4 - SPEND APPROVAL

Further to Minute 6 of the meeting held on 6 July 2021 the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which gave an update on Phase 4 of the Local Authority New Build (LANB) and Acquisitions Programme and sought spend approval of £29.8m to continue the delivery of this phase.

The report explained that, to date, the new build and acquisitions scheme had delivered 234 new homes to the Council's housing stock, of which 43 were purchases of properties. Approvals were in place to build a further 211 new homes which were due for completion within the next three years. The report also set out the current shortlist for Phase 4 which would total 87 properties and explained that the final appraisal and funding bid could not be completed until detailed designs had been developed and planning approval obtained. The report also proposed that a small programme of property acquisitions, often from within the existing Council-owned (HRA) flatted blocks, would continue.

The reported stated that there was a possibility that not all of the sites on the shortlist would be developed at this time and a financial appraisal of each development would be completed to ensure that it was cost-neutral or provided a positive return to the Housing Revenue Account.

Resolved -

- (1) That the spend of £29.6m to continue the delivery of Phase 4 of Local Authority New Build and Acquisitions Programme be approved;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, the Leader of the Council, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Service and the Director of Finance, be authorised to agree the specific funding arrangements for each of the sites referred to within the spend approval and restrictions set out in the report.**

21. SUSTAINABLE WARMTH FUNDING

Further to Minute 33 of the meeting held on 10 March 2022, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out the

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Council's approach to working with partners to use Sustainable Warmth funding for the installation of energy saving measures in low-income homes in the Reading area.

The report explained that the Sustainable Warmth competition had been launched in June 2021 to bring together two fuel poverty schemes, Local Authority Delivery Phase 3 (LAD 3) and Home Upgrade Grant Phase 1 (HUG) into a single funding opportunity for Local Authorities (LAs). Reading Borough Council had applied for Sustainable Warmth funding as part of a consortium bid to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The consortium was made up of over 66 Local Authorities generally located in South East England. The consortium had been successful in their bid and was awarded approximately £84m for LAD 3 funding and £34m for HUG funding. Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) had been designated the Lead Authority for the bid and, as the Accountable Body for the delivery of Sustainable Warmth implementation measures, would provide grant funding, project management and support to Reading residents.

The report added that, as a result, low-income households in Reading living within the private sector would be able to access up to £1.7m (LAD £1.16m and HUG £0.54m), to tackle fuel poverty by improving the energy efficiency of their homes and set out the BEIS eligibility requirements for this funding. CPCA had engaged Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH) to manage the scheme, and they had assigned City Energy as the provider to carry out the retrofit works for Reading. The report also explained that the Council would be working with landlords as they would be responsible for a contribution towards the cost of the upgrade work on their properties and officers had already started a programme of engagement with them.

Resolved - That the approach the Council was taking to work with partners to utilise the Sustainable Warmth funding of £1.7m provided by BEIS through the Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENHZ) for the installation of energy saving measures in low income homes in the Reading area be endorsed.

22. READING FESTIVAL UPDATE

Further to Minute 30 of the meeting held on 10 March 2022, James Crosbie, Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services, introduced Melvin Benn, Victoria Chapman, Charlotte Oliver and Noel Painting of Festival Republic who gave a presentation on the 2022 Reading Festival. The presentation particularly focused on the issues of safeguarding, welfare and sustainability:

- Festival Republic had continued to concentrate on providing a safe and secure festival, working with partners and local schools to look at effective messaging;
- A help map had been made available showing the locations of help hubs, medics etc across the festival site;
- The site had operated the Ask for Angela scheme for women and girls who felt vulnerable, threatened or unsafe, and regular tests had been carried out to ensure that all festival personnel were aware and able to help;
- The timings had been amended to allow early bird arrivals;
- Pre-event communications had included low carbon travel, a tent-buying guide and other sustainability measures that could be taken by festival-goers, all of

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which had been underpinned by the Take It Home message and 35% fewer tents had been left behind this year;

- Food and beverage vendors had used a traffic light system to highlight dishes that had a lower carbon footprint;
- Artists had supported and promoted sustainability during their sets;
- Peer to peer engagement had worked well to normalise sustainability among festival-goers and the free eco-campsite area had been particularly successful and popular with those who had camped there;
- The number of unlicensed and unregulated water taxis operating during the Festival, had been reduced significantly;
- Those festival goers who had been removed from the site had been treated sensitively and efforts had been made to ensure that they got home safely.

The Committee discussed the presentation and took the opportunity to ask further questions of Festival Republic regarding the safety of unaccompanied 16 and 17 year-old festival goers, the difficulty of controlling non-eco friendly items brought into the site by festival goers and the introduction of a Challenge 25 policy from 2023. Festival Republic stated that they would send further details of recycling rates to officers once all the data had been analysed.

Resolved - That Festival Republic be thanked for an interesting and informative presentation.

23. EXCLUSION OF 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 2 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.

24. READING FESTIVAL UPDATE

Further to Minute 22 above Festival republic updated the Committee further on the 2022 Festival and plans for the Festival in 2023.

Resolved: That the position be noted.

(Exempt information under paragraph 3)

(The meeting opened at 6.30pm and closed at 9.28pm).