

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 31 JANUARY 2023

Present: Councillor Eden (Mayor);

Councillors Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Carnell, Challenger, Cresswell, Cross, Davies, C Dennis, G Dennis, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gavin, Gittings, Griffith, Hacker, Hornsby-Smith, Hoskin, Keane, Kitchingham, Kretchmer, Khan, Lanzoni, Leng, Lovelock, McCann, McEwan, McGonigle (via Microsoft Teams), Mitchell, Moore, Mpofu-Coles, O'Connell, Page, Robinson, Rowland, Singh, Sultan, Terry, Thompson, White, Williams, Woodward and Yeo;

Apologies: Councillor Keeping.

23. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced there would be a concert, on Friday 17 February 2023, starting at 7.30pm in the Town Hall, to showcase Ukrainian culture and raise funds for the Reading Ukrainian Community Centre who were supporting Ukrainians caught up in the conflict, through the Mayor of Reading's local appeal <http://www.reading.gov.uk/mayorsappeal>.

24. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

25. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER NO 10

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Cllr Keane	Period Products availability in Public Buildings and Toilets	Cllr McEwan
2.	Cllr Williams	Council Response to Knife Crime	Cllr Rowland
3.	Cllr McElroy	Estate Agent Signs	Cllr Leng
4.	Cllr Singh	Accessibility in the Town Centre	Cllr Rowland

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

26. APPROVAL OF THE LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME AND THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2023/24

The Director of Finance submitted a report regarding the Council Tax support scheme, estimated Council Tax collection rate and Council Tax base for the 2023/24 financial year. The report explained that Section 33 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 required the Council, as the Billing Authority, to calculate a Council Tax Base for its area by 31 January each year.

The report explained that ordinarily, the declared surplus/deficit was paid out/recoverable by the Collection Fund in full in the following financial year.

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However, Government had introduced new legislation that required any 2020/21 in-year deficit to be spread equally across the three financial years 2021/22 - 2023/24, to help ease the financial impact of Covid-19 on Local Authorities. Any residual brought forward balance from 2021/22 or any in-year balance from 2022/23 would not be eligible for phasing and must be accounted for in full in 2023/24. As 2023/24 would be the third and final year of recovering the 2020/21 deficit balance, the total net balance must be paid out/recovered in full in 2023/24. The estimated balance as at 31 March 2023 on the Council Tax Collection Fund was a projected surplus of £2.023m, after taking into account the final year of the three-year phasing of the 2020/21 deficit balance. The Council's overall share of this net surplus was £1.723m.

Each year, the Government amended the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 to ensure that pension-age Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) schemes were updated in line with changes in the wider benefits system. The annual update also provided an opportunity to ensure that the residency requirements for accessing both pension-age and working-age LCTS remain consistent with the UK's immigration policy. These updates would be incorporated into the Council's 2023/24 Scheme in accordance with the principles of the Council's original Local Scheme.

The report also stated that the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and Local Government Finance Act 2012 had replaced the Council Tax Benefit scheme with a locally determined Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which was effectively a type of Council Tax discount. The legislation required the Council to approve the scheme by the end of January preceding the start of the financial year. The recommended Scheme for 2023/24 was based on the Scheme agreed by Council for 2022/23.

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

Resolved -

- (1) That the existing Council Tax Local Reduction Scheme be retained for 2023/24;
- (2) That the Tax Base calculation for 2023/24 of 57,826.56 band D equivalent properties be approved;
- (3) That the assumed Council Tax collection rate of 98.5% for 2023/24 be noted;
- (4) That the 2023/24 Council Tax Reduction Scheme would be updated in line with the Scheme's regulations be noted;
- (5) That it be noted that the estimated balance of the Council Tax Collection Fund as at 31st March 2022 was an overall surplus of £2.023m, after taking into account the final year of the three-year phasing of the 2020/21 deficit balance, the Council's overall share of this net surplus was £1.723m.

27. ADOPTION OF THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN BERKSHIRE JOINT MINERALS AND WASTE PLAN

The Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval to adopt the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and

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Waste Plan (CEBJMWP), which had been prepared by the Council with Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to cover proposals for minerals and waste in the plan area. The report recommended the adoption of the CEBJMWP, to replace the saved policies from the Waste Local Plan and the Replacement Minerals Local Plan. The final Inspector's Report had been received on 20 October 2022 and concluded that, subject to the Main Modifications set out in the draft report, the CEBJMWP was sound and legally compliant and fulfilled the duty to co-operate. Once adopted the CEBJMWP would constitute part of the development plan for Reading, alongside the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan. The CEBJMWP would therefore be the first matter to consider in determining planning applications relating to minerals or waste development. The Plan had already been adopted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead on 22 November 2022, Bracknell Forest Council on 11 January 2023 and Wokingham Borough Council on 26 January 2023 respectively. The report had appended: the Equality Impact Assessment scoping; Report on the Examination of the CEBJMWP; the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (Adoption version); Policies Map (Adoption version); and the Climate Assessment Tool.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Leng and seconded by Councillor Hornsby-Smith and CARRIED:

Resolved -

- (1) That the Report of the Inspector who conducted the Examination into the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (Appendix 2); and that the Inspector had found the Plan, as amended by the Main Modifications, to be sound, legally compliant and that it fulfilled the duty to co-operate, be noted;
- (2) That the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan, incorporating the main modifications (Appendix 3), and the associated Policies Map (Appendix 4) be adopted.

28. COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2023/24 - 2026/27

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report setting out the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, following its meeting on 23 November 2022, in relation to the scheme of Councillors' Allowances for the next four financial years 2023/24 - 2026/27. The Panel's recommendations were set out in Appendix A to the report and had been reflected in the updated allowances scheme at Appendix B to the report. The Panel would continue to review the scheme each year of the four-year term.

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

Resolved -

- (1) That the Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2023/24 - 2026/27, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be adopted;
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services be authorised to administer the Councillors' Allowances scheme in accordance with the provision in the base budget for 2023/24.

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29. ANTI-SOCIAL DRIVING AND ROAD SAFETY

Pursuant to Notice, a motion was moved by Councillor Singh and seconded by Councillor Carnell.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Page and seconded by Councillor Rowland and CARRIED:

‘Delete all after “Council” in the first line of the first paragraph and insert:

“Recognises widespread concerns in Reading about speeding drivers and the lack of any regular visible enforcement by Thames Valley Police (TVP), and welcomes the fact that concerns were raised by councillors and members of the public via questions at last week’s Policy Committee which met with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Chief Constable (CC) and the Reading Local Policing Area Commander.

Deplores the punitive Government cuts since 2010 which have reduced the resources available to the police and resulted, therefore, in a much lower priority being accorded by them to speed enforcement.

Reiterates our formal RBC policy that calls for the transfer of Police speed enforcement powers to the Council, urges the CC and PCC to support this request, and instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary in similar terms.

Regrets the fact the Government and Department for Transport are failing to provide essential clarity, guidance and legislation to regulate the sale and use of e-scooters by continually extending the so-called ‘trials’. Meanwhile the proliferation of unregulated, illegal e-scooters on the public highway continues to generate complaints and concerns from pedestrians and other road users. This Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Transport regretting the continued delay in bringing forward much-needed legislation to enable the safer use of e-scooters on our pavements and roads.

Recognises that references in RBC committee reports or our website to any specific localised road traffic incidents (even if the data is anonymised) could often be traced very easily back through media reports and is therefore sensitive and identifiable information that would be in breach of data protection regulations.

Notes that a considerable amount of road safety data about Reading is freely and publicly available on:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/reported-road-accidents-vehicles-and-casualties-tables-for-great-britain#geographical-breakdowns-ras04>

Repeats its long-standing support for local road safety initiatives particularly focussing on road safety education in primary and secondary schools in the Borough.”

The amended substantive motion was then put to the vote and CARRIED as follows:

Resolved -

This Council recognises widespread concerns in Reading about speeding drivers and the lack of any regular visible enforcement by Thames Valley Police (TVP), and welcomes the fact that concerns were raised by councillors and members of the public via questions at last week’s Policy Committee which met with the

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Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Chief Constable (CC) and the Reading Local Policing Area Commander.

Deplores the punitive Government cuts since 2010 which have reduced the resources available to the police and resulted, therefore, in a much lower priority being accorded by them to speed enforcement.

Reiterates our formal RBC policy that calls for the transfer of Police speed enforcement powers to the Council, urges the CC and PCC to support this request, and instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary in similar terms.

Regrets the fact the Government and Department for Transport are failing to provide essential clarity, guidance and legislation to regulate the sale and use of e-scooters by continually extending the so-called 'trials'. Meanwhile the proliferation of unregulated, illegal e-scooters on the public highway continues to generate complaints and concerns from pedestrians and other road users. This Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Transport regretting the continued delay in bringing forward much-needed legislation to enable the safer use of e-scooters on our pavements and roads.

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Repeats its long-standing support for local road safety initiatives particularly focussing on road safety education in primary and secondary schools in the Borough.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 8.15pm).