

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2023

Present: Councillor Brock (Chair);

Councillors Barnett-Ward, Emberson, Ennis, Hoskin, Leng, McElroy, McEwan, Mitchell, Robinson, Rowland, Terry, Thompson and White

Apologies: Councillors Page

RESOLVED ITEMS

59. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

60. PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS

A petition on 'Tackling Wokingham Road rubbish' was presented by Sarah Magon.

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

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Ann Dally	Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health	Cllr McEwan

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr Thompson	Occupational Therapy for Children	Cllr Hoskin

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

61. ADULT SOCIAL CARE ASSETS - RESPITE PROVISION

The Acting Executive Director for Adult Social Care And Health and the Executive Director For Economic Growth And Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on a proposal for the development of a facility at Amethyst Lane to deliver a respite service to support carers and vulnerable people who had complex needs. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 - 18 January 2021 Policy Committee report - Adult Social Care Asset Review and Capital Strategy
- Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2023

The report noted that it had been agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 18 January 2021 (Minute 81 refers) that a respite facility would be delivered at Hexham Road. The Council had subsequently taken the decision that it was too much of a risk to proceed with the build on Hexham Road, due to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) advising that they were unable to grant registration until the building was completed as per their policy and that the co-location of a respite service with sheltered and general needs housing might not meet their regulatory guidance.

The report explained that alternative proposals to deliver a respite facility had therefore been considered and that it was now proposed to build a Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities respite facility for up to six people at Amethyst Lane. This would offer short term support to people with complex needs and provide their carers with a break from their caring role. In addition, the service would be developed to deliver a more flexible and person-centred service including offering support to young people transitioning to adult services to develop their life skills.

The site at Amethyst Lane had been assessed as meeting the requirements to develop a respite service in terms of space, location and accessibility; it was on a public transport route and local amenities were nearby. The design would respond to the feedback received from CQC on the previously proposed development at Hexham Road and the site would allow the respite facility to be designed as a standalone building and not have multiple uses on one site. The number of rooms had been reduced to six and there would be a designated entrance to the building. Engagement with CQC had commenced to ensure that the building was designed to meet their guidance.

The report noted that the area at Amethyst Lane would also allow development of general needs housing, with the site being split into two and housing and the respite facility being built on adjacent sites. In order to proceed it was proposed that the land required, known as Amethyst Lane, be transferred from the Council's Housing Revenue Account to the General Fund under Section 19 of the Housing Act 1985.

The report also provided an update on the progress of delivering Adult Social Care services, sheltered housing and general needs housing at the sites on Battle Street and Hexham Road, which had also been agreed by the Committee on 18 January 2021.

Resolved -

- (1) That the proposal to use the Amethyst Lane site to deliver a respite facility for Adult Social Care be approved;**
- (2) That the appropriation of the land known as Amethyst Lane from the Housing Revenue Account to the General Fund with effect from 1 April 2023, to enable the delivery of the proposed Respite Service, be approved;**
- (3) That the procurement process to date be noted;**

- (4) That the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Executive Director for Adult Social Care and Health, the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services, the Director of Finance, the Lead Councillor for Housing and the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, be authorised to enter into all necessary works and agreements, including with Gleeds Cost Management and HTA Design, the multi-disciplinary team, and Hampshire County Council for the development of the site at Amethyst Lane, including detailed designs, the securing of planning permission and the procurement of a main building contractor for the construction works;
- (5) That the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Executive Director for Adult Social Care and Health, the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services, the Director of Finance, the Lead Councillor for Housing and the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, be authorised to procure, award and enter into a contract with the main building contractor for the construction works at Amethyst Lane;
- (6) That additional spend approval of capital of £1.8m from the General Fund in addition to the £5,993m already in the capital programme to deliver an adult social care respite facility be approved and allocated.

62. 2022/23 QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE AND MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the projected revenue and capital outturn positions for 2022/23 for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account as at the end of Quarter 3 (December 2022), 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 - Capital Programme for Quarter 3
- Appendix 3 - Debt Write-Offs (exempt information)
- Appendix 4 - Corporate Plan Measures for Quarter 3
- Appendix 5 - Corporate Plan Projects for Quarter 3
- Appendix 6 - Corporate Plan Measures Charts for Quarter 3

The report explained that the forecast General Fund (GF) revenue outturn position at the end of Quarter 3 included a projected adverse net variance on service expenditure of £3.985m. This included net pressures totalling £1.316m within Adult Care and Health Services, relating to care cost pressures; £1.369m within Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, primarily relating to ongoing income shortfalls in Car Parking and Planning as an ongoing impact of Covid-19; £0.871m within Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC), primarily relating to Childrens' Social Care; £0.290m within Resources and £0.139m within Chief Executive Services. Detailed explanations for the variances were set out in the report.

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2023

The report noted that a corporate contingency of £3.627m set for 2022/23 had been released to offset most of the adverse variance on service expenditure. In addition, other Corporate Services budgets were forecast to deliver a positive net variance of £3.665m, including a positive variance of £2.505m against the Capital Financing budget and a positive net variance of £1.160m for other Corporate Budgets. This variance included a pressure of £0.954m relating to the 2022/23 pay award which was more than offset by positive net variances of £2.114m within Other Corporate Budgets due to the release of all unspent contingencies and the forecast reduction in the bad debt provision. Overall, this resulted in a projected overall positive net variance of £3.307m, which was an improvement of £2.040m from Quarter 2. It was recommended that, should the forecast positive variance on the General Fund revenue budget crystallise at the end of the financial year, this balance be transferred into earmarked reserves to support the Capital Programme.

The report also explained that £5.289m (52%) of budgeted savings had been delivered to date in this financial year, with a further £1.745m (17%) of savings on track to be delivered by March 2023. £2.601m (25%) of savings were currently categorised as non-deliverable (and £0.589m (6%) categorised as at risk of delivery. There was therefore a potential impact on the 2023/24 budget should these savings not be deliverable on a recurring basis. These savings had been reviewed as part of the 2023/24 budget setting and 2023/24-2025/26 Medium Term Financial Strategy processes.

The report explained that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was projecting a positive net variance of £2.103m as at the end of Quarter 3, which resulted in a forecast contribution to HRA reserves of £0.051m. The General Fund Capital Programme was forecasting a positive net variance of £1.671m against a proposed revised budget of £74.517m in 2022/23. This variance related to £0.817m of the Delivery Fund that had not yet been allocated to specific proposals as at the end of Quarter 3 and a forecast positive variance of £0.854m on approved Delivery Fund allocations. The HRA Capital Programme was forecasting an adverse variance of £0.098m against a revised budget of £29.987m in 2022/23.

The report sought approval for a number of amendments to the General Fund and HRA Capital Programmes, resulting from additional budgets added to the Programme funded by grants and contributions, reduced budgets due to completed schemes and other carry forward budget adjustments and reprogramming of budgets into future years. Amendments were also proposed to the HRA capital programme. The amended Capital Programme with a revised budget of £74.517m and amended HRA Capital Programme with a revised budget of £29.987m were attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The report explained that formal confirmation of grant funding for the Bus Service Improvement Plan had now been received, and therefore sought spend approval for the total amount of £15.939m across three financial years. The scheme was fully funded by the government grant. Approval was also sought for the write-off of a number of debts which were set out in a confidential appendix to the report.

The report also set out performance against the measures of success published in the Council's Corporate Plan. Of the 27 Corporate Plan Performance Measures monitored

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2023

monthly or quarterly, 70% were currently “green”, 15% “amber” and 15% “red”. 56% had improved since Quarter 2, whilst 30% had gotten worse. Of the 52 Corporate Plan Projects, 56% were currently “green”, 38% “amber” and 6% red”. Those measures that had shown significant change since Quarter 2 were set out in Appendix 6.

Resolved -

- (1) That it be noted that:**
 - a) The forecast General Fund revenue outturn position as at the end of Quarter 3 was a positive net variance of £3.307m;**
 - b) The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was projecting a positive net variance of £2.103m as at the end of Quarter 3, which resulted in a forecast contribution to HRA reserves of £0.051m;**
 - c) £5.289m (52%) of savings had been delivered (blue) to date in this financial year, with a further £1.745m (17%) of savings on track to be delivered (green) by March 2023; £2.601m (25%) of savings were currently categorised as non-deliverable (red) and £0.589m (6%) categorised as at risk of delivery (amber);**
 - d) There was a total £4.065m Delivery Fund available for 2022/23 (inclusive of 2021/22 approved carry forwards); at Quarter 3, £3.248m of this funding had been allocated out to approved schemes;**
 - e) The General Fund Capital Programme was reporting a positive net variance of £1.671m against a proposed revised budget of £74.517m;**
 - f) The HRA Capital Programme was forecasting an adverse variance of £0.098m against a revised budget of £29.987m;**
 - g) The performance achieved against the Corporate Plan success measures was as set out in the report and Appendices 4 and 5;**
- (2) That the intent to transfer the balance of any positive General Fund revenue budget variance at the end of the financial year to earmarked reserves to support the Capital Programme be approved;**
- (3) That the amendments to the General Fund Capital Programme (as set out in further detail in Section 12 of this report and Appendix 2) resulting in a revised budget of £74.517m be approved;**
- (4) That spend approval be given for the Bus Service Improvement Plan scheme;**
- (5) That the amendments to the HRA Capital Programme (as set out in further detail in Section 12 of this report and Appendix 2) resulting in a revised budget of £29.987m be approved;**
- (6) That the write-off of debts be approved as set out in Section 8 and Appendix 3 relating to:**
 - a) Non-Domestic Rates - £111,313.32;**

- b) Housing Benefit Overpayments - £57,120.48;
- c) Sundry Debt - £90,858.25.

63. BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN 2023/2024 BUSINESS PLAN

The Director of Finance submitted a report to the Committee, in its capacity as sole member of Brighter Futures for Children Limited (BFfC), setting out at Appendix 1 the Business Plan submitted by BFfC in response to its obligation to agree an annual Business Plan and contract sum, a matter reserved to the Sole Member.

The report set out the key points arising from the Company's Business Plan including BFfC's strategic objective and four key priorities which were: to work together and across local partnerships to provide the right support and services at the right time to deliver the best possible outcomes for children and their families; to deliver effective early help services to prevent the escalation of need at a later stage while contributing to increased resilience across the partnership to meet children's need at the earliest opportunity; to deliver a sustainable Children's Social Care Service through practice rooted in relationship-based and timely statutory engagement with families; and to influence and support education settings to offer high quality inclusive teaching and learning to support achievement for all, including those who require bespoke, specialised or SEND support. The Plan also set out three enablers to support delivery of the priorities: building a stable workforce of permanent staff, improved quality and ways of working and resources aligned to priorities and delivering value for money.

In agreeing the 2023/24 Business Plan, the Committee were asked to note that the Council had made provision for a contract sum of £51.430m within its Medium-Term Financial Plan, which was an increase of £2.472m from the 2022/23 contract sum and included £6.716m for leases and services provided by RBC via Service Level Agreements. The report set out a breakdown of the increase in the contract sum. The report also explained that a transformation funding bid of £0.257m from the Council's Delivery Fund had been agreed on a one-off basis for 2023/24, for Consultant Practitioners to support Newly Qualified Social Workers and Recruitment and Retention payments for Social Workers. The recruitment and retention payments scheme had been approved by the Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2023 (Minute 50 refers).

Resolved -

- (1) That the increase in the proposed contract sum for 2023/24 to £51.430m, which included growth of £3.679m from the provisional contract sum included in the MTFP for 2022/23, be noted and agreed;
- (2) That the Delivery Fund bid, which was in addition to the contract sum, be noted;
- (3) That the Brighter Futures for Children Business Plan, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be agreed.

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 MARCH 2023

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.24 pm)