

**HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE**  
**9 MARCH 2023**

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

**33. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of 4 January 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

**34. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES**

The Minutes of the following meeting were submitted:

Community Safety Partnership – 10 November 2022.

**Resolved - That the Minutes be received.**

**35. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS**

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

<b><u>Questioner</u></b>	<b><u>Subject</u></b>	<b><u>Reply</u></b>
Jennifer Leach	Reading Festival	Cllr Rowland
Rona Robinson	Allotments	Cllr Rowland
Marg Cobb	Flytipping at Public Bins	Cllr Rowland

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

As Mr Robinson did not attend the meeting to ask his question, a written reply was provided in accordance with Standing Order 11(3).

**36. READING'S CULTURE & HERITAGE STRATEGY STATEMENT OF INTENT 2023-26**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which gave an update on progress to date on the strategic priorities set out in the Culture and Heritage Strategy that ran until 2030 and sought approval of the three-year Culture and Heritage Action Plan for 2023-26. A draft of the Statement of Intent was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the Cultural Sector had expressed a desire for a set of shared cultural aspirations and objectives for Reading. and that a Statement of Intent had been found to be appropriate at this stage. This statement would be a living document, that would evolve with Reading Borough Council's relationship with the sector. The statement was a shared document and would not be the sole responsibility of any one organisation. Reading Borough Council was leading the development of the document and was facilitating, but was not solely responsible for delivery of the statement. The report added that the Statement of Intent did not commit the Council or any partner to spending money to deliver these intentions, and was intended as a direction of travel and set of aims around which the sector could coalesce. The next steps would be for Officers to set up small strategic group to manage and develop the statement of intent. This group would start delivery against year one aspirations and objectives and submit a progress report to the Committee in March 2024.

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The report explained that the Statement of Intent had been inspired by the three strategic priorities of the Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030 and recognised the opportunities that the Levelling Up Funding now presented and the importance of Culture, Creativity and Heritage in the following areas of work:

- Placemaking;
- Physical and Mental Wellbeing;
- Celebrating the diversity of Reading's communities;
- Economic Development;
- Sustainability.

The report also set out examples of successful partnership projects including the High Street Heritage Action Zone Cultural Consortium, Reading Anniversaries Celebrations, Gaia for Reading Climate Festival, Reading Abbey Revealed, the Reading Libraries and Reading Rep partnership and delivering Children and Young People's Mental Wellbeing through Culture.

#### **Resolved:**

- (1) That the progress to date and achievements of Reading Borough Council's culture and heritage partnership projects over the last two years be noted**
- (2) That the shared Statement of Intent and proposed next steps be approved.**

#### **37. READING LIBRARIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME: DISPOSAL OF LIBRARY STOCK**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out a withdrawal policy for library stock. It was necessary for the approach to withdrawal and disposal of stock to be formally agreed as it involved disposal of Council assets. The policy was attached as Appendix 1. To the report

The report explained that Reading Libraries had a bookfund of £110,000 per year, the majority of which was spent on new and replacement printed books. Books were withdrawn based on use, need, quality and condition. This meant that where an item was in poor condition, not being used, or was superseded/superfluous it would be withdrawn to provide space for new books.

The report explained that the majority of items were withdrawn as they were in poor condition, no longer required or not issuing. These items totalled around 8-10,000 per year and as they were often of limited value, were either offered for sale to the public or collected by a book recycler.

The report also noted that following the successful Levelling Up Fund bid to build a new Central Library at the Civic Centre, there was a need to formalise the withdrawal approach as the service prepared to relocate. The process set out in the policy would enable the service to efficiently and effectively assess its withdrawn stock and appropriately dispose of it and give the library service the freedom to look at different ways of maximising return and efficiently and effectively dispose of withdrawn stock.

**Resolved – That the approach for the disposal of library stock and assets as set out in appendix 1 to report be agreed.**

#### **38. READING FESTIVAL UPDATE**

Further to Minute 22 of the meeting held on 9 November 2022, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report updating the Committee on proposals to improve the Festival and providing an overview of the event which was in its planning phase for 2023.

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The report explained that the capacity of the Festival would remain unchanged, as would the main arena layout. Changes for 2023 included replacing Challenge 21 with Challenge 25 to give a margin of safety when trying to prevent the sale of alcohol to under 18s, the introduction of key points within the campsite areas to be used as check points and friendly, approachable sites for information, support and assistance, and an increase in the number of Safeguarding officers as part of the Festival Republic team to ensure a 24-hour response throughout the event. The eco-campsite had proved very popular and would be double the size for the 2023 event. This would be the first event to implement a no campfire policy, with no firewood allowed on site.

The report added that Festival Republic had responded to questions raised by the Committee at the meeting in November 2022. Festival Republic's social media team were keen to explore how all partners social media could be used proactively and positively to reassure or respond to community forums or group pages on social media. This subject was part of this year's planning meeting agendas and would remain so as Festival Republic learnt more about how these platforms could be used positively to support the community. Festival republic were also working with partners and vendors both on-site and nearby to prevent underage sales of vapes and to ensure that the disposable devices were recycled. The provision of a Thames Valley Police boat on the river during the 2022 event had been very useful during the run up and throughout the event had an ongoing impact after the event and this would continue as part of the plan for this year's event.

The report also set out details of emissions from waste, specifically the incineration of non-recyclable material, which are classified as Scope 3 emissions, using DEFRA conversion factors which were used by UK companies as standard to report greenhouse gas emissions. They applied the same factor for recycling and combustion of 21.280 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e / tonne of waste and details are set out in the table below:

STREAM	2022 (t)	2022%	CO <sub>2</sub> e(t)
Landfill	0.00		
Energy From Waste (RDF)	151.75	19.30%	3.23
Energy From Waste (SDF)	103.79	13.20%	2.21
Recycled	436.37	55.50%	9.29
Green Waste (Composted)	94.35	12.00%	0.84
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>786.26</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>15.56</b>

The report explained that total waste reduced from 2021 was 42 tonnes (5.07%) and non-recyclable waste (including tents) was sent to Solid Recovered Fuel (SRF) or Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF). The Material Recovery Facility (MRF) that processed the festival waste reported a 55.05% recycling rate during the period between 22nd August – 16th September (53% in 2021). Festival Republic also included water and wastewater processing as part of the on-site Scope 3 emissions, which gives a total of 74.6 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e compared to the 2021 scope 1, 2 & 3 total of 452 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e. It was estimated that 38% of tents were left behind during 2022 which was a 21% decrease on the previous event.

**Resolved: That the report be noted.**

### **39. HOUSING ANNUAL UPDATE PROGRAMME OF WORKS**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which provided an update on performance and key achievements of the Housing Service over the past financial year and set out the work programme for the Council's housing stock for the next financial year. The following documents were appended to the report:

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Appendix 1 - Works to Housing Stock 23/24 Housing Revenue Account (HRA);  
Appendix 2 – Works to Housing Stock 23/24 General Fund;  
Appendix 3 – Works to Housing Stock by Ward 23/24.

The report stated that over the past year, the achievements of the Service had included:

- Low carbon improvements in a further 18 properties in Kentwood Ward, bringing the total number of improved properties to 43;
- Installation of a further 40 air source heat pumps in Granville Road Southcote with the remaining properties at this location on the 2023-24 work programme;
- Continued support and debt advice to tenants, leading to top quartile rent collection levels of over 99%. The Money Matters webpages had been continually refreshed to offer up to date advice and support;
- No families were placed in shared B&B accommodation;
- Continued delivery of new homes with 15 key worker flats at the old Arthur Hill swimming pool site and 37 homes in North Street due to be handed over in Spring 2023. Planning applications were due to be submitted for two mixed general needs housing and adult social care provision at the old Central Pool site and a site on Hexham Road expected to deliver a further 103 properties;
- Maintaining high tenant satisfaction levels as detailed in the survey results;
- A successful bid to DLUHC for £2.8 million to maintain and increase rough sleeping services;
- The Council had been shortlisted as finalists for the best social housing initiative for the modular pods in the MJ Awards, APSE Awards and LGC Awards.

Further to the introduction of the new Complaints Handling Code (CHC) (see Minute 30 of the meeting held on 4 January 2023), the report set out a breakdown of Housing Service complaints by area and by outcomes. The most common areas for complaint included the quality of the service received, communication, lack of support, policy issues, failure to resolve the issue and the time taken to resolve the issue. The report stated that 59% of the 275 complaints had received a response within the required timescale and explained that new systems to track, manage and embed learning from complaints would be implemented over the next two months, with the aim of improving complaints handling performance.

The report also updated the Committee on the results of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey which had been carried out during Autumn 2022, which found that satisfaction levels were still generally high, there had been an improvement in some areas.

The report explained that Housing Property Services had a responsibility to ensure that the housing stock was well maintained in accordance with the Decent Homes Standard and that Council homes were safe and healthy places to live, including the improvement of the thermal efficiency of its stock in line with the Council's Climate Change ambitions ensuring homes could be heated efficiently and cost effectively, thus reducing their carbon footprint and reducing fuel poverty. The service also worked to improve the wider environment on housing estates to meet the needs and aspirations of both the Council and the tenants.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the performance and key achievements of the Housing Service in the past financial year be noted;**
- (2) That the planned maintenance programme for Council homes for 2023-34 detailed in appendices 1 to 3 of the report be noted;**
- (3) That the Assistant Director of Housing & Communities, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, be authorised to: (a) procure; (b) award and (c) enter into all necessary contracts relating to the individual schemes for**

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**the 2023/24 work programme as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report subject to sufficient funding being available in the approved Budget to meet the cost of the relevant schemes.**

**40. ENVIRONMENT ACT 2021 – WASTE MANAGEMENT**

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report briefing the Committee on aspects of the Environment Act 2021 covering the elements on waste management and the Act's impacts on Reading Borough Council and Reading residents.

The report explained that waste management element of the Environment was intended to promote and deliver: (a) extended producer responsibility, to include the costs for the treatment of packaging, (b) increased recycling, (c) the simplification and increased consistency of waste collection across the UK, (d) the development of a circular economy, and (e) the reduction of litter.

Extended Producer Responsibility meant that producers of packaging would have to pay the full net cost of collection and treatment associated with the packaging placed into circulation, to encourage better overall design of packaging and systems of capture, and to promote resource circularity. Producers would pay modulated fees and the aggregated fees would be used to make payments to local authorities for the costs of managing packaging. Councils would be placed within a performance cohort, wherein their costs and their performance would be benchmarked against a 'best in class' council. The arrangements would be quite different from current operating conditions, and would probably mirror more commercial operating conditions. The timescales were subject to change but local authorities were expecting to be presented with their initial funding allocation during the 2023/24 year.

The deposit return scheme would see a deposit being added to in-scope packaging, at the point of sale. The deposit will be reclaimable via reverse vending machines at retailers and via smaller shops to encourage the return of the packaging. The packing in the scheme would be limited to all polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic drinks bottles and tins/cans (aluminium and steel) for drinks between 50 ml and 3 litres. The level of the deposit would be controlled by the Deposit Management Organisation (DMO) and would be around £0.20 per item and would apparently be applied to all single, in-scope, items and also those sold as part of a multi-pack.

Under Waste Collection Consistency, Councils would be mandated to collect newspapers and magazines, cardboard, glass bottles, plastic bottles, plastic pots/tubs/trays and steel and aluminium cans or tins and a separate food waste collection would also be required. Plastic film, aerosols, cartons and foil would be added to the list of mandated materials, probably in 2027. At present, the re3 councils were well-placed to comply with the requirements of waste collection consistency although glass and plastic film collection and processing would need to be added to current services. It was noted that the Government was also considering two options for garden waste collection: (a) a free scheme for residents or, (b) an assessed reasonable charge, based on estimates put together by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), and pitched at about 50% of current service charges. If Government chose free garden waste collections there would be an estimated budget pressure of c£950k.

The report also set out the potential impacts and opportunities that would arise from the Act, including:

- It was likely that funding allocated to Councils would not meet the costs incurred in meeting the new requirements;
- Councils that were deemed not to be sufficiently Efficient or Effective could receive an Improvement Notice as only one council in each cohort could be 'best in class' and this could lead to reductions in funding if the required improvements were not achieved;
- The introduction of the deposit scheme could have implications for those residents who, through disability or age (or other non-protected characteristics), might find it challenging

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and/or inconvenient to access and utilise a reverse vending terminal and would therefore face increased costs;

- The removal of up to 90% of plastic and metal packaging from recycling collections was likely to prove challenging to many councils who had contractual obligations that related to waste composition, financial value or tonnage. It should be anticipated that contractors may seek contractual relief and/or compensation through Change in Law (CiL) provisions.

Further reports would be submitted to the Committee incorporating proposals for service change to move towards a position of compliance in relation to both waste collection and the shared re3 arrangements.

**Resolved - That the report be noted.**

**41. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2023-24 & 2022-23 HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE UPDATE**

Further to Minute 14 of the meeting held on 29 June 2022, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that provided updates on:

- Year-3 (2022/23) of the 3-year £9M Highway Capital Investment Programme 2020/21 to 2022/23;
- The additional £8M five-year Highway Capital Investment Programme (2022/23 to 2026/27);
- The additional £4M two-year Highway Bridges & Structures Capital Investment Programme (2022/23 to 2023/24);
- Year two of the three-year Department for Transport (DfT) Highway Maintenance Award 2023-24 Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement.

The report also gave an update on the completed Highway Maintenance 2022-23 DfT Local Transport Block Funding Capital Works Programme. The following documents were appended to the report:

- Appendix 1: Programme Delivered: £9M Residential Roads 3- Year Investment Programme Update and the DfT Roads and Bridges Programme (2022-23);
- Appendix 2: Proposed Delivery Programme: £8M 5-year Residential Roads & Pavement Programme (2022/23 to 2026/27);
- Appendix 3: Bridge & Structures five-year Rolling Programme (2023-24 to 2027-28);
- Appendix 4: Financial Implications Report.

Section 4 of the report set out details of the works that included highways maintenance, resurfacing of roads and pavements and works to bridges and other structures, plus the costs associated with these works.

**Resolved:**

- (1) **That the progress of year-3 (2022-23) of the 3-year £9M Highway Capital Investment Programme 2020-21 to 2022-23 be noted;**
- (2) **That the update on the progress of year-1 of the Council's additional £8M 5-year (2022-23 to 2026-27) Highway Capital Investment Programme be noted;**
- (3) **That the update on the progress of year-1 of the Council's additional £4M 2-year (2022-23 to 2023-24) Bridges & Structures Capital Investment Programme be noted;**

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- (4) That the year-2 settlement for the 3-year Department for Transport (DfT) Highway Maintenance Award 2023-24 Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) be noted;**
- (5) That the update on the completed Highway Maintenance 2022/23 DfT Local Transport Block Funding Capital Works Programme be noted.**

(The meeting opened at 6.30pm and closed at 8.47pm).