



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNCIL

MAY 2023

AMENDMENTS:

- Council 17 October 2023 – Amendments to the Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference (Minute 25)
- Council 17 October 2023 – Revised Contract Procedure Rules and Revisions to Articles 10, 12, Standing Order 27, and Part 3 (Officer Delegations) (Minute 27)
- Council 17 October 2023 – Amendments to the Audit & Governance Committee's Terms of Reference & Powers reserved to Council (Minute 28)

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Part 1 - Summary and Explanation

The Council's Constitution

Reading Borough Council has agreed a constitution which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by the law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose.

The Constitution is divided into 16 articles which set out the basic rules governing the Council's business.

More detailed procedures and codes of practice are provided in separate rules and protocols at the end of the document.

What is in the Constitution?

Article 1 of the Constitution confirms that the Council will act within the law and the provisions of the Constitution. Articles 2 – 16 explain the rights of citizens and how the key parts of the Council operate. These are:

- Members of the Council (Article 2).
- Citizens and the Council (Article 3).
- The Council meeting (Article 4).
- Chairing the Council (Article 5).
- The Leadership (Article 6).
- Committees (Article 7)
- Regulatory and other committees (Article 8).
- The Standards Committee (Article 9).
- Consultative Committees and Forums (Article 10).
- Joint arrangements (Article 11).
- Officers (Article 12).
- Decision making (Article 13).
- Finance, contracts and legal matters (Article 14).
- Review and revision of the Constitution (Article 15).
- Suspension, interpretation and publication of the Constitution (Article 16).

How the Council operates

The Council is composed of 48 Councillors representing 16 wards. Each Councillor will normally be elected to serve for four years. The wards are represented by three Councillors, with one third of the Councillors being elected three years in four (the fourth year is a fallow year, with no local elections). Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of their ward. The overriding duty of Councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them.

The Council has a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its Councillors and Co-opted Members. Councillors are asked to follow a Member Code of Conduct to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties. This is in part 5 of the Constitution. The Standards Committee trains and advises them on the code of conduct.

All Councillors meet together as the Council. Meetings of the Council are normally open to the public. Here Councillors decide the Council's overall policies and set the budget each year. The Council, at its Annual Meeting appoints the Leader Lead Councillors and such Committees, Sub-Committees, Panels etc as it considers necessary to carry out the functions of the local authority.

How decisions are made

Reading Borough Council is a democratic organisation with elected members at the heart of the decision-making process. The Constitution describes the decisions that must be made by Councillors as 'key decisions'. These are described in more detail in Part 3 of the Constitution and underpin the central role of councillors in the decision-making process.

The Council operates a committee system form of governance.

The committee system is composed of four standing committees (and two sub-committees) and six regulatory or other committees, as described in Part 3 of the Constitution. Political groups are entitled to nominate members to the Committees (except the Health & Wellbeing Board), in proportion to their representation on the Council. Between them, the Committees have been delegated powers by the Council which cover all of the authority's functions.

The Council's Staff

The Council has staff working for it (called 'officers') to give advice, implement decisions and manage the day-to-day delivery of its services. Some officers have a specific duty to ensure that the Council acts within the law and uses its resources wisely. A code of practice governs the relationships between officers and members of the Council. This is included in Part 5 of the Constitution.

Part 2 - Articles of the Constitution

Article 1 – The Constitution

1.1 Powers of the Council

1.1.1 The Council will exercise all its powers and duties in accordance with the law and this Constitution.

1.2 The Constitution

1.2.1 This Constitution, and all its appendices, is the Constitution of the Reading Borough Council.

1.3 Purpose of the Constitution

1.3.1 The purpose of the Constitution is to assist in the achievement of the Council's key strategic aims by the following:

1. Enable the Council to provide clear leadership to the community in partnership with citizens, businesses and other organisations;
2. Support the active involvement of citizens in the process of local authority decision-making;
3. Help Councillors represent their constituents more effectively;
4. Enable decisions to be taken efficiently and effectively;
5. Create a powerful and effective means of holding decision-makers to public account;
6. Ensure that no one will review or scrutinise a decision in which they were directly involved;
7. Ensure that those responsible for decision making are clearly identifiable to local people and that they explain the reasons for decisions; and
8. Provide a means of improving the delivery of services to the community.

1.3.2 The Council regularly publishes and reviews its Corporate Plan which is available on the Council's website.

1.4 Interpretation and Review of the Constitution

1.4.1 Where the Constitution permits the Council to choose between different courses of action, the Council will always choose that option which it thinks is closest to the purposes stated above.

1.4.2 The Council will monitor and evaluate the operation of the Constitution as set out in Article 15.

Article 2 - Members of The Council

2.1 Composition and Eligibility

(a) Composition

2.1.1 The Council will comprise 48 members, called Councillors. The Borough is divided into 16 wards, and each ward is represented by three Councillors. One Councillor is elected each year by the voters of each of the 16 wards of the authority. This is called election by thirds.

(b) Eligibility

2.1.2 Only registered voters of the Borough or those living or working there will be eligible to hold the office of Councillor.

2.2 Election and Terms of Councillors

2.2.1 The ordinary election of a third of all Councillors will be held on the first Thursday in May each year.

2.2.2 The Councillors are elected for four years.

2.3 Roles and Functions of all Councillors

(a) Key Roles

2.3.1 All Councillors will:

- (i) collectively be the ultimate policymakers, set the Council's budget and Council Tax, and carry out a number of strategic and corporate management functions, through full Council;
- (ii) act as community advocates and leaders by:
 - promoting and representing the Borough and the local communities and bringing their views into the decision-making processes of the Council and partner agencies;
 - being the advocate of and for their ward and local people and communities living within it, including responding to petitions;
 - providing information to, and promoting local democracy, participation and engagement by, sections of the local community
 - working with partners and other agencies to address issues that are beyond the Council's direct control
- (iii) deal with individual casework and act as an advocate for ward residents in resolving particular concerns or grievances;
- (iv) balance different interests identified within the ward and represent the ward as a whole;
- (v) be involved in decision-making as provided by the Constitution, including:
 - agreeing or amending policies, plans and strategies, and taking operational decisions through the Council, Policy Committee and relevant Committees
 - taking regulatory and quasi-judicial decisions on individual planning and licensing applications;
 - decisions affecting personnel matters and senior staff appointments
 - appeals
 - scrutinising operational decisions and their implementation, holding Lead Councillors to account, and providing an overview of policy formulation and development, through the Policy Committee and relevant Committees

- scrutinising the delivery of public services in Reading by partner organisations, and holding their decision-makers to account, through the Policy Committee and relevant Committees
- (vi) be available to serve as the Council's representative on partnership bodies, appointee or nominee on outside bodies, and on school governing bodies;
- (vii) maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics.

2.4 Conduct

- 2.4.1 Councillors will always observe the Members' Code of Conduct, the Planning Code of Conduct, the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations, and the Protocol on Council Publicity and Elections, as set out in Part 5 of this Constitution.

2.5 Allowances

- 2.5.1 Councillors will be entitled to receive allowances in accordance with the Members' Allowances Scheme set out in Part 6 of this Constitution.

Article 3 – Citizens and The Council

3.1 Citizens' Rights

3.1.1 Citizens have the following rights. Their rights to information and to participate are explained in more detail in the Access to Information Rules in Part 4 of this Constitution:

(a) Voting and Petitions.

Citizens on the electoral roll for the area have the right to vote and sign a petition to request a referendum for an elected Mayor form of Constitution or a change of governance arrangements.

(b) Information.

Citizens have the right to:

- (i) attend meetings of the Council and its Committees and Sub-Committees except where confidential or exempt information is likely to be disclosed, and the meeting is therefore held in private;
- (ii) see reports and background papers, and any records of decisions made by the Council, and Committees and Sub-Committees of the Council; and
- (iii) inspect the Council's accounts and make their views known to the external auditor.

(c) Participation.

Citizens have the right to participate in Council, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings, and to contribute to evidence gathering by Committees when undertaking overview and scrutiny exercises, as follows:

- (i) by presenting a petition to the Council or Committees in line with Standing Orders 8 and 36(1)
- (ii) by submitting questions to the Council or Committees in line with Standing Orders 9 and 36(2)
- (iii) by speaking on individual planning applications which affect them at meetings of the Planning Applications Committee, in line with Standing Order 36A
- (iv) by speaking on individual items on the agenda for Committee meetings, for up to five minutes per item at the invitation of the Chair, in line with Standing Order 36B

(d) Complaints.

Citizens have the right to complain to:

- (i) the Council itself under its complaints scheme;
- (ii) the Ombudsman after using the Council's own complaints scheme;
- (iii) the Monitoring Officer of the Council about a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

3.2 Citizens' Responsibilities

3.2.1 Citizens must not be violent, abusive or threatening to Councillors or officers and must not wilfully harm things owned by the Council, Councillors or officers.

Article 4 – The Council

4.1 Meanings

(a) Policy Framework

4.1.1 The policy framework of the authority means the plans and strategies set out in Part 3 of the Constitution.

4.1.2 The process for developing the policy framework, including adopting new plans and strategies, and the arrangements for taking decisions which are contrary to an existing policy, plan or strategy, is set out in the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution.

4.2 Functions of the Council

4.2.1 The functions of the Council are set out in Part 3 of the Constitution.

4.3 Council Meetings

4.3.1 There are three types of Council meeting:

- (a) the annual meeting;
- (b) ordinary meetings;
- (c) extraordinary meetings.

and they will be conducted in accordance with the Council and Committee Procedure Rules (Standing Orders) in Part 4 of this Constitution.

4.4 Responsibility for Functions

4.4.1 The Council will maintain the information in Part 3 of this Constitution setting out the responsibilities for the Council's functions.

Article 5 – Chairing the Council

5.1 Role and function of the Mayor

5.1.1 The Mayor and, in his or her absence, the Deputy Mayor, will have the following roles and functions:

a) Ceremonial role

To act as the first citizen of the Borough and to represent the Council at Civic and other functions where the Council is invited to be represented

To promote the image of the Council in all functions involving the Council or the Mayoralty

To attend such civic and ceremonial functions as the Council and he/she determines appropriate.

b) Chairing the Council meeting

The Mayor will be elected by the Council annually and will have the responsibility to preside over meetings of full Council so that its business can be carried out efficiently and with regard to the rights of Councillors and the interests of the community.

Article 6 – The Leadership and Lead Councillors

6.1 Legal Status

6.1.1 Having adopted a committee system form of governance, political leadership of the council will operate as a local arrangement for Reading, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.

6.2 Leader

6.2.1 The Annual Meeting will appoint a Councillor to be the Leader of the Council for the Municipal Year. The Annual Meeting will also appoint the Leader both to membership and the Chair of the Policy Committee of the Council.

6.2.2 The Councillor appointed as Leader will hold this office until:

- (a) the next Annual Meeting of the Council; or
- (b) s/he resigns from the office; or
- (c) s/he is no longer a Councillor; or
- (d) s/he is removed from the office by resolution of the Council

6.2.3 Any motion submitted to any Council meeting to remove the Leader from this office:

- a) must be moved, seconded and signed by a further eight Councillors as supporters;
- b) will be considered at the start of the Council meeting, after the Minutes of the last meeting have been approved and signed, and
- c) will be followed immediately by an item to appoint a new Leader of the Council

6.2.4 If the Council meeting resolves to remove the Leader from office but fails to appoint a successor, then an item to appoint a new Leader must be included on the next and successive Council agendas until a replacement Leader has been appointed.

6.3 Deputy Leader

6.3.1 The Annual Meeting will appoint a Councillor to be the Deputy Leader for the Municipal Year. The Annual Meeting will also appoint the Deputy Leader both to membership and the Vice-Chair of the Policy Committee of the Council.

6.3.2 The Deputy Leader will act in place of the Leader if the Leader is unable to act, or where the Leader asks the Deputy Leader to so act.

6.3.3 The Deputy Leader will also be a Lead Councillor and have a separate Lead Councillor portfolio.

6.4 Lead Councillors

6.4.1 The Annual Council Meeting will appoint Lead Councillors, with portfolios covering all Council services, for the Municipal Year. The Annual Meeting will also:

- a) agree the portfolio areas for each Lead Councillor
- b) appoint the Lead Councillors to be members of both the Policy Committee, and of the Committee(s) covering their portfolio areas.

6.4.2 The Deputy Leader and other Lead Councillors will hold office until:

- (a) the next Annual Meeting of the Council; or
- (b) they resign from office; or
- (c) they are no longer Councillors; or
- (d) they are removed from office by resolution of the Council.

- 6.4.3 Under the Local Government Act 1972, the Leader, Deputy Leader and Lead Councillors have no legal authority as individuals to exercise functions on behalf of the authority. This is not permitted under the Committee system of governance. They have the following general oversight roles:
- Political oversight and leadership of their portfolio area
 - Collective oversight and leadership of the authority (together with the Leader and other Lead Councillors, as members of the Policy Committee)
 - Public spokesperson for their portfolio area
 - Presenting reports from portfolio services to their Committee(s), the Policy Committee and Council
 - Answerable for service performance in their portfolio areas to Committee and Council
- 6.4.4 Full Council may, during the Municipal Year, resolve to change the portfolios of the Leadership and Lead Councillors; and to fill any casual vacancies that might arise as Deputy Leader or Lead Councillor, on the nomination of the Leader.
- 6.4.5 Where, during the Municipal Year, Council resolves successfully to remove the Deputy Leader or a Lead Councillor from that office, then it must also remove that Councillor from membership of the Policy Committee and make a replacement appointment to the Committee on the nomination of the Councillor's Group Leader.

6.5 Responsibility for Functions

- 6.5.1 The shared responsibilities of the Leadership and Lead Councillors, and their individual portfolio areas are set out below.
- 6.5.2 All functions of the authority will be exercised by Council, except where:
- The function has been delegated to a Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council (as set out in Part 3), in which case the decision will be taken by resolution of that Committee
 - There is an existing delegation of the function to an officer or officers,
 - The Council or relevant Committee or Sub-Committee, through resolution, makes a new delegation to an officer
 - The Council or relevant Committee, through resolution, delegates the function to a new Committee or a new Sub-Committee.
- 6.5.3 In all of the above cases a Committee or Sub-Committee or officers may determine not to exercise a function delegated to them and to refer the decision back to Council or the Committee which made the delegation. Alternatively, the Council or a Committee may itself determine to exercise a function which it has delegated.
- 6.5.4 All delegations which fall within the Council's definition of a Key decision, as set out in Article 13 of this Constitution, will normally be taken either by Committee or, if taken under officer delegation, be recorded through the Decision Book.
- 6.5.5 In taking decisions, Committees will proceed in line with the Standing Orders for Meetings of Committees, set out in Part 4 of this Constitution, which also include the Decision Book.

LEADERSHIP AND LEAD COUNCILLOR PORTFOLIOS

GENERAL

The Leader, Deputy Leader and all Lead Councillors will have the general responsibility to set the strategic direction of the authority, and to ensure and monitor the effective management and delivery of services within their areas of responsibility, as Members of a collective Policy Committee, and within the following framework:

- Corporate Plan
- Sustainable Community Strategy (Reading 2050)
- Local Plan

- The Council's overall strategic objectives, the budget and policy framework of the Council, and the corporate values
- Service Improvement and Performance Management Programmes
- The budgets set for the services, and the Council's Financial Regulations
- The law, the Council's Scheme of Delegations, and Standing Orders and the Constitution

The Leadership and Lead Councillors will promote the Team Reading Values of working as a team to deliver efficiency and value for money to achieve the Council's ambitious plans to make a positive difference to residents, communities, and businesses in accordance with the aims of the Corporate Plan priorities.

General and shared responsibilities will include:

- a) as part of the Council's community leadership role, working with partners to take forward the three themes of Corporate Plan: Healthy Environment; Thriving Communities; and Inclusive Economy.

Healthy Environment:

- To listen to feedback from our residents' survey and transport consultations and make increased investments in green infrastructure.
- To make it easy for people to play their part through the choices they make about their home, transport, and waste.
- To be committed to playing our part in tackling climate change and working towards our goal of a carbon neutral town by 2030.

Thriving Communities:

- To be committed to tackling inequality in our society, to ensure everyone has an equal chance to thrive wherever they live and whatever their economic, social, cultural, ethnic or religious background.
- To invest in voluntary and community organisations, building relationships and strengthening the capacity and resilience of the sector.
- To prioritise the needs of the most marginalised groups and the most vulnerable adults and children in our communities.
- To tackle the effects of the pandemic including employment, training and skills, mental health issues and social isolation.

Inclusive Economy:

- To build on our cultural heritage to enhance our tourist industry, creating an amazing place for people to enjoy.
- To enhance education, skills and training opportunities, particularly for our more vulnerable residents.
- To invest in key infrastructure to keep Reading at the forefront of advances in technology

- b) developing, co-ordinating, promoting and implementing the Council's corporate strategies, policies, objectives and initiatives; and working together with other Lead Councillors to promote the interests of the Borough and its residents
- c) overseeing the implementation of the Council's key priorities for improvement in line with the Performance Improvement Programme
- d) overseeing, developing, monitoring and promoting services provided directly by the Council
- e) acting as client for the procurement, development, monitoring and promotion of services provided under contract to the Council
- f) exploring alternative models of service provision, including developing new partnerships to deliver services differently; and overseeing, developing and monitoring services provided by joint arrangement with partners including other Councils

- g) promoting the interests of the Borough, and of residents, businesses and other organisations; and taking a community leadership role across the public, voluntary and business sectors, to develop working links with and to monitor the work of bodies providing public services in Reading
- h) promoting consultation and new ways of engaging with the public, and devolving decisions to local communities, within the context of an evolving public engagement strategy
- i) responding to consultations from the Government and other public sector agencies
- j) putting forward nominees to represent the Council on appropriate outside bodies
- k) promoting equal opportunities, sustainability, community safety and public health in relation to the provision of the Council's services, and the delivery of services in Reading by other agencies
- l) overseeing the appropriate levels of resource required to provide the services, within corporate guidelines and service plans
- m) overseeing relations with voluntary and community organisations, their procurement and commissioning arrangements, with reference to the Voluntary Sector Strategy and recommending grants for such organisations which fall within the Lead Councillor's portfolio, within the overall grants process and budget set by the Council
- n) championing the needs of children in care as their corporate parent
- o) promoting the Council's vision and transforming services programme, and its key priority areas of value-for-money, residents and customers, and staff
- p) promoting equality and ensuring that services are delivered to the high standards expected of and set by the Council.

1. LEADERSHIP

The Leader and Deputy Leader will between them have the responsibilities set out below. The Deputy Leader will support the Leader in carrying out the responsibilities, share the responsibilities as appropriate, and deputise for the Leader in the Leader's absence.

- (1) To lead the development and implementation of the Council's strategic vision and corporate plan objectives and priorities.
- (2) To provide the Council's community leadership role to promote work in partnership with key stakeholders to secure the implementation of the Sustainable Community Strategy and Reading 2050 vision and Local Plan.
- (3) To oversee the allocation and management of resources required to implement the Council's corporate, budgetary, and strategic objectives.
- (4) To ensure the existence of effective financial management and audit arrangements (with Lead Councillor for Corporate Services & Resources).
- (5) To oversee and monitor the Council's links and relations with other Berkshire authorities, partners and external bodies including:
 - Promoting the Council's economic and other interests in the Borough and in Berkshire, the Thames Valley, the South East region, and beyond
 - Local Enterprise Partnership
 - Reading Economic and Destination Agency CIC
 - Local Government Association and regional local government bodies
 - Town twinning (with The Mayor)
- (6) To ensure the effective delivery of Council services to the public.

- (7) To oversee services on behalf of the Berkshire Unitary Authorities, under the terms of the joint management agreements concluded with the other Authorities.
- (8) To oversee and monitor the Council's procurement and commissioning arrangements, and recommending grants for such organisations, with reference to the Voluntary Sector Strategy (with the Lead Councillor for Corporate Services & Resources).
- (9) To oversee and monitor the Council's major procurements and infrastructure projects.
- (10) To oversee the development and implementation of corporate strategies and policies, which contribute towards delivering more capacity to deliver services within local communities.
- (11) To oversee public involvement with the Council, exploring and promoting new ways for the Council to engage with local people, communities and stakeholders, including use of a wide range of consultation methods.
- (12) To provide quality assurance, strategic planning for community development services and monitor and challenge performance against the key measures for success set out in the Corporate Plan.
- (13) To co-ordinate and monitor representation on outside organisations.
- (14) To promote community use of facilities provided by other public bodies, agencies, or businesses and to oversee the development the Council's community hubs programme.
- (15) To represent the interests of the Council as shareholder of companies in which the Council has a beneficial or controlling interest, including Reading Transport Limited, Brighter Futures for Children Limited, and Homes for Reading Limited.
- (16) To act as the Council's 'equalities champion' promoting equal opportunities, and to lead on the general responsibility of all Councillors to ensure that the Council's functions and services are delivered in accordance with Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

2. ADULT SOCIAL CARE

- (1) To oversee the development and implementation of policies, strategies and procedural arrangements for the provision of the Council's adult social care functions, in accordance with the aims of the Corporate Plan priorities, in particular to: tackle inequality in our society; invest in voluntary and community organisations, building relationships and strengthening the capacity and resilience of services; prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable adults in our communities; and to tackle the effects of mental health issues and social isolation.
- (2) To oversee and be a champion for support and health services to:
 - Vulnerable adults
 - Older people
 - People with mental health problems
 - People with learning disabilities
 - People with physical disabilities
 - Carers
- (3) To provide quality assurance, strategic planning for Adult Social Care Services and monitor and challenge performance against the key measures for success set out in the Corporate Plan.
- (4) To oversee and liaise with partners on commissioned and shared services and budgets.
- (5) To promote good community relations and consultation, working in partnership with the voluntary sector and local interest groups.

- (6) To be responsible for responses to consultation undertaken by external bodies (eg Care Quality Commission) on adult service provision in Reading, and on developments outside Reading affecting residents in Reading.

3. CHILDREN

- (1) To be the Lead Councillor for all Children's services under Section 19(1) of the Children Act 2004; to be accountable for their delivery, including when this is delivered by Brighter Futures for Children; and to exercise political responsibility for the effectiveness, availability, and value for money of all of the Council's children's services.

[NB – the Children Act 2004 specifies that these functions are also the responsibility of the Director of Children's Services]

- a) Education services – the authority's functions in its capacity as a local education authority, except those excluded under Section 18(3) of the Act (namely certain functions relating to further education, higher education, and adult education)
- b) Social Services – the authority's social services functions within the meaning of the Local Authorities Social Services Act 1970, insofar as they relate to children, and the local authority's functions for children and young people leaving care
- c) Health Services – any health-related functions exercised on behalf of an NHS body under Section 31 of the Health Act 1999, insofar as they relate to children
- d) Inter-agency Co-operation – the functions of the Children's Services Authority set out in the Children Act 2004, in particular, building and leading the arrangements for inter-agency cooperation.
- e) The functions conferred on Children's Services Authorities under the Children Act 2004.
- f) The role of the Lead Member for Children's Services is set out in detail in Statutory Guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services. see: [Directors of Child Services Statutory Guidance](#)

Brighter Futures for Children

- (2) To work with the Executive Director for Children's Services and the Chair of Brighter Futures for Children and be accountable for the Company's delivery of the Children's Services functions of the authority covered by the service contract.
- (3) To ensure the effective commissioning and clienting of the contract with Brighter Futures for Children for the delivery of the following functions of the Council as Children's Services Authority covered by the service contract:
 - Children's Safeguarding
 - Early Help and Partnerships
 - Special Educational Needs
 - Quality Assurance and Improvement
- (4) In conjunction with Brighter Futures for Children:
 - (a) To develop the local vision and drive improvements for local people, including integrated children's services, with children, young people and their families placed at the centre of their policies and activities and to communicate this vision for children to councillors, and to the boards and partnerships on which they are either present or represented.
 - (b) To provide a particular focus, with the Executive Director for Children's Services and Chair of Brighter Futures for Children, on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children

across all agencies. The responsibilities of the Managing Director of the Company, the Executive Director (statutory Director of Children's Services) and Lead Councillor (the statutory Lead Member) extend to all children receiving services in their area, irrespective of the type of school they attend, or their home local authority area.

- (c) To develop, promote and implement policies, strategies, and procedural arrangements to champion children's interests both across functional boundaries within the local authority and across local partnerships to ensure that the needs of all children and young people, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, and their families and carers, are addressed, with a particular focus on promoting early identification and prevention.
 - (d) To oversee the development and implementation of the Council's Corporate Plan, Children and Young People's Plan and related strategies and policies.
 - (e) To be satisfied that the discharge of the authority's statutory children's services' functions by Brighter Futures for Children is effective.
- (5) To ensure the provision of the following children's services:
- Commissioning Children's Public Health 0-19 services, including health visiting and school nursing
 - Adoption – through Adopt Thames Valley – and post-adoption support
 - Youth Services provision (including where funded through the Housing Revenue Account)
- (6) To be consulted on, and oversee and monitor the responses from Brighter Futures for Children to inspections and consultation undertaken by external bodies (eg Ofsted and Care Quality Commission) on children's services provision in Reading, and on developments outside Reading affecting residents in Reading.

Corporate Parenting

- (7) To contribute to, and be satisfied that the local authority demonstrates, high standards of corporate parenting, in particular by encouraging Members to promote the educational achievement and health and wellbeing of looked after children and children leaving care.

4. CLIMATE STRATEGY & TRANSPORT

A) Environment

- (1) To oversee the development and implementation of the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan along with other associated policies and strategies across Council services to address climate change and other strategic environmental issues.
- (2) To lead and champion the Council's commitment to work towards achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030 and oversee services which contribute to the quality of the environment to deliver this aim.
- (3) To work in partnership with the Environment Agency and Thames Water to promote flood prevention.
- (4) To promote good community relations and consultation, working in partnership with the voluntary sector and local interest groups.

B) Planning

- (1) To oversee the implementation of the strategic planning framework for the Council, with particular reference to delivering the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (with the Lead Councillor for Planning & Assets).

- (2) To be consulted on and approve responses (with Lead Councillor for Assets & Planning), in consultation with the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection, on:
- Major developments outside the Borough which affect the Borough
 - Regional or sub-regional planning guidance and regional transport strategy
 - Other authorities' local or structure plans
 - Any strategic, non-statutory supplementary planning guidance such as area plans or planning briefs

C) Transport

- (1) To provide quality assurance, strategic planning for transport and monitor and challenge performance to deliver key projects and achieve the key measures for success set out in the Corporate Plan and associated strategies and policies.
- (2) To oversee the development and implementation of the Local Transport Plan to ensure that the transport elements of all major Council and private sector development initiatives contribute to the aims of the Council's transport strategy.
- (3) To provide quality assurance, strategic planning for transport-related services and monitor and challenge performance against the key measures for success set out in the Corporate Plan.
- (4) To ensure effective public, stakeholder and business participation in the planning and transport processes.
- (5) In partnership with neighbouring authorities:
- to oversee the implementation of the Reading Area Transport Plans
 - to prepare a Transport Policy and Programme, and to recommend the Local Transport Plan bid and bids for supplementary grant, Local Strategic Transport Funding and other sources of Government, European and private funding to the Council.
 - To operate the Berkshire Local Transport Body Assurance Framework, and to represent the Council on the Local Berkshire Transport Body.
- (6) To co-ordinate liaison with:
- Local Sustainable Transport Fund Cross-Boundary Councillor Steering Group
 - Berkshire Strategic Transport Forum
- (7) To be responsible for the following environmental health and public protection legislation and services within the Borough:
- Hackney Carriage Licences (including Vehicle and Drivers Licences)
 - Private Hire (including Vehicle, Drivers and Operators Licences)

5. CORPORATE SERVICES & RESOURCES

A) Audit and Financial Management

- (1) To ensure the existence of effective financial and management audit arrangements, reporting any concerns to Audit & Governance Committee as necessary.
- (2) To oversee the development and implementation of corporate strategies and policies to deliver compliance with the governance and auditing arrangements required by the Council's Constitution and statutory provisions.
- (3) To be responsible for activities and services provided by the Deputy Chief Executive, except the Finance Service, which will be exercised by the Leadership.

- (4) To monitor the corporate management of the Council, and the effective delivery of its services to the public; and to oversee the Council's management processes to ensure their effective contribution to the provision of efficient, high-quality services; including the need for new services or changes in services where appropriate (with the Leadership).

B) Equalities and Human Resources

- (5) To promote equal opportunities in employment and in the provision and delivery of services, both by the Council and by other agencies providing services locally; to monitor its effectiveness of this provision; and to disseminate good practice.
- (6) To oversee the development and implementation of relevant corporate strategies and policies.
- (7) To be responsible for corporate Human Resources and Organisational Development activities and services.

C) Performance Management and Service Improvement

- (8) To monitor the delivery of the Council's Corporate Programme to achieve the savings and transformational change needed to ensure the Council's financial sustainability and service improvement
- (9) To work with the Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team to support performance management and service improvement to meet the objectives of the Council's vision and priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan.
- (10) To promote a corporate governance framework for the Council, addressing community leadership, service delivery arrangements, structures and processes, risk management and internal controls, and standards of conduct, and to monitor its implementation.
- (11) To oversee the development and implementation of relevant corporate strategies and policies.
- (12) To promote a corporate framework for performance management and service planning, to identify areas of good and bad performance.
- (13) To promote and oversee the development and implementation of the Performance Improvement Programme and associated corporate projects.
- (14) Within the context both of corporate performance management and the overall budget situation, to review and evaluate alternative models of service provision, including developing new partnerships to deliver services differently, in consultation with the Leader and relevant Lead Councillors.

D) Environmental Health and Public Protection

- (15) To be responsible for the environmental health and public protection legislation carried out by the Resources Directorate and services within the Borough (with other Lead Councillors where appropriate).

E) Voluntary Sector

- (16) To oversee and monitor the Council's procurement and commissioning arrangements, and recommending grants for such organisations, with reference to the Voluntary Sector Strategy (with the Leadership).
- (17) To oversee the corporate framework for the allocation of all grant aid to voluntary organisations, community bodies and other groups.

6. EDUCATION & PUBLIC HEALTH

A) Education

- (1) To develop, promote, and implement policies, strategies, and procedural arrangements for the provision of the Council's educational institutions, including the Council's scheme for the financing of schools.
- (2) To be accountable for the delivery of the Education functions of the authority covered by the contract with Brighter Futures for Children alongside the Executive Director for Children's Services and Chair of Brighter Futures for Children.
- (3) To ensure the effective commissioning and clienting of the contract with Brighter Futures for Children for the delivery of Council functions as Local Education Authority covered by the service contract.
- (4) To provide quality assurance, strategic planning for education-related services and monitor and challenge performance against the key measures for success set out in the Corporate Plan.
- (5) To oversee the development and implementation of policies, strategies and procedural arrangements for the provision of education functions, in accordance with the aims of the Corporate Plan priorities, in conjunction with Brighter Futures for Children where appropriate.
- (6) To work in partnership with Brighter Futures for Children, neighbouring local authorities, maintained schools, Academies, Free schools, the Regional Schools Commissioner and other educational providers to promote high educational standards and opportunities within Reading and for Reading children, and to ensure that the Council is able to meet its statutory duties to ensure the effective education of all local children.
- (7) To co-ordinate and monitor the nomination and/or the appointment of Borough representatives on School Governing and other Educational Bodies.
- (8) To be consulted on, and oversee and monitor, the responses by Brighter Futures for Children to inspections and consultation undertaken by external bodies (e.g. DfE, Ofsted, and the LGA) on education provision by schools in Reading, and provision outside Reading affecting residents in Reading.
- (9) To promote good community relations and consultation, with particular reference to partnerships and key stakeholders in the Education Service, parents, governors, teachers and the voluntary sector.
- (10) To monitor, support and challenge the performance of Brighter Futures for Children and schools.
- (11) Adult skills and community learning including New Directions College
- (12) To be responsible for the following environmental health and public protection legislation and services within the Borough:
 - Environmental education and health promotion
 - School Transport Drivers' Licences
 - Health and safety

B) Public Health

- (1) To oversee the development and implementation of policies, strategies and procedural arrangements for the provision of the Council's public health functions under the terms of the Health & Social Care Act 2012, the National Health Service Act 2006 and the Health and care Act 2022.
- (2) To seek to secure the best possible health care system for the people of Reading and to reduce health inequalities in the Borough, by working in partnership with the Integrated Care Board, the local Healthwatch, the Thames Valley Area team of the NHS Commissioning Board, and other interested stakeholders, health bodies and interested community and voluntary groups.
- (3) To work with health partners, the Director of Public Health for West Berkshire, the Executive Director of Children and the Lead Councillors for Adult Social Care, and Children, to improve the health of all people in the Borough's area, in association where appropriate with other services provided by the Borough Council across all portfolio areas.

- (4) To lead for the Council on the Reading Health & Wellbeing Board, and to work in conjunction with Board members to:
 - Oversee the preparation of Joint Strategic Needs Assessments with the Integrated Care Boards
 - Approve a strategy for meeting the local health needs identified by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, including through the exercise of the Council's functions
 - Develop, agree and implement a shared agenda for commissioning health provision in Reading
 - Monitor the award and delivery of contracts for health provision in Reading, including contracts under the joint arrangement for public health in Berkshire
 - Work with the NHS and other local authorities as part of the Integrated Care System for West of Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire to plan and deliver joined up health and care services, and to improve the lives of people who live and work in the area.
- (5) To provide quality assurance, strategic planning for health-related services and monitor and challenge performance against the key measures for success set out in the Corporate Plan.
- (6) To oversee the implementation of the health transition programme in Berkshire, including the operation of the joint arrangement for public health and the Public Health Joint Advisory Board for Berkshire.
- (7) To oversee the development and implementation of relevant plans and strategies in relation to health and public protection legislation and services within the Borough.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES & COMMUNITY SAFETY

A) Environment

- (1) To oversee the development and implementation of plans and strategies to promote the environment of local communities.
- (2) To be responsible for environmental maintenance and cleansing in the Borough.
- (3) To promote good community relations and consultation, working in partnership with the voluntary sector and local interest groups.
- (4) To determine the position of the Borough Council in respect of the Authority's responsibilities and functions under legislation governing the Police and Fire & Rescue Services, including all matters concerned with the administration of these services.

B) Community Safety

- (1) To promote good community relations and consultation, working in partnership with the voluntary sector and local interest groups.
- (2) To oversee the development and implementation of corporate strategies and policies, which promote community safety.
- (3) To provide quality assurance, strategic planning for community safety-related services and monitor and challenge performance against the key measures for success set out in the Corporate Plan.

C) Public Protection and Regulation

To oversee the development and implementation of plans, and strategies within prescribed regulatory legislation in relation to premises and other licensing functions to deliver public protection measures for the Borough.

8. HOUSING

- (1) To oversee the development and implementation of corporate strategies and policies, which promote the provision and improvement of housing in the Borough, including within the private sector.
- (2) To be responsible for provision of the Council's housing services and other related functions, including:
 - Providing housing accommodation for those households in need, either directly through the Council's own stock, or in other ways, in conjunction with Housing Associations and developers
 - Managing the Council's stock of housing and garages and assessing rents of dwellings
 - Temporary accommodation for those in urgent need through homelessness or emergency
 - Housing maintenance services
 - Housing Revenue Account-funded Anti-Social Behaviour Team
- (3) To provide quality assurance, strategic planning for housing-related services and monitor and challenge performance against the key measures for success set out in the Corporate Plan.
- (4) To oversee the promotion, licensing (where applicable) and enforcement of satisfactory standards in housing accommodation in the private sector, including houses in multiple occupation; action in respect of unfit individual private rented dwellings; and public safety in the case of empty properties.
- (5) To promote the assessment and fulfilment of present and future housing needs, whether in the public or private sectors.
- (6) To promote good community relations and consultation, working in partnership with the voluntary sector and local interest groups, including Reading Neighbourhood Network.

9. LEISURE & CULTURE

A) Leisure, Culture and Heritage

- (1) To oversee policy priorities and objectives and strategies for the provision of arts, cultural and leisure services in Reading; both directly by the Borough Council and in partnership with the private sector and other agencies; and to monitor and review provision against the Council's corporate and strategic objectives.
- (2) To oversee the development and implementation of policies and strategies for the promotion of leisure, culture and heritage, in accordance with the aims of the Corporate Plan priorities.
- (3) To provide quality assurance, strategic planning for leisure and cultural services and monitor and challenge performance against the key measures for success set out in the Corporate Plan.
- (4) To promote:
 - Tourism in the Borough
 - The physical and intangible heritage of the Borough
 - The development and use of waterways within Reading
 - The general development of the arts and learning in Reading, including the support of community arts initiatives
 - Libraries
- (5) To ensure the care of the Council's historic monuments and buildings, including the Abbey Ruins, Abbey Gateway, and the Caversham Court Gazebo.
- (6) To co-ordinate all non-licensing aspects of Council policy towards arts and leisure festivals and other major events.
- (7) To promote good community relations and consultation, working in partnership with the voluntary sector and local interest groups.

B) Sport and Leisure

- (1) To oversee the development and implementation of the Sports Facilities Strategy.
- (2) To oversee the delivery and provision of indoor recreation facilities at the Council's leisure centres and those of its leisure partners.
- (3) To promote physical activity and sport development in the Borough.
- (4) Your Reading Passport (with Lead Councillor for Education & Public Health).

10. PLANNING & ASSETS

A) Planning

- (1) To oversee the implementation of the strategic planning framework for the Council, with particular reference to:
 - Local Plan
 - Sites and Detailed Policies Document
 - Unitary, Structure, Borough, and local plans
 - Minerals
 - Cross-boundary plans
 - Area plans or planning briefs for strategic sites within the Borough
 - Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (with Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy & Transport)
 - Community Infrastructure Levy
- (2) To ensure the Council's position on strategic matters under consideration by the Joint Minerals and Waste Planning Committee is properly represented.
- (3) To be consulted on and approve responses (with Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy & Transport), in consultation with the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection, on:
 - Major developments outside the Borough which affect the Borough
 - Regional or sub-regional planning guidance and regional transport strategy
 - Other authorities' local or structure plans
 - Any strategic, non-statutory supplementary planning guidance such as area plans or planning briefs
- (4) To be responsible for overseeing the effectiveness of the following functions:
 - Planning policy
 - Development Management
 - Planning enforcement
 - Building Control
- (5) To promote effective public participation in the planning process.

B) Assets

- (1) To be responsible for overseeing the effectiveness of the Corporate Asset Management Plan to make the best use of corporate land, buildings, and assets with regard to:
 - Acquisitions
 - Utilisation of assets
 - Management of facilities
 - Disposal of assets

- (2) To be responsible for overseeing the effective use of the Council's assets and ensuring best value is achieved from them in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules / Regulations.
- (3) To oversee the Community Right to Bid for Assets of Community Value process.

Article 7 – Committees

COMMITTEE SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE

7.1 Legal Status

7.1.1 Reading Borough Council operates a committee system form of governance.

7.1.2 The committee system form of governance appoints Committees and Sub-Committees with delegated powers and membership in proportion to the representation of the individual political groups on the Council.

7.1.3 In addition, a Health and Wellbeing Board has been set up as a committee of Council under Sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972.

7.2 Standing Committees

7.2.1 There are four Standing Committees, to discharge those functions described in Part 3 of the Constitution:

- Policy Committee
- Adult Social Care, Children’s Services & Education Committee
- Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee
- Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport

<i>Committee</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oversight of strategy, policy and budget ▪ Covering all services in the Chief Executive’s Office and Resources Directorate ▪ Voluntary sector grants ▪ Economic development and regeneration ▪ Corporate land, buildings and assets – including where the Council is Trustee ▪ Overview of service performance and improvement across all Council services ▪ Partnerships: LSP (Community Strategy), LEP, Reading Economic and Destination Agency CIC, City Deal, Cultural Strategy ▪ Decisions cutting across service committee areas ▪ Any decision between committee meetings, on an urgency basis ▪ Sole Member/Owner for Brighter Futures for Children Ltd ▪ Shareholder for Reading Transport Ltd ▪ Shareholder for Homes for Reading Ltd
Adult Social Care, Children’s Services & Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Covering personal services of the authority – Adult Care, Children’s Social Care, Education & Commissioning, School Improvement ▪ Oversight of the RBC Client function for Brighter Futures for Children ▪ Schools – involvement of Church and School Governor representatives ▪ Adult Education – New Directions ▪ Health scrutiny ▪ Safeguarding responsibilities for children and adults

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partnerships: Children’s Trust, Post-16 joint arrangement ▪ Corporate Parent
Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Covering “place” services of the authority – Environment & Consumer Services; Housing; Licensing; Neighbourhood and Community Services, Community Safety ▪ Recreation; Arts and Cultural Services ▪ Leisure and sports development ▪ Green and clean environment - streetcare, parks and sport ▪ Crime and disorder scrutiny ▪ Partnerships: Community Safety and NAGs, waste disposal (Re3)
Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Covering Planning, Highways and Transport services of the authority ▪ Focus on strategic environment and climate change ▪ Traffic management ▪ Flood prevention scrutiny ▪ Partnerships: RUAP, Berkshire Local Transport Body

7.2.2 Committees delegate functions to Sub-Committees, under section 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972.

<i>Sub-Committee</i>	<i>Appointing Committee</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Trustees	Policy	To consider the Council’s responsibilities for its trusts
Traffic Management	Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport	Traffic Management functions and Highways Permits
Covid-19 Outbreak Engagement Board	Policy	To involve the public and partners in the evolution of the Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan, and to support swift and effective local communication with all residents potentially impacted by a local outbreak

7.3 Frequency of Meetings

- 7.3.1. In each Municipal Year the Committees will meet as set out in the Council diary.
- 7.3.2. Committees may call additional meetings where required, subject to compliance with the Access to Information Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution, and the normal quorum for the Committee being present at the meeting, as set out in Standing Order 30.

7.4 Proceedings of Committees

- 7.4.1 Proceedings of Committees will take place in accordance with the Standing Orders for Council and Committees set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.

7.5 Responsibility for Functions

- 7.5.1 The Standing Committees may exercise all functions of the Council, except those statutorily reserved to the Council, as set out in Article 4 and Part 3, and those delegated by the Council to the Regulatory and other Committees as set out in Article 8.

- 7.5.2. Council will delegate functions to be exercised by individual Committees as set out in Part 3.
- 7.5.3. All Committees may delegate any of their functions to be exercised by a Sub-Committee of Members, or by a senior officer.
- 7.5.4. In addition to the functions delegated to it by Council, the Policy Committee may take operational decisions across all functions of the authority where these have been delegated by Council to other committees, in the following circumstances:
- a) in between planned meetings of the committee, to avoid calling an additional meeting of the committee;
 - b) on grounds of urgency.
- 7.5.5. The Policy Committee may make joint arrangements for the exercise of any Council function (other than those statutorily reserved to full Council) with other local authorities.

7.6 Overview and Scrutiny

- 7.6.1 The Council, having adopted a committee system form of governance, has resolved not to appoint any separate overview and scrutiny committee(s). Therefore, it has no call-in function.
- 7.6.2. The statutory overview and scrutiny functions of the authority will be exercised by each Committee with regard to the services, functions and partnerships covered by the Committee; and by the Policy Committee in respect of overview or scrutiny across Council services covered by more than one Committee.
- 7.6.3 The statutory external scrutiny functions of the authority to be exercised by the relevant service committees, are as follows:
- a) Health: Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education
 - b) Crime and Disorder: Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure
 - c) Flood risk management: Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport
- 7.6.4 The Council's overview and scrutiny procedure rules, and Standing Order 25, will continue to apply when committees specify that they are undertaking their overview and scrutiny function; and the facility for each committee to set up and appoint task-and-finish groups will be retained, as set out in Part 4 of the constitution.

7.7 Urgent Items

- 7.7.1 The Policy Committee may take urgent decisions on all functions of the authority, including on behalf of other Committees, and Council, subject to the function not being reserved by statute to Council or another Committee.
- 7.7.2 An item of business will be urgent if the need for the decision could not have been foreseen at the preceding scheduled meeting of the relevant Committee, Policy Committee or Council, and to delay taking the decision to the next scheduled meeting of either the relevant Committee or full Council would seriously prejudice either the Council's or the public's interests.
- 7.7.3 In addition to 7.3.2 above, the Policy Committee may call additional meetings to deal with any such urgent items of business, subject to:
- a) the meeting being called, and the agenda published in line with the Access to Information Procedure Rules in part 4 of this Constitution;
 - b) the Committee having a quorum of three members present, which includes:
 - i) the Leader or Deputy Leader
 - ii) the Lead Councillor responsible for the function concerned or the Chair of the responsible Committee (if different, and a Policy Committee member)
 - iii)

7.7.4 In exceptional cases, where it is not possible to call an urgent meeting comprising the above, the Head of Paid Service or Monitoring Officer may agree to an additional meeting of Policy Committee being held to determine an urgent item of business to prevent the Council or public interest being seriously prejudiced, with up to three different members of the Policy Committee present.

7.7.5 The facility to call additional meetings of Policy Committee to determine urgent items of business is in addition to the general facility available to all Committees to call additional meetings as set out in para. 7.3.2 above.

7.8 Membership

7.8.1 The Councillor members of each Committee and Sub-Committee shall be appointed for each Municipal Year by the Annual Council Meeting.

7.8.2 The Councillor membership of each Committee and Sub-Committee will comprise Councillors from all political groups on the Council, in proportion to the group's strength on the Council, with the exception of the Health & Wellbeing Board.

7.8.3 Council may appoint people who are not Councillors to be co-opted Members of Committees under Section 102(3) of the Local Government Act 1972, subject to these Co-opted Members not having voting rights on the Committee.

7.8.4 In the event, that the Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education Committee establishes an Overview & Scrutiny Committee to consider education matters it will seek to include in its membership the following representatives:

- 1 Church of England diocese representative (at least 1)
- 1 Roman Catholic diocese representative (at least 1)
- 2 parent governor representatives (between 2 and 5)

7.8.5 The Health & Wellbeing Board will have the voting membership set out in Part 3 of the Constitution.

7.9 Advisory and Consultative Bodies, and Partnerships

7.9.1 The Council sets up, or appoints Councillors to represent it on, a number of advisory bodies and Partnerships which are set out in Article 10.

7.9.2 Partnerships and Advisory/Consultative Panels may agree to make recommendations to any relevant committee and in such cases the Committee will offer them the facility to attend the Committee meeting and to speak to the agenda item when the recommendation is discussed by the Committee.

7.10 Leader, Deputy Leader and Lead Councillors

7.10.1 The Annual Council Meeting will make appointments to these offices, and determine their portfolios, for each Municipal Year.

7.10.2 The role and operation of these offices are set out in Article 6.

Article 8 – Regulatory and Other Committees

8.1 Legal Status

- 8.1.1 In addition to the Standing Committees and Sub-Committees set out in Article 7, each Municipal Year, the Council will appoint the following regulatory and other committees and sub-committees to discharge its quasi-judicial, regulatory and other functions as set out in Part 3 of the Constitution:
- Licensing Applications Committee
 - Licensing Applications Sub-Committee
 - Planning Applications Committee
 - Audit and Governance Committee
 - Health and Wellbeing Board
 - Personnel Committee
- 8.1.2 The Council will also appoint an Appeals Panel and other bodies to hear appeals in individual cases, some of which may not involve Councillors. The functions of the Appeal Panel and other bodies are set out in Part 3 of the constitution.
- 8.1.3 The Committees and Sub-Committees in this Article are set up under Sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972, or Sections 6 and 9 of the Licensing Act 2003.
- 8.1.4 For the purposes of Sections 15-18 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 (political balance on committees), the duty to allocate seats to political groups in proportion to their membership of the Council will apply to all of the bodies listed below, with the following exceptions:
- Licensing Applications Sub-Committee
 - Health & Wellbeing Board (application of the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013)
 - Appeals Panel (unless meeting not as part of a statutory appeals process)
 - Secure Accommodation Panel

Article 9 - The Standards Committee

LOCAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE - TERMS OF REFERENCE AND STANDING ORDERS

9.1 Standards Committee

9.1.1 The Standards Committee is appointed by Council at its Annual Meeting

9.1.2 The purpose of the Standards Committee is to oversee and develop the Council's ethical framework which includes, but is not limited to, the following policies:

Councillor Code of Conduct

Overall standards of conduct and ethics of Members and co-opted Members of the Council

Arrangements for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct (the "Arrangements Document")

Staff Code of Conduct

Planning Code of Conduct

Member Officer Protocol

Policies in relation to Gifts and Hospitality

9.1.3 The Standards Committee may establish sub-committees and determine procedures for the operation of these sub-committees.

9.2 Composition

(a) Political Balance

9.2.1 The Councillor membership of the Standards Committee will comply with the political balance rules in Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

(b) Membership

9.2.2 The Standards Committee will be composed of:

- Seven Councillors, subject to each registered political group on the Council having an entitlement to at least one seat;
- At least one, and no more than three, co-opted Independent Member(s) (persons who are not a Councillor or an officer of the Council or who are not disqualified from being a Member of a Committee of the Council under Section 104 of the Local Government Act 1972)
- Each political group may nominate named substitute members and those Councillors may attend in the place of appointed Councillors provided that they have received training similar to that received by members of the Committee
- The leaders of political groups may not be members of the Standards Committee nor named substitutes (as they have a role in Stage 1 investigations)

(c) Chairing the Committee

9.2.3 The Council will appoint an Independent Member of the Committee to be its Chair.

(d) Quorum

9.2.4 The quorum of the Standards Committee shall be three Members, subject to Councillors from more than one political group being present.

9.2.5 The quorum of any sub-committee of the Committee shall be two members.

(e) Voting

9.2.6 Decisions by the Standards Committee shall be reached by a simple majority vote.

(f) Calling of Meetings

9.2.7 Meetings of the Standards Committee may be called by:

- the Head of Paid Service, or
- the Monitoring Officer, or
- the Leader of the Council, or
- the Leader of any registered political Group on the Council, or
- the Chair of the Standards Committee, or
- a petition signed by at least one fifth of the Councillors serving on the Council (ie ten Councillors)

9.2.8 The meeting will be held in public, under the access to information provisions of Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972. The press and public may be excluded from meetings only where confidential or exempt information is being considered, as defined in the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules (in part 4 of the Constitution), and subject to the passage of the necessary resolution.

9.3 Role and Function

9.3.1 The general terms of reference of the Standards Committee are to be:

1. To advise and support the Council in meeting its statutory duty of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted Members of the authority
2. To assist Councillors and co-opted members of the Council to observe the local Member Code of Conduct, and to promote standards of behaviour and conduct by Members which is consistent with the seven principles of public life.
3. To maintain the Arrangements Document, to oversee its effectiveness and direct the Monitoring Officer to publish amendments or revisions
4. To receive and consider reports from the Monitoring Officer made under the Council's Member complaints process, concerning allegations made about Members involving a breach of the local Member Code of Conduct, and/or other associated Council protocols, in particular the Planning code of conduct and the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations.
5. To develop the ethical framework of the Council.
6. To monitor the probity and propriety of all aspects of Council business.
7. To advise the Council on the adoption or amendment of local codes of conduct and associated protocols and to monitor their effectiveness.
8. To make recommendations to the Council on any matters or issues relating to probity, propriety and general conduct where the Panel considers it appropriate to do so in the interests of maintaining the highest standards in the carrying out of the Council's functions.
9. To refer any matter considered by the Committee for investigation by the Council's Chief Auditor (or other appropriate officer) or the Council's external auditors as it sees appropriate; the Committee may also refer any such matter to the relevant Political Group(s) for their consideration.
10. To advise, train or arrange to train Councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives on matters relating to the local Member Code of Conduct and associated local protocols;
11. To oversee the training delivered to Councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives to ensure that they are able to fulfil their functions effectively;
12. To promote, oversee and monitor the register of interests of Councillors and co-opted Members of the authority, and their disclosure and declaration of disclosable pecuniary interests;

13. To grant dispensations to Councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct.
14. To consider any other matters as the Council refers to the Committee from time to time.

Article 10 – Consultative Committees and Forums

10.1 Consultative Committees and Forums

Each Municipal Year the Council will appoint Councillors to represent it on the bodies listed below:

1. ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP

- (1) To campaign for improved access for people with disabilities and to act as a pressure group in identifying and promoting public awareness of problems of access for disabled people to public buildings, commercial premises, the highway network and public transport within the Borough;
- (2) To monitor and review the role of the Council as an employer and as a provider of services to disabled people.

2. ADULT & CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING PANELS

To meet on an ad hoc basis to consider serious safeguarding case reviews or scrutinise internal/external providers where complex whole systems issues arise.

(The membership of the Adult & Children's Safeguarding Panels will be drawn from members of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education Committee)

3. ALLIANCE FOR COHESION AND RACIAL EQUALITY

- (1) To comment on and input to Council policies and services, with the aim of making them meet the needs of the black and ethnic minority communities in Reading.
- (2) To monitor the implementation of policies and services.
- (3) To promote and support new thinking.
- (4) To promote understanding and harmony between different black and ethnic minority groups in Reading.
- (5) To enable the exchange of information between the Council and the black and ethnic minority community.
- (6) To promote cross-community and cultural events.

4. ARTS AND HERITAGE FORUM

- (1) To act as an advisory, consultative and co-ordinating body on behalf of the Borough Council and other organisations in the town, including voluntary groups, in relation to the arts and heritage.
- (2) To promote and develop arts, crafts and heritage in Reading, including community arts initiatives, through the involvement and cooperation of the Borough Council and local groups and organisations.
- (3) To encourage participation in arts and heritage-related activities and to promote the provision and maximum use of facilities.
- (4) To support educational opportunities in the development of arts, crafts and heritage in Reading.

5. CHANNEL PANEL

In compliance with the statutory requirements set out under sections 36 – 41 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, Reading Borough Council has a Channel panel in place for its area, has regard to the Channel duty guidance 2020 and is committed to complying with the requirements within it.

Aims of the Panel

- The aim of Prevent is to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Delivery of Prevent is grounded in early intervention and safeguarding.
- Channel provides early support for anyone who is vulnerable to being drawn into any form of terrorism or supporting terrorist organisations, regardless of age, faith, ethnicity or background.
- The Channel process adopts a multi-agency approach to identify and support to individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism.

Strategic Objectives

- Reduce the risk of a person living or working in Reading being drawn into violent extremism/terrorism.
- Establish an effective process which will allow for the identification, assessment and support of individuals who may be vulnerable to radicalisation, either through Channel and/ or other appropriate support services.
- Ensure appropriate representation of partner agencies, and other organisations as required, to form a multi-agency Channel Panel working in partnership.
- Ensure that the Channel Panel operates in accordance with the requirements of statutory guidance and make changes as required by any future changes in the guidance.
- Review the Channel Panel Terms of Reference annually.

Operational Objectives

- Risk assess referrals by drawing on the Case Management Information System Vulnerability Assessment Framework and all relevant information shared by partners to agree the most appropriate response
- Agree and record a Support Plan for each case adopted by the panel.
- Identify if appropriate a suitable intervention provider (IP) (from a list designated by the Home Office) to offer support in order to reduce the level of threat/vulnerability/risk where a case has been adopted.
- If Channel is not considered appropriate, a referral to other forms of support must be considered, and arrangements made as considered necessary.
- Accurately record decisions on an agreed proforma, including the Support Plan for everyone adopted by the Channel Panel, keeping a complete audit trail of decision making, and ensure progress reports at each panel meeting including updated VAFs.
- Conduct full reviews at 6- and 12-months following case closure, with flexibility to agree to a 3-month review if deemed appropriate.

6. CIVIC BOARD

To be the project board for the ongoing projects associated with the rationalisation of the Council's office and depot accommodation, the provision of improved office space and accommodation at Council buildings, the demolition of the former Civic Offices and the Masterplan for developing the former Civic Centre site area and other matters as necessary.

To consider nominations to the grant of Freedom of the Borough and make recommendations to a specially convened Council meeting to create Freemen and Aldermen and Alderwomen.

7. CLEANER AIR & SAFER TRANSPORT FORUM

- (1) To propose measures to improve air quality across Reading Borough.
- (2) To evaluate, improve and promote transport sustainability across the Borough.

- (3) To influence Council policy and facilitate the development and direction of the Council's sustainability agenda.
- (4) To identify and share best practice in relation to clean and green 'healthy streets' initiatives which promote sustainability, healthy living, energy efficiency, sustainable transport and carbon reduction.
- (5) To identify and develop potential low traffic neighbourhoods.
- (6) To promote and raise awareness of sustainable initiatives within the Borough and to promote improved performance across the Council and its partners.
- (7) To extend networking to other relevant organisations and to maintain currency of knowledge and information within the context of transport sustainability and climate change matters.
- (8) To make recommendations to the Council on sustainability and climate change matters.
- (9) To support road safety initiatives, particularly for vulnerable road users.
- (10) To discuss progress and delivery of the Cycling Strategy in order to identify, prioritise and optimise actions to meet the objectives of the Cycling Strategy:
 - To improve the cycling environment;
 - To provide better facilities for cyclists;
 - To influence travel behaviour; and
 - To develop skills and capacity.

8. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

- (1) To manage all aspects of the implementation in Reading of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- (2) To identify the resource demands on each partner agency
- (3) To identify the operational changes required of each partner agency
- (4) To co-ordinate Crime and Disorder input to the planning and strategy of partner agencies, and multi-bidding processes (e.g. Europe)
- (5) To manage public and inter-agency consultation about Crime and Disorder strategies and plans
- (6) To oversee the activities of the Safer Neighbourhood Forum, the Youth Justice Management Board, the Drugs and Alcohol Treatment Service and the Reading Anti-Social Behaviour Multi-Agency Panel
- (7) To monitor and manage performance and jointly-held budgets relating to the activities of the Partnership and its sub-groups
- (8) To exercise strategic oversight and scrutiny of the implementation of the Prevent duty in Reading
- (9) To act as the governing body for Reading Troubled Families Programme.

9. CYCLE FORUM

To discuss progress and delivery of the Cycling Strategy in order to identify, prioritise and optimise actions to meet the objectives of the Cycling Strategy:

- To improve the cycling environment;
- To provide better facilities for cyclists;

- To influence travel behaviour; and
- To develop skills and capacity.

Such actions may be on any topic within the Cycling Strategy, including promotion, mapping, training, security, signing, route infrastructure, parking and monitoring.

10. JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE INTEGRATED CARE PARTNERSHIP

Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) are statutory bodies responsible for planning and funding most NHS services in the area. Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) are geographically based arrangements that bring together providers and commissioners of NHS services with local authorities and other local partners to plan, co-ordinate and commission health and care services. ICSs are required to establish new partnership forums called Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) to develop a health and care strategy for the area to integrate the services that they plan, purchase, and provide for local residents. Follow the link to the full terms of reference of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire & Berkshire West Joint Committee of the ICP:

<https://yourvoicebob-icb.uk.engagementhq.com/21739/widgets/61805/documents/37123>

11. LOCAL JOINT FORUM

- (1) To establish and maintain regular methods of negotiation and consultation between the Council and its employees, excluding matters of individual discipline, grievance, promotion or capability.
- (2) To seek to prevent differences and resolve them should they arise, notwithstanding the fact that disputes are dealt with through the Council's Disputes Procedure.
- (3) To implement Agreements entered into by the relevant National Joint Bodies or Provincial Councils.
- (4) To refer matters to the relevant National or Provincial Council on any matter within the scope of the functions of that Council.
- (5) To consider and recommend in relation to any matters of interest, including matters referred to it by the Employers or Trade Union sides, or by the Divisional Joint Forums.
- (6) To make recommendations to the Personnel Committee, or other Committees of the Council, Directorate Joint Forums or other relevant bodies.
- (7) Where recommendations and representations are not accepted by the Personnel Committee or by other Committees of the Council the matters shall be referred back to the Local Joint Forum for further consideration. The Local Joint Forum shall then have the right to make further recommendations to the appropriate body.
- (8) To establish and maintain machinery for the promotion and encouragement of measures affecting the health, safety and welfare of the Council's employees, to receive reports and to make recommendations for appropriate action.
- (9) Any other matters of collective bargaining including staff development, equal opportunities etc.
- (10) To consider and make recommendations concerning the way services are delivered.

12. OLDER PEOPLE'S WORKING GROUP

- (1) To identify and promote awareness of the issues facing older people in the Reading borough;
- (2) To provide a channel for older people to influence the development of local services, particularly those provided or commissioned by the Council;

- (3) To improve older people’s access to information about local services;
- (4) To support older people to take an active role as citizens.

13. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

The function of Corporate Parenting

‘Corporate Parenting’ is the term used to refer to the collective responsibility of the Council and our partner agencies to provide the best possible care and protection for children and young people who are ‘Looked After’; that is, children and young people for whom the authority has, or shares, parental responsibility, or for whom the Authority provides care and accommodation on behalf of their parents.

The Authority also has a duty and responsibility towards care experienced young people aged 16 to 25 years.

Reading Borough Council supports the view set out by the Department for Education regarding Corporate Parenting principles, which states:

‘The role that councils play in looking after children is one of the most important things they do. Local authorities have a unique responsibility to the children they look after and their care experienced young people (relevant and former relevant children) ... and the critical question that local authorities should ask in adopting such an approach is: ‘would this be good enough for my child?’”

We believe that children and young people in care have the same needs – to be loved, cared for, and feel safe – as other children. We also recognise that many Children Looked After (CLA) have suffered abuse or neglect prior to coming into care and it is important that this is addressed whilst they are kept safe and their education, health and care needs are met. Children looked after and care experienced young people face unique challenges and we are committed to ensuring that our corporate parenting principles are embedded in the wider work of Reading Borough Council, so that we can work collectively to help our children looked after and our care experienced young people to address these challenges.

It is our role as corporate parents to advocate on behalf of our children looked after and our care experienced young people, and to empower them to make their own decisions in preparation for adulthood. We want all our children and young people looked after and care experienced young people to achieve their full potential and to obtain the best possible outcomes, the same outcomes that we would want for our own children.

In Reading Borough the delivery of care to children looked after and care experienced young people, is largely delegated to Children’s Services functions within Brighter Futures for Children. The leadership responsibility for corporate parenting rests with the Chief Executive of the Council and as a key element of their statutory duties, the Director of Children’s Services, and the Lead Member for Children. However, all elected members and council employees, regardless of the department they are employed within, share corporate parenting responsibility for Reading’s children looked after and care experienced young people.

The responsibility for corporate parenting also extends to partner agencies such as Police, Housing, Health, and schools, who, through s.10 of the Children Act 2004, have a duty to co-operate with the Council in meeting the needs of cared for and care experienced children and young people. The Headteacher of the Virtual School also has a statutory responsibility to promote the education of children looked after, and children who were previously looked after.

All sections within a local authority and all elected members have a responsibility and a positive role to play in enriching the lives of children and young people who are looked after by the authority, and their care experienced young people.

As corporate parents for our children looked after and care experienced young people, we share responsibility for ensuring that all children looked after receive a good standard of care and are able

to achieve the high-quality outcomes that every parent would want for their own children or children within their family¹.

The key corporate parenting principles which local authorities should have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people² are captured in our corporate parenting aims. We are committed to ensuring that children looked after by Brighter Futures for Children are able to enjoy childhoods in which they are safe, well cared for and supported to achieve their full potential. In order for them to achieve this we are committed to:

- Acting in the best interests of our children and young people and promoting their physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Encouraging our children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- Taking children and young people's views wishes and feelings into account.
- Supporting our children and young people to access and make the best use of services provided by Brighter Futures for Children, Reading Borough Council, and our partner agencies.
- Promoting high aspirations for our children and young people and seeking to secure the best outcomes for them.
- Ensuring that our children and young people are kept safe and enabled to experience stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- Preparing our children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

The role of the Corporate Parenting Panel

The Corporate Parenting Panel will take a key role in monitoring and evaluating the services provided to Reading's children and young people looked after and care experienced young people, in order to ensure that Brighter Futures for Children is, on behalf of Reading Borough Council, meeting our corporate parenting responsibilities to a high standard.

The Panel will be directed and challenged by the Children in Care Council (Care2listen), Care Ambassadors (care experienced young people), and primary school aged children looked after (Care2havefun), who represent the care experienced population of Reading, to ensure that a positive impact is made, and that service delivery is making the differences that it is designed to achieve.

The Panel will:

- Promote a strong corporate parenting ethos and consider whether, and if so how, services need to be delivered differently to meet the needs of our care population as effectively as possible.
- At each Panel meeting the Participation Officer will support members of Care2listen to provide a summary report of the work that the Children in Care Council are undertaking, and share any comments, compliments and complaints made by children and young people in care.
- Corporate Parenting Panel will receive reports and representation from health and education colleagues who can assist the Panel in understanding the needs and experiences of children and young people in care and care experienced young people and help to promote service improvements and better outcomes for children and young people in care.
- Receive information from our Independent Reviewing Officer service to provide an insight into their knowledge of life in care for children in Reading, as well as from advocates, foster carers, social workers, volunteers, and other professionals.

¹ This collective responsibility is laid out in the Children Act 1989. Government guidance for Councillors, *'If this were my child'* (DfES 2003)

² Outlined in The Children and Social Work Act 2017

- Consider key service reports that relate to our children and young people who are looked after and our care experienced young people. These will include (but will not be restricted to):
 - BFFC's annual Corporate Parenting Report
 - BFFC Voluntary Adoption Agency's annual report
 - BFFC Independent Fostering Agency's annual report
 - BFFC's Independent Reviewing Officer Service annual report
 - BFFC's annual Participation Report
 - Annual Health report
 - Annual Virtual School report.
- Ensure that a whole council approach is taken to the delivery and development of services for children and young people in care and care experienced young people.
- Celebrate the individual and collective successes of children and young people in care and care experienced young people.
- Monitor the development of, and adherence to, Brighter Futures for Children's Promises to Children and Young People in Care, and Reading's Care Experienced Young People's Charter.

The Panel will not:

- Manage work programmes or overseas specific pieces of work – acknowledging that operational management needs to be given the freedom to manage.
- Be focused on the delivery of specific services – the Panel will concentrate on 'the big picture'.
- Take responsibility for the outputs and outcomes of specific services – these are best monitored at the level of the specific organisations responsible for them.
- Be the main vehicle for the voice of looked after children and young people – this will be the responsibility of the Children in Care Council (Care2listen). The Panel will however regularly listen to and respect the views of individuals and the wider looked after children's community.

The role of our Children Looked After and Care Experienced young people who attend the Panel will:

- Represent the voices and share the views of Reading children and young people in care.
- Support and guide Panel members regarding the wishes and feelings of our children and young people in care.
- Share our young people's views on whether, and if so how, services need to be delivered differently to meet the needs of our care population as effectively as possible. This will include (but not be restricted to):
 - Activities and initiatives being developed by the council.
 - The design and delivery of services and strategic initiatives
 - The quality of services
 - Participation
 - The celebration of success.
 - Influence the decisions of Panel

Meetings:

Structure, management, and agenda of meetings

- The Corporate Parenting Panel will meet on a quarterly basis (4x yearly).

- The Panel will be chaired by the Lead Councillor for Children or in their absence by the vice chair.
- Administration to the Panel will be provided by Reading Borough Council.
- The Panel will agree an annual work programme which will align with its key priority areas:
 - Safeguarding
 - Engaging with and listening to our children and young people who are looked after
 - Assessment and planning
 - Placements
 - Education, training, and employment
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Leisure, culture, and life skills
 - Leaving care.
- Any papers for Panel consideration will be sent out to Panel members a minimum of 5 working days before each Panel meeting.

Membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Membership of the Brighter Futures for Children (Reading Borough Council) Corporate Parenting Panel will include:

- Elected members
- Senior officers from Brighter Futures for Children (see below)
- Senior officers from across the wider council (see below)
- Relevant strategic and operational leads from education and health (see below)
- Representative membership from key stakeholder groups (see below)
- A representative group of the children and young people who are looked after by BFfC and of our care experienced young people

(Please see further details attached in Appendix 1)

Quoracy

- While the Panel will welcome and benefit from the attendance of representatives from a range of stakeholder groups, including children and young people who are looked after by BFfC and care experienced young people, the Board is not a decision-making body, so a minimum quorum is not required.

Conduct

- The Panel and its members will operate in accordance with the standards of behaviour and principles required of RBC employees, as set out in the council's Code of Conduct; this will apply to both councillors and any persons appointed as a co-opted member of the Panel.

Note: These Terms of Reference will be reviewed after two Panel Meetings – ie in December 2023 and annually thereafter

Appendix 1 – Details of Membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Elected Members:

- The Leader of the Council

- Elected Members / Councillors with the chair of the panel being the Lead Councillor for Children.

Senior officers from Brighter Futures for Children:

- Executive Director of Children's Services
- Director of Children's Social Care
- Head of Service, Corporate Parenting
- Head of Service, Together for Families
- Service Manager, Corporate Parenting
- Service Manager, Conferencing, Reviewing and LADO
- Brighter Futures for Children's, Children's Participation Officer
- Brighter Futures for Children's Independent Fostering Agency Registered Manager

Senior Officers from across the wider council:

- Chief Executive Officer of RBC
- Head of Service for Housing
- Assistant Director for Adults

Strategic and operational leads from education and health

- Headteacher of the Virtual School
- Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and Looked After
- Named Nurse Child Protection, Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust

Stakeholders:

- An approved foster carer representing the Reading Carers' Link
- Representative membership from:
 - Thames Valley Police
 - Source (Drug and Alcohol Counselling Service)
 - DWP (Department of Work & Pensions)
 - Reading Leisure Services

Children Looked After and Care Experienced young people:

- A minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 children and young people who are looked after by BFfC and/or Reading care experienced young people.

14. PLANNING MANAGEMENT PANEL

To preview the planning applications and other items on the Agenda for the forthcoming meeting of the Committee.

15. SACRE

- (1) To advise the Authority on such matters connected with religious worship in schools and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus as the Authority may refer to is or as it may see fit
- (2) In particular, to advise on methods of teaching, the choice of materials, and the provision of training for teachers
- (3) To consider, on an application made by a headteacher of any school after consultation with the governing body, whether it is appropriate for the requirement for Christian collective worship to apply in the case of the school, or in the case of any class or description of pupils at that school;

[SACRE shall arrive at its decision and communicate it to the headteacher in accordance with the provisions of Section 12 of the Education Reform Act 1988]

- (4) The representative groups on the SACRE, other than that representing the Authority, may at any time require a review of any Agreed Syllabus for the time being adopted by the Authority
- (5) To publish each year a report on its proceedings and those of its representative groups; to specify any matters on which the SACRE has given advice to the Authority and the reasons for offering the advice
- (6) To take any action assigned to it by the Authority in relation to the consideration and disposal of any complaint concerning collective worship or religious education in compliance with Section 23 of the Education Reform Act 1988

16. SAFER READING NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

- (1) To reduce crime and the fear of crime in Reading by establishing and supporting geographically based Safer Neighbourhood Forums;
- (2) To develop and support geographically based Safer Neighbourhood Forums which will involve the Police, Councillors, Council Staff, residents and other agencies to develop effective local problem solving responses to identified local priorities and where appropriate those which are contained in the Community Safety Plans;
- (3) To encourage collaboration across Reading on how best to address local issues through the sharing of best practice and jointly run projects.

17. TOWN TWINNING GROUP

To provide a forum for liaison with the Reading Town Twinning Associations, for the exchange of information, to work together as joint projects, and to promote town twinning.

Article 11 – Joint Arrangements

11.1 General Power of Competence

Under Chapter 1 of the Localism Act 2011, the Council or a Committee with delegated responsibility for the function concerned may:

- (a) enter into arrangements or agreements with any person or body;
- (b) co-operate with, or facilitate or co-ordinate the activities of, any person or body; and
- (c) exercise on behalf of that person or body any functions of that person or body.

This is subject to the Committee not entering into a joint arrangement for the discharge of the authority's functions with another local authority under Sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972.

11.2 Joint Arrangements

11.2.1 Under Sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972:

- (a) Full Council may establish joint arrangements with one or more local authorities and/or their executives to exercise functions in any of the participating authorities, or to advise the Council. Such arrangements may involve the appointment of a joint committee with these other local authorities.
- (b) Where the function to be exercised is an executive function in the other participating authorities, then full Council will establish the joint arrangement with the executives of those authorities. Such arrangements may involve the appointment of joint committees with these other local authorities.
- (c) Where an authority is operating an executive form of governance, its executive may only appoint executive members to a joint committee and those members need not reflect the political composition of the local authority as a whole. This does not apply to Members appointed by Reading Borough Council which has adopted a committee system of governance.

11.2.2 The authority has entered into the joint arrangements, including joint contracts, set out in the table below:

Function	Joint arrangement with	Date	Lead authority	Committee
Adopt Thames Valley Regional Adoption Agency (RAA)	Oxfordshire, Swindon & All Berkshire except Slough; also PACT & Barnardos	2017	Oxfordshire	Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education
Adoption Advisory Service	Berkshire-wide	1998 (post-BCC)	Windsor & Maidenhead	Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education
Adult Placements	Wokingham	2004		Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education
Archaeological Services	All except West Berkshire	2004 Cabinet -	Reading	Policy

Function	Joint arrangement with	Date	Lead authority	Committee
		March		
Berkshire Community Equipment Store	Berkshire-wide	2012	Slough	Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education
Berkshire Record Office / County Archive Service	Berkshire-wide	1998 (post-BCC)	West Berkshire – premises Reading – service / staffing	Policy
Child Care Legal Service	Berkshire-wide	1998 (ex-BCC)	Reading	Policy / ASSSE
Construction Services – Architecture & Design	Hampshire / SECE	2007 Cabinet - Sept	S113 Agreement	Policy
Coroner for Berkshire	Berkshire-wide	1998 (post-BCC) Subsequent mergers	Reading	Policy
Emergency Duty Team – Social Services	Berkshire-wide	1998 (post-BCC)	Bracknell Forest	Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education
Emergency Planning	Berkshire-wide	Post-BCC Officer arrangement Memorandum of Understanding	West Berkshire	Policy
Joint Waste Disposal Board (Re3 contract)	Reading, Bracknell Forest, Wokingham	2006 Cabinet – July	Shared Joint Committee	Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure
Local Countryside & Access Forum – Mid- and West Berkshire	Reading, West Berkshire, Wokingham	2005 Decision Book - May (S94, Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000)	Reading	Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport
Lord Lieutenancy	Berkshire-wide	1998 (post-BCC)	Reading	Policy
Modern Records	Berkshire-wide	1998 (post-BCC)	Reading	Policy
Public Health	Berkshire-wide	2013 Cabinet – March	Bracknell Forest S113 Agreement	Health & Wellbeing Board
Raising Participation Partnership (Post-16)	Berkshire-wide	2010 Cabinet – March	Slough	Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education

Function	Joint arrangement with	Date	Lead authority	Committee
School Museum Service	All except Wokingham	1998 (Post-BCC)	Reading	Policy
SCOOT – Urban traffic control system	Reading, Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire, Wokingham	1998 (post-BCC)	Reading	Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport
Sensory Needs – Service – Adults	Reading, Bracknell Forest, RBWM, Wokingham	1998 (post-BCC) Later modified	Windsor & Maidenhead	Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education
Shared Lives Service	Reading, Wokingham		Reading	Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education
Substance Misuse	Reading, Wokingham, West Berkshire	2010 Cabinet – Nov 09	Reading	Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure
Local Transport Body for Thames Valley Berkshire	Berkshire-wide – plus LEP	2013 Cabinet – Feb	Slough	Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport
Joint Health Scrutiny Committee	Reading, Wokingham, West Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire			Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education

11.3 Access to Information

- (a) The Access to Information Rules in Part 4 of this Constitution apply.
- (b) If all the members of a joint committee are members of the executive in each of the participating authorities then its access to information regime is the same as that applied to the executive
- (c) If the joint committee contains members who are not on the executive of any participating authority then the access to information rules in Part VA of the Local Government Act 1972 will apply. This is the case for Reading Borough Council.

11.4 Delegation to and from other Local Authorities

- (a) The authority may delegate functions to another local authority or, in certain circumstances, the executive of another local authority.
- (b) The authority may also accept delegated functions from another local authority or, if they are executive functions, from the executive of another local authority.
- (c) The decision whether or not to make or accept such a delegation with / from another local authority shall be reserved to the Council meeting.

Article 12 – Officers

12.1 Management Structure

12.1.1 The authority may appoint and employ staff under Section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972. Staff are employed by the authority. Appointment of staff below chief officer level must be the responsibility of the Head of Paid Service or his/her nominee.

12.1.2 Councils must include a standing order on the appointment of chief officers, the people who can or must be involved in the appointment of officers and disciplinary action against the Head of Paid Service, Chief Financial Officer and Monitoring Officer.

(a) **General.**

The authority may engage such staff (referred to as officers) as it considers necessary to carry out its functions.

(b) **Chief Officers**

The Council will confirm the appointment of the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) and the Personnel (Appointments) Committee will make appointments to the following posts (or such other similar posts as it may decide from time to time), who will be designated chief officers:

- Deputy Chief Executive or Executive Director of Resources
- **Executive Director of Communities & Adult Social Care**
- Executive Director of Children's Services
- Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services

(c) **Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer and Deputies**

The Council has designated the following posts as shown:

- Chief Executive - Head of Paid Service
- Director of Finance - Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer
- Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services - Monitoring Officer

The Local Authorities (Standing Orders)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2015 prescribe that the dismissal of the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer must be confirmed by Council.

The Council has designated the following Deputy posts as shown:

- Deputy Chief Executive **or Executive Director of Resources (as appropriate)** – Deputy Head of Paid Service
- Financial Planning and Strategy Manager – Deputy Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Section 151 Officer

Such posts will have the functions described in Article 12.2–12.4 below.

(d) **Delegations**

A considerable number of decisions are made by designated officers under approved delegated powers and these are detailed in Part 3 of the Constitution. An officer may not take a key decision under the exercise of a delegated function, and all key decisions must be taken by full Council or a Committee. This process is described in Article 13.

In certain circumstances where there is no existing officer delegation, Directors and Statutory Officers may take decisions which are not key decisions in consultation with the relevant Lead Councillor, and subject to these decisions being recorded by using the Decision Book process. This process is described in Standing Order 42 (See the Rules of Procedure – Part 4 below)

12.2 Functions of the Head of Paid Service

- (a) **Discharge of functions by the Council**
The Head of Paid Service will report to full Council or the Policy Committee on the manner in which the discharge of the Council's functions is co-ordinated, the number and grade of officers required for the discharge of functions and the organisation of officers.
- (b) **Restrictions on functions**
The Head of Paid Service may not be the Monitoring Officer but may hold the post of Chief Finance Officer if a qualified accountant.

12.3 Functions of the Monitoring Officer

- (a) **Maintaining the Constitution.**
The Monitoring Officer will maintain an up-to-date version of the Constitution and will ensure that it is widely available for inspection by Members, staff and the public; and will advise on the application of the Constitution.
- (b) **Ensuring lawfulness and fairness of decision-making**
After consulting with the Head of Paid Service and Chief Finance Officer, the Monitoring Officer will report to the full Council or to a Committee if s/he considers that any proposal, decision or omission by that body would give rise to unlawfulness, or if any decision or omission has given rise to maladministration. Such a report will have the effect of stopping the proposal or decision being implemented until the report has been considered.
- (c) **Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members**
The Monitoring Officer will contribute to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct through promoting the local Member Code of Conduct; providing advice and support to Members of the authority and to the Standards Committee on the Code; and operating the authority's procedure for dealing with complaints about Members. The Local Member Code of Conduct is in Part 5 of the Constitution. The terms of reference of the Standards Committee, and the procedure for dealing with complaints about Members, are in Article 9.
- (d) **Proper officer for access to information**
The Monitoring Officer will ensure that the decisions of the Council and its Committees, together with the reasons for those decisions and relevant officer reports and background papers, are made publicly available as required by the Access to Information Rules in part 4 of the Constitution.
- (e) **Advising whether decisions are within the policy framework.**
The Monitoring Officer will advise whether decisions of full Council and Committees are not contrary to the policy framework of the authority, under the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution.
- (f) **Contributing to corporate management**
The Monitoring Officer will contribute to the corporate management of the Council, in particular through the provision of professional legal advice.
- (g) **Providing advice**
The Monitoring Officer will provide advice on the scope of powers and authority to take decisions, maladministration, financial impropriety, probity and budget and policy framework issues to all Councillors.
- (h) **Restrictions on posts**
The Monitoring Officer cannot be the Chief Finance Officer or the Head of Paid Service.

12.4 Functions of the Chief Finance Officer

- (a) **Ensuring lawfulness and financial prudence of decision-making**
After consulting with the Head of Paid Service and the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Finance Officer will report to Council or Policy Committee, and the Council's external auditor, if s/he

considers that any proposal, decision or course of action will involve incurring unlawful expenditure, or is unlawful and is likely to cause a loss or deficiency or if the Council is about to enter an item of account unlawfully.

(b) **Administration of financial affairs**

The Chief Finance Officer will have responsibility for the administration of the financial affairs of the Council.

(c) **Advising whether decisions are within the budget framework.**

The Chief Finance Officer will advise whether decisions of Council and its Committees are not contrary to, or not in accordance with the budget framework of the authority, under the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution.

(d) **Contributing to corporate management**

The Chief Finance Officer will contribute to the corporate management of the Council, in particular through the provision of professional financial advice.

(e) **Providing advice**

The Chief Finance Officer will provide advice on the scope of powers and authority to take decisions, maladministration, financial impropriety, probity and budget and policy framework issues to all Councillors and will support and advise Councillors and officers in their respective roles.

(f) **Give financial information**

The Chief Finance Officer will provide financial information to the media, members of the public and the community.

12.5 Duty to provide sufficient Resources to the Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer

The Council will provide Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer with such officers, accommodation and other resources as are in their opinion sufficient to allow their duties to be performed.

12.6 Conduct

Officers will comply with the Officers' Code of Conduct and the Protocol on Officer/Member Relations set out in Part 5 of this Constitution.

12.7 Employment

The recruitment, selection and dismissal of officers will comply with the Officer Employment Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.

Article 13 – Decision Making

13.1 Responsibility for Decision Making

- 13.1.1 The Council has adopted a committee system of governance. Consequently, the responsibility for decision making will be determined within the statutory context of Sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 13.1.2 Council will be responsible for the exercise of all functions of the authority. It may delegate functions to be exercised by individual Committees or Sub-Committees, or by a senior officer(s). Committees in turn may delegate any of their functions to be exercised by a Sub-Committee of Members, or by a senior officer; and a Sub-Committee in turn may delegate any of its functions to be exercised by a senior officer.
- 13.1.3 The functions delegated by Council to Committees and Sub-Committees, and their arrangements for exercising them, are set out in Part 3 of the Constitution.
- 13.1.4 Under Sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972, there is no statutory power to delegate the exercise of any function to an individual Councillor, including the Leader.
- 13.1.5 The functions and responsibilities delegated by Council and its Committees and Sub-Committees to individual officers are set out in Part 3 of the Constitution.

13.2 Types of Decision.

13.2.1 Reserved Functions

Several functions are reserved by statute to be exercised by Council. These are set out in Article 4. Decisions relating to the functions listed in Article 4.2 must be made by Council and cannot be delegated.

13.2.2 Policy, Strategy and Budget Decisions

The authority's policy and budget frameworks are set out in Part 4 of this Constitution. Committees set policies, plans and strategies for the functions delegated to them, with the Policy Committee having the responsibility for setting the policies, plans and strategies for functions which cut across more than one committee area.

Council will continue to set the authority's budget and overall strategic direction, which the Policy Committee may recommend to it.

13.2.3 Operational Decisions

Individual Standing Committees can take decisions about the functions delegated to them.

13.2.4 Regulatory Functions

Separate Licensing Applications and Planning Applications Committees have delegated to them the licensing and planning functions

This does not preclude Council in the future from making an alternative arrangement to delegate any of these functions to a Standing Committee, or to delegate other functions to either of these Committees.

13.3 Key Decisions

- 13.3.1 Key Decisions are those decisions which are reserved to the Standing Committees for decision. Non-Key Decisions are delegated to officers in the terms of reference of the respective Standing Committees.

13.3.2 A Standing Committee may specifically delegate a key decision to an officer for them to make. In which case, the decision when taken by the officer, should be formally recorded by them.

13.3.3 Irrespective of these 'key decision' limits, officers should always ask themselves whether this decision might have a significant effect upon residents or communities. If it does, then they should raise the matter initially with the Lead Councillor.

13.3.4 A Key Decision is a decision:

- Where the value to the Council in terms of revenue, income or expenditure exceeds £500,000 per annum: or
- The value to the Council in terms of savings exceeds £250,000 except where such saving has been approved as part of the Council's revenue budget or Medium-Term Financial Strategy; or
- For Spend approval on capital expenditure projects (already in the capital programme) over £2.5m except for the following which is not a 'key decision':
 - Expenditure on rolling programmes of routine capital expenditure included on the capital programme (eg for housing and highways maintenance programmes)
- For expenditure of over £100k on capital preparatory/feasibility works for any capital project
- For spend approval for any capital scheme not on the capital programme
- A budget variation or virement as described in Standing Orders
- Relating to:
 - The closure of a service or an establishment within a service;
 - The externalisation of a service or a substantial part of it;
 - A variation to the Council's budget including virement or additional revenue expenditure of more than £500,000 per annum or additional capital expenditure of £2.5m, except where such expenditure has already been approved as part of the Council's revenue or capital expenditure budget or plan;
 - Decisions materially affecting the terms of joint arrangements or partnership arrangements with other local authorities or bodies;
 - A decision not in accordance with, or to vary, an approved policy, plan, or strategy;
 - Submission of a bid for funding from all available funding sources, if (a) match funding is required and (b):
 - the Council is lead partner and/or accountable body, the total costs of the scheme for which the Council will accept liability are more than £500k per annum over the length of the scheme
 - the Council is not lead partner or accountable body, the costs to the Council are more than £500k over the length of the scheme, AND the financial commitment to the Council extends beyond the current financial year
 - the Council does not have budget provision for it to make its contribution the costs of the scheme Such bids must be approved by the relevant Committee before submission.
 - A traffic regulation order proposing a major change to an existing order, and/or affecting two or more wards;
 - Approving arrangements for admissions to maintained schools where the Council is the admissions authority;

- Appointing the Council’s representatives to represent the Council on outside bodies, other than casual vacancies.

13.4 Decision-making by Council

- 13.4.1 Subject to Article 13.8, the Council meeting will follow the Council and Committee Standing Orders set out in Part 4 of this Constitution when considering any matter.

13.5 Decision-making by Committees and Sub-Committees.

- 13.5.1 Subject to Article 13.8, Committees and Sub-Committees will follow the Council and Committee Standing Orders set out in Part 4 of this Constitution when considering any matter.

13.6 Decision-making by Committees when acting as Overview and Scrutiny Panels

- 13.6.1 The Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Procedures Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution, and Standing Order 25, will apply when Committees which have been delegated an overview and scrutiny function specify that they are exercising this function.

13.7 Decision-making by Officers

- 13.7.1 Subject to Article 13.8, decision-making by officers will be by Executive Directors or Assistant Directors, where a function has been delegated to that officer, and in line with the rules of operation set out in Part 3 of the Constitution.

- 13.7.2 In the absence of a specific officer delegation to exercise a function, the Head of Paid Service, Executive Directors, Chief Financial Officer, or Monitoring Officer may take decisions on behalf of the Council and its Committees, subject to

- a) the decision not being a key decision as defined in Article 13.3 above;
- b) the decision not being statutorily reserved to Council or Committees or the Licensing Applications Committee to exercise.

13.8 Decision-making by Council Bodies acting as Tribunals

- 13.8.1 The Council, Councillors or officers acting as a tribunal or in a quasi-judicial manner or determining/considering (other than for the purposes of giving advice) the civil rights and obligations or the criminal responsibility of any person will follow a proper procedure which accords with the requirements of natural justice and the right to a fair trial contained in Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights in so far as that is achievable within the statutory provisions affecting that tribunal.

Article 14 – Finance and Contract Matters

14.1 Financial Management

The management of the Council's financial affairs will be conducted in accordance with the Financial Regulations set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.

14.2 Contracts

Every contract made by the Council will comply with the Contract Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution unless the Council or a Committee decide otherwise.

Article 15 – Review and Revision of the Constitution

15.1 Duty to monitor and review the constitution

The Constitution will be reviewed at the Annual Meeting of the Council although this does not mean that it cannot be changed at any time where the Council decides that amendment is necessary to assist in the achievement of the objectives set out in Article 1.

15.2 Changes to the Constitution

Changes to the constitution will only be approved by the Council after consideration of a report on the proposal by the Monitoring Officer.

Article 16 – Suspension, Interpretation and Publication of the Constitution

16.1 Suspension of the Constitution

- (a) **Limit to suspension.**
The Articles of this Constitution may not be suspended. The Rules specified below or any one or more of them may be suspended by the full Council to the extent permitted within those Rules and the law.
- (b) **Procedure to suspend.**
A motion to suspend any rules will not be moved without notice unless at least half of the whole number of Councillors are present; and two thirds of those present vote to give permission to do so (see Standing Order 26). The extent and duration of suspension will be proportionate to the result to be achieved, taking account of the purposes of the Constitution set out in Article 1.
- (c) **Rules capable of suspension.**
The following Rules may be suspended in accordance with Article 16.1:
- Council Procedure Rules (Standing Orders)
 - Contract Procedure Rules
 - Financial Procedure Rules
 - Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules
 - Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules
 - Officer Employment Procedure Rules

16.2 Interpretation

The ruling of the Monitoring Officer as to the construction or application of this Constitution or as to any proceedings of the Council shall not be challenged at any meeting of the Council. Such interpretation will have regard to the purposes of this Constitution contained in Article 1.

16.3 Publication

The Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services:

- (a) will give a copy of this Constitution to each member of the authority within one month of the signature of that individual's declaration of acceptance of office on the Member first being elected to the Council.
- (b) will ensure that copies are available for inspection at Council offices, libraries and other appropriate locations, and can be purchased by members of the local press and the public on payment of a reasonable fee.
- (c) will ensure that the summary of the Constitution is made widely available within the area and is updated as necessary.

Part 3 - Responsibility for Functions – Terms of Reference of Council, Committees and Delegations to Officers

1. Council Responsibilities

Procedural Functions

- (1) To adopt and uphold the Constitution of the Council;
- (2) To agree the roles and responsibilities of all committees and keep them under review and to delegate functions to officers;
- (3) To elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Council;
- (4) To agree the composition and membership of all committees unless the function has been delegated by the Council;
- (5) To adopt Standing Orders and Financial Procedure Rules (Regulations) for the Council and to keep them under review;
- (6) To adopt a Code of Conduct for Members and any Member/Officer Protocols;
- (7) To consider any report from committees;
- (8) To consider any matters referred to the Council for decision.
- (9) To receive any report by the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer or Responsible Finance Officer;
- (10) The appointment of representatives to outside bodies unless the appointment has been delegated by the Council

The Budget and Policy Framework

- (11) Council must exercise the following functions:
 - (a) Approving or adopting the following the plans and strategies including any subsequent amendment, modification, variation or revocation (but subject to the exceptions mentioned in (c) below)
 - The Budget, including:
 - Setting the Council Tax
 - The control of borrowing and investments
 - Capital expenditure
 - Determining the authority's minimum revenue provision and agreeing the Council's capital strategy and asset management plan;
 - Plans and Alterations which together comprise the Local Plan;
 - Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy;
 - Statement of Licensing Policy;

- Gambling Act Statement of Principles
 - Pay Policy Statement
 - Local Transport Plan;
 - Youth Justice Plan.
- (b) The Council must approve any part of the above plans or strategies, whether or not in draft form, which is required to be submitted to the Secretary of State.
- (c) The Council must amend, modify, vary or revoke any of the above plans or strategies, once approved or adopted, unless:
- The amendment etc is required to give effect to requirements made by the Secretary of State or a Minister in relation to a plan or strategy submitted for approval, in whole or in part; OR
 - Council, when approving or adopting the plan or strategy, makes an arrangement for its future amendment.
- (d) The following public health document which the authority is required to prepare and publish, with its partner Integrated Care Board and involving the local Healthwatch and local people living or working in the area:
- Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy to meet the health needs of the area included in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, relating to the exercise of public health functions by the authority, the NHS Commissioning Board or the Integrated Care Board. This document will be recommended by the Health and Wellbeing Board to Council for adoption.
- (e) Other plans and strategies, and successor documents, may be adopted, approved, amended modified, varied or revoked by the Committee to which the subject function has been delegated, or the Policy Committee. This provision does not prevent the relevant Committee from recommending a plan or strategy to Council for consideration if it so wishes.
- (12) The Council may set the strategic vision and corporate objectives of the Council;

Powers Reserved to the Council

- (13) To keep under review ward boundaries and to decide the Council's response to any proposals by the Local Government Boundary Commission affecting the authority's electoral boundaries;
- (14) To promote or oppose local, personal, or other Bills of Parliament;
- (15) To determine the Council's Scheme for Members' Allowances after having regard to the Independent Remuneration Panel's report;
- (16) To appoint the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive); and to designate the Monitoring Officer and section 151 Officer;
- (17) To make, amend, revoke, or re-enact any byelaws to apply within the unitary boundaries;
- (18) Any other matter by law required to be considered or determined by the Council;
- (19) Confirming the dismissal of the Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer, or Monitoring Officer;
- (20) Appointing the external auditors and agreeing the arrangements for their appointment;
- (21) Approving the annual statement of accounts.
- (22) Receiving the external auditor's annual report.

- (23) Applications to the Secretary of State in respect of any Housing Land Transfer Housing Land for approval of a programme of disposal of 500 or more properties to a person or to dispose of land used for residential purposes where approval is required under Sections 32 or 43 of the Housing Act 1985;
- (24) Applications to register common land or town or village greens, except where the power is exercisable solely for the purpose of giving effect to -
- (a) an exchange of lands effected by an order under section 19(3) of, or paragraph 6(4) of Schedule 3 to, the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 (c. 67) or
 - (b) an order under section 147 of the Inclosure Act 1845 (c. 8 & 9 Vict. c. 118);
- (25) Making referrals to the Secretary of State, the regulator, or the NHS Commissioning Board arising from the exercise of the health scrutiny function of the authority;
- (26) Council may take a decision in respect of any function it has delegated to a committee or officer, in place of that Committee or officer; and a Committee or officer may refer or recommend a decision in respect of a delegated function to be taken by Council.

Functions Relating to Elections and the Name and Status of Areas and Individuals

- (27) To change the name of the council or its wards under Section 74 of the Local Government Act 1972;
- (28) To confer the title of Freedom of the Borough and Honorary Alderman under Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972;
- (29) To appoint an electoral registration officer under Section 8(2) of the Representation of the People Act 1983;
- (30) To appoint a returning officer for Local Government elections under Section 35 of the Representation of the People Act 1983;
- (31) To divide constituencies into polling districts under Section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983;
- (32) To divide wards and parliamentary constituencies into polling districts at local government elections under Section 31 of the Representation of the People Act 1983;
- (33) To declare vacancy in office in certain cases under Section 86 of the Local Government Act 1972;
- (34) To submit proposals to the Secretary of State for an order under section 10 (pilot schemes for local elections in England and Wales) of the Representation of the People Act 2000 under Section 10 of the Representation of the People Act 2000;
- (35) To decide whether to carry out governance and/or electoral reviews.

[Note. The balance of the electoral functions are delegated to the Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer which is the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services. These include (but are not limited to):

- To assign officers in relation to requisitions of the registration officer under Section 52(4) of the Representation of the People Act 1983;
- To exercise all powers in respect of holding of elections under Section 39(4) of the Representation of the People Act 1983;
- To pay expenses properly incurred by electoral registration officers under Section 54 of the Representation of the People Act 1983;
- To give public notice of a casual vacancy]

2. Standing Committees and Sub-Committees

POLICY COMMITTEE

- (1) To make recommendations as appropriate on matters reserved to Council for decision, including constitutional matters and the authority's budget and overall strategic direction;
- (2) To set the policy framework for those functions for which the Committee is responsible, and for functions which cut across more than one committee area;
- (3) To be responsible for the authority's corporate assets and resources, in particular the financial, land and property, and information assets and resources;
- (4) To ensure the corporate management of the Council, and the efficient and cost-effective delivery of its services to the public
- (5) To be responsible for making Key Decisions (as defined in paragraph 13.4 of Article 13) for the following functions and services:
 - Appointments to outside bodies
 - Business and financial planning
 - Civic Buildings
 - Compulsory Purchase Orders -The making of CPOs
 - Communication
 - Council Tax, NNDR, Revenues and Benefits
 - Councillor Services
 - Customer Services
 - Economic Development and Regeneration – including town centre management
 - Electoral Services
 - Emergency Planning and Business Continuity
 - Equalities
 - Finance
 - Grants to Voluntary Bodies
 - Health and Safety (internal)
 - Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
 - Land, Property and Asset Management – acquisition, utilisation, facility management and disposal
 - Legal and Democratic Services
 - Local Ombudsman Investigations
 - Markets
 - Open Services and Procurement
 - Performance Management and Service Improvement
 - Public Health
 - Registrars
 - Voluntary sector – support and promotion
- (6) To act as Trustee for the Council in respect of such charities as agreed from time to time.
- (7) To promote health care, health improvement, and the reduction of health inequalities for local people.
- (8) To be responsible for any joint arrangements and partnership areas, relevant to the functions of the Committee in which the authority is involved.
- (9) To be responsible for the overview, service performance and improvement and scrutiny of all functions for which the Committee is responsible, and for functions which cut across more than one committee area;

- (10) To exercise Powers for Community Call for Action, Petitions, and scrutiny of other Public Service Providers, as set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (see also Adult, Social Care, Children’s Services & Education Committee below re: Health Scrutiny functions).
- (11) To be responsible for decision-making in matters which cut across the delegation of functions to Committees;
- (12) To act as the shareholder to the Council’s wholly owned Housing Company: “Homes for Reading Limited.
- (13) To act as sole member/owner of Brighter Futures for Children and to exercise all the Council’s responsibilities in relation to this function.
- (14) To act as the shareholder to the Council’s wholly owned Company, Reading Transport Limited.
- (15) To exercise the Council’s functions and responsibilities, in relation to any other companies not specified in (12), (13) and (14) above, in which the Council holds interests for example as shareholder or sole member. The companies include but are not limited to: Reading Economic Destination Agency (REDA); IESE; Reading-Hampshire Property Partnership.
- (16) To take decisions on operational matters in functions which have been delegated to another Committee but where a decision is required out of that Committee’s normal cycle of meetings;
- (17) The Policy Committee may take urgent decisions on behalf of Council, subject to the function not being reserved by statute to Council.
- (18) The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy and the Council’s Carbon Plan- To contribute to and adopt the relevant parts of the Strategy and Plan.
- (19) Delegation to Officers
 - (a) The responsibilities for making decisions in respect of the matters within the responsibility of this Committee (other than key decisions which are reserved to this Committee) are delegated to the Executive Directors and Assistant Directors in the corporate and senior management structure. An officer can only carry out a responsibility if:
 - they (or an officer who reports to them) have budgetary or management responsibility for it and
 - the constitution or the law does not require it to be carried out by someone else.
 - (b) Officers do not have to use their delegated powers: they can ask the person or body that delegated the power to them to make a decision or refer the matter to the relevant committee. Officers who have had something delegated to them can authorise officers they line manage to do it on their behalf (unless it was delegated on condition that they do it themselves).
 - (c) The Committee can at any time take back responsibilities they have delegated or decide to delegate them on certain conditions.

Trustees’ Sub-Committee

To act as Trustee for the Council and consider and respond to any proposal made by any organisation, including the local authority, which might affect the objectives of the charitable trusts below:

- Mapledurham Playing Fields
- Albert Road Recreation Ground
- Blagrove Recreation Ground
- Cintra Playing Fields
- Grove Road Allotments (Poor’s Allotments)
- King George V Gardens (Eldon Square)
- Robert Hewitt Recreation Ground

- Sol Joel Playing Fields
- Victoria Recreation Ground

ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

- (1) To be the authority's Education and Social Services Committee.
- (2) To be responsible for and take key-decisions the statutory and non-statutory functions relating to the services listed below, and to set the policy framework for those functions for which the Committee is responsible:
 - a. Adult Social Care
 - b. Children's Services
 - c. Education
 - d. Health
The Health Scrutiny function (see below), except scrutiny of "Quality Accounts" from Acute sector which is delegated to the Health and Wellbeing Board
- (3) To be responsible for oversight of the Reading Borough Council client function of the service delivery contract with Brighter Futures for Children for the delivery of the Council's children's social care, early years and education services covered by the contract, and the governance of the children's company.
- (4) To be responsible for any joint arrangements and partnerships relevant to the functions of the committee in which the authority is involved.
- (5) To be responsible for the overview, service performance and improvement and scrutiny of all functions for which the Committee is responsible.
- (6) To undertake the health scrutiny functions of the local authority under Section 244 of the National Health Services Act 2006 as amended by Sections 190 and 191 of the Health & Social Care Act 2012.
- (7) To provide a corporate framework for the scrutiny of Children's Services as set out in the Children Act 2004 and to ensure effective accountability for providing a focus on the needs of children across all services of the Council, and the integration of all public services provided to children by the Council, health, and other partners.
- (8) Reading Climate Emergency Strategy and the Council's Carbon Plan - To contribute to and adopt the relevant parts of the Strategy and Plan.
- (9) Delegation to Officers
 - (a) The responsibilities for making decisions in respect of the matters within the responsibility of this Committee (other than key decisions) are delegated to the officers in the corporate and senior management structure. An officer can only carry out a responsibility if:
 - they (or an officer who reports to them) have budgetary or management responsibility for it and
 - the constitution or the law does not require it to be carried out by someone else.
 - (b) Officers do not have to use their delegated powers: they can ask the person or body that delegated the power to them to make a decision or refer the matter to the relevant committee. Officers who have had something delegated to them can authorise officers they line manage to do it on their behalf (unless it was delegated on condition that they do it themselves).
 - (c) The Committee can at any time take back responsibilities they have delegated or decide to delegate them on certain conditions.

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

- (1) Subject to officer delegations, to be responsible for the statutory and non-statutory functions relating to the services and areas of responsibility listed below, and to set the policy framework for those functions for which the Committee is responsible:
 - a. Housing
 - b. Neighbourhoods
 - Environmental and public protection
 - Environmental maintenance and cleansing
 - Community Safety
 - Community Capacity Development
 - c. Recreation including allotments, parks and open spaces and sports development
 - d. Arts and Cultural Services
- (2) To be responsible for any joint arrangements and partnerships, relevant to the functions of this Committee, in which the authority is involved.
- (3) To be responsible for the overview, service performance and improvement and scrutiny of all functions for which the Committee is responsible.
- (4) To undertake the crime and disorder scrutiny functions of the local authority under Section 19 of the Police & Justice Act 2006; and in accordance with the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009, to act as the crime and disorder committee of the Council.
- (5) Reading Climate Emergency Strategy and the Council's Carbon Plan - To contribute to and adopt the relevant parts of the Strategy and Plan.
- (6) Delegations to Officers
 - a. The responsibilities for making decisions in respect of the matters within the responsibility of this Committee (other than key decisions) are delegated to the officers in the corporate and senior management structure. An officer can only carry out a responsibility if:
 - they (or an officer who reports to them) have budgetary or management responsibility for it and
 - the constitution or the law does not require it to be carried out by someone else.
 - b. Officers' use of delegated powers
 - Officers do not have to use their delegated powers: they can ask the person or body that delegated the power to them to make a decision or refer the matter to the relevant committee.
 - Officers who have had something delegated to them can authorise officers they line manage to do it on their behalf (unless it was delegated on condition that they do it themselves).
 - c. The Committee can at any time take back responsibilities they have delegated or decide to delegate them on certain conditions.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

- (1) Subject to officer delegations, to be responsible for the statutory and non-statutory functions relating to the services and areas of responsibility listed below, and to set the policy framework for those functions for which the Committee is responsible:
 - a. Strategic Environment matters, including:
 - Agenda 21 and biodiversity

- Air quality, noise, and radiation
 - Contaminated land
 - Flood prevention
 - Recycling and waste disposal (not operational matters – see Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee)
 - Woodlands Plan
- b. Planning and Building Control (other than those regulatory functions reserved to the Planning Applications Committee)
- c. Highways & Transport and Car Parking
- (2) To be responsible for any joint arrangements and partnerships, relevant to the functions of the Committee in which the authority is involved:
- (3) To be responsible for the overview, service performance and improvement and scrutiny of all functions for which the Committee is responsible
- (4) To review and scrutinise the exercise of flood risk management functions by the lead local authority under Section 9FH of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended by Schedule 2 to the Localism Act 2011)
- (5) Reading Climate Emergency Strategy and the Council's Carbon Plan - To contribute to and adopt the relevant parts of the Strategy and Plan.
- (6) Delegation to Officers
- a. The responsibilities for making decisions in respect of the matters within the responsibility of this Committee (other than key decisions) are delegated to the officers in the corporate and senior management structure. An officer can only carry out a responsibility if:
- they (or an officer who reports to them) have budgetary or management responsibility for it and
 - the constitution or the law does not require it to be carried out by someone else.
- b. Officers' use of delegated powers
- Officers do not have to use their delegated powers: they can ask the person or body that delegated the power to them to make a decision or refer the matter to the relevant committee.
 - Officers who have had something delegated to them can authorise officers they line manage to do it on their behalf (unless it was delegated on condition that they do it themselves).
- c. The Committee can at any time take back responsibilities they have delegated or decide to delegate them on certain conditions.

3. Regulatory Committees

LICENSING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

All members of the Licensing Applications Committee may serve on a Sub-Committee. The Monitoring Officer is delegated to select members to serve on a sub-committee on a case-by-case basis.

1. Subject to officer delegations, to determine the following functions under the Licensing Act 2003 and any regulations or orders made under that Act:
- a. Application for personal licence where a relevant representation is made by the Responsible Authority (Police);
- b. Application for premises licence/club premises certificate where a relevant representation is made and not withdrawn;

- c. Applications to vary designated premises supervisor where a relevant representation is made by the Responsible Authority (Police);
 - d. Application for provisional statement if a relevant representation is made and not withdrawn;
 - e. Application to vary premises licence/club premises certificate if a relevant representation is made and not withdrawn;
 - f. Applications for transfer of premises licence where a relevant representation is received from the Responsible Authority (Police);
 - g. Consideration of an objection from a Responsible Authority (Police) made to an interim authority notice;
 - h. Any application to review premises licence/club premises certificate;
 - i. Decision to give counter notice following Police objection to a temporary event notice;
 - j. Decision to object when Local Authority is a consultee and not the lead authority.
2. To determine the following functions under the Gambling Act 2005
- a. Application for a licence (including for variation and provisional statement) where relevant representations have been made and not withdrawn
 - b. Application for the transfer of a licence where relevant representations have been received from the Gambling Commission;
 - c. Applications for the review of a licence
 - d. Applications for club gaming / club machine permits where the Assistant Director Planning, Transport & Public Protection is minded to refuse;
 - e. The cancellation of club gaming/club machine permits where relevant representations have been received and not withdrawn;
 - f. Decision to give a counter notice to a temporary use notice.
3. In relation to Sex Establishments and Sexual Entertainment Venues
- a. The determination of applications for grant, variation, renewal, or transfer of licences where objections or representations have been received
 - b. The decision to revoke a licence
4. In relation to hackney carriage and private hire licensing:
- a. In relation to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 to revoke, refuse to grant or renew, hackney carriage, private hire, and School Transport drivers and operators' licences;
 - b. To determine whether a charge should be made and where applicable, the level of such fees and charges for the issue, approval, consent, licence or permit, or other registration pursuant to powers set out in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982;
 - c. To determine applications for the revision of the taxi fare tariff pursuant to section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
5. To approve and monitor all policies relating to the above licensing functions and recommend to the Council changes to those policies where the Committee considers it appropriate to do so or where the matter is reserved to Council to determine.
6. To determine applications for, and revocations of, a scrap metal Site or Collector's licence where a relevant representation is received against a proposal to refuse or revoke.
7. To determine appeals against a decision taken under delegated powers, to refuse an application for approval of premises, or to revoke any approval granted under the Marriage Act 1994.
8. To promote equal opportunities, sustainability, and community safety in relation to the provision of the committee's services.
9. Delegations to Officers

- a. The responsibilities for making decisions in respect of the matters within the responsibility of this Committee (other than those reserved to the committee at 1-4 above) are delegated to the officers in the corporate and senior management structure. An officer can only carry out a responsibility if:
 - they (or an officer who reports to them) have budgetary or management responsibility for it and
 - the constitution or the law does not require it to be carried out by someone else.
- b. Officers' use of delegated powers
 - Officers do not have to use their delegated powers: they can ask the person or body that delegated the power to them to make a decision or refer the matter to the relevant committee.
 - Officers who have had something delegated to them can authorise officers they line manage to do it on their behalf (unless it was delegated on condition that they do it themselves).
- c. The Committee can at any time take back responsibilities they have delegated or decide to delegate them on certain conditions.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

1. Subject to officer delegations the determination of:
 - applications for planning permission;
 - approval of reserved matters;
 - variations of conditions;
 - variations of legal agreements or planning obligations;
 - advertisement consent;
 - listed building or conservation area consent;
 - works affecting trees covered by tree preservation order.
2. The committee has reserved the following matters to be determined by the Committee:
 - Applications "called-in" by a Councillor, including those in adjacent authorities
Councillors need to explain why a decision by the Committee is required, in consultation with the Planning Manager and Chair.
 - Planning Applications Committee re-referral
When Planning Applications Committee has resolved that a matter should be referred back to the committee.
 - Applications submitted by serving councillors and employees of the Council on Corporate Management Team and any person employed or engaged by Planning and Legal Services or their close family
Applies to applications for planning permission, approval of reserved matters, variations of conditions, variations of legal agreements or planning obligations, advertisement consent, listed building consent, works affecting trees covered by tree preservation order and certificates of existing or proposed lawful use or development made by serving councillors or their close family and any member of the Corporate Management Team and any person employed or engaged by Planning and Legal Services or their close family.
 - Council developments
Power to determine an application for planning permission made by the Council alone or jointly with another person under Section 316 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 (S.I. 1992/1492) (Para 6) and the determination of applications made by the Council for listed building consent.
 - Departures from the Development Plan
Any development which is considered by the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services to be a departure from the provisions of the adopted development plan and recommendation is for approval.

- 'Major' Applications within the Borough where the officer recommendation is to grant planning permission
Major development, ie: Building or engineering work involving new development or change of use comprising: (i) residential development of 10 or more dwellings or residential development on an application site of 0.5 ha or more, or (ii) in the case of other development those comprising 1,000 sq. m or more of gross floorspace, or an application site of 1ha or more.
- Listed building consent
Only when forms part of a proposal that also requires planning permission in any of the above categories.
- Tree Preservation Orders/Trees in conservation areas
Where an objection to a Tree Preservation Order has been received or where the proposal has been submitted by or on behalf of the Council.

3. Other decisions to be determined by Planning Applications Committee only:

- Additions or removal of properties from the Local List.
- To serve direct action notices.
- To approve street names.

4. Delegations to Officers

- a. The responsibilities for making decisions in respect of the matters within the responsibility of this Committee other than those set out in section 2 and 3 above, are delegated to the officers in the corporate and senior management structure.
- b. An officer can only carry out a responsibility if:
 - they (or an officer who reports to them) have budgetary or management responsibility for it and
 - the constitution or the law does not require it to be carried out by someone else.
- c. Officers' use of delegated powers
 - Officers do not have to use their delegated powers: they can ask the person or body that delegated the power to them to make a decision or refer the matter to the relevant committee.
 - Officers who have had something delegated to them can authorise officers they line manage to do it on their behalf (unless it was delegated on condition that they do it themselves).
 - The Committee can at any time take back responsibilities they have delegated or decide to delegate them on certain conditions.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

- (1) To act as a greater Reading consultative body to promote public transport, cycling and walking within Reading;
- (2) To consult with operators of public transport services, cyclists, pedestrians, and users of public transport in Reading, on matters affecting transportation in the Reading area;
- (3) To receive and hear petitions about, and to determine, transport and traffic management schemes which affect the public highway and may require a regulatory process for which the Council as Transport Authority for the area is responsible, in the following areas:
 - Traffic and Transport Schemes such as Local Area Enhancements;
 - Road Safety Schemes;
 - Traffic Management Schemes such as signalised junctions;
 - Safer Routes to School Schemes;
 - Traffic Management elements of Section 106 Agreements;
 - Traffic Regulation Orders;

- Residents' Parking Schemes;
 - Enforcement of Traffic Regulation Orders
 - On-street and off-street Car Parking.
- (4) To consider and make representations to Committee on transport schemes requiring changes to the public highway resulting from the development of the Reading Transport Strategy, emerging either through the Local Transport Plan process, Local Sustainable Transport Fund Cross-Boundary Councillor Steering Group, or from area or specific consultation exercises;
- (5) To review proposals referred by the Planning Applications Committee to resolve a transport impact generated by a proposed development and, where appropriate, to make recommendations for actions affecting the public highway to be included in such development to either the Planning Applications Committee or another Committee, as appropriate;
- (6) To receive the Minutes of the Cycle Forum.
- (7) To act as the **Discretionary Highway Permits Panel**, in respect of appeals concerning discretionary parking permits, and the use of the highway under Section 115E of the Highways Act 1980. See Article 8.

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

This is set up under Sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972. It is the Council's audit committee as recommended by the Audit Commission and CIPFA.

Statement of purpose

The Audit and Governance Committee's purpose is to provide an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of governance, risk and control arrangements. Its role in ensuring there is sufficient assurance over governance, risk and control gives greater confidence to all those charged with governance that those arrangements are effective.

The committee has oversight of both internal and external audit, together with the financial and governance reports, helping to ensure there are adequate arrangements in place for both internal challenge and public accountability.

Governance, risk and control

- To review RBC's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework, including the ethical framework, and consider the local code of governance.
- To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management in the council.
- To monitor progress in addressing risk-related issues reported to the committee.
- To consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.
- To consider reports on the effectiveness of financial management arrangements, including compliance with CIPFA's Financial Management Code.
- To consider RBC's arrangements to secure value for money and review assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements.
- To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the council from fraud and corruption.
- To monitor the counter-fraud strategy, actions and resources.
- To review the governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations.

Financial and governance reporting

Governance reporting

- To review the AGS prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, including the head of internal audit's annual opinion.
- To consider whether the annual evaluation for the AGS fairly concludes that governance arrangements are fit for purpose, supporting the achievement of RBC's objectives.

Financial reporting

- To monitor the arrangements and preparations for financial reporting to ensure that statutory requirements and professional standards can be met.
- To review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council.
- To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.

Arrangements for audit and assurance

To consider RBC's framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the council.

External audit

- To support the independence of external audit through consideration of the external auditor's annual assessment of its independence and review of any issues raised by PSAA or the authority's auditor panel as appropriate.
- To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports and the report to those charged with governance.
- To consider specific reports as agreed with the external auditor.
- To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.
- To consider additional commissions of work from external audit.
- To advise and recommend on the effectiveness of relationships between external and internal audit and other inspection agencies or relevant bodies.
- To provide free and unfettered access to the audit committee chair for the auditors, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the committee.

Internal audit

- To approve the internal audit charter.
- To review proposals made in relation to the appointment of external providers of internal audit services and to make recommendations.
- To approve the risk-based internal audit plan, including internal audit's resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurance, and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources.
- To approve significant interim changes to the risk-based internal audit plan and resource requirements.
- To make appropriate enquiries of both management and the head of internal audit to determine if there are any inappropriate scope or resource limitations.
- To consider any impairments to the independence or objectivity of the head of internal audit arising from additional roles or responsibilities outside of internal auditing and to approve and periodically review safeguards to limit such impairments.
- To consider reports from the head of internal audit on internal audit's performance during the year, including the performance of external providers of internal audit services. These will include:
 - updates on the work of internal audit, including key findings, issues of concern and action in hand as a result of internal audit work
 - regular reports on the results of the QAIP
 - reports on instances where the internal audit function does not conform to the PSIAS and LGAN, considering whether the non-conformance is significant enough that it must be included in the AGS.
- To consider the head of internal audit's annual report, including:
 - the statement of the level of conformance with the PSIAS and LGAN and the results of the QAIP that support the statement (these will indicate the reliability of the conclusions of internal audit)

- the opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of RBC's framework of governance, risk management and control, together with the summary of the work supporting the opinion (these will assist the committee in reviewing the AGS).
- To consider summaries of specific internal audit reports as requested.
- To receive reports outlining the action taken where the head of internal audit has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to RBC or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions.
- To contribute to the QAIP and in particular to the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place at least once every five years.
- To consider a report on the effectiveness of internal audit to support the AGS where required to do so by the accounts and audit regulations.
- To provide free and unfettered access to the audit committee chair for the head of internal audit, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the committee.

Accountability arrangements

- To report to those charged with governance on the committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks, financial reporting arrangements and internal and external audit functions.
- To report to full council on a regular basis on the committee's performance in relation to the terms of reference and the effectiveness of the committee in meeting its purpose.
- To publish an annual report on the work of the committee, including a conclusion on the compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement.

4. Other Committees

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

- (1) To discharge the functions of the Health & Wellbeing Boards as set out in Sections 195-196 of the 2012 Act, ie:
 - Duty to encourage integrated working in health and social care under the National Health Service Act 2006
 - Power to encourage closer working in relation to wider determinants of health
 - Power to give its opinion to the authority on whether the authority is discharging its duty to have regard to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy for its area
 - Duty to provide an opinion – to its partner Integrated Care Boards and/or the NHS Commissioning Board - about whether the local commissioning plans have taken proper regard of the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- (2) To discharge any other health functions delegated to it by the authority.
- (3) To ensure that the authority meets its duties as a relevant authority, under Section 16 of the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”), as amended by Sections 192 and 193 of the Health & Social Care Act 2012:
 - a. to prepare, with its partner Integrated Care Boards, and publish a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for the area, involving the local Healthwatch and local people living or working in the area;
 - b. to prepare, with its partner Integrated Care Boards, and publish a Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy to meet the health needs of the area included in the Joint Strategic Needs assessment, relating to the exercise of public health functions by the authority, the NHS Commissioning Board or the Integrated Care Boards, involving the local Healthwatch and local people living or working in the area;
 - c. to ensure that the local authority, and its partner Integrated Care Boards have regard to these documents.
- (4) To promote health care, health improvement and the reduction of health inequalities for all local people, including children and vulnerable adults, and to exercise the following statutory duties on behalf of the authority:
 - a. To improve the health of people in its area under Section 28 of the National Health Service Act 2006, including:
 - any public health functions of the Secretary of State which s/he requires local authorities to discharge on his/her behalf
 - dental health functions of the Council
 - the duty to co-operate with the prison service to secure and maintain the health of prisoners
 - the Council’s duties set out in Schedule 1 of the National Health Service Act 2006, which include medical inspection of pupils, the weighing and measuring of children and sexual health services
 - arrangements for assessing the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders
 - b. To improve public health under Sections 2B and 111 of the National Health Act 2006 (as amended by Section 12 of the Health & Social Care Act 2012), including:
 - (i) Under Section 2B(3):
 - Providing information and advice
 - Providing services or facilities designed to promote healthy living (including helping individuals address behaviour that is detrimental to health or in any other way)
 - Providing services for the prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of illness

- Providing financial incentives to encourage individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles
 - Providing assistance (including financial) to help individuals minimise any risks to health arising from their accommodation or environment
 - Providing or participating in the provision of training for persons working or seeking to work in the field of health improvement
 - Making available the services of any person or any facilities
- (ii) Under Section 2B(4), providing grants or loans on such terms as the local authority considers appropriate.
- (iii) Under Section 111 and Schedule 1:
- Dental public health (S111)
 - Medical inspection of pupils (Paras 1-7B)
 - Research for any purpose connected with the exercise of the authority's health functions (Para 13)
- (5) To discharge health and social care functions identified by the Government and/or the National Health Service for exercise by the Board, including the integration of health and social care functions within Reading;
- (6) To approve and publish a Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment for Reading;
- (7) To oversee and implement any joint arrangements and partnerships, relevant to the functions of the committee in which the authority is involved;
- (8) To make representations to the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee as the authority's health scrutiny committee;
- (9) To scrutinise Quality Accounts on behalf of Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee.

Membership

The Council may co-opt additional persons or representatives to be members of the Board as it thinks appropriate, either as voting or non-voting Members, subject to the Council consulting beforehand with the Board.

The membership of the Board, under Section 194(2) of the Health & Social Care Act 2012, is as follows:

- 4 Councillors – ie, the Leader of the Council, and the Lead Councillors for Education & Public Health, Adult Social Care and Children (the Act requires at least 1 Councillor to be on the Board)
- The Director of Adult Social Care & Health *
- The Director of Children, Education & Early Help Services *
- Director of Public Health for the Local Authority or his/her representative *
- Two representatives from the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (the Act requires a representative of each relevant Integrated Care Board)
- A representative from the Local Healthwatch organisation

(* the Members asterisked will not have voting rights, as explained below)

Voting rights

Under the provision of Regulations 6 and 7 of the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013, the Council, following consultation with the shadow Health & Wellbeing Board, has decided as follows:

- To disapply the duty to allocate seats to political groups under Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989
- To treat the following as non-voting members of the Board:
 - The Director of Adult Care & Health Services (or his/her representative)

- The Director of Children, Education & Early Help Services (or his/her representative)
- The Director of Public Health (or his/her representative)

The voting membership of the Board must be named by the body they are representing. It will therefore be as follows:

- 4 Councillors by relevant office, ie the Leader of the Council, and the Lead Councillors for Education & Public Health, Adult Social Care, and Children
- 1 named Local Healthwatch representative
- 2 named local Integrated Care Board representatives

The bodies appointing voting Members to the Board may, in addition, appoint named substitute Members who may attend as voting Members in the place of their named Member.

Voting Members will be subject to the Council's local Member Code of Conduct, and will be required, under the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 to register with the Monitoring Officer, and to declare at meetings, any disclosable pecuniary interest that both they and/or their spouse/partner has in the business of the Board.

Co-opted Members

The following will be co-opted as non-voting additional members:

- The Chief Executive of Reading Borough Council (or his/her representative)
- A representative from Reading Voluntary Action
- A representative from Thames Valley Police's Reading Local Police Area
- A representative from Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
- A representative from Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust
- A representative from Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Observers

The following observers may attend and participate but not vote at Board meetings:

- Chair - Local Safeguarding Adults Board
- Chair - Local Safeguarding Children Board
- One relevant shadow Lead Councillor for each opposition group on the Council (up to three in total).
- A named representative of NHS England will join the Board to help in the preparation of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment or Joint Health and Well-being Strategy.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

To be responsible for functions exercised under Section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972 namely:

- (1) Subject to Officer Employment Procedure Rules set out in the constitution:
 - a) to arrange for the appointment of the Council's Head of Paid Service, and make recommendations to Council in this respect;
 - b) to appoint Executive Directors, the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer;
 - c) to dismiss Executive Directors;
 - d) to establish a Panel (Sub-Committee) under section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 for the purposes of advising the authority on matters relating to the dismissal of the Head of Paid Service, the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer of the authority, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015, and which requires the Panel to include at least two independent persons appointed under section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011;

- e) to settle all matters relating to the above appointments or dismissals unless the decision on the matter is reserved to Council.
- (2) To take any decisions affecting the remuneration, terms and conditions of service of the Head of Paid Service;
- (3) To undertake performance appraisals of the Head of Paid Service and to set annual targets against which performance can be measured.
- (4) To discharge the Council's functions under Section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972, including:
- (a) determining the terms and conditions on which staff hold office;
- (b) approving compensation levels in line with the Council's policies and procedures governing redundancy, medical or early retirement as applying from time to time before notice of dismissal is given to staff below Executive Director level.
- (c) approving matters referred to it by the Local Joint Forum; and resolving matters where it has not been possible to secure agreement at the Local Joint Forum;
- (d) advising the Council and Committees on:
- (i) the requirements for, and the availability of, human resources necessary for the fulfilment of the Council's policies;
- (ii) the promotion of good employee relations in the Council;
- (iii) matters of general employment and personnel concern to the Council;
- (iv) the promotion of equal opportunities for all employees of the Council, and in the Council's recruitment and selection procedures, and to monitor the effectiveness of such measures;
- (5) To receive from the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development twice a year a report on all early retirements and redundancies made in the preceding six months.
- (6) To decide on claims for injury allowance made under the Local Government Superannuation (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1982, where the claim and recommendation for consideration are agreed between both management and trades unions.
- (7) Where appropriate, to convene an Investigatory Committee to examine matters relating to the conduct or capability of Directors and Heads of Service.
- (8) Delegation to Officers
- (a) The responsibilities for making decisions in respect of the matters within the responsibility of this Committee (other than key decisions) are delegated to the officers in the corporate and senior management structure. An officer can only carry out a responsibility if:
- they (or an officer who reports to them) have budgetary or management responsibility for it and
 - the constitution or the law does not require it to be carried out by someone else.
- (b) Officers do not have to use their delegated powers: they can ask the person or body that delegated the power to them to make a decision or refer the matter to the relevant committee. Officers who have had something delegated to them can authorise officers they line manage to do it on their behalf (unless it was delegated on condition that they do it themselves).

- (c) The Committee can at any time take back responsibilities they have delegated or decide to delegate them on certain conditions.

MEETING AS AN APPOINTMENTS PANEL, in accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules as set out Part 4 of the Council’s Constitution “Rules of Procedure”

- (9) Where the Council appoints a Personnel (Appointments) Committee or a Sub-Committee to carry out the function of appointing any officer to the positions referred to in paragraph 2.2 of the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the membership of the Committee or Sub-Committee shall consist of members nominated by the Group Leaders from the political groups represented on the Personnel Committee and should include the Leader and/or at least one Lead Councillor.

Investigating and Disciplinary Committee (Relevant Officers)

To deal with disciplinary matters relating to the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), the Section 151 Officer (Executive Director of Resources) and the Monitoring Officer (Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services) ('relevant officers'), including the authority:

- To implement sanctions other than dismissal of a 'relevant officer,' including suspension;
- To make representations to the Independent Panel in the event the Committee makes a recommendation to dismiss a 'relevant officer.'

Appeals Committee (Relevant Officers)

To hear appeals from the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), the Section 151 Officer (Executive Director of Resources) and the Monitoring Officer (Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services) ('relevant officers') in relation to disciplinary matters short of dismissal.

Independent Panel (Relevant Officers)

An Independent Panel, comprising at least two people appointed under section 28 of the Localism Act 2011, to hear from the 'relevant officer' and the Chair of the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee (IDC) and advise Council in the event of a recommendation from the IDC to dismiss a 'relevant officer' i.e., Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), the Section 151 Officer (Executive Director of Resources) and the Monitoring Officer (Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services).

(NB: confirming the dismissal of a relevant officer i.e., the Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer is a matter reserved to Council.)

5. Appeals Bodies

Appeals Panel

To provide a pool of trained Councillors to hear individual appeals and complaints, either as part of a statutory complaints process or as part of the Council's own policies and procedures in respect of the areas set out below, on the following bases:

- (a) Where the meeting is part of a statutory process, the Panel will have a quasi-judicial role.
- (b) Where the meeting is not part of a statutory process, the Panel will meet as a Committee of Council.
- (c) the Panel will provide Councillors:
 - (i) to hear individual complaints which reach the third stage of the Council's curriculum complaints process;
 - (ii) to hear appeals against the removal of Early Years Providers from the Council's Directory of Providers.

Discretionary Highway Permits Panel

This is exercised by the Traffic Management Sub-Committee of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee: See also Article 7.

- (1) To consider and determine appeals against decisions made by the AD Planning, Transport and Public Protection to refuse discretionary parking permits, and with the right, in exceptional circumstances, to overturn decisions and grant permits
- (2) To review decisions to refuse applications for the grant of permission for use of the highway under Section 115E of the Highways Act 1980.

Secure Accommodation Panel

In accordance with the Children Act 1989, to review the position of each young person placed in secure accommodation, within 28 days of the initial placement being made, and quarterly thereafter.

Social Services Complaints Review Panel

In accordance with the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 and Children Act 1989, to hear individual complaints which reach the third stage of the Council's Social Services Complaints process.

Councillors may not serve on the Social Services Complaints Review Panel.

Education Appeals and Review Panels

To hear and determine:

- (1) School admission appeals
- (2) Individual reviews of decisions of the School's Governing Body to uphold the Head Teacher's decision to exclude pupils permanently from Academies, LEA maintained, voluntary-controlled, and maintained special schools.

Councillors may not serve on Education Appeal and Review Panels.

6. Joint Committees

JOINT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, OXFORDSHIRE, READING, WEST BERKSHIRE, WOKINGHAM)

1. Health Services are required to consult a local authority's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee about any proposals they have for a substantial development or variation in the provision of health services in their area. When these substantial developments or variations affect a geographical area that covers more than one local authority (according to patient flow), the local authorities are required to appoint a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) for the purposes of the consultation.
2. The NHS Long-Term Plan (published at the beginning of 2019) sets out the vision and ambition for the NHS for the next 10 years. It states - "Every Integrated Care System will need streamlined commissioning arrangements to enable a single set of commissioning decisions at system level." The purpose of the JHOSC would be to hold to account and challenge these commissioning decisions at system level. This function would be new and a different part of local health scrutiny arrangements. The powers and duties of health scrutiny would remain unchanged at Place and Neighbourhood level (see definitions below) – and, in recognition of the slight differences across the ICS footprint, also at Locality level. The creation of a JHOSC to scrutinise system level decisions would strengthen existing scrutiny arrangements.
3. These terms of reference set out the arrangements for Buckinghamshire Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Reading Borough Council, West Berkshire Council, Wokingham Borough Council, to operate a JHOSC in line with the provisions set out in legislation and guidance and to allow it to operate as a mandatory committee.

Terms of Reference

4. The new JHOSC will operate formally as a mandatory joint committee i.e., where the councils have been required under Regulation 30 (5) Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Well-being Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 to appoint a joint committee for the purposes of providing independent scrutiny to activities delivered at system level (as detailed below) by the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System.

The Kings Fund published a report in April 2020 "Integrated Care Systems explained: making sense of systems, places and neighbourhoods" which says that NHS England and NHS Improvement has adopted the terminology used in some systems to describe a three-tiered model – System, Place and Neighbourhood.

System - typically covering a population of 1–3 million people. Key functions include setting and leading overall strategy, managing collective resources and performance, identifying and sharing best practice to reduce unwarranted variations in care, and leading changes that benefit from working at a larger scale such as digital, estates and workforce transformation.

Place – a town or district within an ICS, typically covering a population of 250-500,000. This is where the majority of changes to clinical services will be designed and delivered and where population health management will be used to target intervention to particular groups. At this level, providers may work together to join up their services through alliances and more formal contractual arrangements.

Neighbourhood – a small area, typically covering a population of 30-50,000 where groups of GPs and community-based services work together to deliver co-ordinated, pro-active care and support, particularly for groups and individuals with the most complex needs. Primary Care Networks and multi-disciplinary community teams form at this level.

Activities at Place, Neighbourhood and Locality would be scrutinised by the relevant local authority through their existing health scrutiny arrangements.

5. The purpose of the mandatory JHOSC across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Reading, West Berkshire, Wokingham is to:

- a. make comments on the proposal consulted on
 - b. require the provision of information about the proposal
 - c. gather evidence from key stakeholders, including members of the public
 - d. require the member or employee of the relevant health service to attend before it to answer questions in connection with the consultation.
 - e. Refer to the Secretary of State only on where it is not satisfied that:
 - consultation on any proposal for a substantial change or development has been adequate in relation to content or time allowed (NB. The referral power in these contexts only relates to the consultation with the local authorities, and not consultation with other stakeholders)
 - the proposal would not be in the interests of the health service in the area
 - a decision has been taken without consultation and it is not satisfied that the reasons given for not carrying out consultation are adequate.
6. Notwithstanding point (e) above, Member authorities have the right to refer an issue to the Department of Health if the joint health scrutiny committee does not collectively agree to refer an issue.
7. With the exception of those matters referred to in paragraph [3] above responsibility for all other health scrutiny functions and activities remain with the respective local authority Health Scrutiny Committees.
8. The process for determining the appropriate level of scrutiny – i.e.. System or Place/Neighbourhood/Locality will be in accordance with an agreed toolkit which will set out the process for initiating early dialogue between ICS Leads and the Members of the JHOSC. All constituent authorities will be notified of the outcome of those discussions.
9. No matter to be discussed by the Committee shall be considered to be confidential or exempt without the agreement of all Councils and subject to the requirements of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Governance

10. Meetings of the JHOSC will be conducted under the Standing Orders of the Local Authority hosting and providing democratic services support and subject to these terms of reference.

Frequency of meetings

11. The JHOSC will meet at least twice a year with the Integrated Care System Leads to ensure oversight of key priorities and deliverables at system level.

Host authority

12. The JHOSC would be hosted by one of the named authorities. The role of host authority would be undertaken by the chairing authority for the same time period [24 months].

Membership

13. Membership of the JHOSC will be appointed by the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham bodies that have responsibility for discharging health scrutiny functions.
14. Appointments to the JHOSC have regard to the proportion of patient flow. The Joint Committee will therefore have 19 members, consisting of 6 from Buckinghamshire, 7 from Oxfordshire, 2 from Reading, 2 from West Berkshire, 2 from Wokingham.
15. Appointments by each authority to the JHOSC will reflect the political balance of that authority.
16. The quorum for meetings will be 6 voting members, comprising at least one member from each authority. Member substitutes from each authority will be accepted.
17. The JHOSC shall reserve the right to consider the appointment of additional temporary co-opted members in order to bring specialist knowledge onto the committee to inform specific work streams or agenda items. Any co-opted member appointed will not have a vote.

18. Healthwatch shall be recognised as a key stakeholder and a standing item will be included on the JHOSC agenda to allow the organisation to report back on patient and public views from across the ICS.

Chairman & Vice Chairman

19. The Chairman of the JHOSC shall be drawn from the members of it and will normally be filled by the member whose authority is hosting the Committee for a period of 24 months.
20. The Vice-Chairman of the JHOSC shall be drawn from members on the Committee and elected every 24 months.

Task & Finish Groups

21. The Committee may appoint such Working Groups of their members as they may determine to undertake and report back to the Committee on specified investigations or reviews as set out in the work programme. Appointments to such Working Groups will be made by the Committee, ensuring political balance as far as possible. Such panels will exist for a fixed period, on the expiry of which they shall cease to exist.

Committee support

22. The work of the JHOSC will require support in terms of overall coordination, setting up and clerking of meetings and underpinning policy support and administrative arrangements.
23. Meetings of the committee are to be arranged and held by the host authority.

Should a press statement or press release need to be made by the JHOSC, this will be approved all authorities before being signed off by the Chairman.

7. Officer Scheme of Delegation of Functions

1. The scheme of delegation to Officers

- 1.1 The intention of the scheme is to authorise the Chief Executive or an Executive Director or Assistant Director to carry out responsibilities for all functions which the Council has not reserved to itself or delegated to a Committee or Sub Committee in this constitution and which Council has not authorised another officer to carry out.
- 1.2 The fact that an Officer is authorised to carry out a function does not require that Officer to give the matter their personal attention and the Officer may authorise an officer of suitable skills and experience to carry out that function. Any such authorisation must be set out in writing, kept by the Director, and notified to the Monitoring Officer.
- 1.3 Where an Officer is authorised to carry out a function, they will authorise another officer or officers to carry out that function in his absence, or as required by him or her.
- 1.4 Officers do not have to deal with all matters where they have authority to do so: they can refer the matter back to the Council, Committee, or a Sub Committee.

2. Interpreting these rules

- 2.1 The scheme delegates functions of the Council to officers and should be interpreted widely rather than narrowly. In cases of dispute as to the interpretation of this scheme the interpretation of the Monitoring Officer shall apply.
- 2.2 In the scheme “officer” means an Executive Director or Assistant Director or the holder of any post named in this scheme.

An Executive Director means an officer who reports directly to the Chief Executive and who does not carry out a role which has the primary function of carrying out an administrative or secretarial support role.

An Assistant Director means an officer who reports directly to an Executive Director and who does not carry out a role which has the primary function of carrying out an administrative or secretarial support role.

- 2.3 This scheme operates under the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 2000, the National Health Service Act 2006, the Localism Act 2011, and all other legislation conferring powers and responsibilities on the Council as amended consolidated or re-enacted from time to time.
- 2.4 Any reference to a statute, statutory provision or statutory instrument includes a reference to that statute, statutory provision, or statutory instrument together with all rules and regulations made under it as from time to time amended, consolidated, or re-enacted.
- 2.5 Where an Officer is authorised to carry out a function within this scheme of delegation or elsewhere in the Constitution, they have authority to do anything necessary to carry it out that function (unless it was forbidden when the responsibility was delegated).

Examples of this are the authority to sign all necessary documents, determine applications, authorise payments, authorise prosecutions, implement national agreements, issue, and serve statutory and other notices, authorise entry to land in pursuance of statutory powers, and take statutory action if:

- a) The Officer has management or budget responsibility for the function concerned, and
- b) The law or the Council’s standing orders do not require the action to be taken by someone else and

- c) The decision maker has had regard to any advice from the Chief Financial Officer under Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Monitoring Officer under section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

3. Limitations

This scheme does not delegate to officers: -

- a) Any matter which by law may not be delegated to an officer;
- b) Any matter reserved to Council and which Council has not authorised an officer to carry out;
- c) Any decision that has been delegated and reserved to a Committee or Sub-Committee of Council and which that Committee or Sub-Committee has not authorised an officer to carry out; This includes:
 - a. Key Decisions which are generally reserved to committees;
 - b. Any matter that is a new policy or is a departure from the existing and agreed policy framework of the Council.
 - c. Any decision that is not in accordance with the budget.
 - d. Any matter in which the officer has a personal interest.

Any delegations or authorisations will remain in place until superseded.

4. Urgency and Emergency Powers

The Chief Executive can take such action as they consider necessary in urgent or emergency situations to protect the interests of the Council, having consulted with the Leader of the Council and Lead Councillors where appropriate, subject to the action taken being reported to the next meeting of the Council or its committees as appropriate.

5. Legal Powers

The Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services has power:

- (1) to institute, defend, appeal, settle or abandon legal proceedings on the Council's behalf in any court, arbitration or tribunal.
- (2) to instigate and conduct legal proceedings for any offence or any matter arising under:
 - a. legislation which gives the Council a right or duty to prosecute
 - b. any order notice or licence issued in pursuance to any legislation under which the Council has powers or duties
 - c. any other order or regulation under which the Council has powers or duties
- (3) to make changes to a political group's appointments to Committees, Panels and Working Parties, during and for the remainder of the Municipal Year in question, on the recommendation of the Group Leader and specifically to fill a casual vacancy which has arisen or to address situations of long-term absence, and subject to:
 - (1) the political balance of the Committee etc or the authority's basket of appointments not being affected
 - (2) the Monitoring Officer reporting the change to the next meeting of Council

6. Proper Officer Appointments

- 6.1 The following table, subject to 2 and 3 below, sets out the proper officer appointments of the Council.
- 6.2 Legislation in these tables includes any amendments, re-enactments and subordinate legislation.

6.3 In relation to any other proper officer appointments which are contained with legislation, whether that legislation was made before or after this list was approved and requiring a proper officer appointment, or authorised officer the Chief Executive (or the Deputy Chief Executive in their absence) shall be delegated the responsibility to allocate all such functions to appropriate officers, in consultation with the Leader.

Legislation		Responsibility	Proper officer
Public Health Act 1936	S85	To serve notice requiring remedial action where there are verminous persons or articles	Assistant Director of Planning, Transport & Public Protection
	S84	Cleansing of filthy and verminous articles	
Public Health Act 1961	S37	Controlling verminous things	Assistant Director of Planning, Transport & Public Protection
Registration Services Act 1953		To be the Proper Officer (the Proper Officer is called the Superintendent Registrar) for the purposes of the Registration Act 1953, the Marriage Act 1949 (as amended by the Marriage Act 1994) the Civil Partnership Act 2004, the and the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 and to set fees and offer discounts where applicable.	Superintendent Registrar, appointed by Head of Community Services
Local Government Act 1972	Section 83(1) to (4)	Witnessing and receiving declarations of acceptance of office	Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer
	Section 84(1)	Receiving a Councillor's resignation	Monitoring Officer
	Section 88 (2)	Calling a Council meeting to elect a Mayor if there is a casual vacancy	Chief Executive
	Section 89	Giving notice of a casual vacancy	AD of Legal and Democratic Services
	Section 100B	Access to Agenda and Connected Reports	Monitoring Officer
	Section 100C	Inspection of minutes and other documents after the meeting	Monitoring Officer
	Section 100D	Listing background papers for reports and making copies available for the public to look at	Monitoring Officer
	Section 100F	Additional right of access to documents for members	Monitoring Officer
	Section 115	Receiving money due from officers	Director of Finance
	Section 151	Responsibility for the administration of the Council's financial affairs.	Director of Finance
	Section 191	Receiving applications under Section 1 of the Ordnance Survey Act 1841	Chief Valuer or AD
	Section 210	To exercise certain residual functions relating to charities	AD of Legal and Democratic Services
	Section 225	Depositing documents	AD of Legal and Democratic Services
	Section 228(3)	Making accounts available for Councillors to look at	Director of Finance
	Section 229(5)	Certifying photocopies of documents	AD of Legal and Democratic Services

Local Government Act 1972	Section 234	Authenticating documents	AD of Legal and Democratic Services
	Section 238	Certifying byelaws	AD of Legal and Democratic Services
	Section 248	Keeping a list of Honorary Aldermen and Freemen	Chief Executive
	Schedule 12, paragraph 4(2)(b)	Signing the summons to Council	Chief Executive
	Schedule 14, paragraph 25 (7)	Certifying resolutions passed under this paragraph	AD of Legal and Democratic Services
Local Government Act 1974	Section 30(5)	Giving notice that copies of an Ombudsman's report are available	AD of Legal and Democratic Services as MO
Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976	Section 41(1) Section 41 (2A)	Certifying copies of resolutions and minutes	AD of Legal and Democratic Services
	Sections 16, 23, 25 and 29	Relating to requisitions for information, dangerous trees, dangerous excavations and protection of buildings	AD of Planning, Transport and Public Protection
	Part II	To act as Authorised Officer for the purposes of Part II (Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles)	AD of Planning, Transport and Public Protection
	SS50(4), 53(3), 56(2), (3) & 4, 58(2), 68 and 72	To appoint additional authorised Officers, where necessary,	AD of Planning, Transport and Public Protection
Rent Act 1977	Part IV	To exercise the functions of proper officer under the provisions of Part IV of the Rent Act 1977	AD of Planning, Transport and Public Protection
Representation of the People Act 1983 And Section 87 of the Local Government Act 1972		With the exception of powers reserved to the Council as set out in Article 4, to exercise the Council's powers and duties in relation to electoral registration and local and parliamentary elections.	AD of Legal and Democratic Services
Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984	S48 S59	Certifying that the retention of a body in a building would endanger health Authentication of documents relating to matters within the post's responsibility	Director of Public Health
Access to Information Act 1985	All		AD of Legal and Democratic Services
Berkshire Act 1986	Sections 32, 33, 35, 36, 37 and	Fire and safety matters	AD of Planning, Transport and Public Protection

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Local Government and Housing Act 1989	Section 2	To retain on deposit a list of politically restricted posts	Monitoring Officer
	Section 4	Designated as 'Head of Paid Service'.	Chief Executive
	Section 5	Designated as Monitoring Officer	AD of Legal and Democratic Services
	Section 6	Officer responsible for financial administration	Director of Finance
		To undertake all matters relating to the formal establishment of political groups within the membership of the Council.	Monitoring Officer
Food Safety Act 1990		To act as Proper Officer for the purposes of the Act, including the authentication of documents.	Assistant Director of Planning, Transport & Public Protection
Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regs 1990	All	Dealing with political balance on committees	Monitoring Officer
Local Authorities (Referendum) (Petitions and Directions) Functions Regulations 2000	Part 2	Petitions and Referendums	AD of Legal and Democratic Services
Local Government Act 2000		Acting as PO for all the responsibilities under the LGA2000 and subordinate legislation	Monitoring Officer
Freedom of Information Act 2000	Section 36	Qualified Person to grant exemption	Monitoring Officer

Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) regulations 2001		Giving notice of appointments and dismissals of officers in accordance with the regulations	Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer
Housing Act 2004	Section 4	To inspect where an 'official complaint' on the condition of residential premises under Sub-Section 2 is received and, where Sub-Section 6 applies, to produce a report	AD of Planning, Transport & Public Protection
Traffic Management Act 2004	Section 17(2)	To act as the Council's Transport Manager in respect of the performance of the authority's network management duty.	AD of Planning, Transport & Public Protection
Mental Capacity Act 2005	Section 45	To act as the Appointee of the Department of Work and Pensions and Deputy of the Court of Protection	Director of Adult Social Care
Coroners and Justice Act 2009		To appoint coroners	AD of Planning, Transport and Public Protection in consultation with AD for

			Legal and Democratic Services
Health Protection (Notification Regulations) 2010	Regs 2, 3, and 6	Receipt and disclosure of notification of suspected notifiable disease, infection or contamination in patients and dead persons	Director of Public Health
Localism Act 2011	Section 33	Determination of written requests from members for dispensations where they have a disclosable pecuniary interest	Monitoring Officer
Local Authorities Petition Regulations 2011	Reg 4	To publish the verification number of Local Government electors for the purposes of petitions for holding a referendum on changing to a different form of governance	AD of Legal and Democratic Services
Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (England) Regulations 2012		Conducting Referenda	AD of Legal and Democratic Services
Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012	Reg 7	Access to agenda and connected reports for public meetings	Monitoring Officer
	Reg 10	General exception to publication and access duties	Monitoring Officer
	Reg 15	Inspection of background papers	Monitoring Officer
	Reg 20	Confidential Information and exempt information	Monitoring Officer

* In relation to appointments of proper officers under section 234 of the Local Government Act 1972 the appointments shall be to each of the officers to sign, any notice, order or other document required to be made, given, or issued to give effect to the powers delegated to them only where:

- (i) They or one of their staff has budgetary or management responsibility for that function; and
- (ii) The officer appointed is qualified to carry out the functions of a proper officer; and
- (iii) The Council's standing orders or the law does not require the function to be carried out by someone else.

7. Statutory Officers

Legislation	Function	Officer
S4 Local Government & Housing Act 1989	Head of Paid Service	Chief Executive
S5 Local Government & Housing Act 1989	Monitoring Officer	Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services
S151 Local Government Act 1972 and Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988	Chief Finance Officer	Director of Finance

Sections 8 and 35, Representation of the People Act 1983	Electoral Registration Officer	Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services
S24(3) Representation of the People Act 1983	Returning Officer	Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services
S6(A1) Local Authority Social Services Act 1970	Director of Adult Social Services	Executive Director of Adult Care & Health Services
S18 Children Act 2004	Director of Children's Services	Executive Director of Children's Services
S71(1)(a) Weights and Measures Act 1985	Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures	Public Protection Manager
S21ZA of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended by Section 31 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009)	Scrutiny Officer	Democratic Services Manager
Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR	Data Protection Officer	Customer Relations & Information Governance Manager
Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 as amended	RIPA Monitoring Officer	Customer Relations & Information Governance Manager
Section 2(6)(zb) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, inserted by Schedule 5 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012.	Director of Public Health	Director of Public Health Berkshire West

Part 4 - Rules of Procedure

Council and Committee Procedure Rules (Standing Orders)

AS TO TYPES OF MEETINGS

1. ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

1.1 Timing and Business

In a year when there is an ordinary election of Councillors, the annual meeting will take place within 21 days of the retirement of the outgoing Councillors. In any other year, the annual meeting will take place in March, April or May.

The annual meeting will:

- (i) elect a person to preside if the Mayor is not present;
- (ii) elect the Mayor;
- (iii) elect the Deputy Mayor;
- (iv) approve the minutes of the last meeting;
- (v) receive any announcements from the Mayor and/or Head of Paid Service;
- (vi) appoint the Leader, Deputy Leader and Lead Councillors;
- (vii) approve the arrangements for the exercise of the authority's statutory overview and scrutiny functions;
- (viii) approve a programme of ordinary meetings of the Council for the year; and
- (ix) consider any business set out in the notice convening the meeting.

1.2 Selection of Councillors on Committees

At the annual meeting, the Council meeting will:

- (i) decide which committees and sub-committees to establish for the municipal year;
- (ii) decide the size and terms of reference for those committees and sub-committees;
- (iii) decide the allocation of seats [and substitutes] to political groups in accordance with the political balance rules;
- (iv) receive nominations of Councillors to serve on each committee, sub-committee and outside body; and
- (v) appoint to those committees, sub-committees and outside bodies.
- (vi) appoint the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of those committees in accordance with Standing Order

2. ORDINARY MEETINGS

Ordinary meetings of the Council will take place in accordance with a programme decided at the Council's annual meeting.

3. EXTRAORDINARY MEETINGS

3.1 Calling Extraordinary Meetings.

Those listed below may request the Head of Paid Service to call Council meetings in addition to ordinary meetings:

- i) the Council by resolution;
- ii) the Mayor;
- iii) the Leader;
- iv) the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer, or Chief Finance Officer; and
- v) any five members of the Council if they have signed a requisition presented to the Mayor and he/she has refused to call a meeting or has failed to call a meeting within seven days of the presentation of the requisition.

3.2 Business

The business at such meetings shall be limited to the purposes for which the meeting was called as set out in the notice of the meeting.

AS TO MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL – MOTIONS, QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

4. Arrangements for Meetings

4.1 Start of Meeting

At each meeting of the Council, the Chair must be taken at exactly the time at which the meeting is due to start. The business of the meeting must begin immediately.

4.2 Chair of the Meeting

If the Mayor does not chair the meeting, any other person who takes the Chair will have all the powers and duties of the Mayor relating to the conduct of the meeting.

4.3 Quorum for the Meeting

- (1) The quorum for a meeting is the number of Councillors required to be present before the meeting can take place, or continue.
- (2) The quorum for a Council meeting is a quarter of all members of the Council. This currently is 12.
- (3) If, during a Council meeting, the Mayor or another Councillor notices that there is not a quorum present, the Mayor must announce that this is the case and adjourn the meeting. At that time the Mayor should set a time for the meeting to restart. If the Mayor does not set a time for the meeting to restart, any business that has not been dealt with will be adjourned to the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

4.4 Adjournment Motion

At the end of any speech after 9.30 pm, any Councillor can move a motion to adjourn the meeting until 6.30 pm the next day. There must be no debate on this motion. If an adjournment motion is lost, no Councillor may move another adjournment motion within the next hour.

5. Order of Business

- (1) The Summons for a Council meeting shall set out the items of business to be considered at that meeting.
- (2) The first four items of business at each Council meeting will be:
 - (a) To choose someone to take the Chair if the Mayor or Deputy Mayor are absent;
 - (b) Mayor's announcements;
 - (c) To deal with any business that is required by law to be dealt with before other business;
 - (d) To approve and sign the Minutes of the last meeting of the Council as a correct record.

For ordinary meetings of the Council, the following items should be considered next:

- (e) To consider any motion to remove the Leader, in which case the item must be followed by (f);
 - (f) To appoint the Leader of the Council (where required);
 - (g) To receive petitions under Standing Order 8;
 - (h) To answer questions under Standing Order 9;
 - (i) To answer questions under Standing Order 10;
 - (j) To consider reports or announcements from the Leader of the Council or Lead Councillors;
 - (k) To receive presentations on matters for which there are reports from officers;
 - (l) To consider reports from officers;
 - (m) To consider recommendations from Committees, and associated reports;
 - (n) To consider motions in the order in which they have been received;
 - (o) To deal with any business remaining from the last meeting;
 - (p) Any other business specified in the Summons.
- (3) The order of items may be changed:
 - (a) At the discretion of the Mayor;
 - (b) By Motion. The motion must be moved, seconded and put to the vote without discussion. This motion need not be in writing.

6. Motions which do not Need to be Submitted in Writing before the Meeting

The following motions do not need to be submitted in writing before the meeting. They should however be proposed and seconded and put in writing before they are discussed:-

- (a) To move a motion about the accuracy of the Minutes;
- (b) To move a motion to do with the Mayor's announcements;
- (c) To refer an item back to a Committee for further consideration;
- (d) To appoint a Committee of one or more of its Members arising from an item mentioned in the Summons to the meeting;
- (e) To consider reports from and the Minutes of Committees or other bodies or Officers, and to move any other resolutions that are necessary because of this;
- (f) To suspend Standing Orders, in accordance with Standing Order 26;
- (g) To exclude the public under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended);
- (h) To request a Councillor to stop speaking, or to leave the meeting, in accordance with Standing Order 21;
- (i) To give the consent of the Council where it is required under Standing Orders.

The following motions do not need to be in writing at all:-

- (j) To appoint a Chair of the meeting;
- (k) To ask permission to withdraw a motion;
- (l) To move to the next item of business;
- (m) To vote on the motion or amendment being discussed, in accordance with Standing Order 16;
- (n) To adjourn the meeting under Standing Order 4.

- (o) To change the order of business under Standing Order 5(3)(b)

7. Motions which Need to be Submitted in Writing before the Meeting

- (1) If a Councillor wishes to move a motion at a Council meeting (except those listed in Standing Order 6) the Councillor must submit it in writing. The motion must be sent to and received by the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services at least six clear working days before the Council meeting. **(This means that if the Council meeting is on a Tuesday, the motion must be received in writing by 12.00 noon on the Friday two weeks before, assuming that no Bank Holidays fall within this period).**
- (2) The Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services will number and date all motions in the order they are received and keep a record which can be inspected by all Councillors.
- (3) The Summons to the meeting will set out all the motions which have been submitted in accordance with paragraph 7(1) above in the order in which they have been received, unless:
 - (a) The Councillor submitting the motion states in writing that he/she wants the motion to be considered at a later meeting of the Council instead;
 - (b) The Councillor submitting the motion has withdrawn it, in writing. A Councillor may withdraw any motion of which he/she has given notice that he/she will move up till midday two clear working days before the Council meeting. **(This means that if a Council meeting is on a Tuesday, the Motion may be withdrawn up to 12 noon on the preceding Thursday.)**
- (4) If a Councillor does not move a motion which he/she has submitted in writing, and it is not moved by someone else on his/her behalf, it will not be considered at the meeting. However, the Council can agree to consider the motion at a future meeting, instead. If the Council does not agree to do this, the Councillor may submit the motion in writing again for a future meeting.
- (5) Each motion must be relevant to the Council's powers and duties or be about a matter which affects the Borough or its residents.

8. Petitions

- (1) A member of the public may present a petition to Council or a Committee provided the petition has not previously been considered by a committee, sub-committee or other body established by the Council.
- (2) Petitions presented must be received by the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services by not later than 12 noon four clear working days before the day of the meeting. **(For example, this means that if a Council meeting is on a Tuesday, the petition must be received in writing by 12 noon on the Tuesday before).**
- (3) Petitions must be presented in the order in which they have been received.
- (4) A petitioner may only submit one petition to any Council or Committee meeting. The petitioner may present the petition to the Council or Committee but may not speak for longer than three minutes in total, and the Mayor or Chair shall be able to set a shorter time limit if the number of petitions being presented to the Council or Committee meeting in question warrants this.
- (5) The same petition may only be presented once and may not be submitted to a subsequent meeting of another meeting.
- (6) Where petitions are submitted to the Council or Committee:
 - (a) The Leader or Lead Councillor or Chair responsible will reply to the petition, and, if appropriate, may indicate the body of the authority to which the petition will be referred.
 - (b) There will be no right of reply by the petitioner, and no debate.
 - (c) The time limit for the consideration of petitions and questions from members of the public is thirty minutes in total.

- (d) If petitions are not presented or heard within the time limit they will be referred to the relevant Committee, Sub-Committee or other Council body.
- (e) Where a petition is submitted to the Council signed by 1,500 or more people who live, work or study in the local authority's area, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, at the request of the Lead Petitioner, will include the topic of the petition on the next available appropriate agenda to allow a debate on the matter. [Petitioners must demonstrate they live, work or study in the Borough for example by providing a valid postcode for their home address or place of work or study on signing the petition. Petitioners who do not live, work or study in the Borough will not be counted towards the 1,500 signatories that can trigger a debate].
- (f) That, in relation to Council Procedure Rule 8(6)(e) above, the petition organiser will be entitled to address the Council or Committee on the topic of the petition but may not speak for longer than five minutes in total without special dispensation from the Mayor.
- (g) If the petition is about a planning application or a licensing application or a matter before the Standards Committee refer to Council Procedure Rule 36(4).

9. Questions from Members of the Public

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this Standing Order, a member of the public may ask a question:
 - (i) about any matter relating to the Council's powers and duties;
 - (ii) about a matter which affects the Borough or its residents; or
 - (iii) about a matter which affects an organisation on which the Council is represented by a Councillor appointed or nominated by it, **and** which falls within (ii) above.
- (2) Any such question may be answered by the following, as appropriate:
 - (a) the Leader or Lead Councillors
 - (b) a Committee or Sub-Committee Chair
 - (c) any Councillor appointed or nominated by the Council to an outside body
- (3) Questions under this Standing Order must be submitted by the questioner in writing to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services by not later than 12 noon four clear working days before the meeting **(This means that, for example, if the meeting is on a Tuesday, the question must be received in writing by 12 noon on the Tuesday before, assuming that no Bank Holidays fall within this period)**.
- (4) Any person specified in (2)(a), (b) or (c) above, may reserve the right to reply in writing to a question submitted in accordance with (1) above, where s/he considers:
 - (a) that the question is a repetition of a question asked at a previous meeting of the Council within the last twelve months;
 - (b) that the reply contains purely factual information and could more readily be provided in written form;
 - (c) that to reply orally would represent an inappropriate use of the time provided for questions from members of the public under Standing Order 9(6) below.
- (5) The member of the public shall ask the question himself/herself. To clarify a reply to the question s/he has asked, a member of the public may ask one supplementary question, provided the reply to the original question was not given under the provisions of Standing Order 9(4) above. If the questioner is not present, the question will be answered in writing as provided in Standing Order 11(3).
- (6) The time limit at each Council meeting for questions from members of the public and petitions is thirty minutes in total. This time limit cannot be extended. There shall also be a time limit of five minutes for each answer given orally to a question from a member of the public.
- (7) A member of the public may ask no more than three questions at any one Council meeting
- (8) Questions answered in writing and questions which are not answered because they fall out of time shall be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting, in the same manner as those answered orally.

10. Questions from Councillors

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this Standing Order, a Councillor may ask a question about any matter relating to the Council's powers and duties; or which affects the Borough or its residents or which affects an organisation on which the Council is represented by a Councillor appointed or nominated by it.
- (2) Any such question may be answered by the following as appropriate:
 - (a) the Leader or Lead Councillors
 - (b) a Committee or Sub-Committee Chair
 - (c) any Councillor appointed or nominated by the Council to an outside body
- (3)
 - (a) Subject to (b) below, questions under this Standing Order must be delivered in writing to the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services by no later than 12 noon four clear working days before the meeting. **(This means that, for example, if the meeting is on a Tuesday, the question must be received in writing by 12 noon on the Tuesday before, assuming that no Bank Holidays fall within this period).**
 - (b) The time limit set out in (a) above may be waived to allow a Councillor to ask a question on any matter as described therein, where the Mayor and the Monitoring Officer are satisfied that the circumstances giving rise to the question have arisen after the date specified and that the matter is of genuine urgency, and provided that the question is received in writing by 12 noon on the day before the Council meeting.
 - (c) Questions asked under Standing Order 10(3)(b) shall not be subject to the time limit at each Council meeting for questions from Councillors, specified in Standing Order 10(4).
- (4) The time limit at each Council meeting for questions from Councillors is thirty minutes. This time limit cannot be extended. There shall also be a time limit of five minutes for each answer given orally to a question from a Councillor.
- (5) The Councillor shall ask the question him/herself. In his/her absence the question shall be asked by the relevant Group Leader or his/her nominee. To clarify a reply to a question, any Councillor may ask a supplementary question. Only one supplementary may be asked unless the Mayor allows more.
- (6) A Councillor may ask no more than three questions at any one Council meeting.
- (7) Questions answered in writing shall be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting in the same manner as those answered orally.

11. Rules applying to all Questions asked under Standing Orders 9 and 10

- (1) Questions will be asked in the order received by the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services.
- (2) The Councillor of whom the question is asked may decide how to reply and may ask any other Councillor to reply on his/her behalf.
- (3) If questions are not answered within the time limit the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services will ensure that the Councillor or member of the public receives a written answer within two days of the Council meeting.

12. Minutes of Council Meetings

- (1) A copy of the Minutes of each meeting of the Council must be sent to each Councillor before the next ordinary scheduled meeting of the Council.

Where an extraordinary meeting of the Council has been called (under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972), the Minutes of this meeting will be sent to each Councillor before the next ordinary scheduled meeting of the Council and will be signed at that meeting.

- (2) If a report or document mentioned in the Minutes has been sent separately to each Councillor, or is required by law to be published, it need not be sent out with the Council Minutes.
- (3) The Mayor must ask whether the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the day of constitute a correct record.
- (4) No discussion must take place about the Minutes, except about their accuracy. Any questions on the accuracy of the Minutes must be asked by a Member moving a motion. If no question is raised, or when a question has been raised and dealt with, the Mayor shall sign the Minutes.

13. Consideration of Recommendation from Committees

- (1) When a Committee makes a recommendation to the Council, an item shall be included on the Agenda for the next Council meeting and a report on the matter, including the Committee recommendation, shall be circulated with the agenda for the Council Meeting at which the recommendation is considered, or sent to each Councillor, on or before the day of the Council meeting.
- (2) Where a recommendation is made to Council by a Committee, it will be moved by the Chair or Vice-Chair, or by the responsible Lead Councillor, or by another Councillor nominated by the Chair or Vice-Chair, as appropriate.

Where a recommendation is made to Council by an officer in a report, it will be moved by the Leader or the responsible Lead Councillor or by another relevant Councillor.

- (3) Any amendment to a recommendation of a Committee must be put in writing and be available to the Council before it can be discussed.
- (4) The rules for debating recommendations from Committees are the same as those applying to motions or amendments, as set out in Standing Order 14.

AS TO RULES OF DEBATE

14. Motions or Amendments

- (1) All motions and amendments must be proposed and seconded.
- (2) A motion or an amendment must be put in writing and be available to the Council before it can be discussed, unless it arises under Standing Orders 6(j) to (o), 14(10) & (11), 16, 21 and 26.

(3) Seconder's Speech

A Councillor who seconds a motion or an amendment, does not have to speak immediately, but may reserve his/her right to speak until later in the debate.

(4) One Councillor to Speak at a Time

If two or more Councillors indicate they wish to speak together, the Mayor will ask one to speak and the others should then wait to be called to speak by the Mayor. When a Councillor is speaking, other Councillors must remain silent unless to make a point of order or to give a personal explanation.

(5) Content and Length of Speeches

A Councillor must only speak on the subject under discussion, in personal explanation or on a point of order. A Councillor may only speak for five minutes. A mover of a motion must limit his/her speech and reply to the debate to five minutes each, unless the Council allows otherwise.

(6) **When a Councillor may Speak Again**

A Councillor may only speak once on any motion whilst it is the subject of debate. The exceptions to this rule are:

- (a) If he/she wishes to speak once on an amendment moved by another Councillor;
- (b) If the motion has been amended since he/she last spoke, to move a further amendment;
- (c) If his/her first speech was on an amendment moved by another Councillor, he/she may speak to the main motion, whether or not the amendment was carried;
- (d) To exercise his/her right of reply;
- (e) On a point of order;
- (f) In personal explanation.

(7) **Amendments to Motions**

Amendments must be relevant to the Motion. They may only be moved:

- (a) To refer a subject of debate to a Committee for consideration or reconsideration;
- (b) To leave out words;
- (c) To leave out words and insert or add others;
- (d) To insert or add words;
- (e) Not to approve a recommended item contained in a set of Minutes submitted to the Council.

An amendment must only be used to make changes to the substance of a motion. It must not be used simply to negate the Motion.

- (8) Only one amendment may be moved and discussed at a time. A Councillor must not move a further amendment until the amendment under discussion has been dealt with.
- (9) If an amendment is lost, other amendments can be moved on the original motion. If an amendment is carried, the amended motion takes the place of the original motion. The amended motion then becomes the motion upon which any other amendment can be moved.

(10) **Alteration of a Motion**

If Council gives its consent (which must be given without discussion) a Councillor may:

- (a) Alter a motion which he/she has submitted in writing before it is moved;
- (b) Alter a motion which he/she has moved, with the agreement of the seconder.

Any alteration made by the mover of a motion must be one that could be moved as an amendment to the motion (see Standing Order 14(7) above).

(11) **Withdrawal of a Motion**

A motion or an amendment, once moved and seconded, may be withdrawn by the Councillor who moved it, with the consent of the Council. This must be without discussion. No Councillor can speak about the motion once permission has been given to withdraw the motion.

(12) **Right to Reply**

- (a) The mover of a motion has a right of reply at the end of debate on the motion, just before it is put to the vote;
- (b) The mover of an amendment has the right of reply on his/her amendment. The Mayor will not call upon him/her to reply, however, until the mover of the motion has had the opportunity to speak about the amendment;
- (c) The mover of an amendment or motion must not introduce any new issues in his/her right of reply.

15. Motions which may be Moved during Debate

When a motion is being debated, no other motion shall be moved, except the following:

- (a) To amend the motion;
- (b) To adjourn the meeting under Standing Order 4;
- (c) To vote upon the motion;
- (d) To request a Councillor not to speak again under Standing Order 21;
- (e) To request a Councillor to leave the meeting, under Standing Order 21;
- (f) To exclude the public under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended);
- (g) To ask permission to withdraw a motion;
- (h) To give the consent of the Council where it is required under Standing Orders.

16. Closure Motions

- (1) At the end of any speech the Councillor, whether or not he/she has spoken to the motion or amendment, may move ‘that the motion or amendment be voted upon’.
- (2) If the Mayor thinks that the matter has been discussed sufficiently, he/she must ask the Council to vote on the motion that a vote be taken. If the motion that a vote be taken is passed, before the vote is taken the Mayor must:
 - (a) If it is a motion, allow the mover of the motion a right of reply;
 - (b) If it is an amendment, allow the mover of the motion to speak if he/she has not already done so, and then allow the mover of the amendment to reply.

17. Points of Order

- (1) A Councillor should stand up if he/she has a point of order or wishes to give a personal explanation. He/she must be heard immediately.
- (2) A point of order must relate to either an alleged breach of Standing Orders or statutory provision. The Councillor must specify what Standing Order or statutory provision he/she considers to have been breached and how he/she considers it to have been breached.
- (3) A personal explanation must relate to part of a former speech he/she has made earlier in the debate, which appears to have been misunderstood.
- (4) The Mayor must decide whether a point of order or a personal explanation is relevant. The Mayor’s ruling is final.

18. Respect for the Chair

Councillors must always address the Mayor. Whenever the Mayor stands up during a debate, any Councillor must stop speaking, and the Council must be silent.

19. Use of Official Titles

When speaking, all Councillors must refer to other Councillors or Officers by their official titles.

20. Debate affecting People employed by the Council

The appointment, promotion, dismissal, salary, superannuation, conditions of service or conduct of an employee of the Council, must not be discussed until the Council has considered whether the public should be excluded under Section 100A or Section 100E of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

21. Disorderly Conduct at Council Meetings

- (1) The Mayor should advise the Council if he/she considers that, during a meeting of the Council, a Councillor is:
 - (a) Misconducting himself/herself by ignoring the ruling of the Chair; or
 - (b) Behaving irregularly, improperly or offensively; or
 - (c) Wilfully obstructing the business of the Council.

The Mayor, or any Councillor may move ‘that the Councillor named must not speak again’ on the matter being discussed. If the motion is seconded, it must be put to the vote without discussion.

- (2) If the Councillor in question continues his/her misconduct after such a motion has been carried, the Mayor shall:
 - (a) Move ‘that the Councillor named must leave the meeting’. This motion should be put to the vote without seconding or discussion; or
 - (b) Adjourn the meeting for such time that he/she considers necessary.
- (3) If there is a general disturbance which the Mayor feels makes it impossible to continue with the business of the meeting, he/she may, without debate, adjourn the meeting for any length of time that he/she considers necessary.

22. Interruption of a Meeting by Members of the Public

If members of the public interrupt the proceedings of a meeting, the Mayor should warn them that if they do not stop, they will be asked to leave the meeting. If they continue the interruption, the Mayor may order the members of the public to leave the Council Chamber. If there is a general disturbance in the part of the Chamber open to the public, the Mayor must order everyone in that part of the Chamber to leave.

23. Resolutions already made by the Council or Committees

- (1) The Council may only pass a motion:
 - (a) To cancel any motion, resolution or amendment which has been passed by the Council or by a Committee or Sub-Committee exercising delegated powers, within the last six months; or
 - (b) Which would have the same effect as any motion, amendment or resolution that has been moved and lost at a Council meeting within the last six months;

if permission to move the motion is given at a meeting of the Council where at least 24 Councillors are present and vote in favour.

- (2) If a Committee or Sub-Committee wishes to cancel a resolution it has made itself, it must take a recommendation directly to the Council. The decision cannot be cancelled unless at least 24 Councillors are present and vote to give permission to move a motion to cancel the decision.
- (3) Once the Council has given this permission, the motion to cancel a decision still has to be moved. This does not have to be passed by 24 Councillors, but by a simple majority.
- (4) The period of six months will begin from the end of the meeting at which the decision has been made.

24. Voting

- (1) Subject to (3) below, all voting will be done by show of hands, unless three Councillors demand that the vote be recorded. If this happens, then the names of those voting for or against the motion or amendment must be taken down in writing and entered in the Minutes. Any Councillor present who does not vote must declare that he/she is abstaining.
- (2) Where a non-recorded vote has been taken, any Councillor may request immediately after the vote that how s/he voted, or the fact that s/he abstained from voting, should be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting.
- (3) Where any vote is taken at a Council meeting on setting the budget for the authority, then the Minutes of the meeting will record the names of all Councillors present at the vote and how each Councillor voted (for or against) or the fact that they abstained from voting. Therefore every such vote shall be treated as a recorded vote under (2) above.

Such votes will be on any decision to make the budget calculation required under Sections 31A, 31B, 34 to 36A, 42A, 42B, 45 to 49, 52ZF and 52Z of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, or to issue a precept under Chapter 4 of Part 1 to that Act,

These decisions will have been included as items of business on the agenda for the meeting.

25. Recommendations from Scrutiny Reviews undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny Panels

- (1) This Standing Order applies where a Committee is undertaking, at the request of the Council, a scrutiny review of a function of the authority under the provisions of para. 6.3(b) of Article 6 to the Constitution.
- (i) A Committee may at any time during the course of a scrutiny review make interim recommendations to the Council seeking authority to proceed to the next stages of the review. These recommendations may be accompanied by a report and shall be considered in accordance with Standing Orders 5(2)(m) and 13 to 24.
 - (ii) At the conclusion of each individual scrutiny review the Committee shall submit its conclusions and any recommendations which may be accompanied by a report to the next available meeting of the Council.
 - (iii) When the recommendations first appear before the Council in accordance with paragraph (ii) above, the Chair of the Committee shall introduce the report following which the Leader or relevant Lead Councillor shall make a statement in relation to the report and its recommendations.
 - (iv) The Council, having debated the recommendations, may take one or more of the following decisions in respect of all or individual recommendations:
 - a. to accept the recommendations – in which case they will then be implemented
 - b. to accept the recommendations with amendments – in which case they will be implemented unless Council resolves to refer the amendments back to the Committee for further consideration
 - c. to make alternative proposals for the Committee to consider
 - d. to note the recommendations but take no further action
 - e. to reject the recommendations
 - f. a variation of any of the above
 - (v) The recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel shall be dealt with in accordance with the Standing Orders 13 to 24.

AS TO SEALING OF DOCUMENTS, MEMBERS' INTERESTS AND SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

26. Suspension of Standing Orders

The Council may, by passing a resolution, suspend all or any of its Standing Orders if two thirds of the Councillors present at a meeting of the Council, at the time when the vote is taken, vote to give permission to do so.

27. Sealing of Documents

- (1) The Common Seal of the Council must be kept in the custody of the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services.
- (2) Any documents which need to be sealed before a decision of the Council or a Committee or Sub-Committee can be put into effect, must be sealed with the Common Seal of the Council, **and may be sealed electronically.**
- (3) The Seal shall be attested by **a single officer; the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, or any other officer of the Council delegated by the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to seal on his/her behalf.**

- (4) The Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services must enter the details of each document that has been sealed into a Seal Register. He/she must also record the date on which this was done.

28. Councillors' Interests in Contracts and Other Matters

At any meeting subject to these Standing Orders, if any Councillor present declares that s/he has a disclosable pecuniary interest (as defined in the Member Code of Conduct) which relates to or is likely to affect an item of Council business being transacted at a meeting of the authority at which s/he is present, s/he may make representations, answer questions and give evidence on the item of business, subject to there being equivalent public speaking rights, but s/he may not participate in the discussion or vote on the item of business, and s/he should leave the meeting before any discussion on the item of business takes place at the meeting and before the vote on the item of business is taken.

AS TO CHIEF OFFICERS

The Officer Employment Rules are set out in Part 4 of the constitution.

AS TO MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES

NB References to a Committee shall include a Sub-Committee unless otherwise indicated.

29. Summoning Committees

- (1) Any Committee can be summoned at any time at the request of the Chair, or any three members of the Committee, with the exception of the Standards Committee or the Personnel Committee when a particular post is under discussion.
- (2) Additional meetings of the Policy Committee may be called to deal with urgent items of business as set out in Article 7.7 of this Constitution.

30. Quorum

- (1) The quorum for a meeting is the number of people required to be present before the meeting can take place or continue. The quorum for bodies set up by the Council shall be three unless specified otherwise and for the following meetings is as follows:

Standing Committees (including Policy Committee)	five
Planning Applications Committee	five
Licensing Applications Committee	four
Licensing Applications Sub-Committees	two

- (2) The quorum for the Policy Committee when an additional meeting is called to conduct urgent items of business shall be three, as set out in Article 7.7 of this Constitution.

31. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

The Council may at its Annual Meeting or at any other meeting held for the purpose of appointing Committees, appoint the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of those Committees. More than one Vice-Chair may be appointed for any one Committee.

Subject to the above, the Councillors on each Committee must elect one of their number as Chair at the first meeting of the Committee.

32. Attendance by Councillors at Committees and Overview and Scrutiny Panels

- (1) A Councillor, who is not a member of a particular Committee or Sub-Committee, may attend any meeting of that Committee or Sub-Committee as an observer. If the Councillor wishes to make a statement on any of the items on the Agenda, s/he may do so at the invitation of the Chair. He/she must give notice to the Chair before the meeting that s/he wishes to speak on an item. The Councillor may only make a statement on any matter considered by the Committee or Sub-Committee following a resolution to exclude the press and the public if the Chair is satisfied:
 - (a) that the item directly affects the Ward which the Councillor represents.
 - (b) that the Councillor is the Chair or Vice-Chair of a Committee with an interest in the item.
 - (c) that the Councillor is a Lead Councillor with an interest in the item.

- (2) Standing Order 32(1) does not apply to:
 - (i) a meeting of the Personnel Committee, when a particular post or postholder is under discussion, or to meetings of the Standards Committee. In such cases Standing Order 32(3) below, will apply.
 - (ii) a meeting of a Licensing Applications Sub-Committee dealing with applications and reviews under the Licensing Act 2003. In such cases, a Councillor can only speak at the Sub-Committee meeting if s/he has submitted a relevant representation to the Licensing Authority or is representing another interested party who has submitted a relevant representation (see the Licensing Guidelines for further details).

- (3) When the Standards Committee is meeting, or the Personnel Committee is considering an appointment or matter related to a particular post or post-holder, the Leaders of each group registered with the Head of Paid Service under the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 will have the following rights:
 - (a) If they are not members of the Committee, the right to attend meetings of the Committee as observers (or the right to nominate other Councillors to attend on their behalf)
 - (b) If they are members of the Committee, the right to nominate an additional Councillor to attend the meeting as an observer.

33. Respect for the Chair

Councillors shall always address the Chair. If they are requested by the Chair not to speak further on a particular item, they must not do so.

34. Disorderly Conduct at Committee and Sub-Committee Meetings

- (1) The Chair should advise the meeting if he/she considers that, during a meeting, a member of the Committee or Sub-Committee is:
 - (a) Misconducting himself/herself by ignoring the ruling of the Chair; or
 - (b) Behaving irregularly, improperly or offensively; or
 - (c) Wilfully obstructing the business of the meeting.

- (2) The Chair or any other member of the Committee or Sub-Committee may move 'that the Councillor named must not speak again' on the matter under discussion. If the motion is seconded, it must be put to the vote without discussion.

- (3) If the Councillor continues his/her misconduct after such a motion has been carried, the Chair may:
 - (a) Move 'that the Councillor named must leave the meeting'. This motion must be put to the vote without seconding or discussion; or
 - (b) Adjourn the meeting for such time that he/she considers necessary.

- (4) If there is a general disturbance which the Chair feels makes it impossible to carry on with the business of the meeting he/she may, without question, adjourn the meeting for any length of time that he/she considers necessary.

35. Interruption of Committee Meetings by a Member of the Public

If a person, other than a Councillor, interrupts the proceedings of any meeting, the Chair shall warn him/her that if he/she does not stop he/she will be asked to leave the meeting. If s/he continues the interruption the Chair will order that the member of the public must leave the meeting.

36. Participation by Members of the Public

(1) Subject to (3) and (4) below, members of the public may present a petition to a Standing Committee, subject to:

- The petition being about a matter relating to the Committee's powers and duties; and
- The petition being received by the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services by no later than 12 noon, four clear working days before the day of the meeting.

(This means that, for example, if the meeting is on a Tuesday, the petition must be received in writing by 12 noon on the Tuesday before, assuming that no Bank Holidays fall within this period).

The petition will be dealt with under Standing Order 8 above.

(2) Subject to (3) below, a Councillor or a member of the public may ask the Chair of any Committee (but not the Standards Committee) a question about that body's powers and duties, if:

- (a) It has been submitted in writing to the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services;
- (b) It has been received by him/her by not later than 12 noon four clear working days before the meeting.

(This means that, for example, if the meeting is on a Tuesday, the question must be received in writing by 12 noon on the Tuesday before, assuming that no Bank Holidays fall within this period).

The question will be dealt with under Standing Order 9 or 10 above.

(3) Questions asked in accordance with (2) above shall not be permitted if they involve consideration of confidential information or exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

(4) At meetings of the Planning Applications Committee, Licensing Applications Committee, Standards Committee or their sub-committees, a petition may not be submitted or a question may not be asked about any individual application to be determined or individual case to be heard at the meeting.

(5) There shall be a time limit of 30 minutes for petitions to and questions asked at Committees.

36A. Public Speaking at Planning Applications Committee

(1) Public speaking at meetings of the Planning Applications Committee will be allowed in line with the resolutions of Planning Applications Committee on 23 September 1998 and 7 November 2001 (Minutes 55 and 57 refer):

In every case where an individual planning application is to be considered by the Planning Applications Committee, the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection will:

- a) Inform all people who have commented on a planning application that the application is to be considered by the Committee, and the date of the Committee meeting, and
- b) Send them information about the public speaking arrangements at Planning Committee.

(2) (a) Any persons receiving the information described in 1(a) above may notify the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection that they wish to speak on the application at the Planning Applications Committee meeting, subject to such notification being in writing and being received by the Head of Planning and Building Control by 12 noon two days before the Planning

Applications Committee meeting (**this means that if the Committee meeting is held on a Wednesday, this notification must be received by 12 noon on the preceding Monday**)

- (b) The local Reading MP may also give similar notice that he/she wishes to speak on the application at the Planning Applications Committee, subject to the site being within his/her constituency.
- (3) Where the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection receives a notification under (2) above:
 - a) S/he will then notify the applicant and agent that other person(s) have given notice that they wish to speak on their application at the meeting.
 - b) The applicant and agent may notify the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection, up to 1:00pm of the day of the meeting, that they also wish to speak on the application.
 - c) Applicants/agents may only speak on their application if another person has given notice to speak under (2) above; and where they have themselves given notice to speak under 3(b) above.
- (4) Public speaking will take place after the introduction of the item by the Chair/officers but before discussion of the item by the Committee.
- (5) Public speakers who have given notice will speak first and together will be allowed a maximum of five minutes to address the Committee (unless the Chair of the Committee using his/her discretion, allows a longer period for public speaking), regardless of the number of public speakers, and whether they are objecting or supporting the application.
- (6) The Committee may then ask questions of individual public speakers to clarify any points made by them.
- (7) The applicant/agent of the application will then be allowed a maximum of five minutes to address the Committee.
- (8) The Committee may then ask questions of the applicant/agent to clarify any points made by them.
- (9) No members of the public will be allowed to address the Committee unless they have given notice to speak under (2) above or the Chair of the Committee uses his/her discretion to give such permission to speak.
- (10) Members of Committee will then debate the proposal and make their decision.
- (11) Public speaking may not take place on the same application more than once in any six month period, unless the Chair of the Committee, using his/her discretion, considers it is appropriate to do so, for example in cases where there has been a significant “material change in circumstances” within the preceding six months.

36B Public Participation in Standing Committees

- (1) The Chair of a Standing Committee or Sub-Committee listed in Part 3 of this Constitution may, at his/her discretion, invite members of the public present at the meeting to indicate if they wish to speak on any particular item on the agenda, and to make up to five minutes available on any agenda item for public speaking, subject to:
 - any one member of the public being able to speak on one item only on any Committee agenda;
 - advance notice being encouraged, but not a requirement;
 - the Chair having the discretion to end these flexible arrangements in the event of abuse of the right to speak, for example by representatives of political parties
- (2) The Chair of a Standing Committee or Sub-Committee may invite local residents, stakeholders and partners, and/or members and officers of other bodies providing public services in Reading to attend a Committee meeting, to address the meeting, to discuss issues of local concern and/or answer questions.

- (3) Any Partnership or Advisory /Consultative Panels listed in Article 10 of this Constitution may make recommendations to a relevant Committee or Sub-Committee, in which case a representative of the body may attend the Committee to speak to the agenda item when the recommendation is discussed by the Committee.

36C Putting Items onto Committee Agendas

- (1) The Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services will determine the agenda for each Committee and Sub-Committee meeting, subject to consultation with the Leader and the Head of Paid Service and Chief Financial Officer for the Policy Committee; and the Chair, responsible Lead Councillors and the lead officers for the other Committees.
- (2) The Leader or a Lead Councillor may request the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to include an item on the agenda for the next available meeting of a Committee which covers part of his/her portfolio.
- (3) An Opposition Group Leader or the Mayor may ask the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to put an item on the agenda of a Committee or Sub-Committee meeting for consideration, and if the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic services agrees the item will be considered at the next available meeting, subject to there being no more than two such reports per Committee or Sub-Committee meeting. The notice of the meeting will give the name of the Councillor who asked for the item to be considered.
- (4) The Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and/or the Chief Financial Officer may include items for consideration on the agenda of any Committee or Sub-Committee meeting and may require that an additional meeting of a Committee be called in pursuance of their statutory duties.

37. Debate affecting People employed by the Council

The appointment, promotion, dismissal, salary, superannuation, conditions of service or conduct of an employee of the Council must not be discussed until a Committee or Overview and Scrutiny Panel has considered whether the public should be excluded under Section 100A or Section 100E of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

38. Recording of Vote

Immediately after a vote has been taken, any Councillor may request that how she/he voted, or the fact that he/she abstained from voting, should be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting.

39. Application of Standing Orders to Committee Meetings

NB This Standing Order sets out the Rules of Debate, described in Council Procedure Rule 14 (above), which shall apply to Committee and Sub-Committee meetings.

- (1) Any Councillor who is a member of the Committee or Sub-Committee may move an amendment to a recommendation contained in a report to that committee or Sub-Committee, or a recommendation moved by the Chair.
- (2) All amendments must be proposed and seconded.
- (3) Amendments must be relevant to the motion. They may only be moved:
 - (a) To leave out words
 - (b) To leave out words and insert or add others
 - (c) To insert or add words
- (4) Only one amendment may be moved and discussed at a time. A Councillor must not move a further amendment until the amendment under discussion has been dealt with.
- (5) If an amendment is lost, other amendments can be moved to the original recommendation. If an amendment is carried, the amended recommendation takes the place of the original. The amended

recommendation then becomes the recommendation upon which any other amendments can be moved.

- (6) An amendment, once moved, may be withdrawn by the Councillor who moved it, with the consent of the Committee or Sub-Committee.
- (7) The mover of an amendment has the right of reply on his/her amendment at the end of the debate on the amendment.

40. Rights of Additional Members

- (1) Committees and Sub-Committees shall not include additional members who are not members of the Council unless there is a statutory entitlement to do so.
- (2) Representatives of Foundations Schools and Parent Governors will be co-opted to attend meetings of the Adult Care, Children's Services and Education when it is operating as an overview and scrutiny committee and considering education matters. These additional members may only vote on such education matters.
- (3) Additional members may not serve as chair or vice-chair of a Committee or Sub-Committee.

41. Disclosure of Confidential or Exempt Information by Councillors

- (1) No member or additional member shall disclose or quote in public the contents of any agenda, report or other document which is marked 'confidential' or 'not for publication' unless and until the document has been made available to the public or the press by or on behalf of the Council or a Committee or Sub-Committee.
- (2) No member or additional member shall disclose to a non-member or quote in public any matter that is not otherwise published which has come to his/her knowledge by virtue of his/her office as a member of the Council where such disclosure would or may prejudice the interest of the Council.

41A Councillors' Interests in Contracts and other Matters

Standing Order 28 will apply to all Committees and Sub-Committees.

42. Decision Book

- (1) Subject to the provisions of the constitution relating to the powers of the Council, the powers and duties of the Committees and Sub-Committees, Article 13.7, and the Scheme of Delegations, the Head of Paid Service, the Executive Directors, the Chief Financial Officer and the Monitoring Officer shall have power to take decisions on functions which have not been delegated to an officer, on behalf of the Council or the responsible Committees or Sub-Committee, subject to the following provisions:
 - (a) Before exercising any such delegation, the officer proposing to exercise the delegation shall consult with the relevant Lead Councillor(s) and shall prepare a report on the matter including the precise decision which is to be taken and a list of background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 or any variation of that definition from time to time in force.
 - (b) The Head of Paid Service shall maintain a Decision Book in which all decisions made under this delegation shall be recorded together with copies of reports referred to in (a) above. The Decision Book shall be published on the Council's website and circulated electronically to all Councillors on publication.
 - (c) Copies of the reports shall be given to the press and the public on request in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 or any amendment of it and any Regulation made under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000.
 - (d) Members of the Council may reasonably request such copies of the reports as they require.

- (e) Not less than three Members of the Council may request the Head of Paid Service in writing to refer a decision to the responsible Committee or Sub-Committee within a period of ten days of the decision being included in the Decision Book.
 - (f) Where a reference is requested in accordance with (e) above, no further action shall be taken on the decision in question by any officer unless the Head of Paid Service or Monitoring Officer is of the opinion that delay is likely seriously to damage the interests of the Council.
- (2) This delegation may not be used to take any decision which is inconsistent with the Council's Policy and Budget Framework as described in the constitution.

AS TO SCRUTINY

The Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules are set out in Part 4 of the constitution

AS TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The rules governing the Standards Committee are set out in Article 9 of the constitution.

AS TO REVENUE AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

REVENUE

Council's Annual Budget

45. The Director of Finance shall collate annual revenue estimates as prepared by Assistant Directors and submit them to the Policy Committee, which shall recommend to the Council a budget for the ensuing year. This will include estimates of Council Tax, the General Fund Budget and the Housing Revenue Account or any other accounts that the Council is required or considers appropriate to maintain.

Budget Variations (overspends and underspends)

General Fund

46. The sum of all budget variations which are estimated for the financial year will be considered to be a Key Decision if it exceeds additional net expenditure of £500,000 and results in the estimated level of the General Fund balance at 31 March as calculated by the Director of Finance, falling below the minimum balance requirement recommended by the Director of Finance and approved by Council in setting the budget.

Housing Revenue Account

47. The sum of all budget variations which are estimated for the financial year will be considered to be a Key Decision if it exceeds additional net expenditure of £500,000 and does not result in the estimated level of the HRA balance at 31 March, as calculated by the Director of Finance, falling below the minimum balance requirement recommended by the Director of Finance and approved by Council in setting the budget.

Council would need to consider any request from the Policy Committee, taking into account the advice from the Director of Finance on the level of balances.

Capital Project/Programme Budget

48. A budget variation will be considered to be a Key Decision if it is over £500,000 revenue or over £2.5m capital .

Virement (revenue budgets)

49. A virement shall be considered a Key Decision if it exceeds £500,000.

Virement (capital expenditure)

50. A virement shall be considered a Key Decision if it exceeds £500,000, the virement being between projects/programme within the approved Capital Programme of the service area for which spending approval has been given.

Revenue Virements of less than £500,000 and Capital Virements of less than £500,000 are subject to the procedures set out in the Budget Holders Manual and Financial Regulations.

Annual Accounts

51. After each financial year the Director of Finance shall present to the Council by the 30th September each year, the Annual Accounts and report a comparison of performance against estimates.

CAPITAL

Capital Programmes

- 52.** Assistant Directors shall make arrangements for the preparation of the programme of estimated capital expenditure for consideration by the Policy Committee in consultation with the Director of Finance.

Approval to Spend

- 53.** The inclusion of schemes in programmes of estimated capital expenditure shall not commit the Council to proceed with them, nor authorise expenditure to be incurred on them, except as otherwise provided by the Policy Committee or the Council from time to time in accordance with Standing Order 54 below.
- 54.** A scheme included in the approved capital programme shall remain subject to
- (i) spending approval in detail by the responsible committee or officer, as outlined in the Scheme of Delegation,
 - (ii) the Director of Finance confirming the availability of funds.

Approval of Government Departments

- 55.** In addition to Standing Orders 53-54 above, where works or other matters are subject to the sanction of a Government Department, no contract shall be entered into, no money shall be expended or work done without such sanction being first obtained or a written intimation being received from the Government Department concerned that the sanction will be forthcoming, unless the Council has given specific authority to do so. Spending on projects which are funded, part-funded or otherwise sanctioned by a Government Department shall not commence without the further authority of the Director of Finance in order to ensure that the necessary funds are available.

SCHEDULE 12 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Schedule 12 sets out various minimum requirements which procedural rules should reflect.

Reference should be made to the schedule itself, but in summary it provides that:

- the annual meeting must be held between 8 and 21 days after the retirement of Councillors in an election year, and in March to May in other years;
- any five members can requisition an extraordinary meeting if the chair fails to do so;
- at least five clear days' notice must be given of meetings and a summons must be sent by post or left at the usual place of residence of every member;
- unless otherwise specified, the quorum for a meeting is one quarter of the membership;
- decisions are to be made by simple majority voting, with a casting vote to the chair;
- the names of members at a meeting must be recorded; and
- minutes must be signed at the next suitable meeting.

Access to Information Procedure Rules

1. SCOPE

These rules apply to all meetings of the Council, its Committees and Sub-Committees, the Health & Wellbeing Board, the Standards Committee and Appeals Panels (together called meetings).

2. ADDITIONAL RIGHTS TO INFORMATION

These rules do not affect any more specific rights to information contained elsewhere in this Constitution or the law.

3. RIGHTS TO ATTEND MEETINGS

Members of the public may attend all meetings subject only to the exceptions in these rules.

4. NOTICES OF MEETING

The Council will give at least five clear days' notice of any meeting by posting details of the meeting at the Civic Offices.

5. ACCESS TO AGENDA AND REPORTS BEFORE THE MEETING

The Council will make copies of the agenda and reports open to the public available for inspection at least five clear working days before the meeting. If an item is added to the agenda later, the revised agenda will be open to inspection from the time the item is added to the agenda.

6. SUPPLY OF COPIES

The Council will supply copies of:

- (a) any agenda and reports which are open to public inspection;
- (b) any further statements or particulars necessary to indicate the nature of the items in the agenda; and
- (c) if the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) thinks fit, any other documents supplied to Councillors in connection with an item to any person on payment of a charge for postage and any other costs.

7. ACCESS TO MINUTES ETC AFTER THE MEETING

The Council will make available copies of the following for six years after a meeting:

- (a) the minutes of the meeting or records of decisions taken, together with reasons, for all meetings, excluding any part of the minutes of proceedings when the meeting was not open to the public or which disclose exempt or confidential information;
- (b) a summary of any proceedings not open to the public where the minutes open to inspection would not provide a reasonably fair and coherent record;
- (c) the agenda for the meeting; and
- (d) reports relating to items when the meeting was open to the public.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 List of background papers

The author of the report will set out in every report a list of those documents (called background papers) relating to the subject matter of the report which in his/her opinion:

- (a) disclose any facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based; and
- (b) have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report but do not include published works or those which disclose exempt or confidential information (as defined in Rule 10), and the advice of a political adviser where such officers are appointed.

8.2 Public inspection of background papers

The Council will make available for public inspection for four years after the date of the meeting one copy of each of the documents on the list of background papers.

9. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC'S RIGHTS

A written summary of the public's rights to attend meetings and to inspect and copy documents must be kept at and available to the public at the Civic Offices. These rules constitute that summary.

9.1 General

The Local Government Access to Information Act 1985, provides for greater public access to meetings of the Council, its Committees and Sub-Committees, to reports and associated documents and to minutes. It places a duty on local authorities to publish certain information about its Members and the constitution of its Committees and Sub-Committees.

The main provisions of the Act require that, subject to certain exceptions, all meetings of the Council, etc, shall be open to the public, and not less than five clear days public notice of the time and place of meetings shall be given and that copies of any reports shall be available for inspection during that period of notice.

9.2 Members' Rights of Inspection

The Act also provides that *'any document which is in the possession or under the control of the Council and contains materials relating to any business to be transacted at a meeting of the Council shall be open to inspection by any Member of the Council'*. This right also applies to meetings of Committees and Sub-Committees. However, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services may decline to make documents available for inspection where they contain certain types of information described in the Act.

Requests to inspect documents should be addressed to the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services.

9.3 Inspection of Documents after Meetings

The Act provides that Minutes of meetings (insofar as they do not disclose exempt information), agendas and any reports dealt with whilst a meeting was open to the public shall be available for inspection by members of the public for a period of six years.

Furthermore, in respect of such reports a list of 'background papers' has to be compiled and copies of the list and the papers included in the list must be open to inspection for a period of four years.

'Background papers' are documents which were relied upon to a material extent in compiling the report, excluding published works.

9.4 Information to be published by the Council

Every local authority has to maintain:

1. a register of the names and addresses of every member of the Council and the Ward they represent;
2. the name and address of every Member of each Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council;
3. a list of delegations to each Committee and to each officer of the Council [this is published in Part 3 of the Constitution];

4. a summary of the rights of people to attend meetings of the Council, etc, and to inspect and copy documents;
5. the Members' Allowances Scheme adopted by the Council and the details of payments made under the scheme.

These Registers are open to inspection by the public through their publication on the Council's website.

10. EXCLUSION OF ACCESS BY THE PUBLIC TO MEETINGS

10.1 Confidential information – requirement to exclude public

Confidential information is either information given to the Council by a Government Department upon terms which forbid the disclosure of the information to the public, or information whose disclosure to the public is prohibited by or under any enactment or by an order of a court. In this case the press and public *must* be excluded from the meeting.

10.2 Exempt information – discretion to exclude public

The public may be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that exempt information would be disclosed.

Where the meeting will determine any person's civil rights or obligations, or adversely affect their possessions, Article 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998 establishes a presumption that the meeting will be held in public unless a private hearing is necessary for one of the reasons specified in Article 6.

When the public are to be excluded from a meeting, a motion similar to the following will be moved by the Chair:

“That, pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following Item/s on the agenda, as it is likely that there will be disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.”

10.3 Meaning of exempt information

Exempt information means information falling within the following 7 categories (subject to any condition):

Category	Condition
1) Information relating to any individual	
2) Information that is likely to reveal the identity of an individual	
3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	<p>Not exempt if required to be registered under:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Companies Act 1985 • Friendly Societies Acts 1974 and 1992 • Industrial & Provident Societies Acts 1965 to 1978 • Building Societies Act 1986 * • Charities Act 1993 <p>Relates to past, current or contemplated activities</p> <p>* in relation to the Building Societies Act 1986, “registered” means recorded in the public file of any building society (within the meaning of that act)</p>

Category	Condition
<p>4) Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority</p>	<p>Employee means a person employed under a contract of service</p> <p>Labour relations matter means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any matters specified in paras. (a)-(g) of S218(1) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidations) Act 1992 (matters which may be the subject of a trade dispute) • Any dispute about a matter falling within (a) above <p>Office holder means the holder of any paid office appointments to which are or may be made or confirmed by the authority or by any joint board on which the authority is represented or by any person who holds any such office or is an employee of the authority</p>
<p>5) Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings</p>	
<p>6) Information which reveals the authority proposes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or b. To make an order or direction under any enactment 	
<p>7) Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</p>	

Information falling within any of paragraphs 1-7 is not exempt by virtue of that paragraph if it relates to proposed development for which the local planning authority can grant itself planning permission under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992.

Information falling within any of paragraphs 1-7 above, and which is not prevented from being exempt by virtue of the conditions above, is exempt information if and so long as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it (the public interest test).

11. EXCLUSION OF ACCESS BY THE PUBLIC TO REPORTS

If the proper officer thinks fit, the Council may exclude access by the public to reports which in his or her opinion relate to items during which, in accordance with Rule 10, the meeting is likely not to be open to the public. Such reports will be marked “Not for publication” together with the category of information likely to be disclosed.

12. ADDITIONAL RIGHTS OF ACCESS FOR MEMBERS

12.1 Material relating to previous business

All Members will be entitled to inspect any document which is in the possession or under the control of the Council or its Committees and contains material relating to any business previously transacted at a private meeting unless either (a) or (b) below applies.

- (a) it contains exempt information falling within paragraphs 1, 2, 4, 6 or 7 of the categories of exempt information (subject to the identity of a protected informant not being disclosed); or
- (b) it contains the advice of a political adviser.

12.2 Nature of rights

These rights of a Member are additional to any other right s/he may have.

13. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS

13.1 Rights to copies

Subject to Rule 13.2 below, where a Committee resolves to carry out an overview or scrutiny exercise and sets up a task-and-finish group to do so, the Committee and task-and-finish group will be entitled to copies of any document which is in the possession or control of the Council or its Committees and which contains material relating to:

- (a) any business transacted at a public or private meeting of the Council or its Committees; or
- (b) any decision taken by an individual officer under delegated authority.

13.2 Limit on rights

A Committee or task-and-finish group, when undertaking an overview or scrutiny exercise, will not be entitled to:

- (a) any document that is in draft form;
- (b) any part of a document that contains exempt or confidential information, unless that information is relevant to an action or decision they are reviewing or scrutinising or intend to scrutinise; or
- (c) the advice of a political adviser.

Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules

[18 October 2022 - The Financial Regulations are being reviewed in line with the introduction of the new Financial System and will be reported to Council.

The Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules will be incorporated into the new Financial Regulations. The financial limits will be updated to reflect the new definition for a 'key decision' and will be harmonised with the values set out in the Contract Procedure Rules.]

1. THE FRAMEWORK FOR DECISIONS

- 1.1 Full Council will be responsible for the adoption of the authority's budget framework as set out in Article 4. It will also be responsible for setting the strategic objectives and vision of the authority, and of adopting the policies, plans and strategies set out in paragraph 4.1(a)(i) of Article 4, which by law must be adopted by the authority and cannot be delegated to a committee or officer.
- 1.2 Article 4 also sets out other policies, plans and strategies which have been adopted by the authority, either by the former executive or full Council. These, and any successor documents or new policies, plans and strategies, may now be adopted, approved, amended, modified, varied or revoked by the Committee to which the subject function has been delegated by full Council, or by the Policy Committee.
- 1.3 Once the budget or a policy, plan or strategy is in place, it will be the responsibility of individual Committees to implement it, and operate within it.

Definitions

- 1.4 In Reading the Strategic Finance Director is the Section 151 Officer under the Local Government Act 1972 and the Responsible Officer under Section 113 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. This person is described elsewhere in the Constitution as the Chief Finance (or Financial) Officer. The Head of Finance is the Deputy Section 151 Officer and Deputy Responsible Officer.
- 1.5 The terms of reference of the Policy Committee include making recommendations to full Council on the authority's budget; and ensuring the corporate management of the Council and the efficient and cost-effective delivery of its services to the public. Full Council has not delegated any functions relating to budgets to other Committees.
- 1.6 The Administration is the Leader and Lead Councillors, who together comprise the controlling group's membership of the Policy Committee. The Administration will work with the Chief Executive and the Council Management Team to oversee and monitor the implementation of the budget during each financial year, and to formulate the budget estimates for each forthcoming financial year, and the forward financial plan.

2. PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING THE FRAMEWORK

The process by which the budget and policy framework is developed is set out below:

2.1 BUDGET FRAMEWORK

- 2.1.1 The following is an indicative timetable only, for one financial year.

Timescale	Action
During February	Policy Committee recommends Medium Term Financial Plan to Council in Gold Book. (MTFP will include draft Budget Guidelines).

During the financial year	Policy Committee and Audit & Governance Committee receive regular Budget Monitoring reports covering both revenue and Capital expenditure and income.
Timescale	Action
June/July	Administration and Corporate Management Team (CMT) agree and publish draft Budget Guidelines for the forthcoming year (both Revenue and Capital), for consultation, to be agreed by Policy Committee by the end of July.
Late November/early December	Government Announcements on Local Government Finance Settlement.
January (Statutory deadline of 31 January for Council Tax decisions)	Policy Committee recommends to Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax Base and Collection Rate • Council Tax support scheme <p>Policy Committee receives NNDR estimate</p> <p>Policy Committee or Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee recommends to Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRA Budget and rent levels
15 January Statutory date for Council Tax and NNDR surplus/deficit	Strategic Finance Director estimates Collection Fund surpluses and deficits.
January	Treasury Management and Investment Strategy, Prudential Indicators and MRP Policy Statement presented to Audit & Governance Committee
February	Policy Committee recommends to Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Fund Budget • Council Tax Levels • Capital Programme • Treasury Management and Investment Strategy, Prudential Indicators and MRP Policy Statement.
February	Council agrees the above, and sets the Budget and Council Tax for the new financial year.
By the end of February	Completion of Local Tax billing runs for forthcoming year.
By 11 th March	This date is the legal deadline for setting the General Fund Budget and Council Tax each year.
March/April	Policy Committee agrees Capital Projects for spending approval as appropriate in line with the overall approved Capital Programme.
End June	Strategic Finance Director approves final accounts for external audit
July - September	External audit of accounts
Late August	Public inspection of accounts (3 weeks)
September	Audit & Governance Committee approves the final accounts for the previous financial year

2.1.2 The following paragraphs were added to the Council's budget framework by Council on 23 Jun 2004 to reflect the provisions of Sections 25 to 28 the Local Government Act 2003. They have been updated to reflect subsequent legislation and the move to a committee system form of governance:

Budget Strategy

2.1.3 The Council's Budget Strategy for the forthcoming financial year will be set out in the budget setting report to Policy Committee and Council each year. The report will set out:

(A) General Fund

- 1) Estimates of gross expenditure and income for the current and forthcoming year.
- 2) Estimate of net expenditure forming the Council's Council Tax Requirement for Council Tax setting.
- 3) The level of Council Tax for the forthcoming year.
- 4) Changes to Fees and Charges.
- 5) Budget Risk Assessment.
- 6) The level of the General Fund balance and the advice from the Section 151 Officer on the recommended minimum level of balance to be held and the purpose of holding balances.
- 7) A statement on the level of reserves and provisions including the purpose for which they are held and advice from the Section 151 Officer on the adequacy of any such reserves and provisions.
- 8) The Treasury Management and Investment Strategy, the Section 151 Officer recommendations to comply with the Prudential Code for Local Authority Borrowing and MRP policy statement.
- 9) Forecasts of the General Fund Budget for at least the following two years.

(B) Capital Programme

- 1) Estimates of Forecast Capital Resources and Expenditure for the forthcoming year and up to the following two years.
(Requests for capital spending approval for schemes and programmes will be submitted to Policy Committee in March/April each year.)
- 2) The impact of the Capital Programme on the Revenue Budget for the forthcoming year and over the medium term.

(C) Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The Budget Strategy for the HRA will normally be submitted to Council in January and include:

- 1) Estimated of gross expenditure and income for the current forthcoming year.
- 2) Proposals for rent levels, garage rents and heating and service charges for the forthcoming year.
- 3) Issues relating to the HRA Business Plan.
- 4) The level of HRA balance and advice from the Section 151 Officer on the minimum level of balance to be held, the purpose for holding balances; and advice on the robustness of the HRA over the medium term, and longer (30 year) term.

(D) Consideration of Final Accounts

In considering the final accounts each year the Section 151 Officer:

- 1) Will report on the adequacy of balances, reserves and provisions.
- 2) May review and propose amendments to the Budget Strategy as appropriate.
- 3) Will propose the Council's Treasury Management and Investment Strategy and Prudential Indicators, and MRP Policy as appropriate.

Requirement for Policy Committee to Monitor the Budget

- 2.1.4 To comply with Clause 28 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Strategic Finance Director will submit Budget Monitoring reports to the Policy Committee and Audit & Governance Committee on a regular basis each year (at least quarterly to the Policy Committee, and to three meetings of the Audit & Governance Committee).
- 2.1.5 If, as a result of Budget Monitoring, it appears that there is a forecast deterioration in the financial position of the authority which could affect the budget framework adversely, then the Strategic Finance Director, as the Council's Section 151 Officer, will make recommendations as appropriate to the Policy Committee on the action he/she considers necessary to deal with the situation. If the Policy Committee does not take the action recommended to it, the Section 151 Officer will report on the position to full Council.

2.1.6 Budget Monitoring Reports will include:

Details of forecast variations in expenditure and income compared with the approved budget for both the General Fund and HRA.

- Details of forecast capital expenditure and funding thereof for the financial year.
- Forecast of the level of General Fund and HRA revenue balance.
- Details of any significant issues identified that may impact on Revenue and Capital budgets in the medium term (at least quarterly).
- A risk assessment of the overall budget undertaken by the Section 151 Officer (at least quarterly).
- An update of the Council's Treasury Management and Investment position recommended by the Section 151 Officer (at least quarterly).

2.1.7 Any such recommendations may include reference to the use of balances, reserves and provisions.

2.1.8 The Policy Committee will be required to consider and report on to full Council on any recommendations made by the Section 151 Officer deciding the action it deems necessary to address the situation identified.

Adequacy of Balances, Provisions and Reserves

Minimum Balance Requirement

2.1.9 In accordance with Clauses 26 and 27 of the Local Government Act 2003, as part of the Annual Budget Setting Report to Policy Committee and Council, the Section 151 Officer is required to give advice on the minimum level of balance to be held by the Council throughout the forthcoming year.

2.1.10 In setting the Budget, Council must have regard to the advice given by the Section 151 Officer, and both the advice of the Section 151 Officer and the decision on the level of balance to be held, and reasons for any variance from the advice given be recorded in the minutes of the Council Meeting. (This paragraph is consistent with CIPFA Best Practice Advice.)

Provisions and Reserves

(To comply with CIPFA Best Practice Advice)

2.1.11 It shall be the responsibility of the Section 151 Officer to create, manage and make additions to, or make use of, Provisions and Reserves in accordance with the following objectives:

- Optimising the Council's overall financial position by creating a degree of financial flexibility over the year or between years.
- Maintaining contingencies against unbudgeted expenditure or unexpected events.
- Enabling funding of known or predicted liabilities falling in the year or future years.

2.1.14 Any proposals for creating and using provisions or reserves will be subject to the approval of the Section 151 Officer.

2.1.15 The Section 151 Officer will be required to report on the adequacy and provisions and reserves at least twice a year when the Budget is set and the Final Accounts reported to Policy Committee, Audit & Governance Committee and/or Council.

Statutory Provisions relating to setting the General Fund Budget and Council Tax

- 2.1.16 The Statutory Provisions for setting the General Fund Budget and Council Tax each year are set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- 2.1.17 The relevant sections are contained in Chapter 111 (sections 30 to 38)
- 2.1.19 Powers available to the Section 151 Officer /Responsible Officer
The powers of the Section 151 Officer/Responsible Officer are set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Local Government Act 2003. The relevant sections of these Acts are reproduced below:

Local Government Finance Act 1988

Section 114 - Functions of Responsible Officer as regards reports

- 1) On and after the commencement day the person having responsibility for the administration of the financial affairs of a relevant authority under section 151 of the 1972 Act, section 73 of the 1985 Act or section 112 above shall have the duties mentioned in this section, without prejudice to any other functions; and in this section he is referred to as the chief finance officer of the authority.
- 2) The chief finance officer of a relevant authority shall make a report under this section if it appears to him that the authority, a committee or officer of the authority, or a joint committee on which the authority is represented:
 - (a) has made or is about to make a decision which involves or would involve the authority incurring expenditure which is unlawful.
 - (b) has taken or is about to take a course of action which, if pursued to its conclusion, would be unlawful and likely to cause a loss or deficiency on the part of the authority, or.
 - (c) is about to enter an item of account the entry of which is unlawful.
- 3) The chief finance officer of a relevant authority shall make a report under this section if it appears to him that the expenditure of the authority incurred (including expenditure it proposes to incur) in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources (including sums borrowed) available to it to meet that expenditure.
- 4) Where a chief finance officer of a relevant authority has made a report under this section he shall send a copy of it to:
 - (a) the person who at the time the report is made has the duty to audit the authority's accounts and
 - (b) each person who at that time is a member of the authority (ie all Councillors).
- 5) Subject to subsection (6) below, the duties of a chief finance officer of a relevant authority under subsections (2) and (3) above shall be performed by him personally.
- 6) If the chief finance officer is unable to act owing to absence or illness his duties under subsections (2) and (3) above shall be performed:
 - (a) by such member of his staff as is a member of one or more of the bodies mentioned in section 113(3) above and is for the time being nominated by the chief finance officer for the purposes of this section, or
 - (b) If no member of his staff is a member of one or more of those bodies, by such member of his staff as is for the time being nominated by the chief finance officer for the purposes of this section.
- 7) A relevant authority shall provide its chief finance officer with such staff, accommodation and other resources as are in his opinion sufficient to allow his duties under this section to be performed.
- 8) In this section

- (a) references to a joint committee are to a committee on which two or more relevant authorities are represented, and
- (b) references to a committee (joint or otherwise) include references to a sub-committee.

Section 115 - Authority's duties as regards reports

- (1) This section applies where copies of a report under section 114 above have been sent under section 114(4) above.
- (2) The authority (full Council) shall consider the report at a meeting where it shall decide whether it agrees or disagrees with the views contained in the report and what action (if any) it proposes to take in consequence of it.
- (3) The meeting of full Council must be held not later than the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the day on which copies of the report are sent.
- (4) Section 101 of the 1972 Act (delegation) shall not apply to the duty under subsection (2) above where the authority is one to which that section would apply apart from this subsection.
- (5) If the report was made under section 114(2) above, during the prohibition period the course of conduct which led to the report being made shall not be pursued.
- (6) If the report was made under section 114(3) above, during the prohibition period the authority shall not enter into any new agreement which may involve the incurring of expenditure (at any time) by the authority.
- (7) If subsection (5) above is not complied with, and the authority makes any payment in the prohibition period as a result of the course of conduct being pursued, it shall be given not to have had power to make the payment (notwithstanding any obligation to make it under contract or otherwise).
- (8) If subsection (6) above is not complied with, the authority shall be taken not to have had power to enter into the agreement (notwithstanding any option to do so under contract or otherwise).
- (9) In this section "the prohibition period" means the period:
 - (a) beginning with the day on which copies of the report are sent, and
 - (b) ending with the first business day to fall after the day (if any) on which the authority's consideration of the report under subsection (2) above is concluded.
- (10) If subsection (3) above is not complied with, it is immaterial for the purposes of subsection (9) (b) above.
- (11) The nature of the decisions made at the meeting is immaterial for the purposes of subsection (9) (b) above.
- (12) In subsection (9)(b) above "business day" means any day other than a Saturday, a Sunday, Christmas Day, Good Friday or a day which is a bank holiday in England and Wales.

Section 116 – Information about meetings

- (1) Where it is proposed to hold a meeting under section 115 above the authority's proper officer shall soon as is reasonably practicable notify its auditor of the date, time and place of the proposed meeting.
- (2) As soon as is reasonably practicable after a meeting is held under section 115 above the authority's proper officer shall notify its auditor of any decision made at the meeting.
- (3) For the purposes of this section an authority's proper officer is the person to whom the authority has for the time being assigned responsibility to notify its auditor under this section.
[]The proper Officer for the purpose of this section is the Section 151 Officer or the Deputy Section 151 Officer(Strategic Finance Director/Head of Finance)

- (4) For the purposes of this section an authority's auditor is the person who for the time being has the duty to audit its accounts.

Local Government Act 2003

Authorisation of agreements during the prohibition period

- (1) In section 115 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (c.41) (which sets out the consequences for a relevant authority of the receipt of a report made by its chief finance officer under section 114(3)), in subsection (6) (which prevents an authority that has received such a report from entering into certain agreements during prohibition period), at the end there is inserted "unless the chief finance officer of the authority authorises it to do so",
- (2) After the subsection there is inserted:
- “(6A) The chief finance officer may only give authority for the purposes of subsection (6) above if he considers that the agreement concerned is likely to:
- (a) prevent the situation that led him to make the report from getting worse,
 - (b) improve the situation, or
 - (c) prevent the situation from recurring
- (6B) Authority for the purposes of subsection (6) above shall:
- (a) be in writing
 - (b) identify the ground on which it is given, and
 - (c) explain the chief finance officer's reasons for thinking that the ground applies.”

2.2 POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 The policy framework for the Council is based on the Council's strategic aims adopted in 1999. These are:

- To develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley
- To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all
- To establish Reading as a learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit

2.2.2 In order to respond to the challenges facing local authorities, the Council now adopts a three-year Corporate Plan in February each year, which puts the Council's service delivery into context and explains what will be measured to show the difference the Council has made. The focus of the Corporate Plan is to outline the Administration's vision and ambition and establish the priorities for the Council's service delivery.

2.2.3 In order to achieve these aims, the Council will:

- Work in partnership
- Promote the participation of Reading people in local democracy through effective consultation and communication
- Secure the most effective use of our resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public services

- 2.2.4 The range of main policies and strategies which support these aims are listed in Article 4. It should be noted that at any one time it may not cover the complete range of policies and strategies because:
- It does not cover the complete range of detailed service specific policies and strategies;
 - Very new or recently revised policies and strategies may not be included as yet in the latest version.
- 2.2.5 The Council's vision for Reading was set out in the City 2020 document adopted in 1998, to give a framework within which many of the key strategies and activities of the Council sit. The Council has worked with the Reading Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), in consultation with local residents, businesses and key partner organisations, to update the Vision for Reading to 2030 and beyond, and to agree a Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out the key challenges that must be addressed to make progress towards the 2030 Vision. This was adopted by full Council on 29 March 2011.
- 2.2.6 The Vision 2030 has a strong emphasis and focus on Reading's **People** as the primary basis for everything that affects our **Place** and **Prosperity**. The Sustainable Community Strategy provides the framework for the LSP Partnership to identify priorities and programmes for all local partners and stakeholders to turn the Vision for Reading into reality. The People, Place and Prosperity themes underpin the Reading Sustainable Community Strategy. Each is supported by detailed objectives and outcomes and a high-level action plan.
- 2.2.7 The Council, in its community leadership role, is a key partner in the LSP, and the lead body for the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Council has its own Corporate Plan, "Leading the Way", which cross-refers to the Sustainable Corporate Strategy and sets the context for the application of the Strategy to the delivery of the Council's services. The Plan was adopted by full Council in March 2010, to run for three years. The Council also agreed its own vision for the sort of organisation it needs to be in order to deliver the services that local people need. This is to be:
- "A highly regarded, leading Council; ambitious and focused on what matters most for our communities, delivering value for money and quality services."
- 2.2.8 The Council, as planning authority, has also adopted a suite of documents which together comprise the Development Plan, and provide the Local Development Framework for land use in the Borough.
- 2.2.9 The Council has, furthermore, adopted a set of values that define the organisation's culture and set the framework for a way of working:
- ◆ Be open and honest in our dealings with colleagues and the public
 - ◆ Learn from what we do, encouraging innovation and creativity
 - ◆ Work together to achieve the best results
 - ◆ Value and respect the diversity within our workforce, services and community
 - ◆ Take responsibility for what we do and how we do it
 - ◆ Set high standards and support people in meeting them
- 2.2.10 These values describe a commitment on the part of both Councillors and Officers to how we work together and deliver services to the community.

Consultation on Policies, Plans and Strategies

- 2.2.11 In 2012, the Cabinet adopted the **Working Better with You** programme of public engagement. This recognises the role for all Lead Councillors to ensure that the public are fully involved in decision-making and in supporting the involvement of local people in developing policy, establishing the Council's priorities and shaping future service delivery. It includes a "We Need to Talk" public questionnaire (online or leaflet), and a "Let's Talk" rolling programme of community consultation on themed issues. This programme is ongoing.
- 2.2.12 The Council's arrangements for consultation are set out in the *Working Better for You Community Involvement Guidance, 2012*, which sets out core principles for community involvement activities.

Consultation will also have due regard to the duty on local authorities, in Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to involve local people by keeping them informed, consulting them, and involving them in other ways in the design and delivery of services. All Committee reports include a 'Community Engagement and Information' paragraph.

2.2.13 Except where the policy, plan or strategy is required by Regulation to be approved or adopted by full Council, as set out in Article 4.1(a)(i):

(1) The Committee to which full Council has delegated responsibility for the function(s) and service(s) covered by the policy, plan or strategy may adopt, approve, amend, vary or revoke any such policy.

(2) The Policy Committee will set the policy framework for, and may adopt, approve, amend, vary or revoke, any policy, plan or strategy which covers, functions or services that have been delegated to more than one Committee.

3. DECISIONS OUTSIDE THE BUDGET OR POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.1 Committees, Sub-Committees, Officers, area committees or joint arrangements discharging delegated functions may only take decisions which are in line with the authority's budget framework. If any of these bodies or persons wishes to make a decision which is contrary to or not in accordance with the budget approved by full Council, then that decision may only be taken by the Council, subject to 4 below.

3.2 Committees, Sub-Committees, Officers, area committees or joint arrangements discharging delegated functions should also take operational decisions about a function or service that are consistent with any policy, plan or strategy of the authority which applies to the function or service, and must not take operational decisions that are contrary to any such policy, plan or strategy. However, Committees may now resolve to amend, modify, vary or revoke a policy, plan or strategy.

3.3 If a Committee, Sub-Committee, Officer, area committee or joint arrangement discharging delegated functions wants to take such a decision, they shall take advice from the Head of Paid Service and/or the Monitoring Officer and/or the Chief Financial Officer, as to whether the decision they want to make would be contrary to the policy framework, or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget.

(a) If the advice of any of those officers is that the decision would be contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with, the existing budget framework, then the decision must be referred by that body or person to full Council for consideration and decision, unless the decision is a matter of urgency, in which case the provisions in paragraph 4 (urgent decisions outside the budget framework) shall apply.

(b) If the advice of any of the above officers is that the decision would be contrary to an existing policy, plan or strategy, framework, then the decision must be made by the responsible Committee

(c) in the case of both (a) and (b) above, the decision must be taken by full Council or the responsible Committee in full understanding of the advice of the Monitoring Officer and/or Chief Financial Officer, which must be set out in the report considered by full Council or the Committee.

3.4 Three or more Councillors may, in writing, seek advice from the Monitoring Officer and / or the Chief Financial Officer as to whether a decision to be taken by a Committee, Sub-Committee, Officer, area committee or joint arrangement is contrary to any policy, plan or strategy of the authority, or contrary to or not in accordance with the budget approved by full Council. In all such cases:

(a) an officer may not take the decision under delegated powers, and must refer the decision to the next meeting of the Committee or Sub-Committee with delegated responsibility for the function or service concerned;

- (b) the Monitoring Officer and/or Chief Financial Officer must report this written request for advice to the Committee or Sub-Committee taking the decision, and set out their advice in writing for consideration by the body before it takes its decision.

3.5 A decision taken by a Committee or Sub-Committee under delegated functions may be cancelled by full Council, under the provisions of Standing Order 23.

4. URGENT DECISIONS OUTSIDE THE BUDGET OR POLICY FRAMEWORK

4.1 The Policy Committee may take a decision which is contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget approved by full Council if the decision is a matter of urgency. However, the decision may only be taken:

- a) if it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of the full Council; and
- b) if the chair of the Policy Committee agrees that the decision is a matter of urgency.

4.2 The reasons why it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of full Council and the Chair of the Policy Committee's consent to the decision being taken as a matter of urgency must be noted on the record of the decision. In the absence of the Chair, the consent of the Vice-Chair, and in the absence of both the Mayor, will be sufficient.

4.3 The Head of Paid Service and Chief Financial Officer, on behalf of the Policy Committee, will provide a full report to the next available Council meeting explaining the decision, the reasons for it and why the decision was treated as a matter of urgency.

4.4 The Policy Committee may take a decision which is contrary to an adopted policy, plan or strategy if the decision is a matter of urgency, under the urgency provisions set out in Article 7.7, and subject to the application of Rule 3(3)(c) above. In such cases, the Director responsible for the function or service will provide a full report to the next available meeting of the Committee with delegated responsibility for the function or service, explaining the decision, the reasons for it, and why the decision was treated as a matter of urgency.

5. IN-YEAR CHANGES TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

5.1 No changes may be made to any plan, policy or strategy which has to be adopted or approved by full Council under Article 4.1(a)(i) within the statutory or Regulatory timetable for consulting on and adopting or updating such documents, except where the change:

- (a) will result in the closure or discontinuance of a service or part of service to meet a budgetary constraint;
- (b) is necessary to ensure compliance with the law, ministerial direction or government guidance;
- (c) the existing policy document is silent on the matter under consideration.

Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules

1. Overview & Scrutiny Statutory Functions

- 1.1 Under the provisions of Paragraph 9JA of Schedule 2 to the Localism Act 2011, the Council, having adopted a committee system form of governance, has resolved not to appoint any separate overview and scrutiny committee(s). Therefore the call-in function has ended.
- 1.2 The statutory overview and scrutiny functions of the authority will be exercised by each Committee with regard to the services, functions and partnerships covered by the Committee; and by the Policy Committee in respect of overview or scrutiny across Council services covered by more than one Committee.
- 1.3 The statutory external scrutiny functions of the authority to be exercised by the relevant service committees, are as follows:
- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| a) Health: | Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education |
| b) Crime and Disorder: | Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure |
| c) Flood risk management : | Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport |
- 1.4 The Council's overview and scrutiny procedure rules, and Standing Order 25, will continue to apply when committees specify that they are undertaking their overview and scrutiny function; and the facility for each committee to set up and appoint task-and-finish groups will be retained, as set out in Part 4 of the constitution.

2. Overview & Scrutiny Roles of Committees

- 2.1 Within their terms of reference, Committees may carry out overview or scrutiny exercises including:

1) Policy Development and Review:

- To assist the Council in the development of its budget framework and policies by in-depth analysis of policy issues;
- To conduct research, community and other consultation in the analysis of policy issues and possible options;
- To consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the development of policy options;
- To question Lead Councillors and/or Directors and Heads of service about their views on issues and proposals affecting the area;
- To liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working.

2) Performance Monitoring:

- To review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas;
- To question Lead Councillors and/or chief officers about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects.

3) External Scrutiny:

- To review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the Committee and local people about their activities and performance;
- To question representatives of Health bodies about their views on issues and proposals affecting their areas, review and scrutinise matters relating to the health service in the authority's area and make reports and recommendations on these matters to local NHS bodies. Any member or employee of a relevant NHS body or a relevant health service provider may also be required to

attend to answer questions, as provided for by the National Health service act 2006 (as amended by Section 190 of the Health & Social Care Act 2012)

- To question partners in the Community Safety Partnership on issues and proposals affecting crime and disorder, as provided for by the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009.
- To review and scrutinise the exercise of flood risk management functions by the lead local authority under Section 9FH of the Local Government Act 2000(as amended by Schedule 2 to the Localism Act 2011).

4) Holding to Account:

- To scrutinise and review decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any Council functions covered by the Committee. As well as reviewing documentation, in fulfilling the scrutiny role, a Committee may require any Lead Councillor and/or any senior officer to attend before it to explain in relation to matters within their remit:
 - i) any particular decision or series of decisions;
 - ii) the extent to which the actions taken implement Council policy; and/or
 - iii) their performance (subject to the provisions of Standing Orders);

2.2 As set out in Paragraph 5 of the Member/Officer protocol, in Part 5 of this Constitution:

- (1) Lead Councillors and officers must attend such scrutiny exercises if requested, unless exceptional circumstances prevent this, in which case arrangements for an alternative date will be made in consultation with the Lead Councillor and Chair of the Panel. They are also required to answer all questions asked of them, unless they would otherwise have grounds for not answering the question if it were put to them in a court of law.
- (2) Officers who are not Corporate Directors or Heads of Service and who are requested to attend to give evidence at a scrutiny exercise can, at the officers' request, be accompanied by a senior manager or a Trades Union representative. This request cannot be reasonably denied by the Committee or task-and-finish group.
- (3) Councillors and officers may not be accompanied by an external legal representative without the specific approval of the Monitoring Officer.

3. Overview & Scrutiny Exercises

3.1 Where Committees agree to carry out an overview & scrutiny exercise they will determine the appropriate form of scrutiny to be used, to include:

- Hands-on task-and-finish groups
- One-off evidence-taking sessions
- Commissioning officer reports reviewing service areas
- Discursive meetings on set topics, as training or learning sessions

3.2 When carrying out an Overview & Scrutiny exercise a Committee or task-and-finish group may hold enquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may appoint advisers and assessors to assist them in this process. They may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations. They may ask witnesses to attend to address them on any matter under consideration and may pay to any advisers, assessors and witnesses a reasonable fee and expenses for doing so.

4. Task and Finish Groups

4.1 Where appropriate, the Committees may set up and appoint task-orientated, time-limited task-and-finish groups to undertake an overview & scrutiny exercise and report back to the appointing Committee. The Committee will:

- determine the specification or terms of reference for the group's scrutiny exercise – in general terms the groups will be charged with carrying out an in-depth investigation into a specific service area or policy or any issue of genuine importance to the town
- appoint Councillors to the task-and-finish group on the following basis:
 - the group to be small, and focused on outcomes
 - at least two political groups on the Council to be represented on the group
 - to include at least one Member of the appointing Committee, to be appointed to chair the group
 - other Councillor members to be agreed in consultation with Group Leaders, and need not be members of the Committee

4.2 These task-and-finish groups are not established as Sub-Committees under the Local Government Act 1972, and Committees will not be expected to make the appointments in accordance with the proportionality rules set out in Sections 15-17 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989.

5. Rights of Overview and Scrutiny Members to Documents

5.1 In addition to their rights as Councillors, Committee or task-and-finish group members carrying out Overview and Scrutiny have the additional right to documents, and to notice of meetings as set out in Paragraph 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part 4 of this Constitution.

6. Evidence Gathering for Overview and Scrutiny

6.1 Where a Committee or task-and-finish group conducts an Overview & Scrutiny exercise, they may also ask community and voluntary sector organisations, users of services and others to attend to give evidence at meetings, which are to be conducted in accordance with the following principles:

- i) that the investigation be conducted fairly and all members of the committee or group be given the opportunity to ask questions of attendees, and to contribute and speak;
- ii) that those assisting the committee or group by giving evidence be treated with respect and courtesy; and
- iii) that the investigation be conducted so as to maximise the efficiency of the investigation or analysis.

7. Overview & Scrutiny Reports

7.1 Once it has completed any investigation or review and formed any recommendations, a Committee or its task-and-finish group will prepare a formal report and submit it to the Head of Paid Service for consideration by the relevant Committee (if the proposals are consistent with the existing budgetary framework), or by the Council or Policy Committee as appropriate (e.g. if the recommendation would require a departure from or a change to the agreed budget or policy framework).

7.2 If a task and finish group cannot agree on one single final report to the Committee or Council as appropriate, then up to one minority report may be prepared and submitted for consideration with the majority report.

7.3 The Committee or Council shall normally consider a report at the next available meeting. Following any investigation or review, the committee shall make its report and findings public.

Financial Procedure Rules/Financial Regulations

[18 October 2022 - The Financial Regulations are being reviewed in line with the introduction of the new Financial System and will be reported to Council.]

The Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules will be incorporated into the new Financial Regulations. The financial limits will be updated to reflect the new definition for a 'key decision' and will be harmonised with the values set out in the Contract Procedure Rules.]

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Section 1 - Introduction

1.1 Context

These Financial Regulations set out the financial policies and procedures and the framework for managing the Council's financial affairs. The Regulations are organised around seven themes, as follows:

- (i) Financial planning (see Section 3)
- (ii) Financial management (see Section 4)
- (iii) Accounting records and financial systems (see Section 5)
- (iv) Risk management and internal control (see Section 6)
- (v) Control of resources (see Section 7)
- (vi) Income and expenditure (see Section 8)
- (vii) External arrangements (see Section 9)

They seek to ensure that the Council conducts its affairs in a way that complies with specific statutory provisions, generally accepted accounting principles and professional good practice.

1.2 Financial Responsibilities

An overview of the financial responsibilities of the Council, various Committees, the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), The Chief Finance Officer (Strategic Finance Director), the Monitoring Officer (Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services) and the Directors is provided in **Section 2** of the Financial Regulations. Specific responsibilities are explained, in context, throughout the Financial Regulations.

The Strategic Finance Director is the Council's Responsible Finance Officer under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, and is responsible for maintaining a continuous review of the Financial Regulations and for updating them, as necessary, for Council to approve. The Strategic Finance Director is also responsible for reporting, where appropriate, breaches of the Financial Regulations.

Any consultation required under these Regulations must be managed to ensure that sufficient time is available for proper consideration of the issues raised.

1.3 Advice and guidance to underpin Financial Regulations

The Strategic Finance Director will, from time to time, issue advice, guidance and accounting instruction notes to underpin the Financial Regulations, ensure compliance with specific statutory provisions and reinforce best professional practice. Councillors, officers and others acting on behalf of the Council are required to comply with such advice and guidance.

1.4 Compliance

All financial and accounting procedures must be carried out in accordance with the Financial Regulations and with any accounting instruction notes and other corporate guidance issued by, or on behalf of, the Strategic Finance Director.

Directors will ensure that their staff are aware of the existence, and content, of the Council's Financial Regulations, accounting instruction notes and other corporate guidance, and ensure compliance with them.

Non-compliance with these Financial Regulations, and with any accounting instruction notes and other corporate guidance issued by the Strategic Finance Director, may constitute a disciplinary matter that will be pursued, as appropriate, in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedure.

1.5. Scope of the Regulations

The Financial Regulations, including advice, guidance and accounting instruction notes issued to underpin the Financial Regulations, apply to all services of the Council.

Whilst Schools have their own specific Financial Regulations, they will not override or contradict these overarching Regulations. Some specific references are made to schools' operations within these Regulations where particular responsibilities are placed upon Council officers that are not employed within schools, and upon Councillors and other Members of the Council.

1.6. Scheme of Delegation for Financial Management

The Scheme of Delegation, as set out within the Reading Borough Council Delegations Register, defines how the financial responsibilities set out within the Financial Regulations are reserved or delegated to officers.

This must be read in conjunction with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, in Part 4 of the Constitution, and Article 13 of the Constitution, on decision-making. Under these, officers do not have delegated authority to take decision which:

- is specifically reserved to full Council or any Committee body, including any key decision.
- involves the approval of statutory Plans and other Policies;
- conflicts with Council Policy;
- is not compliant with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules;
- involves the approval of Capital and Revenue budgets; or
- incurs expenditure for which there is no approved budget.

A key decision is one which involves a variation to the Council's budget, including virement or additional expenditure, of over £500k, or savings of over £250k. Officers cannot take decisions which are outside the Council's budget and policy framework.

Section 2 – Financial Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Introduction

The roles and responsibilities of Councillors and Officers are set out within the Council's Constitution. The purpose of the Financial Regulations is to provide an overview of the respective financial roles and responsibilities of Councillors and Officers within the Council. Specific financial responsibilities are set out in more detail throughout the subsequent sections of the Regulations.

2.2 Council

Full Council is responsible for:

- (i) Adopting and changing the Authority's Constitution (*including the Financial Regulations*), which sets out how the Council works, how decisions are made and the procedures to be followed to ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability to local people.
- (ii) Approving and adopting the policy framework which incorporates the Council's Corporate Plan and various other plans and strategies, and is developed in line with the Council's Budget and Code of Corporate Governance.
- (iii) Approving the annual budget, which includes:
 - The budget framework within which the Authority and its Committees and officers operate.
 - The allocation of financial resources to different services and to capital projects, and the setting of trading activities' financial targets.
 - The level of contingency funds, reserves and balances to be held.
 - The Council Tax base and setting the Council Tax.
 - The Non-Domestic Rates tax base and setting the precept for Business Rates income.
 - The annual Treasury Management Strategy.
 - Decisions relating to the control of the Council's borrowing requirement, including setting of Prudential Indicators which define the parameters for borrowing activity, and the approval of the Council's Revenue Provision policy for the repayment of debt.
 - The annual income (fee setting) and charging policy.
- (iv) The annual pay policy statement.
- (v) Making arrangements for the proper administration of the authority's financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of these affairs.
- (vi) Making arrangements for approving the statutory annual statement of accounts by dates specified by relevant regulations.
- (vii) Approving and monitoring compliance with the Authority's overall framework of accountability and control. The framework is set out in the constitution. The Council is also responsible for monitoring compliance with the agreed policy and budget framework.
- (viii) Approving procedures for recording and reporting decisions taken. This includes those functions delegated to and decisions taken by the Council and its committees.

2.3 Policy Committee

The Policy Committee makes recommendations as appropriate on matters reserved to full Council for decision, including constitutional matters and the authority's budget and overall strategic direction.

2.4 Audit and Governance Committee

The Council's Audit & Governance Committee is a cross-party Committee established by and reporting to full Council, and with functions covering the authority's audit activity, regulatory framework, treasury management, financial accounts, risk management and governance. The Audit & Governance Committee is responsible for:

- (i) Approving the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts, having due regard to any matters raised by the external auditor.
- (ii) Receiving and considering the Council's Annual Governance Statement, ensuring that it reflects the Council's governance arrangements.
- (iii) Consideration of the External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter and to provide advice and comments on the Letter to the Policy Committee and Council, as appropriate.
- (iv) Ensuring that there are effective relationships between external and internal audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies, and that the value of the audit is actively promoted.
- (v) Receiving any reports from the External Auditor about the effectiveness of the Council's financial and operational arrangements and monitoring Management's response to the issues raised by External Audit.
- (vi) Approving the annual Internal Audit plan and receiving reports from the Council's Internal Auditor on the outcome of audit reviews and investigations and the implementation of recommendations, including the annual report of the Chief Auditor.
- (vii) Monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's Financial Regulations, Procurement Policies and Procedures and strategies for anti-fraud and corruption, declarations of interest, gifts and hospitality, whistle blowing and anti-money laundering.
- (viii) Considering the Council's arrangements for corporate governance and risk management policy and strategy and, subject to the role and responsibilities of the Standards Committee, to advise on any action necessary to ensure compliance with best practice.

2.5 Overview and Scrutiny

Under the provisions of Paragraph 9JA of Schedule 2 to the Localism Act 2011, the Council, having adopted a committee system form of governance, has resolved not to appoint any separate overview and scrutiny committee(s). Each Committee is now responsible for the overview, service performance and improvement, and scrutiny of all functions delegated to it. The statutory overview and scrutiny functions of the authority may be exercised by each Committee with regard to the services, functions and partnerships covered by the Committee; and by the Policy Committee in respect of overview or scrutiny across Council services covered by more than one Committee.

2.6 The Statutory Officers

2.6.1 Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive)

The Head of Paid Service is responsible for the corporate and overall strategic management of the Authority as a whole. S/he must report to and provide information for the Council and its Committees. S/he is responsible for establishing a framework for management direction, style and standards and for monitoring the performance of the organisation. The Head of Paid Service is also responsible, together with the Monitoring Officer, for the system of record keeping in relation to all the authority's decisions (see below).

2.6.2 Chief Finance Officer

Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 specifies that every authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs. The Council's Strategic Finance Director is the designated officer for this purpose.

The Strategic Finance Director has statutory duties in relation to the financial administration and stewardship of the Council that cannot be overridden. These statutory duties arise from:

- (i) Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 which makes the Strategic Finance Director responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs.
- (ii) Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which places a duty on the Strategic Finance Director to report to all Councillors of the Council if it is considered that the Council, Committees or an employee has made (or is about to make) a decision involving expenditure or loss which is unlawful.
- (iii) Local Government and Housing Act 1989 which requires the Strategic Finance Director to consult with the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) before making a Section 114 report to Council.
- (iv) Local Government Act 2003 which requires the Strategic Finance Director to make a report to the Council, when it is considering its budget and council tax, that addresses the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves.
- (v) Accounts and Audit Regulations, which require the Strategic Finance Director to ensure that the accounting control systems are observed, that the accounting records are maintained in accordance with proper practices and that they are kept up to date.

In order to fulfil these statutory duties and legislative requirements the Strategic Finance Director will:

- (vi) Set appropriate financial management standards for the Council which comply with the Council's policies and proper accounting practices, and monitor compliance with them.
- (vii) Determine the accounting records to be kept by the Council.
- (viii) Ensure there is an appropriate framework of budgetary management and control.
- (ix) Monitor performance against the Council's budget and advise upon the corporate financial position.
- (x) Ensure proper professional practices are adhered to and to act as Head of Profession in relation to the standards, performances and development of finance staff throughout the Council; all finance staff will have a direct reporting line to the Strategic Finance Director.
- (xi) Prepare and publish the Council's Statement of Accounts for each financial year, in accordance with the statutory.
- (xii) Make proper arrangements for the audit of the Council's accounts.
- (xiii) Ensure that claims for funds, including grants, are made by the due date and in compliance with the grant terms and conditions.
- (xiv) Make proper arrangements for the overall management of the Council's Internal Audit function.
- (xv) Manage the treasury management activities in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Policy Statement, Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators.

2.6.3 Monitoring Officer (Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services)

The functions and responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer are carried out by the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services and include:

- (i) Maintaining an up-to-date version of the Constitution and making this widely available.
- (ii) Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct through the provision of support to the Standards Committee and maintenance of Officers' and Councillors' Codes of Conduct.
- (iii) Reporting, after consultation with the Head of Paid Service and the Responsible Finance Officer, any actual or potential breaches of the law or maladministration to the Council and/or to the responsible service Committee.
- (iv) Ensuring that Committee decisions, together with the reasons for those decisions, the relevant officer reports and background papers are made publicly available as soon as possible.
- (v) Advising whether the decisions of Committees are in accordance with the budget and policy framework.

- (vi) Provision of advice on the scope of powers and authority to take decisions, maladministration, financial impropriety, probity and budget and policy framework issues to all councillors
- (vii) Provision of advice on the authority's compliance with the public sector equality duty; the duty to consult; and, as the Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO), on information security, data protection and freedom of information.

2.7 Directors and Heads of Service

Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that the Council, Committees and Lead Councillors are advised of the financial implications of all proposals made in their name, and that the financial implications have been agreed by the Strategic Finance Director.

It is the responsibility of Directors and Heads of Service to consult with the Strategic Finance Director and seek approval on any matter liable to affect the Authority's finances materially, before any commitments are incurred.

This responsibility must be exercised within the corporate financial management framework determined by the Strategic Finance Director, and includes:

- (i) Putting in place appropriate budget management and delegation arrangements to ensure the effective use of resources, the safeguarding of assets and the operation of a system of appropriate internal controls.
- (ii) Promoting appropriate financial management standards within their Services, and monitoring adherence to the standards and practices, liaising as necessary with the Strategic Finance Director, and ensuring that relevant training is provided to those staff with financial management responsibilities
- (iii) Promoting sound financial practices in relation to the standards, performance and development of staff in their services.
- (iv) Advising Lead Councillors and the Strategic Finance Director of the financial implications of all proposals.
- (v) Seeking approval, in conjunction with the Strategic Finance Director, on any matter liable to affect the Council's finances materially, before any commitments are incurred.
- (vi) Signing contracts on behalf of the Council (*in accordance with the Council's Procurement Policies and Procedures and Contract Standing Orders and after consultation with the relevant Lead Councillor*).
- (vii) Consulting with, and obtaining the approval of, the Strategic Finance Director before making any changes to accounting records or procedures.
- (viii) Complying with the following principles when allocating accounting duties:
 - Separating the duties of providing information about sums due to or from the Council and calculating, checking (*including reconciling the accounts*) and recording these sums from the duty of collecting or disbursing them.
 - Employees with the duty of examining or checking the accounts of cash transactions must not themselves be engaged in these transactions.
- (ix) Ensuring that claims for funds (*including grants and 'match funding'*) are made in accordance with the delegation register, accounting instructions issued by the Strategic Finance Director and the conditions defined by the grant awarding body, by the due date and that appropriate records are maintained.
- (x) Contributing to the development of performance plans in line with statutory requirements.
- (xi) Contributing to the development of corporate and service targets and objectives and performance information.

2.8 Internal Audit

Internal Audit will review, appraise and report upon:

- (a) The extent of compliance with, and effectiveness of, relevant policies, plans and procedures.
- (b) The adequacy and application of financial and other related management controls.

- (c) The processes for identifying and managing risk.
- (d) The suitability of financial and other related management data.
- (e) The extent to which the Council's assets and interests are accounted for and safeguarded from loss of any kind from:
 - Fraud and other offences.
 - Waste, extravagance and inefficient administration.
 - Inefficient value for money or other causes.
- (f) Directors' self-assessments of the status of the governance framework, including systems of internal controls in place, for each of their service areas. Further details on the internal audit function are set out in paragraph **6.6.2**.

Section 3 - Financial Planning

3.1 Policy Framework

The Council is responsible for agreeing the Authority's budget framework and budget, which will be proposed to it by the Policy Committee. In terms of financial planning, the key elements are:

- (i) The corporate plan
- (ii) Revenue Budget and 3-year financial plan
- (iii) Capital Programme
- (iv) Treasury management, prudential and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy
- (v) Income and charging policy
- (vi) Pay policy

3.2 Corporate/financial Plan

The Corporate Plan sets out the corporate approach to delivering services for the people of Reading and helps ensure greater strategic control on prioritisation, resource allocation and performance monitoring, improvement and efficiency. The Council's Financial Plan sets out the framework for resource allocation in terms of the revenue and capital budgets.

3.3 Revenue budget

3.3.1 Revenue income and expenditure

Revenue income and expenditure represents the current or day-to-day running costs, and associated receipts, of the Council; including salaries, heating and lighting, travelling and office expenses, income raised by charging service users and government grants.

3.3.2 Revenue budget

Budgets (spending plans) ensure that the Council can plan, authorise, monitor and control the way money is allocated and spent.

The revenue budget must be constructed so as to ensure that resources are allocated in a way that reflects the service plans and priorities of the Council. The Strategic Finance Director is responsible for developing and maintaining a resource allocation process that ensures this is achieved.

3.3.3 Budget preparation

The Strategic Finance Director is responsible for ensuring that a revenue budget is prepared on an annual basis and includes a three-yearly revenue plan for consideration by the Policy Committee, before submission to the Council. The Council may amend the budget or ask the Policy Committee to reconsider it before approving it.

The Strategic Finance Director, through the Policy Committee, is responsible for issuing budget guidelines on the general content of the budget each year in July.

It is the responsibility of Directors to ensure that budget estimates reflecting agreed service plans are submitted to the Policy Committee and that these estimates are prepared in line with guidance issued by the Policy Committee.

3.3.4 Format of the budget

The general format of the budget will be proposed by the Policy Committee to full Council for approval, on the advice of the Strategic Finance Director. The draft budget should include allocation to different services and projects, proposed taxation levels and contingency funds.

3.3.5 Budget Monitoring and Control

The Strategic Finance Director is responsible for providing appropriate financial information to enable budgets to be monitored effectively. S/he must monitor and control expenditure against budget allocations and report to the Policy Committee on the overall position on a regular basis.

It is the responsibility of Directors and Heads of Service to control income and expenditure within their area and to monitor performance, taking account of financial information provided by the Strategic Finance Director. They must submit monthly monitoring reports to the Strategic Finance Director on variances within their own areas. They must also take any action necessary to avoid exceeding their overall budget allocation and alert the Strategic Finance Director to any problems.

3.3.6 Resource Allocation

The Strategic Finance Director is responsible for developing and maintaining a resource allocation process that ensures due consideration of the Council's policy framework.

3.3.7 Maintenance of Reserves

In accordance with Clauses 26 and 27 of the Local Government Act 2003, as part of the Annual Budget Setting Report to Policy Committee and Council, the Strategic Finance Director is required to give advice on the minimum level of balance to be held by the Council throughout the forthcoming year.

In setting the Budget, Council must have regard to the advice given by the Strategic Finance Director on the decision on the level of balance to be held, and reasons for any variance from the advice given be recorded in the minutes of the Council Meeting. (This paragraph is consistent with CIFPA Best Practice Advice).

3.4 Capital financial planning

3.4.1 Capital expenditure

Expenditure is classified as capital expenditure when:

- It results in the acquisition, construction or the addition of subsequent costs to non-current (i.e. fixed) assets that will be held by the Council for use in the production or delivery of services, for rental to others or for administrative purposes and are expected to be used during more than one financial year.
- It is defined by Regulation as capital (*i.e. this will include expenditure that would ordinarily be capitalised except for the fact that the Council has no future direct control or benefit from the resulting assets*).
- It is classified by Government Direction as capital (*i.e. a Government Direction is explicit permission to capitalise expenditure that would not otherwise constitute capital expenditure*).

3.4.2 Capital programme

The Strategic Finance Director is responsible for ensuring that a capital programme is prepared on an annual basis for consideration by the Policy Committee before submission to the Council. The Strategic Finance Director will manage the preparation of a capital programme on an annual basis in accordance with the Council's capital projects' governance arrangements and capitalisation criteria.

Proposals for new buildings, extensions, improvements and alterations to buildings or the policy on sale of buildings and land will be assessed by the Director of Environment & Neighbourhood Services to determine whether they fit with the Council's property strategy.

Any proposal for investment in information technology will be assessed by Head of Customer Services to ensure that it accords with the Council's IT strategy.

Each scheme that is added to the Capital Programme is allocated an overall 'scheme approval' which sets the overall budget for the scheme, and an 'annual payments guideline' which sets the parameters for expenditure in each of the financial year's over which the scheme is expected to span. Directors may only proceed with capital projects when there is adequate and minuted scheme and spend approval in the capital programme to finance these projects.

3.4.3 Financing of capital expenditure

The Strategic Finance Director will review the financing of the capital programme, taking into consideration the availability of reserves and balances, funding from other bodies and the affordability of borrowing.

3.5 Leasing and rental arrangements

Leases of land or buildings and other property agreements will only be authorised for completion by the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services, on the Council's behalf, by the Chief Valuer. The relevant Finance support will be consulted as part of this process. Other leasing arrangements (including rental agreements and hire purchase arrangements) will only be entered into with prior approval from the Strategic Finance Director.

Prior approval to enter into leases is required to ensure that:

- Leases that constitute credit arrangements are taken into account when the Council determines its borrowing limits;
- Such arrangements represent value for money and are accounted for appropriately.

3.6 Internal Trading Activities

3.6.1 Definition and framework

The main types of trading activity permitted by the Council include those where:

- Services are provided in a competitive environment where users are given the freedom to buy from elsewhere if they wish;
- Budget holders are free to decide the quantity and type of work to be done on the basis of the prices quoted to them, but not to buy externally when an internal service is available.

The Policy Committee will approve the establishment of all trading activities, in consultation with the Strategic Finance Director.

Trading activities will maintain a separate Income and Expenditure account to which all relevant income is credited, and all related revenue expenditure (*including asset charges and support service and overhead costs*) is charged. Trading activities are required to balance their budget and cover their operating costs by generating income from the provision of their services.

Trading activities must adhere to Financial Regulations, although are controlled to an overall financial target rather than against individual expenditure and income headings.

Trading activities must operate within the Council's overall arrangements and rules for personnel and resource management. The Policy Committee may approve special arrangements in exceptional circumstances, where it can be demonstrated that adherence to these rules and arrangements would lead to the unit becoming uncompetitive and losing work and that the proposed departure does not expose the Council to significant risk.

3.6.2 Financial targets

Each trading activity must prepare an annual financial plan for approval by the Council as part of the annual budget setting (*see paragraph 3.1, on page 15*), and which defines the expected levels of income and expenditure for the year.

Trading activities must, as a minimum, aim to break-even (*i.e. only incur expenditure that can be financed from the income the activity expects to generate during the year*). It is only

permissible to plan for a deficit in exceptional circumstances, and then only if the deficit can be met from the trading activity's own accumulated revenue reserves or, in exceptional circumstances, from an approved contribution from the General Fund.

3.6.3 Trading balances

Trading activities do not retain any surpluses they generate. The Strategic Finance Director will advise the Policy Committee, after consultation with the relevant Director, if the level of balance held by a trading activity is in excess of that deemed necessary to meet the business needs of the operation.

3.7 Treasury management and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

The Strategic Finance Director will propose an annual Treasury Management Strategy, prudential indicators and a policy for the revenue provision for the repayment of debt to the Council in advance of the start of the relevant financial year that is consistent with the Council's revenue budget and capital programme proposals. This Strategy will comply with the CIPFA's Codes of Practice on Treasury Management and the Prudential Framework for Capital Finance, relevant Regulations and with the Council's own Treasury Management Policy Statement and Treasury Management Practices; it will set the parameters within which investment and borrowing activity will be managed during the forthcoming financial year.

3.8 Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

The MTFP brings together the key assumptions about financing resources (including council tax, non-domestic rates and revenue support grant) and spending pressures over the medium to longer term. This enables the Council to plan for financial risks and thus inform the setting of service financial targets for the annual revenue budget and capital payments guidelines. The setting of financial targets within the available resource envelope is completed with reference to the priorities set within the Corporate Plan. The Strategic Finance Director will ensure that reports are presented to Council, as part of the annual budget setting, upon the medium-term budget prospects and the resource constraints set by the Government.

3.9 Income and charging policy

Directors will establish a charging policy for the supply of goods or services and, in consultation with the Strategic Finance Director, review it annually, as part of the corporate planning process. An annual statement on fees and charges will be taken to the Policy Committee, and then Council, in alignment with the budget setting timetable. Further detail on income is provided in Section 8, which commences on page 55.

3.10 Pay Policy Statement

The pay policy statement will be prepared as required by law, to set out the Council's policy on the level and elements of remuneration for each chief officer, the remuneration of its lowest paid employees, and the relationship between the remuneration of its chief and other officers. It is also required to address other specific aspects of chief officer remuneration such as remuneration on recruitment, increases and additions to remuneration, use of performance related pay and bonuses, termination payments and transparency. This policy is produced annually or as required by law and is approved by full Council.

Section 4 - Financial Management

4.1 Introduction

Financial management covers all financial accountabilities in relation to the running of the Council, including the policy framework, revenue budget, trading activities' financial plans, capital programme and treasury management.

4.2 Financial management standards

All staff and Councillors have a duty to abide by the highest standards of probity in dealing with public money. This is facilitated by ensuring everyone is clear about the standards to which they are working and by the controls that are in place to ensure that these standards are met.

4.3 Revenue budget monitoring and control

4.3.1 Budget management

The Council operates within an annual cash limit, approved when the annual budget is set. To ensure that the Council does not overspend in total, each service is required to manage its own expenditure and income recovery within the cash limited budget allocated to it. Budget management also ensures that once the Council has approved the budget, the resources are used for their intended purposes and are properly accounted for.

4.3.2 Framework for budgetary control

Once the budget is approved by the Council, Directors are authorised to incur expenditure in accordance with the estimates that make up the budget. Directors must however maintain effective budgetary control within their service(s) to ensure that spending is contained within the annual budget cash limit.

Directors will not commit expenditure that would result in an approved budget being exceeded. Prior approval must be sought to increase the budget by virement (see *paragraph 4.3.3*) before additional commitments are made.

Directors may exceptionally incur additional expenditure in an emergency (see *paragraph 8.6 for the approval required to make an emergency payment*). In such situations, retrospective approval must be sought, as soon after the event as possible, to offset the additional expenditure by virement.

Directors will:

(a) **Ensure that all income and expenditure is properly recorded and accounted for.**

Directors will ensure that all officers responsible for committing expenditure comply with all relevant guidance, and follow approved certification processes.

(b) **Ensure that an appropriate budget holder structure is in place to ensure that responsibility is assigned for each item of income and expenditure under their control.**

Budget holders will be accountable for the effective management of the budgets allocated to them either to oversee or directly manage, even where they put delegations in place that enable officers to commit expenditure on their behalf.

(c) **Ensure that individual policy budgets are not over spent.**

Budgets must be monitored and appropriate corrective action taken where significant variations from the approved budget are forecast (see *paragraphs 4.3.3 and 4.3.4*).

(d) **Exercise discretion in managing the Service's budgets.**

Discretion will be exercised by, for example, avoiding supporting recurring expenditure from one-off sources, or creating commitments for which future resources have not been identified. Services must plan to fund such commitments from within their own budgets.

(e) **Ensure that a monitoring process is in place.**

A monitoring process is required to review performance and / or service levels in conjunction with the budget and to ensure they are operating effectively.

(f) **Regularly report to the relevant Lead Councillor(s).**

Such reports will be prepared, in consultation with the Strategic Finance Director, upon the service's projected 'controllable net expenditure' compared with its budget. Lead Councillors must be fully briefed, as part of this process, on any budget pressures and any proposal to address these pressures by virement (*see bullet point (viii) below*).

(g) **Ensure prior approval by the Council or Policy Committee (as appropriate) for new proposals.**

Prior approval of the Council or Policy Committee may be required for proposals that create financial commitments in future years or which materially extend or reduce the Council's services, or which initiate new ones.

(h) **Ensure compliance with the Scheme of Virement.**

The scheme of virement is explained within paragraph 4.3.3.

(i) **Agree with the relevant Corporate Director(s) where it appears that a budget proposal, including a virement proposal, may impact on their service area.**

The corporate control process will be the monthly budget monitoring reporting exercise to the Corporate Management Team, in which Directors will identify emerging budget pressures and their proposals for compensating savings (virements) in the Directorate budget reports accompanying the overall report.

(j) **Ensure that relevant training is delivered to all staff assigned responsibility for budget management.**

Officers will undertake approved finance training prior to commencement as an operational budget holder and/or as an authorised signatory, to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and skills to perform effectively their financial responsibilities; refresher training will be undertaken periodically thereafter.

The Strategic Finance Director will ensure that each budget holder receives or has access to timely information on income and expenditure for each budget, which is sufficiently detailed to enable them and their managers to fulfil their budgetary responsibilities.

The Strategic Finance Director will monitor performance against the Council's budget on an on-going basis, and will advise upon the Council's overall financial position. Specifically, the Strategic Finance Director will prepare financial overview reports for the Corporate Management Team. These financial overview reports will:

- Provide a comparison of the Council's projected income and expenditure and the latest approved budget;
- Seek approval to changes to the approved budget (*including virements between budgets, supplementary estimate requests and changes to the scheme, and payment approvals for capital projects*).

4.3.3 Scheme of virement

As detailed in paragraph 4.3.2, Directors must ensure that spending remains within the service’s overall cash limit, and that spending does not exceed individual policy budget headings. It is however permissible, in certain circumstances, to switch resources between approved budget headings, subject to obtaining the necessary approval. The switching of resources between approved budget headings is referred to as a virement. The virement rules are as follows:

- (i) No expenditure shall be incurred without appropriate budget provision and, if necessary, a virement should be undertaken to put this in place.
- (ii) No virement relating to a specific financial year should be made at the end of the financial year after the date specified within the Strategic Finance Directors’ timetable for closure of the accounts.
- (iii) Virements are not permitted in relation to asset charges or other budget headings that are outside the control of the relevant budget holder, or where a proposal would adversely affect long-term revenue commitments.
- (iv) Heads of Service may make transfers between budget headings within a cost centre for which they are the budget holder up to a maximum of £100,000, subject to the transfers not resulting in an ongoing payroll cost commitment in future years (e.g. a transfers cannot be made from, say, an equipment budget to a salary budget which results in an ongoing salary cost commitment into future years) without approval from the relevant Director and Strategic Finance Director or their nominees.
- (v) A virement that is likely to impact on the level of service activity of another budget holder can be implemented only with the agreement of the relevant budget holder(s).
- (vi) Directors may approve transfers between cost centres for which they are responsible up to a maximum of £250,000, with the consent of the Strategic Finance Director; and up to a maximum of £500,000 with the additional consent of the Corporate Management Team (CMT). The responsible Directors may approve transfers between cost centres in different Directorates on the same basis.
- (vii) Transfers between cost centre budgets within or between Directorates of over £500,000 are key decisions, and will require the prior approval of the Policy Committee. The report to Policy Committee must specify the proposed expenditure and the source of funding, and must explain the implications in the current and future financial years.
- (viii) Virements involving unbudgeted savings of over £250,000 in any cost centre are also key decisions, and will require the prior approval of the Policy Committee.
- (ix) Virements that are being actioned to effect a change in policy or priorities (*either within the same portfolio or between portfolios*) will be subject to the following approval:
 - Agreement of the change of policy by the responsible Committee
 - No virement is permitted between the General Fund or Housing Revenue Account without the approval of the Strategic Finance Director or his nominee.
 - No virement is permitted between Revenue or Capital budgets without the approval of the Strategic Finance Director or his nominee, and by the Policy Committee.
 - No virement is permitted between retained and delegated schools budgets without the approval of the Strategic Finance Director or his nominee.

Virement between budget headings within a cost centre	Budget Holder	Head of Service	Director	Strategic Finance Director	CMT	Policy Committee
Amount of Virement						
Up to £100,000	✓					
In excess of £100,000, but less than £250,000	✓	✓	✓	✓		
In excess of 250,000, but less than £500,000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Over £500,000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Budget headings within a cost centre (where the virement will result in an ongoing payroll cost commitment in future years) Amount of Virement	Budget Holder	Head of Service	Director	Strategic Finance Director	CMT	Policy Committee
Up to £100,000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Virement between cost centre budgets within a directorate Amount of Virement	Budget Holder	Head of Service	Director	Strategic Finance Director	CMT	Policy Committee
Up to £100,000	✓	✓				
In excess of £100,000, but less than £250,000	✓	✓	✓	✓		
In excess of 250,000, but less than £500,000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Over £500,000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Virement of budgets between directorates Amount of Virement	Budget Holder	Head of Service	Director	Strategic Finance Director	CMT.	Policy Committee
Up to £100,000	✓	✓	✓			
In excess of £100,000, but less than £250,000	✓	✓	✓	✓		
In excess of 250,000, but less than £500,000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Over £500,000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Exceptions to the virement rules are as follows:

- (a) The virement rules do not apply to the movement of budget between the individual budget headings of an individual trading activity. The approval of the Policy Committee is however required to transfer resources between trading activities and the General Fund - see paragraph 3.6.3.
- (b) Policy Committee approval is not required when the virement reflects the implementation of decisions already taken by Councillors, except where budget is required that was not made explicit when the decision was taken.
- (c) Policy Committee approval is not required where a budget will continue to be used for the approved purpose but is being moved, for example, to reflect a change in budget holder responsibilities. Such transfers will however require the approval of the relevant Head(s) of Finance.
- (d) Policy Committee approval is not required for budget movements arising in order to comply with the CIPFA Service Expenditure Reporting Code of Practice guidance on accounting for overheads, or budget movements arising in order to comply with proper accounting practice. Approval is required from the relevant Strategic Finance Director.

4.3.4 Treatment of year end balances

(i) **Carry forward scheme**

In certain circumstances, it is permissible to transfer resources between accounting years (i.e. carry unspent budget forward for use in the following year or fund an overspend in the current year from next year's budget allocation). The Strategic Finance Director may issue advice on this to budget holders before the end of each financial year.

The Authority's corporate budget monitoring process (Budget Holders Guidance) informs the Authority's treatment of year-end balances. It is administered by the Strategic Finance Director in consultation with the Corporate Management Team.

Approval to carry forward any underspends will not be given prior to consideration by the Policy Committee of the final outturn position and overall financial position of the Council upon closure of the accounts, as the Council's ability to support the carry forward requests will need to be assessed.

(ii) **Trading activities**

Balances arising from internal trading activities will be dealt with as outlined in paragraph 3.6.3. Any deficits will be financed by a withdrawal from the relevant Trading Activity's accumulated reserves, or from an approved contribution from the General Fund Balance.

(iii) **Partnership schemes**

The funding of some partnership schemes is ring-fenced (*including the contribution made by the Council*) and is not therefore available for alternative use by the Council. The unspent balances on approved partnership schemes will be carried into an earmarked reserve, which can be drawn upon to finance expenditure by the partnerships in a subsequent year.

(iv) **Grant-funded schemes**

Where revenue grants and contributions are recognised as income in advance of the related expenditure being incurred, the unspent grant will be carried into a reserve, which can be applied, and matched with the related expenditure, in a subsequent year.

(v) **Dividends received**

Dividends received from subsidiaries of the Council will be credited as corporate income and use of such income will be determined by the Policy Committee.

(vi) **Individual Schools' budgets**

Individual Schools' budgets are ring-fenced in accordance with statutory provisions.

Where an unplanned deficit occurs, the governing body must prepare a detailed financial recovery plan, which will be evaluated by the Strategic Finance Director and Director. Schools will be expected to agree a plan to recover the deficit within a defined period. Details of the amount of balances carried forward from one financial year to the next will be reflected in the relevant out-turn statement published under Section 251 of the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children & Learning Act 2009

4.3.5 Capital payments monitoring and control

The principles and framework for managing the revenue budget (*as set out within paragraphs 4.3.1 and 4.3.2*) will apply equally with regard to the monitoring and management of individual capital projects within their scheme and payment approvals.

The scheme of virement, as set out in paragraph 4.3.3, does not apply to capital expenditure, as approval to capital expenditure is given on a scheme by scheme basis, for the duration of the scheme, rather than by Service and year. However, in the event that an overspend arises against one scheme or 'block' approval, the relevant service will identify savings against another approved project (or 'block' approval) that will be applied to offset the overspend (*i.e. provided that such an approach is supported by the Strategic Finance Director and the Leader of the Council, and is approved by Policy Committee*).

Where it is anticipated that schemes will be progressed ahead of, or behind, schedule, such that capital expenditure is expected to vary from the approved payment guideline for the year, Policy Committee approval must be sought to re-profile the payment guidelines from one year to the next; this is necessary to enable impact upon capital financing resources to be assessed.

Schemes will usually only be added to, or removed from, the Capital Programme as part of the annual budget setting process referred to in paragraph 3.4.2 (see page 18). Schemes may be added to, or removed from, the capital programme outside of this process with the approval of the Policy Committee if:

- costs are less than £1m
- the scheme is subject to financing from Section 106 contributions
- the scheme is financed by external funding
- the scheme is urgent.

Capital expenditure will be subject to scrutiny in accordance with the Council's capital projects' governance framework.

The monies obtained through the provisions of an agreement entered into under the provisions of section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010, shall be subject to the Revised Section 106 Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, and the CIL Charging Schedule, approved by the Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee³, and allocated to schemes by the Corporate Property and Asset Steering Group. Where appropriate, the allocations will be subject to approval by the Policy Committee or through the Decision Book procedure.

Compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and national and European procurement regulations is required where appropriate.

In addition to the relevant Contract Procedure Rules, where works or other matters are subject to the sanction of a government department, no contract shall be entered into, no money shall be expended or work done without such sanction being first obtained or a written intimation being received from the government department concerned that the sanction will be forthcoming, unless the responsible Committee has given specific authority to do so.

³ on 10 November 2013 and 19 March 2014 respectively.

Spending on projects, which are funded, part-funded or otherwise sanctioned by a government department, shall not commence without the further authority of the Strategic Finance Director in order to ensure that the necessary funds are available.

Monitoring of progress is overseen by the Corporate Property and Asset Steering Group in conjunction with expenditure and comparison with approved budget and reported to the Strategic Finance Director through the steering group.

4.3 Trading activities

Trading activities must manage their income and expenditure to an overall financial target (see *paragraph 3.6.2*); in doing so, trading activities must operate within the Council's framework for budgetary control (as *outlined within paragraph 4.3.2*).

Policy Committee approval is required to alter a trading activity's overall financial target. Where the proposed target reflects a worsening position that will result in a loss for the year, the request to amend the financial target must explain how the loss is to be financed and the plans for recovery from this position. Where a surplus is forecast, above that previously reported, the request to amend the target must explain whether and for what purpose the additional surplus is to be retained by the trading account.

Section 5 - Accounting records and financial systems

5.1 Accounting records

Maintenance of proper accounting records is one of the ways in which the Council discharges its responsibility for stewardship of public resources. The Strategic Finance Director is responsible for determining the accounting procedures and records for the Council, and for the compilation of all accounts and accounting records.

The Council's accounting records are maintained within its General Ledger. A standard coding convention is maintained within the General Ledger that enables actual and budgeted income and expenditure to be analysed by:

- Category (*i.e. revenue, capital, balance sheet*);
- Type (*e.g. employee costs, premises related expenditure, supplies and services etc.*); and
- Activity (*e.g. passenger transport, parks etc.*).

This coding convention facilitates the analysis of income and expenditure in a variety of ways (*i.e. according to the political and management structures of the Council, as well as satisfying the Council's statutory reporting requirements*). The integrity of the Council's financial reporting for management and statutory purposes is therefore dependent upon transactions being coded correctly at source.

Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that their services (*including those delivered through strategic partnerships*) comply with the coding conventions adopted within the General Ledger. This includes adherence to the standard subjective classifications for categories of income and expenditure. The requirement to adhere to this standard classification applies even where expenditure on projects have 'net nil' budgets (*i.e. expenditure is matched with income*).

In the event that application of this standard classification results in under- or overspends, appropriate action must be taken to re-align the budgets (*see paragraphs 4.3.3 and 4.3.4*); the guiding principle being that budget provision should follow expenditure and/or income, and not vice versa.

5.2 Retention of Records

The Authority has a statutory and legal responsibility to retain accounting records for a predetermined period. These records may be subject to External Audit and other inspection bodies. The following conditions apply:

- a) All the Authority's transactions, material commitments and contracts and other essential accounting information are recorded completely, accurately and on a timely basis.
- b) Prime documents are retained in accordance with legislative and other requirements.
- c) Financial records should normally be retained for three years or, if storage space is a problem, at least until accounts are signed off by External Audit.
- d) Legal, contract and mortgage documents should be retained at the discretion of the Assistant Director of Legal Services.
- e) Paid invoices and payroll records should be kept in accordance with VAT and other legal requirements.
- f) Records may be retained in electronic form only with the agreement of the Strategic Finance Director.

Under Regulations to be issued under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, officers taking decisions under delegated powers must keep an adequate and auditable record of the decision, authorisation etc.; and must record in writing for six years and publish (subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998) any decisions taken under officer delegation which:

- Grant permissions or licences
- Affect the rights of individuals

- Award contracts
- Incur expenditure which materially affects the Council's financial position

5.3 Annual statement of accounts

The Council has a statutory responsibility to prepare its accounts to present a true and fair view of the financial performance and results of its activities during the year, and is responsible for approving and publishing those annual statements in accordance with the timetable specified in the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

The Strategic Finance Director is responsible for selecting suitable accounting policies, and for applying them consistently, to ensure that the Council's annual statement of accounts is prepared in compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom and other relevant accounting standards and statutory provisions. In addition, the Strategic Finance Director will ensure that the Statement of Accounts is compiled, approved and published in accordance with the statutory timetable specified within the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

The Strategic Finance Director will issue accounting instruction notes on closure of the accounts, including a timetable, annually. All budget holders must comply with these accounting instructions and supply the information requested by the dates specified.

The Strategic Finance Director must sign and date the Statement of Accounts, thereby confirming that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view of the financial position of the Council at the accounting date and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March.

The Strategic Finance Director is responsible for making proper arrangements for the audit of the Council's accounts.

5.4 Financial Systems

The Strategic Finance Director has responsibility for ensuring that the Council's financial systems (*including any financial elements of non-financial or integrated systems*) are sound, properly maintained and that they are held securely. The Strategic Finance Director will therefore determine the accounting systems, form of accounts and supporting financial records.

Directors must ensure that prior approval is obtained from the Strategic Finance Director and the Corporate Management Team to operate any financial system (including any elements of a non-financial or integrated system relied upon for financial reporting purposes) within or on behalf of their area of responsibility. Prior approval must also be obtained from the Strategic Finance Director and Corporate Management Team to make changes to any such systems already being operated within a service area. The 'go live' sign-off criteria must be complied with in respect of implementation or amendment to any financial systems (*or non-financial or integrated system relied upon for financial reporting purposes*) operated within, or on behalf of, a Service area. A Change Request Form must be submitted to the Strategic Finance Director for approval prior to making any changes to such systems.

Systems must be documented and backed up, and disaster recovery and business continuity plans must be maintained to allow information system processing to resume quickly in the event of an interruption. Directors will ensure that an adequate audit trail exists through the computerised system and that audit reviews are being carried out, as necessary.

Where appropriate, computer systems will be registered in accordance with data protection legislation. Relevant policies and guidelines for computer systems and equipment that are issued by the Head of Customer Services and Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services (SIRO⁴) will be observed.

⁴ Senior Information Risk Officer

Section 6 - Risk Management and Internal Control

6.1 Introduction

It is essential that robust, integrated systems are developed and maintained for identifying and evaluating all significant strategic and operational risks to the Council. This should include the proactive participation of all those associated with planning and delivering services.

6.2 Risk management

Risk management is concerned with evaluating the measures in place, and the actions needed, to identify and control risks effectively. The objectives are to secure the Council's assets and to ensure the Council's continued financial and organisational wellbeing.

It is the overall responsibility of the Audit & Governance Committee to approve the Council's Risk Management Policy and Strategy, to review the strategic risk register and to promote a culture of risk management awareness throughout the Council.

The Chief Auditor is responsible for preparing the Council's Risk Management Policy and Strategy, and for promoting it throughout the Council where appropriate. The Chief Auditor will:

- (i) Ensure that procedures are in place to identify, assess and prevent or contain material risks, and also allow for the identification and management of positive opportunities.
- (ii) Regularly review the effectiveness of risk reduction strategies and controls.
- (iii) Engender a positive attitude towards the control of risk.
- (iv) Provide relevant information on risk management initiatives, and training on risk management.
- (v) Ensure that acceptable levels of risk are determined.

Directors and Heads of Service must have regard to the advice of the Chief Auditor, and adhere to the Council's Risk Management Policy and Strategy. Specifically, Directors and Heads of Service must:

- (i) Take full ownership of all risks within their areas of responsibility, including those related to partnerships in which their services participate.
- (ii) Ensure that risk management is implemented in line with the Council's Risk Management Strategy and the minimum standard for business planning process.
- (iii) Identify and manage risks and ensure that mitigating actions are regularly reported.
- (iv) Have regard to other specialist officers (*e.g. internal audit, ICT, insurance, health and safety*).
- (v) Ensure there are appropriate arrangements within their service area to identify risk issues and take appropriate action to mitigate the effects of them and maximise opportunities. This includes ensuring that the relevant officers are trained to manage risk and where required provide a defence for the Council.
- (vi) Make sure that consideration is given and appropriate arrangements are made to ensure that all 3rd party providers and delivery vehicles used by the authority understand and operate within the Council's Risk Management Policy and Strategy in their service delivery.
- (vii) Ensure that service programme, project and partnership risk registers are compiled, and kept up to date.

6.3 Insurance

The Council is responsible for ensuring that proper insurance arrangements exist. The Strategic Finance Director is responsible for advising the Council on proper insurance cover, and will:

- (i) Effect corporate insurance cover, through external insurance and internal funding, and negotiate all claims in consultation with other officers, where necessary.
- (ii) Include all appropriate Members and employees of the Council in suitable fidelity guarantee insurance.
- (iii) Offer insurance cover to schools in accordance with arrangements for financing schools.

- (iv) Ensure that provision is made for losses that might result from identified risks.
- (v) Ensure that procedures are in place to investigate claims within required timescales.
- (vi) Be aware of and manage effectively operational risk to the Council.

Directors must comply with all relevant Insurance terms and conditions, to include:

- (i) Notifying the Strategic Finance Director immediately of any loss, liability or damage that may lead to a claim against the Council, together with any information or explanation required by the Strategic Finance Director or the Council's insurers.
- (ii) Notifying the Strategic Finance Director promptly of all new risks, properties or vehicles that require insurance and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.
- (iii) Consulting the Strategic Finance Director and the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services on the terms of any indemnity that the Council is requested to give.
- (iv) Ensuring that employees, or anyone covered by the Council's insurances, do not admit liability or make any offer to pay compensation that may prejudice the assessment of liability in respect of any insurance claim.

6.4 Internal Control and the governance framework

The Council faces a wide range of financial, administrative and commercial risks, both from internal and external factors, which threaten the achievement of its strategic objectives and statutory obligations. Internal controls are devised by management to help ensure the Council's objectives are achieved in a manner that promotes economical, efficient and effective use of resources and that the Council's assets and interests are safeguarded.

It is the responsibility of the Chief Auditor to assist the Council to put in place an appropriate control environment and effective internal controls that adhere with proper practices, and provide reasonable assurance of effective and efficient operations, financial stewardship, probity and compliance with laws and regulations.

The system of internal control is a significant part of the Council's governance framework. The Chief Executive will compile an Annual Governance Statement each year. The Governance Statement will be compiled with reference to proper practices in relation to governance⁵.

The governance framework, control environment and internal controls include:

- (i) Identification and communication of the Council's vision of its purpose and intended outcomes for citizens and service users.
- (ii) Reviewing the Council's vision and its implications for the Council's governance arrangements.
- (iii) Measuring the quality of services for users, and ensuring they are delivered in accordance with the Council's objectives and that they represent the best use of resources.
- (iv) Project management.
- (v) Defining and documenting the roles and responsibilities of Councillors and officers of the authority, including scrutiny functions, with clear delegation arrangements and protocols for effective communication.
- (vi) Developing, communicating and embedding codes of conduct, defining the standards of behaviour for Councillors and staff.
- (vii) Reviewing and updating the Council's constitution, standing orders, contract procedure rules, standing financial instructions, and the scheme of officer delegations.
- (viii) Preparing supporting procedural notes/manuals, which clearly define how decisions are taken and the processes and controls required for managing risks.
- (ix) Undertaking the core functions of an Audit Committee, as identified in CIPFA's Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities.
- (x) Ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures and that expenditure is lawful.

⁵ (principally the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government')

- (xi) Whistle blowing and arrangements for receiving and investigating complaints from the public.
- (xii) Establishing clear channels of communication with all sections of the community and other stakeholders, ensuring accountability and encouraging open consultation.
- (xiii) Incorporating good governance arrangements in respect of partnerships and other group working.
- (xiv) Policies, objectives and plans, monitoring financial and other performance and taking appropriate anticipatory and remedial action.
- (xv) Financial and operational control systems and procedures which comprise physical safeguards for assets, segregation of duties, authorisation and approval procedures and information systems.
- (xvi) An effective internal audit function that is appropriately resourced, and which operates in accordance with the principles contained in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and with any other statutory obligations and regulations.

It is the responsibility of Directors to:

- (i) Establish sound arrangements for planning, appraising, authorising and controlling their operations in order to achieve continuous improvement, economy, efficiency and effectiveness; Best Value and Social Value; and for achieving their financial performance targets.
- (ii) Manage processes to check that controls are adhered to and to evaluate their effectiveness, in order to be confident in the proper use of resources, achievement of objectives and management of risks.
- (iii) Communicate responsibilities, codes of conduct and the importance of good governance arrangements to their staff and ensure that they understand the consequences of lack of control and inadequate governance arrangements.
- (iv) Review existing controls in the light of changes affecting the Council and to establish and implement new ones in line with guidance from the Chief Auditor. Directors and Heads of Service should also be responsible, after consultation with the Strategic Finance Director and Chief Auditor, for removing controls that are unnecessary
- (v) Support internal audit in any review being undertaken within their area, and respond to issues raised within audit reports within the agreed timescale.
- (vi) Under Regulations to be issued under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, keep an adequate and auditable record of delegated decisions; and record in writing for six years and publish (subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998) any decisions taken under officer delegation which:
 - Grant permissions or licences
 - Affect the rights of individuals
 - Award contracts
 - Incur expenditure which materially affects the Council's financial position

6.5 Preventing fraud and corruption

6.5.1 Anti-fraud and anti-corruption policy

The Council has an effective anti-fraud and corruption policy and maintains a culture that will not tolerate fraud or corruption. It is the responsibility of the Chief Auditor to maintain the Council's anti-fraud and anti-corruption policy.

Directors must ensure that this policy is adhered to and that all appropriate action is taken. This will include reporting all suspected irregularities to the Chief Auditor (see paragraph 6.6.2).

6.5.2 Declaration of Interests

To avoid giving rise to suspicion about the honesty and integrity of the Council or its employees, or giving the impression of corruption or improper behaviour, all interests of a personal and/or financial nature with external bodies or persons who have dealings with the Council, or any

other interests which could conflict with an officer's duties, must be declared in accordance with the Council's Employee Code of Conduct, which is attached to each employee's conditions of employment

6.5.3 Gifts and hospitality

Officers must be cautious regarding offers of gifts and hospitality as acceptance can easily give the impression of improper behaviour or favour. The Council's Employee Code of Conduct explains how offers of gifts and hospitality are to be dealt with, including what can be accepted, what cannot be accepted and what must be declared. In accordance with the Gift and Hospitality Policy, Directors must ensure that a Gifts and Hospitality register is established and maintained for the services for which they are responsible.

Under the Council's Member Code of Conduct, Councillors must notify the Monitoring Officer of any gift or hospitality over the value of £25 that they are offered or receive in their role as a Member of the authority. This is done through Councillor Services, who maintain the Councillor Gift book. The monitoring Officer will report details of all gifts and hospitality registered by Councillors each year in his/her annual report to the Council's Standards Committee, which is a public document.

6.5.4 Whistle blowing

In accordance with the Council's whistle blowing policy, all suspected irregularities must be reported to the Chief Auditor (see paragraph 6.6.2). The Chief Auditor will report significant matters to the Chief Executive, Strategic Finance Director (Section 151 Officer) and where appropriate the Audit & Governance Committee.

6.5.5 Standards of conduct

The full responsibilities with regard to standards of conduct for officers are set out in the Officers' Code of Conduct and the standards for Councillors are set out in the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

6.5.6 Money laundering

Money laundering is defined as:

- (i) Concealing, disguising, converting, transferring or removing criminal property from the Country.
- (ii) Being concerned in an arrangement which a person knows or suspects or facilitates the acquisition, retention, use or control of criminal property.

In accordance with the Council's Anti-Money-Laundering policy, all suspected attempts to use the Council to launder money must be reported to the Assistant Director of Legal (MO), the Strategic Finance Director (S151) and the Chief Auditor (Money-laundering report officer) Chief Auditor who is also the Council's Anti-Money-Laundering Reporting Officer.

Directors must ensure that their staff understand what money laundering is and of their obligations under the money-laundering legislation, so that they can recognise situations that might lead to suspicions of money laundering arising.

When a person knows or suspects that money-laundering activity is taking place (or has taken place), or becomes concerned that their involvement in a matter may amount to a prohibited act under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and the Money Laundering Regulations 2011, they must disclose this as soon as practicable or risk prosecution.

To mitigate the risks of the Council being used to launder money cash payments⁶ in excess of **£5000** will not be accepted on behalf of the Council except with the prior approval of the Strategic Finance Director.

⁶ In practice and where possible officers should not accept cash payments

6.5.7 Anti-Bribery Policy

In accordance with the Council's Anti-Bribery Policy, the detection, prevention and reporting of bribery and other forms of corruption are the responsibility of all those working for Reading Borough Council or under its control. Bribery is an inducement or reward offered, promised or provided to gain personal, commercial, regulatory or contractual advantage. The Bribery Act has been enacted to enable robust action against such activity.

6.5.8 Promoting good governance

The Council's intranet (IRIS) provides further information and guidance on the policies used in promoting good governance across the Council. Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that all staff in their services complete governance training provided via e-learning modules on the Council website. Directors and Heads of Service are also responsible for ensuring that new employees undertake the relevant modules of the e-learning training at commencement of their employment, and that all staff refresh their learning.

6.6 Audit requirements

6.6.1 External audit

The external auditor duties include reviewing and reporting upon:

- (i) The financial aspects of the Council's corporate governance arrangements.
- (ii) The Council's financial statements; the external auditor must be satisfied that the Statement of Accounts give a 'true and fair view' of the financial position of the Council and its income and expenditure for the year in question and complies with the legal requirements.

The Council may, from time to time, also be subject to audit, inspection or investigation by external bodies such as HM Revenue and Customs, who have statutory rights of access.

The External Auditors and other statutory inspectors must be given reasonable access to premises, personnel, documents and assets that it is considered necessary for the purposes of their work. Regard must be given to sensitivity of data though, including compliance with the statutory duty not to disclose personal data to a third party under the Data Protection Act 1998. If there is any doubt about whether it is appropriate to provide such data to the external auditor or other statutory inspector, advice should be sought from the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services, the Strategic Finance Director and/or Chief Auditor.

Services must respond to external audit and inspection reports in writing, within a timescale agreed by the External Auditor, detailing the action intended to address any recommendations.

6.6.2 Internal Audit

The requirement for an Internal Audit function for local authorities is implied by Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, which requires that authorities 'make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs'.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations more specifically require authorities to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and of its internal controls, and to conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of its systems of internal audit. The findings of these annual reviews are considered by the Audit & Governance Committee on behalf of the Council as part of the consideration of the system of internal control referred to in paragraph 6.4.

Internal audit is an independent and objective appraisal function, established by the Council for reviewing the systems of internal control and assists the Council's stakeholders on business objectives and related risks and, thereby, contributes strategically to the organisation. The internal auditors adhere to proper practices in relation to internal control; specifically the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. They examine, evaluate and report upon the adequacy

of internal control as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources.

The Head of Audit will report functionally to the Audit Committee and administratively to the Strategic Finance Director (Sec 151 Officer) and will have direct right of access to the Chief Executive.

Day to day management of the Internal Audit Team will be performed by the Head of Audit. The Head of Audit will report audit findings to the Council's Corporate Management Team and Audit & Governance Committee.

Internal Audit has the authority to:

- (i) Access any Council premises, assets, records, documents and correspondence, and control systems.
- (ii) Receive any information and explanation related to any matter under consideration.
- (iii) Require any employee of the Council or school maintained by the Council to account for cash, stores or any other asset under his or her control.
- (iv) Access records belonging to third parties (e.g. Contractors) when required.
- (v) Talk directly to the Chief Executive and Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee.

The Strategic Finance Director and the Audit & Governance Committee will approve the annual audit plan prepared by the Chief Auditor, which takes account of the characteristics and relative risks of the activities involved. The Strategic Finance Director and the Audit and Governance Committee will also ensure that effective procedures are in place to investigate promptly any suspected fraud or irregularity.

Services must respond to internal audit reports in writing, within a timescale agreed as part of the internal audit methodology detailing the action intended, responsible officer, timescale for implementation and whether the action will require additional resources, to address all agreed recommendations. The relevant Head of Service must ensure that any agreed actions arising from audit recommendations are carried out in a timely and efficient fashion. This is validated by follow-up process undertaken by internal audit.

The Chief Auditor will maintain a record of all reports and allegations of suspected fraud, corruption or other financial irregularity in respect of funds and assets that are the responsibility of the Council, and will ensure that appropriate action is taken to investigate these.

The Chief Auditor should be given the opportunity to evaluate the adequacy of new systems, or changes to existing systems, for maintaining financial records or records of assets, in a timely manner before live operation.

Section 7 - Assets

7.1.1 Security of assets

The Council holds assets in the form of property, land, vehicles, ICT and other equipment, furniture and other items worth many millions of pounds. These assets must be safeguarded and used efficiently in service delivery.

All staff have a responsibility for safeguarding the Council's assets and information, including safeguarding the security of the Council's computer systems and paper records, and for ensuring compliance with the Council's computer and Internet security policies.

The Director of Environment & Neighbourhood Services, on behalf of the Corporate Management Team, will undertake the role of 'corporate landlord' and will:

- (i) Ensure the proper security and maintenance of all premises occupied and/or owned by the Council.
- (ii) Hold the title deeds for all Council properties.

The Director's corporate landlord functions will be exercised on a day-to-day basis by the Chief Valuer, except where they involve the facilities management of Council properties when they will be exercised on a day-to-day basis by the Civic Offices Manager.

Directors and Heads of Service will:

- (i) Advise the Director and Chief Valuer in any case where security of Council premises is thought to be defective or where it is considered that special security arrangements may be needed.
- (ii) Ensure that no Council asset is subject to personal use by an employee without proper authority.
- (iii) Ensure the safe custody of vehicles, equipment, furniture, inventory, stores and other property belonging to the Council.
- (iv) Ensure cash holdings on premises are kept to a minimum.
- (v) Ensure that keys to safes and similar receptacles are carried on the person of those responsible at all times; loss of any such keys must be reported to the relevant Head of Service and the Chief Auditor.

The Director and Chief Valuer have delegated authority to acquire or dispose of land and (real estate) property, subject to financial limits set out in the Delegations Register. No other Director or Head of Service may acquire, or enter into or amend a licence or lease to occupy, any land or property, nor to dispose of any land or property owned by the Council, except in the day-to-day allocation and management of single Council dwellings under the HRA.

7.1.2 Asset registers

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services is responsible for the maintenance of a corporate register of the Council's non-current (i.e. fixed) assets. This register forms the basis of Balance Sheet reporting on all non-current assets held by the Council.

This 'Assets Register' is maintained, in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK and the underlying accounting standards, for all items capitalised in accordance the guidelines set out with paragraph 3.4.1 that are expected to be used and controlled by the Council during more than one financial year; items that the Council has acquired for a prolonged period under the terms of a lease or similar arrangement are also recorded.

This means that the 'Assets Register' is maintained for:

- (i) All land and property owned, occupied or held by the Council, including land held under a charitable Trust where the Council has an interest in the land
- (ii) Buildings held and being used by the Council for operational purposes, including those held under the terms of a finance lease, and those held for investment purposes, for disposal or deemed to be surplus to current requirements.
- (iii) All highways infrastructure (*e.g. roads, structures, traffic management systems etc.*) that, when acquired, was capitalised in accordance with the guidance set out within paragraph 3.4.1.
- (iv) All vehicles, plant and equipment (*including IT hardware, if owned by the Council*) and intangible assets (*mainly IT software*) that, when acquired, were capitalised in accordance with the guidance set out within paragraph 3.4.1.

Directors will provide the Strategic Finance Director with any information necessary to maintain the Assets Register. This will include confirmation, and the location, of moveable assets, which should be appropriately marked and insured.

Non-current assets that are required to be measured at 'fair value' will be re-valued in accordance with:

- (i) The requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK; and
- (ii) Methodologies and bases for estimation set out in relevant professional standards (*including those of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors*).

7.1.3 Use of property other than for direct service delivery

The use of property other than for direct service delivery will be subject to prior agreement of, and in accordance with terms and conditions specified by, the Chief Valuer.

Prospective occupiers of Council land and buildings are not permitted to take possession or enter the land and buildings until a lease or agreement, in a form approved by the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services on the instruction of the Chief Valuer, has been put in place.

7.1.4 Property Transactions

In the course of its day to day business, the Council enters into a variety of property agreements, including (but not limited to):

- (i) Freehold sales;
- (ii) Long leasehold disposals;
- (iii) Short leases as tenant and as landlord;
- (iv) Freehold acquisitions;
- (v) Long leasehold acquisitions;
- (vi) Section 106 agreements as landowner;
- (vii) Release of covenants;
- (viii) Compulsory acquisitions and land compensation claims;
- (ix) Taking and granting easements;
- (x) Option Agreements;
- (xi) Lease surrenders and exit agreements (including dilapidations).

Once land and buildings have been declared surplus to requirements, the Chief Valuer will arrange for the disposal of these assets in accordance with the Council's property strategy and where required the approval of the Policy Committee, and then only when it is in the best interests of the Council and when Best Value is obtained.

The proceeds from the sale of all land and buildings (*subject to certain statutory limitations*) will be pooled and applied to finance future capital investment or for any other purpose permitted by Regulation.

The Strategic Finance Director will advise on best practice for disposal of other assets that are deemed surplus to requirements, bearing in mind factors such as environmental issues, security and data protection.

The Head of Customer Services is responsible for ensuring that the standards, policies and guidelines of decommissioning of IT equipment are well defined and communicated to all staff within the Council. The Data Protection Act must be a key consideration in the decommissioning of IT equipment.

1.2 Consumable stocks and stores

Heads of Service will make adequate arrangements for the care and custody of consumable stocks and stores held by their services, and will maintain inventory records that document the purchase and usage of these items.

The stock of such items should be maintained at an appropriate level and be subject to a regular independent physical check. Discrepancies must be investigated and pursued to a satisfactory conclusion.

Where stocks and stores are not expensed as purchased, but are held in a 'control account' until consumed, the Head of Service (or operational budget holder) must produce a stock certificate at each financial year end, confirming the number and value (*i.e. value represents the lower of cost and net realisable value*) of items held as at 31st March.

Stocks and stores must be removed from (i.e. written off) the Council's financial records when obsolete (i.e. when they cannot be sold or consumed) or when no longer held (i.e. due to theft or other loss).

The scheme of delegation allows Heads of Service/Directors in consultation with the Strategic Finance Director to write off losses of property and obsolescent stores and equipment, up to £20K.

1.3 Cash

7.3.1 Introduction

All money in the hands of the Council is controlled by the Strategic Finance Director. The Strategic Finance Director is thereby responsible for providing assurances that the Council's money is properly managed in a way that balances risk with return, with the overriding consideration being given to security.

In accordance with the Council's Anti-Money-Laundering Policy, all suspected attempts to use the Council to launder money must be reported to the Chief Auditor who is the Council's Money Laundering Reporting Officer (see paragraph 6.5.6).

7.3.2 Treasury management

Treasury management is an important aspect of the overall financial management of the Council. Treasury management activities are those associated with the management of the Council's cash flows and its borrowing and investments. A fundamental aim is to effectively control the risks associated with these activities and to pursue best value, in so far as that is consistent with the effective management of risk.

The Council complies with the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-sectoral Guidance Notes, and has approved:

- A **Treasury Management and Investment Strategy Statement**, which sets out the policies and objectives of its treasury management activities; and
- A series of **treasury management practices** (TMPs) which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve its policies and objectives for treasury management.

The Strategic Finance Director is responsible for maintaining the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and TMPs, and for recommending any changes to Council for approval through the Audit & Governance and Policy Committees⁷.

As noted in paragraph 3.7 (see page 21), the Strategic Finance Director will propose an annual Treasury Management Strategy to the Council in advance of the start of the relevant financial year. This Strategy will comply with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management, relevant Regulations and with the Council's own Treasury Management Policy Statement and TMPs; it will set the parameters within which investment and borrowing activity will be managed during the forthcoming financial year. The Strategic Finance Director is responsible for ensuring that all borrowing and investment activity is undertaken in compliance with the approved Treasury Management Strategy.

The Strategic Finance Director will report to the Policy Committee and Audit & Governance Committee at regular intervals in each financial year, on treasury management activities undertaken within delegated powers.

All investments of money, and borrowings undertaken, on behalf of the Council will be made in the name of the Council. The Strategic Finance Director will maintain records of such transactions

7.3.3 Loans to third parties

⁷ See Budget & Policy Framework Procedure Rules in part 4 of the Constitution – para. 2.1

The following table sets out the circumstances in which loans may be provided to third parties, and the approval required to each type of loan:

Type of loan	Approval required
Season ticket and similar loans made to employees	To be made in accordance with the Council's Delegations Register and HR Guidance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Season ticket loans – Strategic Finance Director • Car and cycle loans – Head of Service
Monies invested with banks and other financial institutions.	To be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Annual Treasury Management Strategy (see <i>paragraph 7.3.2 above</i>).
Loans to third parties for the purpose of financing expenditure which, if incurred by the Council, would constitute capital expenditure.	Such a loan would constitute capital expenditure by the Council (<i>and the repayment would constitute a capital receipt</i>) and so would require Capital Programme approval (see <i>paragraphs 3.4.2 and 4.4</i>). The approval of the Strategic Finance Director will be required to make any such loan, within the scheme and spend approval already given by Committee for the capital expenditure.
Loans sought from the Council for other purposes (<i>e.g. where a service is being outsourced and the potential provider seeks an up-front payment to support cash flows</i>).	Only to be undertaken with the prior approval of the Strategic Finance Director. The Strategic Finance Director's approval will also be required to offer such a loan at a discounted rate of interest. In all cases, this approval will be subject to any necessary Committee consent for the overall purpose being pursued

7.3.4 Bank accounts

The Strategic Finance Director is the only Council officer with delegated authority to open bank accounts on behalf of the Council, and to be the authorised signatory. No other officer may do so.

The Strategic Finance Director is also the only officer with delegated authority:

- (1) To make arrangements for the collection and payment into the Council's bank accounts of all monies due to the Council.
- (2) To make or authorise transfers between the various bank accounts and withdrawals from those accounts.

7.3.5 Imprest accounts

Wherever possible, Procurement Cards will be used for low value transactions and where there are no mandated procurement contracts in place (*the use of Procurement Cards is discussed further in section 8.2, which commences on page 55*). However, in the limited circumstances when Procurement Cards cannot be used, the Strategic Finance Director may provide bank imprest (petty cash) accounts to meet minor expenditure on behalf of the Council.

The Strategic Finance Director will:

- (i) Prescribe rules for operating these accounts;
- (ii) Determine the amount of each imprest account;
- (iii) Will maintain a record of all transactions and cash advances made; and
- (ix) Periodically review the arrangements for the safe custody and control of these advances.

Employees operating an imprest account will:

- (i) Obtain and retain vouchers to support each payment from the imprest account. Where appropriate, an official receipted VAT invoice must be obtained.
- (ii) Make adequate arrangements for the safe custody of the account.
- (iii) Produce cash and all vouchers to the total value of the imprest amount.
- (iv) Record transactions promptly.
- (v) Reconcile and balance the account at least monthly; reconciliation sheets to be signed and retained by the imprest holder.
- (vi) Ensure that the float is never used to cash personal cheques or to make personal loans and that the only payments into the account are the reimbursement of the float and change relating to purchases where an advance has been made.
- (vii) Provide the Strategic Finance Director with a certificate of the value of the account held at 31 March each year.

7.3.6 Trust funds and funds held for third parties

All trust funds will, wherever possible, be held in the name of the Council. All officers acting as trustees by virtue of their official position shall deposit securities relating to the trust with the Strategic Finance Director, unless the deed provides otherwise.

Where the Council is the trustee, funds will be operated within any relevant legislation and the specific requirements for each trust.

Where funds are held on behalf of third parties, for their secure administration, written records will be maintained of all transactions.

The Strategic Finance Director is responsible for making returns of charity trust accounts to the Charity Commission, subject to such accounts being made publicly available.

7.3.7 Staffing

The Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, is responsible for providing overall management to staff and for advising Councillors on how the authority should discharge of the Council's functions and the number, organisation and grading of employees required to achieve this.

The Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services, advised by the Human Resources Manager, is responsible for presenting an annual Pay Policy Statement to full Council for approval, and for ensuring that there is proper use of evaluation or other agreed systems for determining the remuneration of a job.

Directors have primary responsibility for their establishment and are accountable for compliance with establishment and financial controls, as outlined in the Council's approved budget and Pay Policy Statement. They will ensure that the staffing budget is not exceeded without due authority and that it is managed to enable the agreed level of service to be provided.

The Strategic Finance Director will advise Directors on areas such as National Insurance and pension contributions, as appropriate.

7.3.8 Intellectual property

Intellectual property is a generic term that includes inventions and writing. If an employee creates these during the course of employment then, as a general rule, they belong to the employer, not the employee.

Directors will ensure that their staff are complying with the Officer Code of Conduct, and not carrying out private work in Council time; and that their staff are aware of the Council's rights with regard to intellectual property. Instances of where intellectual property may be, or has been, created should be referred to the relevant Corporate Director(s)

Section 8 - Income and Expenditure

8.1. Income

8.1.1. Introduction

Effective income collection systems are necessary to ensure that all income due to the Council is identified, collected, receipted and banked properly.

Wherever possible, income should be collected in advance of supplying goods or services. Such an approach will avoid the time and cost of administering debts, and negates the possibility of a bad debt.

It is the responsibility of Heads of Service to ensure that staff authorised to act on their behalf in respect of income collection are clearly identified.

8.1.2. Charging policies

Where appropriate, Directors will ensure that charges for the supply of goods or services will cover the costs of their provision, including on-costs. These will be reviewed annually with the Strategic Finance Director, as part of the corporate budget process. An annual statement on fees and charges will be taken to Policy Committee, and then to Council, in alignment with the budget setting timetable.

On an exceptional basis, alternative timeframes will be considered in agreement with the Strategic Finance Director.

8.1.3. Income collection

The Strategic Finance Director will agree the arrangements for the collection of all income due to the Council and approve the procedures, systems and documentation for its collection.

In relation to the collection of income, the Strategic Finance Director and Directors will ensure that:

- (i) All money received by, or on behalf of, the Council is paid fully and promptly into the appropriate Council bank account in the form in which it is received.
- (ii) Income is not used to cash personal cheques or other payments.
- (iii) Appropriate details are recorded onto paying-in slips to provide an audit trail.
- (iv) A record is kept of money received directly by employees of the Council.
- (v) The receiving officer signs for the transfer of funds, and the transferor must retain a copy.
- (vi) Wherever possible, at least two employees are present when post is opened so that money received by post is properly identified and recorded; this requirement must be met where post regularly contains money.
- (vii) Money collected and deposited is reconciled to the appropriate bank account on a regular basis.
- (viii) The responsibility for cash collection is separated from that for identifying the amount due and that responsibility for reconciling the amount due is separated from handling of the amount received.
- (ix) Income is only held on premises up to levels approved by the Strategic Finance Director. All such income will be locked away to safeguard against loss or theft, and to ensure the security of cash handling.
- (x) All appropriate income documents are retained and stored for the defined period in accordance with the Council's document retention policy and schedule.
- (xi) The Strategic Finance Director is advised of outstanding income relating to the previous financial year as soon as possible after 31 March, and in line with the timetable for closure of the accounts determined by the Strategic Finance Director.

8.1.4. Debt recovery

Directors will ensure that a clear framework is in place within their areas of responsibility which defines who is empowered to raise a debt on the Council's behalf.

Once debts are raised Directors have a responsibility to assist the Head of Customer Services in collecting the debts that they have originated by providing any further information requested by the debtor, and in pursuing the matter on the Council's behalf.

Debts should be recovered in accordance with the Council's Corporate Debt Policy, which sets out the principles for maximising collection, and provides details of the approach the Council will take in seeking to recover all money due. In all cases will be reasonable, fair and appropriate given the nature of the debt:-

- (i) Where appropriate and lawful, ensure payment is received before or at the point of service.
- (ii) Invoices and other requests/demands should be checked for completeness and accuracy before being issued promptly.
- (iii) Invoices should be paid using the Council's preferred payment method of direct debit or standing order where a direct debit is not available.
- (iv) All invoices to be paid in accordance with the deadlines set out in the Corporate Debt Policy.

8.1.5. Writing off debts

Services are required to confirm they have followed the normal debt recovery procedure before referring the debt for write-off, and where the procedures have not been followed an explanation will need to be provided.

Directors will critically review outstanding debts on a regular basis, in conjunction with the Strategic Finance Director, and take prompt action to write off debts no longer deemed to be recoverable.

No *bona fide* debt may be cancelled, other than by formal write off. The scheme of delegation gives delegated authority to Directors/Heads of Service delegated authority to write off debts, for a particular debtor, for sums up to £1,000 at their own discretion; and for sums of up to £20,000 with the consent of the Strategic Finance Director. In both cases they must keep a written record of the debt and the reasons for writing it off.

The Strategic Finance Director will report to the Policy Committee on the writing-off of individual debts of over £20,000.

A record must be maintained for all debts written off. Where debts have been referred to Legal Services, the Strategic Finance Director will have due regard to their advice when considering action relating to bad debts. The appropriate accounting adjustments must be made following approval to write-off a debt.

A write off is only appropriate where:-

- The demand or invoice has been raised correctly and is due and owing; and
- There is a justified reason why the debt should not be pursued further.

8.1.6. Credit notes

A credit note to replace a debt must be substantiated and can only be issued to correct a factual inaccuracy or administrative error in the calculation and/or billing of the original debt, and once it is confirmed that the debt is not payable.

Credit notes will not be issued:

- (i) For irrecoverable debts, as the formal write off procedure should be followed.
- (ii) Where the debtor cannot afford to pay at that time. The debt should remain, and revised payment terms agreed, as appropriate.

- (iii) Where a debt is to be recovered through deductions from payments. In such instances, the deductions made should be offset against the debtor.

Credit notes will be subject to the approval of the Head of Service / operational budget holder.

8.2. Ordering and paying for work, goods and services

8.2.1 Introduction

Public money must be spent with demonstrable probity and in accordance with the Council's policies. The Council's procedures help to ensure that officers are protected and services obtain value for money from their purchasing arrangements through the use of established contracts, service level agreements and the use of the Council's systems.

Officers involved with engaging contractors, and/or with purchasing decisions, have a responsibility to declare:

- (i) any links or personal interests that they may have with purchasers, suppliers and/or contractors; and
- (ii) any gifts or hospitality offered by, or received from, purchasers, suppliers and/or contractors.

The necessity to make such declarations arises from the requirements outlined in paragraphs 6.5.2 and 6.5.3.

8.2.2. Ordering works, goods and services

Procurement cards can be used for:

- (i) Low value transactions for works, goods and services (i.e. *those under £500 and where there is not a mandated contract in place*);
- (ii) On-line purchases;
- (iii) One-off purchases;
- (iv) Subsistence purchases; and
- (v) Retail purchases (point of sale).

All such transactions must be in accordance with RBC's Procurement Card guidelines

All other works, goods and services must be ordered in accordance with the Council's Procurement Policies and Procedures (*see further guidance in paragraph 8.3.1*), and in accordance with the standardisation of supplies and materials (*including the use of mandated contracts*)

Orders for work, goods and services must:

- (i) Be in a form approved by the Strategic Finance Director.
- (ii) Be raised via one of the Council's Purchase-to-Pay systems (e.g. Oracle Fusion/Framework) and issued to the supplier prior to receipt of goods or services or commencement of works. The only exceptions are for periodic payments such as rent or rates and petty cash or Procurement Card purchases.
- (iii) Not be raised for any personal or private purchases.

Orders for works, goods and services must be raised and authorised by officers designated by the relevant Directors and Heads of Service. Heads of Service will ensure that orders are only approved by those authorised to do so, and Corporate Finance will maintain a list of designated staff on the Authorised Signatory Database, identifying in each case the limits of their authority. The Authorised Signatory Database underpins and supports the signatory process, as any officer seeking to commit expenditure will be verified against the database to ensure they have the delegated power to do so.

The authoriser of an order must be satisfied that:

- (i) The works, goods and services ordered are appropriate and needed;
- (ii) There is adequate budgetary provision; and
- (iii) Quotations or tenders have been obtained, if necessary, in accordance with the Procurement Policies and Procedures.

8.2.3. Receipt of works, goods and services

Works, goods and services must be checked upon receipt to ensure they are in accordance with the order. Wherever possible, goods should not be received by the person who approved the order.

If the works, goods or services have been obtained using a Procurement Card, it is the cardholder's responsibility to ensure that:

- (i) product or service information is provided for every transaction;
- (ii) Budget codes are provided for each transaction;
- (iii) clear, complete and accurate receipts are obtained, including VAT receipts for every transaction (where appropriate).

For further guidance and information, please refer to the RBC's Procurement Card Guidelines.

If ordered via Oracle Fusion, the receipt of works, goods and services must be recorded against the original purchase order prior to receipt of an invoice, in order to provide approval to pay for works, goods and services.

8.2.4 Payment of suppliers

The Strategic Finance Director will make payments from the Council's funds upon the receipt of proper original, certified copy or valid electronic VAT invoices that have been checked, coded and certified by the Service, confirming:

- (i) The receipt of goods or services to the correct price, quantity and quality standards.
- (ii) That the invoice has not previously been paid.
- (iii) That expenditure has been properly incurred and is within budget provision.
- (iv) That prices and arithmetic are correct and accord with quotations, tenders, contracts or catalogue prices.
- (v) That discounts have been taken where available.
- (vi) The correct accounting treatment of tax, including VAT
- (vii) That the invoice is correctly coded.
- (viii) That appropriate entries will be made in accounting records.

If items were ordered via Oracle Fusion the payments will only be made where a valid (Oracle Fusion) purchase order number is quoted on the suppliers' invoice and where confirmation of receipt of the work, goods or services has been provided. Invoices received which do not quote an approved purchase order number are not valid and may be returned to the supplier unpaid. Purchase orders should be raised in advance of the receipt of goods and/or service.

Payments to creditors will be made as soon as possible within agreed payment terms.

Any invoice in dispute with a supplier must be clearly identified and processed in accordance with guidance issued by the Strategic Finance Director and Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services.

For transactions other than those processed via Oracle Fusion, a different officer from the person checking an invoice must authorise the payment.

It is not permissible to make a payment in advance of the delivery of works, goods or services, or to vary the Council's standard settlement terms, other than with the prior approval of the Strategic Finance Director.

Directors will notify the Strategic Finance Director immediately of any expenditure to be incurred as a result of statute/court order where there is no budgetary provision. In such cases, appropriate budget provision should be sought, by way of a virement (see paragraph 4.3.3).

The normal methods of payment by the Council shall be by:

- (i) BACS payments direct into suppliers' bank accounts;
- (ii) Procurement Card (*in accordance with the Council's Procurement Card Guidelines*).

In exceptional circumstances, where suppliers are unable to accept payment via BACS, cheques will be issued by the Strategic Finance Director. The use of direct debits to make payments will require the prior agreement of the Strategic Finance Director.

All appropriate evidence of the transaction and payment documents will be retained and stored in accordance with the Council's document retention policy and schedule.

Directors must advise the Strategic Finance Director, at the end of each financial year, of outstanding expenditure relating to the financial year just ended, in line with the timetable for closure of the accounts determined by the Strategic Finance Director.

8.2.5. Contracts for construction and alterations to buildings / civil engineering works

The systems and procedures for dealing with the financial aspects of contracts for construction and alterations to buildings and for civil engineering works must be agreed with the Strategic Finance Director. This will include the systems and procedures for the certification of interim and final payments, checking, recording and authorising payments, for monitoring and controlling capital schemes and the procedures for validation of subcontractors' tax status.

8.3. Contracts

8.3.1. Procurement

The way goods and services must be procured is laid down in the Council's Commissioning and Procurement Strategy and the Contract Procedural Rules. These Procedures identify the approach that must be taken, dependent on the anticipated value of a contract over its whole life and the associated level of risk to the Council.

The Procurement Policies and Contract Procedural Rules provide a framework that must be followed every time anyone procures goods, work and services on behalf of the Council. Failure to comply with these procedures could expose the Council to unnecessary risk, legal challenge and/or reputational damage; adherence to the Procedures is therefore a mandatory requirement.

Where a third party is procuring goods, work or services on behalf of the Council then the relevant officer(s) must ensure that the third party is aware of and complies with the Council's procurement procedures.

Tender specifications and contracts must require organisations providing goods, work or services on behalf of the Council to comply with the Council's legal requirements and policies, including equality, sustainability, recruitment and employment practices, data handling and protection, freedom of information principles, standards and behaviour and arrangements for engaging with citizens and service users.

Master copies of contracts must be held within Legal Services for the retention of contracts. All new contracts must also be recorded in the corporate contracts register in accordance with the Procurement Policies and Procedures.

8.3.2. Monitoring of performance

All contracts should include applicable performance indicators. Contract managers are responsible for monitoring achievement against the performance indicators and invoking

service credits where applicable. In addition, contract managers should regularly review contractors' performance to identify error and/or mis-representation.

Best value principles should underpin the Council's approach to procurement and Directors have a responsibility to ensure, and be able to demonstrate, value for money in all their procurement activities.

8.3.3. Financial appraisal of tenderers

All potential tenderers for contracts meeting the Council's medium and high risk criteria (*as defined within the Council's procurement policies and procedures*) will complete the Council's standard pre-qualification questionnaire.

In some cases, contracts falling below the financial threshold for 'medium' risk contracts may nevertheless be considered as 'medium' risk. In such circumstances, a pre-qualification questionnaire will need to be completed. Further guidance is available in the Procurement Policies and Procedures.

The financial appraisal of the relevant organisations will be undertaken in accordance with the methodology determined by the Strategic Finance Director.

8.4. Payments to Employees and Councillors

8.4.1. Salaries

Staff appointments will be made in accordance with the Council's Pay Policy Statement, Recruitment Guidance and approved establishments, grades and scales of pay.

All appropriate payroll documents must be retained and stored for the defined period in accordance with the Council's document retention policy and schedule (7 years).

The Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Human Resources Manager) is responsible for all payments of salaries and overtime to staff (*with the exception of those schools that have the delegated power to procure their payroll function from elsewhere*). The Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services will therefore:

- (i) Arrange and control secure and reliable payment of salaries, wages, compensation or other emoluments to existing and former employees, in accordance with prescribed procedures, on the due date.
- (ii) Record and make arrangements for the accurate and timely payment of tax, pensions and other deductions.

Directors must ensure that effective systems and procedures are operated, so that:

- (i) Payments are only made to bona fide employees.
- (ii) Payments are only made where there is a valid entitlement.
- (iii) Conditions and contracts of employment are correctly applied.
- (ix) Employees' names listed on the payroll are checked at regular intervals to verify accuracy and completeness.

Directors will ensure that they maintain a list of staff designated to authorise appointments, terminations and other variations that may affect the pay or pension of an employee or former employee. This list will be maintained on the Authorised Signatory Database, identifying in each case the limits of their authority. The Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services (Human Resources Manager) will advise upon the employment status of individuals employed on a self-employed consultant or sub-contract basis.

8.4.2. Expenses and allowances

Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for authorising the payment of expense claims by staff in accordance with the Council's travel and subsistence policy.

The Human Resources Manager will:

- (i) Make arrangements for paying all authorised travel and subsistence claims.
- (ii) Ensure that taxable allowances and benefits are accounted for, recorded and returned, where appropriate, to HM Revenue and Customs.

The Strategic Finance Director is responsible for the payment of Councillors' travel or other allowances, and for ensuring that such taxable allowances are accounted for, recorded and returned, where appropriate to HM Revenue and Customs.

Councillors expenses must be claimed in accordance with the provisions set out in the Councillors Allowance Scheme approved each year by Full Council. The following processes will apply:

- All claims will be submitted through the Councillor Services team for review and checking against the Allowance Scheme, ensuring that claims are for approved duties and receipts are provided for all expenses, including fuel VAT receipts where mileage is claimed (unless the Councillor is registered for VAT).
- The Civic Services Manager will refer any resulting queries back to the Councillor for clarification.
- All claims properly submitted in accordance with the Allowance Scheme will be forwarded to the Human Resources Manager for payment. Certification of travel and subsistence claims is taken to mean that journeys were authorised and expenses properly and necessarily incurred for business purposes, and that allowances are properly payable by the Council, ensuring that cost-effective use of travel arrangements is achieved.

Heads of Service must notify details of any employee benefits in kind to the Strategic Finance Director to enable full and complete reporting within the income tax self-assessment system. Due consideration should be given to tax implications, ensuring that advice is sought and the Strategic Finance Director is informed where appropriate.

8.5. Taxation

The Strategic Finance Director is responsible for ensuring compliance with all relevant taxation regulations and guidance that affect the Council either directly, as a consequence its own activities, or indirectly, as a consequence of service delivery through external partners.

To enable the Strategic Finance Director to fulfil the requirements of this role, Directors and Heads of Service will:

- (i) Ensure that the Strategic Finance Director is consulted on all proposals that may alter or affect the Council's tax liability, including proposals to implement alternative service delivery models (as outlined in section 9.1, which commences on page 68).
- (ii) Ensure that the VAT guidance issued by the Strategic Finance Director is complied with (*i.e. to ensure that the correct liability is attached to all income due and that all amounts recoverable on purchases can be claimed*).
- (iii) Ensure that, where construction and maintenance works are undertaken, the sub-contractor fulfils the necessary **construction industry tax scheme** requirements (*as advised by the Strategic Finance Director*).
- (iv) Ensure that the Strategic Finance Director's guidance fee payments to consultants, individuals or partners is complied with.

The Strategic Finance Director will maintain the Council's tax records, make all tax payments, receive tax credits and submit tax returns by their due date, as appropriate.

8.6. Emergency Payments

Emergency payments are those arising from legal cases, civil emergencies or natural disasters such as flooding. They relate to unforeseen circumstances where budget provision has not been made and the payment cannot be covered within the relevant service's existing budget.

Emergency payments can only be made in extenuating circumstances with the following approval (as a minimum):

Minimum approval required to make an emergency payment	Director	Strategic Finance Director	CMT	Policy Committee	Council
Up to £500,000	✓	✓			
In excess of £500,000	✓	✓	✓	✓	
In excess of a sum which will cause the Council's minimum balance to fall below £5M)					✓

Details of emergency payments made within the financial year will be reported retrospectively to the Policy Committee.

Directors must notify the Strategic Finance Director as soon as practicable of any emergency payment made without the Strategic Finance Director's approval.

8.7 Transparency

To provide transparency in its stewardship of public funds the Council makes information available to the public in relation to its spending, regardless of value. Monthly payment transactions and accounts payable are available to download via the Council's RBC Spending Information Webpage.

Section 9 - External Arrangements

9.1. Alternative delivery models

9.1.1 Introduction

Services may be commissioned from retained services within the Council or via an alternative delivery models. There are various types of alternative delivery model, including:

- (i) **Local Authority Trading Company (LATC)** - separate legal entities established and owned by the Council that trade for profit with both public and private bodies.
- (ii) **Joint Ventures** - set up as separate corporate entities joining two or more parties for the purpose of executing a business undertaking. They are able to trade for profit if set up as separate corporate entity.
- (iii) **Charitable Company** - a corporate entity which is regulated by the Charities Commission; surpluses are reinvested into the company.
- (iv) **Co-operative** - trades for the mutual benefit of Councillors and is owned and operated by its Councillors.
- (v) **Outsourcing** - contractual arrangement between the Council and a private provider for the delivery of an agreed service, which involves the transfer of Council staff to the private provider. The outsourced provider can charge its customers and make a profit.
- (vi) **Licensing** - contractual arrangement between the Council and a private provider using the Council's intellectual property or infrastructure. For these arrangements the licensee is able to generate a profit, which can be paid to the Council
- (vii) **Social Enterprises** - businesses trading for social and environmental purposes.
- (viii) **Payment by results** – payments for the provision of services are dependent upon performance outcomes.
- (ix) **Pooling of budgets** – pooling of resources with other public sector bodies as a means of facilitating joint working in the provision of services.
- (x) **Agency Agreements and Sharing Staff** – between local authorities, under the provisions of Sections 101(1)(b) and 113 of the local Government Act 1972
- (xi) **Joint Arrangement** – with one or more other local authority, under Section 101(5) of the Local Government Act 1972. This may include the appointment of a joint committee under Section 102 of that Act.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but is provided to illustrate the range and diversity of alternative service delivery models. Any intention to commission services through such a model must only be pursued in compliance with the decision making process outlined in paragraph 9.1.2 below.

9.1.2 Business Cases for alternative delivery vehicles

Any proposal to commission services via an alternative delivery vehicle must be supported by an approved business case, to ensure that there is a robust planning and decision-making process in place.

The Business Case must clearly articulate the options being considered and measure these against the desired outcomes. It should also set out whether there is a statutory basis for the provision of the service or activity under consideration.

A decision to enter into or to affect the terms of, an agreement or partnership agreement with other local authorities or bodies falls within the authority's definition of a key decision, and therefore requires specific committee approval. A decision to enter into a joint arrangement or joint committee with other local authorities under Sections 101 and 02 of the Local Government Act 1972 must be taken by full Council.

Directors are responsible for ensuring that Council or Committee approval is obtained before any contract negotiations are entered into, and that all agreements and arrangements are properly documented.

The Policy Committee is responsible for approving the Council's participation in all significant partnerships / joint working arrangements with other local public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations.

Directors, following advice from the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and Strategic Finance Director, will advise the Policy Committee on the key elements of arrangements for commissioning services via an alternative delivery model, including:

- (i) The financial roles and responsibilities of the Council with respect to monitoring of the alternative delivery model provider.
- (ii) Appraisal of financial and non-financial risks, together with mitigation plans. The reputational impact of failure to deliver services should be considered, with clear plans on how this would be addressed.
- (iii) A comprehensive list of all the financial commitments the Council will enter into as a result of adopting the alternative service delivery model.
- (iv) The governance arrangements for decision making and how these will be carried out to ensure that the services provided remain aligned to those of the Council.
- (v) Performance measurement arrangements.
- (vi) Exit arrangements, and what would be done to ensure services continue to be delivered in the event of non-delivery by the service provider.
- (vii) The financial implication (including taxation issues) arising as a consequence of the proposed alternative delivery model.
- (viii) Transfer of Council assets to the proposed delivery vehicle, and arrangements for safeguarding their title and use.
- (ix) How equality, sustainability, recruitment and employment practices, data handling and protection, freedom of information principles, standards and behaviour and arrangements for engaging with citizens and service users are aligned to the Council's legal requirements and policies.
- (x) Audit requirements (both internal and external) and arrangements for the Council's auditors, where relevant, to have access to information.
- (xi) Arrangements for providing information required for the Council's Statement of Accounts to the Strategic Finance Director.
- (xii) In the event that the proposal is for a local authority trading company, a dividend policy should be agreed that sets out the process by which decisions will be taken regarding the retention or distribution of profits.
- (xiii) Pensions advice.

9.2. Partnerships

9.2.1 Context

Partnerships include any arrangements where the Council agrees to undertake, part fund or participate in a project with other bodies; either as a beneficiary of the project, or because the nature or status of the project gives the Council a right or obligation to support it. It is important to understand and distinguish between a partnership in this context and a supplier who the Council may refer to as a 'partner' due to the status that the Council has contractually awarded to it. Irrespective of the title applied to it, this latter type of partnership is a supplier relationship, which will be entered into in accordance with, and governed by, the Council's Procurement Policies and Contract Procedure Rules.

9.2.2 Forming of partnerships

The approval of both the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and Strategic Finance Director must be obtained prior to the Council entering into any partnership agreement where it is proposed that the Council adopts the role of 'Accountable Body' for a partnership. This is to ensure that the:

- (i) Legal status and financial viability of the arrangement are clearly established and that they are acceptable.
- (ii) Council's financial commitment to the partnership is quantified and that this is can be accommodated within the existing budget provision.

- (iii) Financial and corporate governance arrangements in place for the partnership are robust, and acceptable from the Council's perspective.
- (iv) The Council is not exposed to undue financial, legal or reputation risk as a consequence of its involvement in the partnership.
- (v) Council's own financial accounting and reporting requirements can be satisfied.

A partnership agreement must be produced that documents each of the above matters, and the arrangements for dispute resolution and for exiting the arrangement.

The relevant service Committee is responsible for approving the partnership agreement, and any delegations and frameworks required by it, in respect of functions and services delegated to that committee. The Policy Committee will approve partnership agreements, delegations and frameworks which affect services which cut across the delegation of functions to committees, or where the decision falls outside the service committee's normal cycle of meetings or is urgent.

Directors will ensure that:

- (i) The approval of the Strategic Finance Director and the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services is obtained prior to entering into a partnership agreement.
- (ii) An appraisal is undertaken which demonstrates that the risks associated with the arrangement are minimal, or that appropriate arrangements are in place to mitigate any such risks.
- (iii) The partnership agreement and arrangements will not impact adversely upon the services provided by the Council or upon its finances.
- (iv) The proposed financial contribution by the Council to the partnership can be met from existing budget provision.
- (v) Committee approval is secured for the agreement, and for all delegations and frameworks for the proposed partnership.

9.2.3 Delegation of budget to a partnership

Directors and Heads of Service must make clear, in their report to Committee, the Council's budget provision for the service covered by the proposed partnership arrangement. The report must specify where the authority will be the accountable body under the partnership, set out the financial implications and seek the necessary budget transfers and officer delegations to exercise this role.

9.2.4 Financial administration

Where the Council is the 'accountable body', these Financial Regulations apply to decisions relating to the expenditure of that money. All expenditure must be authorised by an appropriate RBC officer, or by someone else who has a statutory power to authorise expenditure. Directors are responsible for ensuring that the Council is promoting and applying the same high standards of financial administration to the partnership that apply throughout the Council.

Whenever any such arrangements are made there must be a written document which clearly establishes the responsibilities of the respective partners for managing the arrangement and the resources made available to the partnership. The document must also set out the arrangements in respect of unspent funding at each year end, unless this is to be returned to the Council as unspent money.

Directors must provide information on the partnership arrangements to the Strategic Finance Director, in order that the appropriate disclosures can be made within the Council's annual Statement of Accounts.

9.2.5 Documenting and recording of partnership agreements

Directors must ensure that all partnership agreements and arrangements are properly documented, and that all money for which the Council is accountable is spent via a written contract with the recipient (even if the recipient is a party to the arrangements) and that a

register of those contracts must be maintained in accordance with procedures specified by the Strategic Finance Director.

9.2.6 Representing the Council

Directors will ensure that the Council has full oversight of the operation of the arrangements. Directors will ensure that appropriate officer input is provided to support the partnership, and for each partnership, a responsible lead officer will be identified, who will be responsible for briefing and supporting Councillors on the operation of the partnership.

Where the partnership arrangements include a 'partnership board', to which Councillors and/or officers may be appointed, these appointments will be made each year (June) by the Policy Committee and recorded and published by the Committee Service in the Council's list of appointments to outside bodies.

The Director and partnership lead officer will be responsible for ensuring that all actions proposed by the partnership are properly taken through the Council's decision-making processes, as permitted within the Council's constitution and Scheme of Officer Delegations.

9.3 External Funding

9.3.1 Funding conditions

External funding is an important source of income to the Council, but funding conditions need to be carefully considered prior to entering into agreements, to ensure that:

- (i) They are compatible with the aims and objectives of the Council;
- (ii) The necessary procedures are in place to meet funding conditions and reporting requirements; and
- (iii) Appropriate budget provision is available if 'match funding' is required.

All bids for external funding bids must be made in consultation with the Strategic Finance Director and responsible Lead Councillor.

Bids for sums which, if successful, would involve the Council in a financial commitment of over £500k for the length of the scheme, are key decisions and must be agreed in advance by the responsible service Committee. So is any bid where the Council does not have budget provision to meet its contribution to the cost of the scheme. For other bids, the following delegations apply:

- (1) The Head of Service for the service in question, in consultation with the Strategic Finance Director and relevant Lead Councillor, is authorised to submit bids for funding from all available UK and European sources which do not fall within the key decision definition, and where successful to accept, subject to:
 - (a) The scheme being consistent with the Council's capital strategy, budget and policy framework and medium-term priorities
 - (b) The Council's contribution being met from within existing approved budgets in the current and future years
 - (c) The Council's costs or liability not exceeding £500,000 over the length of the scheme
 - (d) All successful bids being reported by the lead Head of Service:
 - If over £100,000, to the next meeting of the responsible Committee
 - If under £100,000, through the Decision Book
- (2) Where the criteria in (a) to (c) above are not met, the lead Head of Service may not submit or accept a bid for any scheme without the prior approval of the Policy Committee
- (3) In exceptional cases, where the timescale and deadline for the bid mean that it would not be practical to submit a report to the relevant Committee, the bid may be submitted

following consultation with the Strategic Finance Director, Lead Councillor and Leader or Deputy Leader, and reported to the next meeting of the Committee by the lead Head of Service.

9.3.2 Accounting for external funding

The Strategic Finance Director, in conjunction with the Head of Service in receipt of the grant, must, as appropriate, ensure that all funding notified by external bodies is received and properly recorded in the Council's accounts. This will include ensuring that claims for funding are made by the due date, and in accordance with the funding conditions and the accounting instruction notes on Grants issued by the Strategic Finance Director.

9.3.3 External funding claims

The Strategic Finance Director and Heads of Service must, as appropriate, satisfy audit requirements in respect of external funding claims. This includes maintaining appropriate records that accord with the funding conditions, and making these available to the auditors as required.

9.3.4 Third party expenditure

Sometimes, grant funding awarded to the Council may be passed to an organisation falling outside of the direct responsibility of the Council. The Council will however remain accountable for the grant funding and, as such, will be responsible for ensuring that all of the terms of the grant are met.

The Head of Service in receipt of the grant must ensure that effective monitoring procedures are in place to provide assurances over the eligibility of expenditure incurred by the third party. Upon audit, if the eligibility of third party expenditure cannot be proven by the Council, the Council will itself be required to return the grant funding to the awarding body.

9.4 Work by the Council for Third Parties

9.4.1 Approval to contractual arrangements

Work can only be undertaken for third parties where the Council has the legal powers to undertake the work. Where such legal powers exist, Directors are responsible for:

- (i) Approving the contractual arrangements for any work undertaken by their services for third parties or external bodies.
- (ii) Ensuring that the appropriate expertise exists to fulfil the contract.
- (iii) Ensuring that no contract adversely impacts upon the services provided by the Council.

9.4.2 Financial aspects of third party contracts

With regard to the financial aspects of third party contracts, Directors will:

- (i) Comply with any guidance issued by the Strategic Finance Director and will ensure that the appropriate insurance arrangements are made.
- (ii) Ensure that all costs arising from the provision of services to a third party are recovered and hence that there is no subsidy included within the contract.
- (iii) Ensure that the Council is not exposed to the risk of bad debts.

9.4.3 Documenting and recording contracts

All contracts will be properly documented, and a register will be maintained of those contracts. Directors will provide information on the contractual arrangements to the Strategic Finance Director, in order that the appropriate disclosures can be made within the Council's annual statement of accounts.

Contract Procedure Rules

(adopted by Council on 17 October 2023)

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CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

1. Introduction

- (1.1) These Contract Procedure Rules provide the basic rules for anyone making a contract for supply to the Council. They apply equally to contracts for the supply of goods, services, or works (or any type of consideration) to the Council, and to concessions contracts involving the Council. In making such contracts, the overriding obligation on everyone working on behalf of the Council is to obtain the best value for money for the Council.
- (1.2) These Contract Procedure Rules explain the minimum standards and base procedures that the Council expects to be applied by all staff responsible for buying goods, services or works (or any type of consideration), or making concessions contracts, on behalf of the Council. The detailed procedures that must be followed are set out more fully in the Council's Procurement Manual and associated Contract Management Guidance available on the Council Intranet.
- (1.3) These Contract Procedure Rules govern the *contractual aspects* of buying goods, services or works (or any type of consideration) or making concessions contracts, on behalf of the Council, and outline the contractual delegations (authority to engage a third party) for Officers. They apply in conjunction with Financial Procedure Rules, which govern the *financial aspects* (authority to commit budgetary funds) of buying.

2. CPR Outputs

- (2.1) The main intended *outputs* from these Contract Procedure Rules are:
- (i) To help Officers to deliver best value for money at all times;
 - (ii) To manage corporate risk when dealing with third parties;
 - (iii) To clearly set out the accountability for procurement decisions

3. Principles

- (3.1) The Executive, Deputy and Assistant Directors [ED, DD & AD] have delegated authority to invite bids, and to "accept" tenders (i.e. approve the "award" of contracts resulting from tenders) for Council contracts under these Contract Procedure Rules, and to exercise any other functions ascribed to the ADs or Client Officers in these Contract Procedure Rules. This includes, where applicable, authorising (where permissible) the extension or variation of contracts as an officer with delegated authority.
- (3.2) EDs, DDs and ADs shall ensure that the procurement and commissioning of goods, services and works by their Officers adheres to:
- a. UK and/or English Law;
 - b. The UK National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS);
 - c. The Council's Constitution including these Contract Procedure Rules, Financial Regulations and Financial Procedure Rules;
 - d. The Council's Procurement Manual and Contract Management Guidance;
 - e. Any conditions imposed by a Funding Body for spending funds or awarding contracts made available by that Body for a specific project or activity;
 - f. The Council's formal Decision-Making process.
- (3.3) For the avoidance of doubt, the relevant "UK and/or English Law" includes The Public Contracts Regulations (Utilities, Contract Regulations and Concessions Contract Regulations) that are currently enacted, The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, and The Modern Slavery Act 2015
- (3.4) The alignment of these Rules with applicable UK Law will be reviewed on an annual basis. If these Rules (or the Procurement Manual) conflict in any way at any time with the UK Law, the Law shall always take precedence, including the period during which these Rules are being updated.
- (3.5) Where the value of a procurement is below the thresholds specified by the Regulations the procurement must still be conducted in accordance with the Regulation principles of openness, transparency & non-discrimination.

(3.6) Each Executive Director, Deputy Director and Assistant Director shall:

- (i) be accountable for all procurements undertaken by their service;
- (ii) ensure that best value for money is evidenced and achieved in all procurements for their service area;
- (iii) ensure that all procurements for their service area are conducted in an open, transparent, and non-discriminatory manner;
- (iv) ensure that all procurements for their service area observe the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) where that exists;
- (v) ensure that during the earliest stages of planning any procurement for their service area, & where relevant, TUPE is considered;
- (vi) assess the ability to join up spending/contracts across other service areas to secure efficiencies and value for money;
- (vii) ensure that all contracts awarded by their service area are managed to deliver optimum performance and best value for money;
- (viii) operate a Scheme of Sub-delegation for their service area;
- (x) in conjunction with the AD for Procurement & Contracts, ensure that training on these Contract Procedure Rules and the Procurement Manual is provided to Budget Managers & Client Officers;

(3.7) All procurement activity must comply with the principles of best value for money as set out in the Procurement Manual, and the relevant guiding themes of the Corporate Plan applicable at the time.

4. Scope of these Contract Procedure Rules

(4.1) These Contract Procedure Rules do not apply to:

- (i) contracts of employment;
- (ii) contracts that relate solely to the purchase or acquisition of land;
- (iii) contracts awarded by schools that are outside the control of the Council (such as academies and foundation schools);
- (iv) the engagement of external solicitors/barristers for potential legal proceedings and urgent advice;
- (v) the allocation or disbursement of grant funding to third parties;
- (vi) contracts or agreements where the Council is the party providing the goods or services to, or undertaking works for, another body.

5. Compliance

(5.1) Once the need for goods, services or works is determined, it is necessary to decide on a process by which they shall be acquired. These Contract Procedure Rules shall govern any such process, including quotations, tenders, and all aspects of frameworks and Dynamic Purchasing Systems.

(5.2) Every contract subsequently made by or for the Council for the carrying out of works, or for the supply of goods, materials or services to the Council must comply with these Contract Procedure Rules.

(5.3) Where the procurement of goods, services or works is taking place, or where any form of consideration is involved, for activity that is subject to Funding from an external Funding Body, any conditions imposed by the Funding Body shall take precedence over these Contract Procedure Rules (but never over the Regulations). Where the Funding conditions require greater rigour than these Contract Procedure Rules, and in the context of ensuring that the funding is secured, the Funding conditions shall be fully observed; where the Funding conditions are of less rigour than these Contract Procedure Rules, these Rules shall be fully observed.

(5.4) Where tenders, quotes or bids have been invited by any consortium, collaboration or agency arrangement of which the Council is a member, and where the Contract Procedure Rules adopted by the lead agency ("the contracting authority") differ from these Contract Procedure Rules, these Contract Procedure Rules shall take precedence, in particular where the Council is the contracting authority in such instances.

- (5.5) Any consultant appointed by the Council shall at all times comply with these Contract Procedure Rules where their roles requires an involvement in any contract for supply. The contract with any consultant must provide that all records maintained by the consultant in relation to a contract must be made available to the Council on request and handed over to the Council on completion of the assignment.
- (5.6) Where the Council wishes to appoint a consultant or “contractor” to undertake any procurement or contract related (as defined by these CPRs) activities, the RBC Procurement Hub must be consulted prior to the appointment of any such consultant or “contractor”
- (5.7) The Procurement Manual must be followed, and the associated Contract Management Guidance must be observed, as part of these rules.

ESTABLISHING A CONTRACT – PROCUREMENT OBLIGATIONS

6. Requirement for a nominated Client Officer and Contract Manager

- (6.1) From the outset, contract files should clearly record the identity of the officer undertaking the procurement (Client Officer) and the officer responsible for managing the subsequent contract (Contract Manager).
- (6.2) All contracts must be fully documented in a central contract file with a complete audit trail recording all communications and actions taken. This file must adhere to the records management policy of the Council and should be held by the Contract Manager.
- (6.3) Where a contract for the supply of goods, services or works, or any type of consideration, is to be made in respect of activity that is subject to external Funding, the Client Officer must ensure that the Funding conditions are observed throughout the process, and that an audit trail is maintained for examination by the Funding Body (or its representatives).

7. Authorisation to initiate a procurement

- (1) The Client Officer leading the procurement is responsible for ensuring and recording on the contract file that the relevant authority (Council, Committee or delegated Officer as appropriate) to proceed has been obtained and that there is sufficient budgetary provision in place for the procurement before proceeding.
- (2) Contracts with an estimated value of £500,000 per annum or over must be discussed with the relevant ED before proceeding. Agreement must be reached on the sourcing approach (tender, quotation, framework, etc.), specification, evaluation criteria and scoring, in accordance with the procurement governance framework instigated by the AD of Procurement and Contracts, and the approval of the ED shall be secured on file.

8. Estimated Value of Contracts

- (8.1) An estimated value must be prepared and documented for every contract before starting the procurement process to confirm there is adequate budget provision, and to determine (in accordance with the Regulations) the appropriate form of tender, quotation or call off process to follow.
- (8.2) For contracts which continue over an indetermined number of years, the estimated value of the contract shall be taken to be the annual value multiplied the length of contract in years (inclusive of VAT), as this will allow the Client Officer to assess whether UK Regulations may apply. Where the contract term is indeterminate or indefinite the value will be forty-eight times the monthly cost. The value of all extensions permitted must be included when calculating that contract value.
- (8.3) For concession contracts (contracts for which the Council does not pay the provider for the services/works/goods, but the contractor receives consideration in other ways e.g., directly from the end user), the contract value will be based upon the anticipated income that the contractor is likely to receive from any source pursuant to such contract.

- (8.4) Contract values should be calculated in accordance with the Regulations to determine whether the full provisions of the Regulations need to be applied or not; in all cases, the provisions of the UK National Procurement Policy Statement shall be observed.

9. Division of Contracts

- (9.1) Large scale works or contracts shall not be broken down into smaller units for the purpose of creating lower value contracts, except where there are sound National or Local Policy, operational or management reasons for doing so. Any such action must be authorised by the AD for Procurement & Contracts in writing, with the reasons recorded on the contract file.

10. Frameworks and Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS)

- (10.1) Where the Council determines to establish a framework or DPS, it shall do so in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations.
- (10.2) Where the Council determines that a framework or DPS provides the best value for money option for securing the solution and meets all Regulatory and Policy obligations, it shall use it in accordance with the Regulations.
- (10.3) Where a framework or DPS established by another organisation contains procedures that do not comply with the Regulations, the Regulations must be followed. It is the Council’s responsibility under the Regulations to satisfy itself of its obligations under the Regulations, and to ensure that the Regulations are followed at all times.

11. The Requirements for Competition

Total Value of proposed contract (incl. VAT)	Options for establishing a contract
Goods or Services	
Up to £5,000	Request at least one written quotation Undertake a compliant call off from a framework Use an appropriate DPS
£5,001 to £125,000	Invite at least 3 quotations (or tenders) Undertake a compliant call off from a framework Use an appropriate DPS
£125,001 to Regulation Threshold	Formal Tender process Undertake a compliant call off from a framework Use an appropriate DPS
Works	
Up to £25,000	Request at least one written quotation Undertake a compliant call off from a framework Use an appropriate DPS
£25,001 to £2.5m	Invite at least 3 Tenders Undertake a compliant call off from a framework Use an appropriate DPS
£2,500,001 to Regulation Threshold	Formal Tender process Undertake a compliant call off from a framework Use an appropriate DPS
Goods, Services and Works	
Regulation Threshold and Above	Undertake a Regulation-compliant tender Undertake a compliant call off from a framework Use an appropriate DPS

Table 1 – Contract Thresholds

- (11.1) The Council is obligated to demonstrate the principles of openness, transparency and non-discrimination when spending its money on goods, services, or works or when any form of consideration is involved.
- (11.2) The manner of doing this is determined by the total estimated value of the proposed contract over its duration (including all extension options, and to include VAT), and the methods are summarised in **Table 1** above.
- (11.3) The duration of a proposed contract shall be determined based on the likely means of securing best value for money based on industry practice, market sounding, and budget availability. The decision of whether to include an extension option (and the duration of any such option) shall be based upon the same considerations, as shall the decision of whether to invoke any such option (as the need for a further contract is considered).
- (11.4) Where the estimated value is of or above the relevant thresholds for goods, services or works, the tender procedure may be conducted in accordance with any of the applicable procedures as defined and set out in the Regulations.
- (11.5) For procurements for **concessions contracts** that exceed the Regulation thresholds, the procedure to instigate the contract shall be conducted in accordance with the principles of the Regulations, and in accordance with a procedure of the Council's choosing.
- (11.6) All procurements for care, social health education and other specific services listed in the Regulations that align to the relevant thresholds, may be conducted in accordance with "**The Light Touch Regime**", which aims to encourage innovation and flexibility via a more relaxed approach.

12. Exceptions to the Requirements for Competition

- (12.1) It is the Council's policy to adhere at all times to the requirement for open and fair competition to achieve, and evidence, best value for money.
- (12.2) The Council may waive the requirement for competition only in certain instances (and not at all where doing so is prohibited by the Regulations).
- (12.3) All applications for an exception to the requirements for competition shall be made in accordance with the Exception to Competition Application process outlined in the Procurement Manual.
- (12.4) All applications for exceptions, to include the reasons, shall be signed by the relevant AD, and submitted for consideration in accordance with the exceptions procedure as set out in the Procurement Manual.
- (12.5) Exception requests that contravene UK or English Law will be rejected.
- (12.6) Any exceptions to the requirements of competition shall only be granted in exceptional circumstances, where permitted by the Regulations, and generally for only such time as may be required to instigate a fully compliant solution; the relevant part(s) of the Regulations must also be expressly referenced, and all such applications recorded and logged.
- (12.7) Possible justifiable reasons for waving the requirement for competition (and pending the undertaking of a compliant solution) include:
 - (i) Genuine emergencies – Critical preventative or remedial work where there is a real and imminent risk to the safety of people or property arising from a hitherto unforeseen 'catastrophic' event or incident such as fire, bombing, flooding, major landslide, etc.
 - (ii) Urgent situations not of the council's own making. The urgency must have been reasonably unforeseeable (e.g. existing supplier going into liquidation, urgently imposed statutory changes, etc.). Urgency arising through issues of the Council's own making (whatever the cause and regardless of whether it involved previous delays or resource shortages) shall not in itself justify exemption.

- (iii) To avoid enforcement action against the Council for non-compliance with a relevant statutory provision;
 - (iv) Reasons of compatibility - If compatibility with existing goods, equipment or ICT software or systems is essential and where they cannot be sourced from another supplier (e.g. spare parts for existing equipment) or where additional units are being purchased to match existing equipment and there is an overwhelming case for matching the existing items on the grounds of functionality.
 - (v) The purchase of proprietary or patented goods, works or services. Similarly, for any highly specialised/niche services where, for all practical purposes, no realistic alternative source of supply exists.
 - (vi) Works orders placed with utility companies, e.g. for re-routing cables or pipework. The term utilities does not include telecommunications.
 - (vii) Where the Council wishes to obtain goods, services or works from another public sector body (including another local authority or NHS Trust).
 - (viii) Where the Council wishes to undertake a compliant direct award from a framework that was established by means of competition and in accordance with the Regulations, and where the terms of the framework compliantly permit such an approach
- (12.8) Where the procurement of goods, services and works is taking place in respect of activity that is subject to Funding from an external Funding Body, confirmation of the acceptability of the proposed approach shall be sought from the Funding Body, in advance of any activity, where it is proposed that the activity may not be subject to competition; in such cases, any conditions imposed by the Funding Body shall override any of the potential reasons in Rule 12.7 herein (but never the Regulations).

PROCEDURAL STEPS FOR A PROCUREMENT

13. Specification, Selection/Assessment Criteria & Evaluation/Award Criteria

- (13.1) A specification, selection/assessment (“looking back”) criteria, and award/evaluation (“looking forward”) criteria (both to include weightings) must be prepared in advance of bids being sought, and included in any Contract Notice, Request For Quotation (RFQ), Invitation to Tender (ITT) or framework call off. The Director of Finance shall approve all financial scoring methodologies used.
- (13.2) The award/evaluation criteria must be based on determining the tender that provides the most advantageous solution, and must adhere to the Regulations. Where a framework advises a procedure that does not adhere to the Regulations, the Regulations must be adhered to (in the event that the Council still chooses to use the framework or DPS).

14. Late Submissions

- (14.1) Subject to 14(2) below, any tender or bid received after the specified time shall be promptly rejected and the bidder notified.
- (14.2) Any tender or bid that is received late may nevertheless be considered upon request if the AD for Procurement & Contracts and the Monitoring Officer are satisfied that:
- (a) There is clear evidence of attempted submission by the tenderer in time for the due date and time and this has not been successful owing to circumstances beyond the control of the tenderer, and
 - (b) No other tenders have been opened, and
 - (c) No unfair advantage is likely to have been achieved.

15. Tender Assessment and Tender Evaluation

- (15.1) Tenders shall be **assessed**, in accordance with the Regulations and the selection/assessment (“looking back”) criteria stated in the SQ or ITT, and as per the Procurement Manual.

(15.2) The Client Officer shall ensure that Council has determined that the successful bidder is sufficiently capable and financially sound to undertake the contract, and that the contractor or supplier has all appropriate and relevant Policies (incl. Health & Safety) and Insurances in place.

(15.3) Tenders shall be **evaluated**, in accordance with the Regulations and the award/evaluation (“looking forward”) criteria in the Contract Notice and ITT, and as per the Procurement Manual, to identify the successful bid.

16. Errors and clarifications of tenders

(16.1) Where examination of tenders reveals possible errors or ambiguities that would affect the tender score in an otherwise successful tender, the tenderer should be asked to explain the aspect for clarity. This explanation must not, however, be permitted to change any fundamental aspect of the submission.

17. Evaluation Report

(17.1) At the conclusion of the award/evaluation process, the Client Officer will compile and agree with the evaluation panel an Evaluation Report to support the recommendation to award a contract to the successful tenderer and to comply with the Regulations. The Report will provide a summary of the tender process and will include full reasons for the decision to recommend the contract award. **NB** The Report will be fully disclosable under FOIA Legislation.

18. Tender Acceptance

(18.1) The decision to authorise acceptance of a tender or bid shall be made in accordance with the information contained in the Evaluation report.

(18.2) Acceptance of quotes, tenders or call offs with a value up to £100,000 per annum may be authorised by the relevant ED, DD or AD.

(18.3) Acceptance of tenders or call offs with a value of £100,001 up to £500,000 per annum (revenue), or £100,001 up to £2.5m (capital), must be authorised by the signing of a formal decision report by the relevant AD, in consultation with their ED.

(18.4) Acceptance of tenders or call offs with a value of £500,001 per annum (revenue) or £2.5m per annum (capital) or greater, or other contracts that qualify as key decisions, must be authorised by:

- (i) A formal decision of Council or Committee, or
- (ii) An Executive Director with an authority delegated specifically by a formal decision of Council or Committee.

(18.5) Where the Council is undertaking a tender in order to establish a framework or DPS, the tender shall be accepted in accordance with CPR 18 (1)– (4), based on the total estimated value of the framework as calculated in accordance with CPR 8, and as stated in the Contract Notice.

(18.6) Where the Client Officer wishes to add a new supplier to a DPS, this shall be subject to the protocol outlined in the Procurement Manual.

19. Standstill Period

(19.1) At the conclusion of the relevant competitive evaluation for above Regulation threshold procurements, a standstill period shall be applied where required by the Regulations, and conducted in accordance with the procedures set out in the Regulations.

20. Award Notices and Contracts Register

(20.1) Where an above threshold requirement has been tendered under the Regulations, a Contract Award Notice shall be published, after the contract is awarded, and within the regulated number of days thereafter.

- (20.2) Every contract made by the Council, above or below the Regulations thresholds, shall be entered onto the Council's Contracts Register.

21. Management of Contracts

- (21.1) Every Council contract shall be managed in accordance with any risk segmentation criteria that may have been applied, or as set out in the Procurement Manual and associated Contract Management Guidance.
- (21.2) Budget Managers, Commissioning Officers and those managing contracts shall observe the protocols set out in the Contract Management Guidance associated with the Procurement Manual.
- (21.3) Contract Managers shall ensure, and be able to evidence, that best value for money is being delivered in a timely manner by the contracted supplier, and that all applicable contractual expectations are being met.

CONTENT OF CONTRACTS

22. Form and Execution of Contracts

- (22.1) A written contract is required for all goods, services, or works, regardless of whether a formal tender or a quotation was or should have been obtained. The written contract may take the form of a Purchase Order.
- (22.2) Every contract for the supply of goods, works, or services of £100,001 up to £500,000 per annum must be in writing, in a form approved by the AD of Legal and Democratic Services.
- (22.3) Every contract for the supply of goods, works or services of £500,001 per annum (or greater) in value shall be in writing and shall be sealed with the common seal of the Council or provided the AD for Legal & Democratic Services is satisfied that the Council's interests are properly protected, signed by an officer authorised to use the Council's Common Seal.
- (22.4) All procurements, regardless of value, must use the Council's appropriate un-amended model contract available on the Intranet. Legal Services shall, in conjunction with the Procurement Team, keep current and formally review all model contract templates on a regular basis, and maintain version control.
- (22.5) Contracts up to £500,000 per annum may be signed by the ED, DD or AD
- (22.6) No Councillor of the Council, Officer of the Council, or consultant, shall enter, orally or in writing, into any contract on behalf of the Council unless they have explicit authorisation to do so.
- (22.7) A Letter of Intent may not be issued without the prior written approval of the Monitoring Officer or their nominee and after consultation with the Director of Finance or their nominee, and not at all if the Regulations have not been followed in identifying the proposed contractor(s).
- (22.8) In situations of extreme urgency (as defined in CPR 12 (7)), an oral instruction may be given to a Supplier to provide goods, works or services provided that CPR 22.6 is adhered to, and that written confirmation of the instructions (via PO or contract template) is sent to the Supplier within ten days, and copied to the AD for Procurement & Contracts.

23. Retention of Tenders and Quotations

- (23.1) All tenders and quotations (accepted and unaccepted) not forming part of a contract signed or sealed in accordance with these Contract Procedure Rules shall be retained by the Client Officer for a period of 12 months after the relevant contract commencement date.
- (23.2) All tenders and quotations that are part of a contract signed or sealed in accordance with these Contract Procedure Rules shall be retained for a period of 12 years after the following have happened or been considered.
- (i) All payments under the Contract have been made.

- (ii) The AD is satisfied that all of the requirements under the terms of the Contract have been successfully carried out whether by the Council or the Contractor and that no claims are likely to arise by or against the Council.
- (iii) They are not likely to be required for inspection as part of the Annual Audit by the Council's external auditors, or a Funding Body.

24. Insurance

- (24.1) The Client Officer must consider the Council's need for appropriate indemnities backed by insurance, relevant to the goods, services or works being procured, and aligned to the standards of that respective industry.
- (24.2) For a contract for works or services, the contract must require the contractor to carry public liability insurance and employer's liability insurance, to an industry appropriate value, and as agreed with the Council's Insurance Manager.
- (24.3) In the case of a contract for professional services, the contract must also require the contractor to carry professional indemnity insurance to an industry appropriate value, and as agreed with the Insurance Manager.

25. Assignment or Novation of Contracts

- (25.1) Assignment or novation of contracts shall only be permitted with the prior consent of the Monitoring Officer, who must be satisfied that an effective vetting procedure of assignees or subcontractors has been implemented.

26. Security of Contract Delivery

- (26.1) Every contract for works shall provide for liquidated damages as standard, to be paid by the contractor in case the terms of the contract are not performed, unless otherwise agreed by the Director of Finance.
- (26.2) The Client Officer shall consider, based on the specific requirement and standard industry practices, whether a Parent Company Guarantee or Performance Bond shall be a requirement of the contract.

27. Corruption, Bankruptcy & Cancellation

- (27.1) Every contract must state that the Council may cancel the contract and recover any resulting losses if the contractor, their employees, or anyone acting on their behalf, with or without their knowledge, does anything improper to influence, or commits an offence under Bribery Act 2010.

28. Variations or Extension

- (28.1) Any contract may be varied or extended where permitted by the Regulations, and (only) where provision for an extension has been provided in the original Notice, ITT and subsequent contract. Variations must be in accordance with the existing contract terms & within permitted variation limits as stated by the Regulations.
- (28.2) Contracts below the Regulation threshold may be extended only where provision for an extension has been provided in the original Notice and subsequent contract, and only varied in accordance with the existing contract terms and aligned to the variation limits in the Regulations.
- (28.3) Approval of any contract variation or extension shall be based on the total contract value *including* the proposed variation or extension, and in accordance with the Tender Acceptance levels set out in CPR 18.
- (28.4) Where a variation would mean that the value of a contract would exceed the Regulation Threshold, or where there would be a material change to the contract, the contract must be treated as a new Procurement under these Contract Procedure Rules (and no variation enacted).

29. Registration of Contracts

(29.1) The Council will keep a Register of all contracts of £5,000 and over placed by the Council, and publish this externally. The Register must state the name of the contractor, the name of the Council’s Contract Manager, the work to be done or goods to be supplied, the duration and value of the contract. Any Client Officer letting a contract must ensure details are supplied to the AD for Procurement & Contracts for entry in the Register.

30. Termination of Contract

(30.1) Early termination of any contract by agreement or in accordance with the termination provisions set out in the contract (every contract made must include such provision) is subject to the following authorisation:

- (i) Contracts classed as Key Decisions (by Committee, Council, or Officer) - in accordance with the Key Decision Rules.
- (ii) Contracts up to £500,000 per annum - by the relevant ED, DD or AD.

31. Glossary

Assessment	The term used to describe the scoring of initial part of a bid submission (usually termed the Supplier Questionnaire)
Assessment Criteria	The means by which the Assessment of the initial part of a bid submission is undertaken. The means of assessment (or “selection”) must be determined in advance of the publication of any Contract Notice, appropriately weighted, and clearly set out in the bid documentation
Award Criteria	The means by which the Evaluation of the specification element of a bid submission is undertaken. The evaluation (or “award”) criteria must be determined in advance of the publication of any Contract Notice, appropriately weighted, and clearly set out in the bid documentation
Best value for money	The optimum combination of whole life cost and benefits to meet the council’s requirements, and includes consideration of social responsibility, equality, economic factors, and sustainability
Budget Manager	An officer with budgetary responsibility for the spend relating to a Procurement
Client Officer	A person appointed in accordance to lead and co- coordinate procurement procedure for a particular contract and completing the Procurement Plan
Consideration	The main element of a contract, consideration describes why each party is joining the agreement; consideration from each side is what makes a contract legally binding.
Contract	Each agreement between the Council and a Contractor or a Supplier, which creates an obligation to perform a particular duty in return for consideration (i.e. “payment”)
Contractor	The supplier, provider or business contracted by the Council to furnish goods, deliver a service or undertake works
Commissioning Officer	An officer with responsibility for commissioning a service
Committee	The Committee with delegated responsibility for the function or service covered by the contract, or the Policy Committee on behalf of the responsible Committee
Contract Management Plan	A document agreed with the supplier for the proper management of the contract to ensure the benefits anticipated by the contract are realised for the Council

Contracts Register	The central repository of key contract information as required under the Transparency Act, containing details of contracts entered into with a value of £5,000 or more
DPS	Dynamic Purchasing System. Similar to a framework, but has the facility to add suppliers during the DPS term.
EU Regulations	<i>The Regulations that governed the Council's procurement activity prior to the UK leaving the European Union [the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, Concessions Contracts Regulations 2016 & Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016]</i>
EU Threshold	<i>A financial threshold for goods, services or works above which the EU Regulations applied when in force</i>
Evaluation	The term used to describe the scoring of the part of a bid submission that relates directly to the requirement (usually termed the Statement of Need or Specification)
Evaluation Criteria	The means by which the Evaluation of the specification element of a bid submission is undertaken. The evaluation (or "award") criteria must be determined in advance of the publication of any Contract Notice, appropriately weighted, and clearly set out in the bid documentation
Financial Regulations	The Financial Regulations set out in the Council's constitution as updated from time to time, which provide financial controls around commitments including contracts
Framework Agreement	An agreement which allows the council to call-off from a supplier a range or pre-defined goods or services. Each call-off constitutes a standalone contract made on the terms and conditions of the Framework Agreement
NPPS	The UK Government's National Procurement Policy Statement, which sets out the UK Government's policy priorities that the Council should have regard to in its procurement activity (where it is relevant to the subject matter of the contract and where it is proportionate to do so)
NPPS Policy Priorities	The UK Government's 3 Policy Priorities for the Council to have regard to through its procurement activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating new businesses, new jobs and new skills; • Improving supplier diversity, innovation and resilience; • Tackling climate change and reducing waste;
Policy Statement	The UK Government's NPPS (National Procurement Policy Statement), which sets out the UK National priorities that the Council should have regard to in its procurement activity (where it is relevant to the subject matter of the contract and where it is proportionate to do so)
Procurement	The term given to the whole "buying" process, from the identification of a need, the selection of a supplier, the award of a contract, and the management of that contract.
Procurement Plan	The planning document that is completed before a high value procurement is started that documents such as the business case, option appraisal, risk assessment, TUPE, Social Value and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion considerations that are relevant to the procurement
Quotation	An invitation to bid to supply goods, services or works to the Council against a statement of requirements and general contractual obligations. A quotation is less regulated than a tender, is often on a fixed cost basis, and is generally used for more straightforward requirements.
Regulations	The relevant UK Regulations for public sector procurement, the Local Government Transparency Code 2014, and the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 and any amendments replacements of or re-enactments thereof
Regulation Threshold	A financial threshold for goods, services or works above which the relevant Procurement Regulations apply;

Scheme of Sub Delegation	The means by which Directors and Assistant Directors may choose, where permitted, to delegate powers granted to them by the Constitution, to officers within their Areas.
Selection Criteria	The means by which the Assessment of the initial part of a bid submission is undertaken. The means of assessment (or “selection”) must be determined in advance of the publication of any Contract Notice, appropriately weighted, and clearly set out in the bid documentation
Supplier	Any person or body of persons providing, or seeking to provide, goods, services, or works to the Council.
Tender	A formal invitation to bid to supply goods, services or works to the Council, in accordance with a specification of requirements and specified contractual obligations. A tender is more regulated than a quotation, and is used where a more detailed solution breakdown is required.
UK Regulations	The relevant Contract Regulations made in the UK, and the Local Government Transparency Code 2014 and any amendment to replacement of or re-enactment thereof
UK Thresholds	A financial threshold for goods, services or works above which the UK Procurement Regulations apply; where UK Threshold is used in these Rules, unless specifically stated it shall be the threshold for goods, works and services
Value	The total contract value, inclusive of VAT & all permissible extensions (whether taken up or not), for the purpose of determining the correct procedure to be followed

Officer Employment Procedure Rules

Adopted by Council, 22 May 2019

The Officer Employment Procedure Rules incorporate prescribed Standing Orders relating to staff as required by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) Regulations 1993, as amended by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001; the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014; and the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015. Part IV of Schedule 1 to the 2014 Regulations sets out provisions that must be incorporated into the Standing Orders of an authority operating a committee system. They have been incorporated into the Rules below, in plainer English.

1. Recruitment and Appointment

(a) Declarations

The Council requires any candidate for appointment as an officer to state on the application form whether they are a partner, spouse or relative of an existing Councillor or officer of the Council.

(b) Seeking Support for Appointment.

The Council advises all applicants for appointment as an officer that canvassing support from any Councillor or employee of the authority, or giving false information, or omitting to give information, will render the person liable for dismissal if appointed.

No Councillor may seek support for any person for any appointment with the Council.

2. Appointment, Dismissal and Disciplinary Action

2.1 The appointment and dismissal of, and taking disciplinary action against, a member of staff of the Council shall be carried out by the Chief Executive as the Head of the Council's Paid Service or by an officer nominated by him/her. A record of officers nominated by the Chief Executive shall be maintained by the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

2.2 Paragraph 2.1 shall not apply to the appointment or dismissal of, or disciplinary action against, an officer holding a post described in Sections 2 and 9 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989. This includes the following:-

- (a) the Head of the Authority's Paid Service (Chief Executive)
- (b) the Executive Director of Adult Care and Health Services, Director of Children's Services and the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services
- (c) the Executive Director of Resources (Chief Finance Officer)
- (d) the Monitoring Officer (Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services)
- (e) persons who, as respects all or most of their duties, report directly to or are directly accountable to the Head of the Council's Paid Service
- (f) persons who, as respects all or most of their duties, report directly to or are accountable to any of the posts listed above (other than staff whose duties are of a clerical or support nature)
- (g) persons who, as respects all or most of their duties report directly or are directly accountable to the Council or a Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council
- (h) assistants for political groups.

2.3 Any appointment or dismissal of an officer designated as the Head of the Council's Paid Service, shall be approved by the full Council before any offer of appointment or notice of dismissal is given to the person concerned.

2.4 Any dismissal of an officer designated as the Chief Finance Officer or Monitoring Officer, shall be approved by the full Council before any notice of dismissal is given to the person concerned.

- 2.5 Where the Council appoints a Committee or a Sub-Committee to carry out the function of appointing or dismissing any officer to or from the positions referred to in paragraph 2.2 above, the Committee or Sub-Committee shall include at least one Lead Councillor.

3. Appointment of Chief Officers - Process

- 3.1 Where the Council wishes to appoint a Chief Officer as defined by statute, and wishes to seek applicants from outside existing officers of the Council, the following procedure will apply:
- (a) the appointment will be co-ordinated and made by the Personnel Committee, or by any other Committee or Sub-Committee authorised by full Council or the Personnel Committee to make the appointment;
 - (b) the post will be advertised publicly, to bring it to the attention of people who are qualified to apply for it;
 - (c) a job description and person specification will be produced, and sent to all applicants for the job, specifying:
 - (i) the duties of the post
 - (ii) the qualifications and qualities being sought by the Council
 - (d) the Personnel Committee will either:
 - (a) interview all qualified applicants for the post, or
 - (b) select a short-list of qualified applicants in accordance with the Council's recruitment and selection policy and procedures.
 - (e) If no suitably qualified person applies for the post, any re-advertisement will comply with paragraph (3) above.
- 3.2 The Personnel Committee has delegated powers to appoint Executive Directors, the Monitoring Officer, the Section 151 Officer and posts falling within the definition of Deputy Chief Officer in Section 2(1) of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989.

4. Disciplinary Proceedings against the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer

- 4.1 No disciplinary action as defined by Regulation 2 of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 may be taken against the Head of the Authority's Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer or the Chief Finance Officer in cases of alleged misconduct, unless the procedure set out in Schedule 3 of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 as amended by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015, as reflected in the model disciplinary procedure rules incorporated into the Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Authority Chief Executives National Salary Framework and Conditions of Service Handbook (updated 13 October 2016) as may be updated from time to time has been complied with.
- 4.2 Such disciplinary action means any action occasioned by alleged misconduct which, if proved, would be recorded under normal Council procedures on the officer's personal file, and includes any proposal for dismissal for reasons other than redundancy, permanent ill-health or infirmity of mind or body. It does not include failure to renew a fixed-term contract of employment unless the authority has undertaken to review such a contract.
- 4.3 The relevant officer may be suspended whilst the investigation is taking place, and if so, the suspension will be on full pay and will last for no longer than two months.
- 4.4 The Council establishes an Investigating and Disciplinary Committee (IDC) to deal with disciplinary matters relating to the 'relevant officers' and an Appeals Committee to deal with disciplinary matters short of dismissal relating to the 'relevant officers'.
- 4.5 Dismissal of the Head of the Authority's Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer or the Chief Finance Officer may only be exercised by the full Council.

- 4.6 Where the IDC has recommended dismissal of a ‘relevant officer’, the Council must invite any Independent Person appointed under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 section 28(7) who has been appointed by the Council (or, where there are fewer than two such persons, such Independent Persons as have been appointed by another authority or authorities as the Council considers appropriate), to be considered for appointment to an Independent Panel with a view to appointing at least two such persons to the Panel.
- 4.7 The Council must appoint to the Panel such relevant Independent Persons who have accepted an invitation issued in accordance with paragraph (ii) in accordance with the following priority order:-
- (a) An Independent Person who has been appointed by the Council and who is a local government elector within the authority’s area;
 - (b) Any other Independent Person who has been appointed by the Council; and;
 - (c) An Independent Person who has been appointed by another council or councils.
- 4.8 The Council is not required to appoint more than two relevant Independent Persons but may do so.
- 4.9 The Council must appoint any Panel at least 20 working days before the meeting of the Council to consider whether or not to approve a proposal to dismiss a relevant officer.
- 4.10 Before the taking of a vote at the meeting of the Council to consider whether or not to approve a proposal to dismiss a relevant officer the authority must take into account in particular:
- (a) Any advice, views or recommendations of the Panel
 - (b) The conclusions of any investigation into the proposed dismissal; and
 - (c) Any representations from the relevant officer.
- 4.11 The Personnel Committee has delegated powers to dismiss Executive Directors (provided they are not a statutory officer as described in 4.1 above) and posts falling within the definition of Deputy Chief Officer in Section 2(1) of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989.

5. Appeal

- 5.1 Nothing in this Standing Order shall prevent a Member from serving as a member of any Committee or Sub-Committee established by the Council to consider an appeal by:
- (i) a person against any decision relating to the appointment of that person as a member of staff of the authority, or
 - (ii) a member of staff of the authority against any decision relating to the dismissal of, or taking disciplinary action against, that member of staff.

Part 5 - Codes and Protocols



Councillor Code of Conduct 2022

Introduction

The role of councillor across all tiers of local government is a vital part of our country's system of democracy. It is important that as councillors we can be held accountable and all adopt the behaviours and responsibilities associated with the role. Our conduct as an individual councillor affects the reputation of all councillors. We want the role of councillor to be one that people aspire to. We also want individuals from a range of backgrounds and circumstances to put themselves forward to become councillors.

As councillors, we represent local residents, work to develop better services and deliver local change. The public have high expectations of us and entrust us to represent our local area, taking decisions fairly, openly, and transparently. We have both an individual and collective responsibility to meet these expectations by maintaining high standards and demonstrating good conduct, and by challenging behaviour which falls below expectations.

Importantly, we should be able to undertake our role as a councillor without being intimidated, abused, bullied, or threatened by anyone, including the general public.

This Code has been designed to protect our democratic role, encourage good conduct and safeguard the public's trust in local government.

Signed

Cllr Jason Brock

Leader of the Council

Adopted by Council 18 October 2022

Introduction

All councils are required to have a local Councillor Code of Conduct.

The Code will be reviewed when necessary to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose, incorporating advances in technology, social media and changes in legislation.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, a “councillor” means a member or co-opted member of a local authority or a directly elected mayor. A “co-opted member” is defined in the Localism Act 2011 Section 27(4) as “a person who is not a member of the authority but who

- a) is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or;
- b) is a member of, and represents the authority on, any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the authority;

and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee”.

Purpose of the Code of Conduct

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to assist you, as a councillor, in modelling the behaviour that is expected of you, to provide a personal check and balance, and to set out the type of conduct that could lead to action being taken against you. It is also to protect you, the public, fellow councillors, local authority officers and the reputation of local government. It sets out general principles of conduct expected of all councillors and your specific obligations in relation to standards of conduct.

General principles of councillor conduct

Everyone in public office at all levels; all who serve the public or deliver public services, including ministers, civil servants, councillors and local authority officers; should uphold the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#), also known as the Nolan Principles.

Building on these principles, the following general principles have been developed specifically for the role of councillor.

In accordance with the public trust placed in me, on all occasions:

- I act with integrity and honesty
- I act lawfully
- I treat all persons fairly and with respect
- I lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of councillor

In undertaking my role:

- I impartially exercise my responsibilities in the interests of the local community
- I do not improperly seek to confer an advantage, or disadvantage, on any person
- I avoid conflicts of interest
- I exercise reasonable care and diligence
- I ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with my local authority's requirements and in the public interest

Application of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you sign your declaration of acceptance of the office of councillor or attend your first meeting as a co-opted member and continues to apply to you until you cease to be a councillor.

This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a councillor which may include when:

- you misuse your position as a councillor
- your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a councillor

The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- at face-to-face meetings
- at online or telephone meetings
- in written communication
- in verbal communication
- in non-verbal communication
- in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments.

You are also expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times when acting as a councillor.

The Monitoring Officer has statutory responsibility for the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and you are encouraged to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer on any matters that may relate to the Code of Conduct.

Standards of councillor conduct

This section sets out your obligations, which are the minimum standards of conduct required of you as a councillor. Should your conduct fall short of these standards, a complaint may be made against you, which may result in action being taken.

Guidance is included to help explain the reasons for the obligations and how they should be followed.

General Conduct

1. Respect

As a councillor:

- 1.1 I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.
- 1.2 I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As a councillor, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack.

In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in councillors.

In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and report them to the local authority, the relevant social media provider or the police. This also applies to fellow councillors, where action could then be taken under the Councillor Code of Conduct, and local authority employees, where concerns should be raised in line with the local authority's member officer protocol.

2. Bullying, harassment and discrimination

As a councillor:

- 2.1 I do not bully any person.
- 2.2 I do not harass any person.
- 2.3 I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 defines harassment as conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such conduct on at least two occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person.

Unlawful discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. They are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on local authorities. Councillors have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the local authority's performance and strategic aims, and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

3. Impartiality of officers of the Council

As a councillor:

3.1 I do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the local authority.

Officers work for the local authority as a whole and must be politically neutral (unless they are political assistants). They should not be coerced or persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality. You can question officers in order to understand, for example, their reasons for proposing to act in a particular way, or the content of a report that they have written. However, you must not try and force them to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

4. Confidentiality and access to information

As a councillor:

4.1 I will seek advice from the Monitoring Officer before releasing any paper which is marked, or could reasonable be assumed to be, confidential or exempt.

4.2 I do not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of my role as a councillor for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, my employer or my business interests.

4.3 I do not prevent anyone from getting information that they are entitled to by law.

Local authorities must work openly and transparently, and their proceedings and printed materials are open to the public, except in certain legally defined circumstances. You should work on this basis, but there will be times when it is required by law that discussions, documents and other information relating to or held by the local authority must be treated in a confidential manner. Examples include personal data relating to individuals or information relating to ongoing negotiations.

5. Disrepute

As a councillor:

5.1 I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.

As a Councillor, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other councillors and/or your local authority and may lower the public's confidence in you or your local authority's ability to discharge your/its functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute.

You are able to hold the local authority and fellow councillors to account and are able to constructively challenge and express concern about decisions and processes undertaken by the Council whilst continuing to adhere to other aspects of this Code of Conduct.

6. Use of position

As a councillor:

6.1 I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.

Your position as a member of the local authority provides you with certain opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges, and you make choices all the time that will impact others. However, you should not take advantage of these opportunities to further your own or others' private interests or to disadvantage anyone unfairly.

7. Use of local authority resources and facilities

As a councillor:

7.1 I do not misuse council resources.

7.2 I will, when using the resources of the local authority or authorising their use by others:

- **act in accordance with the local authority's requirements; and**
- **ensure that such resources are not used for political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the local authority or of the office to which I have been elected or appointed.**

You may be provided with resources and facilities by the local authority to assist you in carrying out your duties as a councillor.

Examples include:

- office support
- stationery
- equipment such as phones and computers
- transport
- access and use of local authority buildings and rooms.

These are given to you to help you carry out your role as a councillor more effectively and are not to be used for business or personal gain. They should be used in accordance with the purpose for which they have been provided and the local authority's own policies regarding their use.

8. Complying with the Code of Conduct

As a Councillor:

8.1 I undertake Code of Conduct training provided by my local authority.

8.2 I cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination.

8.3 I do not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved with the administration of any investigation or proceedings.

8.4 I comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct.

It is extremely important for you as a councillor to demonstrate high standards, for you to have your actions open to scrutiny and for you not to undermine public trust in the local authority or its governance. If you do not understand or are concerned about the local authority's processes in handling a complaint you should raise this with your Monitoring Officer.

Protecting your reputation and the reputation of the local authority

9. Interests

As a councillor:

9.1 I register and disclose my interests.

Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of members of the authority.

You need to register your interests so that the public, local authority employees and fellow councillors know which of your interests might give rise to a conflict of interest. The register is a

public document that can be consulted when (or before) an issue arises. The register also protects you by allowing you to demonstrate openness and a willingness to be held accountable. You are personally responsible for deciding whether or not you should disclose an interest in a meeting, but it can be helpful for you to know early on if others think that a potential conflict might arise. It is also important that the public know about any interest that might have to be disclosed by you or other councillors when making or taking part in decisions, so that decision making is seen by the public as open and honest. This helps to ensure that public confidence in the integrity of local governance is maintained.

You should note that failure to register or disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest as set out in Table 1, is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011.

Appendix B sets out the detailed provisions on registering and disclosing interests. If in doubt, you should always seek advice from your Monitoring Officer.

10. Gifts and hospitality

As a councillor:

- 10.1 I do not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence on my part to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the local authority or from persons who may apply to the local authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.**
- 10.2 I register with the Monitoring Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25 within 28 days of its receipt.**
- 10.3 I register with the Monitoring Officer any significant gift or hospitality that I have been offered but have refused to accept.**

In order to protect your position and the reputation of the local authority, you should exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality which are (or which you reasonably believe to be) offered to you because you are a councillor. The presumption should always be not to accept significant gifts or hospitality. However, there may be times when such a refusal may be difficult if it is seen as rudeness in which case you could accept it but must ensure it is publicly registered. However, you do not need to register gifts and hospitality which are not related to your role as a councillor, such as Christmas gifts from your friends and family. It is also important to note that it is appropriate to accept normal expenses and hospitality associated with your duties as a councillor. If you are unsure, do contact your Monitoring Officer for guidance.

Appendix A

The Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Appendix B

Registering interests

Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-election or re-appointment to office you must register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) which are as described in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012.

You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in Table 2 (Other Registerable Interests).

"Disclosable Pecuniary Interest" means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

"Partner" means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer.
2. A 'sensitive interest' is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a 'sensitive interest' you must notify the Monitoring Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

Non participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest. Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.
5. [Not applicable to councils with a committee system of governance]

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in Table 2), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in Table 1) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.
8. Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects –
 - a. your own financial interest or well-being;
 - b. a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate; or
 - c. a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registerable Interests as set out in Table 2

you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied

9. Where a matter (referred to in paragraph 8 above) affects the financial interest or well-being:
- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
 - b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

10. [Not applicable to councils with a committee system of governance]

Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the [Relevant Authorities \(Disclosable Pecuniary Interests\) Regulations 2012](#).

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land and Property	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
Licenses	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— i. the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or ii. if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the

	<p>shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p>
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- * 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.
- * 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2: Other Registerable Interests

You must register as an Other Registerable Interest:

- a) any unpaid directorships
- b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- c) any body
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
 - (ii) directed to charitable purposes or
 - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)

of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Officers' Code of Conduct

EMPLOYEES' CODE OF CONDUCT

APPROVED BY PERSONNEL COMMITTEE – 19 November 2020

CONTENTS

This document has two sections:

SECTION 1: The purpose, scope and principles of the code

This sets out the reasons for the code, describes who is covered by it and the principles contained in it

SECTION 2: This sets out the areas of conduct that must be observed:

Conduct during working hours	Para 1
Political neutrality	Para 2
Personal Relationships	Para 3
Recruitment	Para 4
Use of Information	Para 5
Confidentiality	Para 6
Hospitality	Para 7
Gifts	Para 8
Bribery & Corruption	Para 9
Dressing Appropriately	Para 10
Use of Council property, facilities and equipment	Para 11
Using the services of people who deal with the Council	Para 12
Conduct outside working hours	Para 13
Employment outside the Council	Para 14
Personal Interests	Para 15
Breach of the code	Para 16

SECTION 1: PURPOSE, SCOPE AND PRINCIPLES

PURPOSE

- To meet requirements specified by the National Conditions of Service for all employee groups.
- To specify and explain the standards the Council has set, therefore protecting employees from misunderstanding or criticism.
- To help employees maintain fully acceptable standards of conduct set by the Council.
- To ensure that the Council maintains a deserved reputation for the high standards of its activities and the integrity of its employees at all levels.

WHO IS COVERED BY THE CODE OF CONDUCT?

The code of conduct applies to all those working for Reading Borough Council, including those on permanent, temporary or part-time contracts, job sharers, and employees on non-standard terms of employment. Relevant parts of the code should be included in the specifications for consultants and contractors, and drawn to the attention of voluntary workers on Council projects.

Some employees may already have specific requirements relating to conduct included in their contracts or standard conditions of employment. Where contract conditions and requirements of individual contracts are more specific, due to the nature of the work, they will override the provisions of this Code., where individual contracts are more specific due to the nature of the work.

In addition:

- a) The Code may be supplemented within services/directorates by specific provisions or requirements, for example, a professional Code of Conduct. Where this is the case, proposed codes and rules should follow proper process by consulting through the Directorate Joint Forum.
- b) Individual services and professions may have their own Codes of Conduct and/or ethics. Where this is the case, they complement, rather than replace, this Code of Conduct.
- c) References to “the Council” throughout this document mean Reading Borough Council.
- d) This Code has been agreed between the Council and recognised trades unions.

PRINCIPLES

This Code is based on and consistent with the following seven principles which are set out in Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011, and which were originally set out by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life:

- a) **Selflessness**
Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits.
- b) **Integrity**
Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- c) **Objectivity**
In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- d) **Accountability**
Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- e) **Openness**

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

f) **Honesty**

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

g) **Leadership**

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

The various sections in section 2 of this document set out how the general principles are applied to different aspects of conduct. **The Code cannot describe every possible circumstance that may occur.**

Employees and managers need to exercise good sense and judgement in deciding whether specific situations fall within the Code or not. For employees, a key guideline is:

WHEN IN DOUBT AS TO WHETHER THE CODE APPLIES – ASK YOUR MANAGER

SECTION 2: CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES

1. Conduct during working hours

You have a responsibility to act in accordance with the Council's equal opportunities policies, statutory guidance and best practice. Service decisions and activities must not favour one person or section of the community on any grounds which would be in contravention of equal opportunity principles.

All forms of unlawful discrimination, victimisation, bullying and harassment, in any form, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Allegations will be investigated and dealt with under the Council's [Disciplinary Policy](#) where necessary.

2. Political Neutrality

You serve the Council as a whole. This means that all Councillors are served equally, irrespective of their political group or affiliation and you must ensure that the individual rights of all Councillors are respected.

You must not allow your own personal or political opinions to interfere with your work or influence the advice you give to Councillors, the public or other staff.

If your job involves you giving advice to political groups, you must do so in ways which do not compromise your political neutrality.

If your post is designated a "politically restricted post" under the provisions of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989, certain additional rules will apply to you and you should have been informed of these rules when you are appointed. It is your responsibility to acquaint yourself with the rules, if they apply to you.

If your post becomes politically restricted during the course of your employment, then you will be notified.

Posts affected by these rules (politically restricted posts) fall into the following categories:

- a) Certain specified posts, such as the Head of the Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer and all Chief Officers and their Deputies
- b) Posts that, by the nature of the work involved, are deemed to be "sensitive". For example:
 - (i) posts where the employee regularly advises members, committees or sub-committees or any joint committee on which the authority are represented, and
 - (ii) posts where the employee regularly speaks on behalf of the authority to journalists and broadcasters.

Exemptions to this Act (ie not politically restricted) are:

- (i) posts reporting directly to the Chief Executive where the duties of the postholder are solely secretarial or clerical.
- (ii) Head Teachers, Principals of schools or colleges, or other educational establishments maintained/assisted by the local LEA. Any person holding the post of Teacher or Lecturer in any such educational establishment will not be politically restricted.

If you are unsure if your post falls within the politically restricted categories, or whether your post is exempt from the political restrictions, you should speak to your manager or the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services.

3. Personal Relationships

Personal relationships may develop with colleagues, Councillors, contractors, customers and clients. You should not allow a personal relationship to place you in a position where you are unable to carry out the duties of your job in a proper and impartial manner. Certain Directorates have particular rules regarding personal relationships (eg, [see these personal relationship guidelines](#)), and you should ensure that you abide by these.

You should inform your manager if you have, or develop, a close personal relationship with another employee which could be considered, by colleagues or others, to have an impact on how you conduct yourself at work. The information will be treated with confidentiality.

You must maintain a professional working relationship with colleagues, Councillors, contractors, customers and clients.

Elected Councillors are subject to their own statutory Code of Conduct which addresses relationships between Councillors and employees. ①⁸

4. Recruitment

If a relative or close personal friend is a candidate for a post that you are involved in the recruitment for, you must discuss this with your manager. It may be appropriate for you to withdraw from the process, if your manager considers this appropriate and it is practicable for you to do so.

You must follow the Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy and ensure fairness is applied at all stages.

5. Use of Information

The law requires that certain types of information must be available to members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public. Your manager must identify, and make you aware of this information at induction, including outlining when additional information is relevant.

Information you gather while working for the Council must not be used for personal or commercial gain, or be otherwise misused.

You must not destroy, alter or falsify any document or record, whether for personal gain or to cover up, mislead or deceive other people.

You must comply with the Council's [Data Protection Policy](#).

You must not pass on information to anyone not entitled to receive it, nor post it on any public forum or any social media platform.

You must comply with the Council's [Social Media Policy](#).

You must not pass on to the public or press, information from any Committee or meeting, from which they have been excluded.

You must not deal directly with the press or media, or make any public statement, unless you have been authorised to act as an official spokesperson.

⁸ (① The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 has given statutory status to the National Code of Local Government Conduct (for the guidance of councillors of local authorities)).

6. Confidentiality

You may be subject to “restrictive covenants”, which are intended to protect the Council’s confidential information, which restrict you from disclosing or using such information during and after leaving employment.

7. Hospitality

In certain circumstances, receiving hospitality may be acceptable. Where that is the case, you must discuss it with your manager and the details – the type of hospitality offered and the person/organisation offering it - should be recorded in a register maintained by your directorate.

Examples of generally acceptable hospitality are:

- (i) Invitations to attend events where you represent the Council
- (ii) Hospitality offered by other public sector organisations or recognised civic or government bodies that have links with the Council
- (iii) A working lunch or other meal which allows the work or discussion to continue during the course of the day
- (iv) An event where the Council should be seen to be represented.
- (v) Hospitality to mark the completion of a transaction or piece of work provided it has been successfully concluded and the nature of the hospitality is reasonable
- (vi) Where the Council is a regular client of an organisation or firm and the hospitality is being offered to a number of clients in the ordinary course of the business.

Examples of hospitality which should be declined include:

- (i) Offers of hotel accommodation or other form of holiday
- (ii) Free use of other forms of leisure, sports or entertainment facilities or equipment

8. Gifts

If you are offered a gift you should consider whether it is one of “low” value (£25 as at 2020). You must use common sense and tell your manager, who should decide if the gift is acceptable or should be declined. It must be recorded in a register maintained by your directorate.

Examples of generally acceptable gifts:

- (i) Small gifts that have been sent or given as an advertisement for a particular firm, for example, appropriate items for use in the office
- (ii) Small gifts such as a bottle of wine or a box of chocolates that have been given at the end of work on a project. These gifts should be made generally available to those who have worked on the project
- (iii) Christmas boxes – in a number of jobs, for example, refuse collection, it has been traditional for members of the public to give the team concerned gifts with varying financial values. As a normal and well-established practice, acceptance of the Christmas gift, on behalf of the team concerned, is acceptable, provided:
 - The gift is not solicited or requested either directly or indirectly
 - There is no suggestion that decisions concerning the service, or the quality of the service provided will change in any way

- Any gift that is of such a value that falls outside a normal range is notified to your manager

Gifts should be declined if it is from anyone who is, or may be in the foreseeable future, tendering for any contract with the Council, seeking planning permission, seeking employment or in dispute with the Council.

9. Bribery & Corruption

The Bribery Act 2010 makes it an offence to seek, accept or agree to accept a financial or other advantage as an inducement or reward to perform a function improperly. In simple terms, for public employees, agency and contracted staff it is a crime to seek or accept a financial or other advantage in return for making a decision, granting an award or performing any other public function, regardless of what decision is made. The maximum sentence for a bribery offence is 10 years imprisonment.

The Bribery Act 2010 also makes it an offence for employees to offer or pay bribes and both the individual and the organisation may be prosecuted.

The Local Government Act 1972 makes it an offence for employees to accept any fee or reward (including gifts) for their employment other than their proper pay, and on conviction employees are liable to be fined.

10. Dressing Appropriately

- a) You are expected to dress appropriately for the role for which you are employed. You must be mindful of the impact your appearance will have on the client/customer relationship.
- b) If you are required to wear a uniform you must conform to that requirement.
- c) You are required to comply with any Health & Safety clothing requirements.
- d) If you have personal, cultural or religious objections to these requirements, you should discuss them with your Head of Service who will consider each case on its merits and take appropriate action.

11. Use of Council property, facilities and equipment

- a) Be mindful that you are using Council assets, not your own personal property
- b) You may make phone calls within reason and within your own time
- c) You may access the Council's internet connection for personal use, but only within your own time and as stated in the Council's ICT rules
- d) Council vehicles must be used for authorised purposes only
- e) You must return any Council property if you stop working for the Council

12. Using the services of people who deal with the Council

You are not prohibited from personally obtaining goods and services from organisations that deal with the Council. However, you must make sure that you are not being offered preferential rates in an attempt to influence the Council to use that organisation. As far as possible, make sure that the price you are quoted is a competitive one.

If you are authorised to award or recommend the award of contracts to an individual or an organisation, you should try to avoid using that individual or organisation for the purchase of goods or services for yourself, unless it can be demonstrated that there was little or no alternative. This should be declared to your manager if this happens.

This does not affect the purchase of goods or services at discount rates negotiated through a scheme endorsed by the Council or a Trades Union.

13. Conduct outside working hours

In general, what you do outside work is your own concern. However, you must avoid doing anything which may result in damaging the Council's reputation. Some actions, including serious misconduct or criminal offences can lead to disciplinary action and may lead to dismissal.

Remember that if you are expected to wear a uniform as part of your job, and wear it outside working hours, you can be identified as a Council employee and you must act appropriately while wearing the uniform.

For certain professions, if it is considered that you have brought the profession into disrepute, you may be struck off the professional register and no longer able to practise.

14. Employment outside the Council

If you take on, or consider taking on, paid or unpaid work in addition to your work at the Council, you must be certain that it does not have an adverse effect on your work for the Council and does not conflict with the interests of the Council.

You must declare any personal interest or activities that may be perceived by others as being potentially in conflict with the Council's interests.

You should bring this to the attention of your manager to check that it is acceptable for you to do it. In particular, you must ensure that you comply with the following conditions:

- (i) You must not undertake private work or business (including private work for your line manager) during your Council working hours, on Council premises or using Council equipment.
- (ii) You must not take on work that will adversely affect the way in which you perform your duties for the Council. You must consider the Working Time Regulations.
- (iii) You should take care when undertaking paid or unpaid private work that involves official contact with the Council (for example, work for relatives or friends that needs planning permission). You must discuss this with your manager.
- (iv) You must not undertake paid or unpaid private work for any person or organisation if you allocate business to them as part of your duties at the Council, or if you are in a position to award contracts or commission work, or influence the awarding of contracts or commissioning of work, or grant approval or permission.
- (v) You must not be involved in awarding, monitoring or managing contracts in which partners, spouses, relative or friends are employed.
- (vi) If you are invited to speak at a conference, in your position as an officer of the Council, your fees for this would normally be paid to the Council.

There may be situations where it may be appropriate to carry out some form of **unpaid** "outside work", academic research or other task in the workplace. Generally this would only be appropriate out of work time (e.g. during lunch breaks or outside normal work hours) and in no way for personal gain.

15. Personal Interests

It is accepted that you will have outside interests and will support, or belong to, different groups or organisations, whether this is paid or unpaid. You should declare to your manager your involvement or interest (financial and non-financial interests) **if and when** your outside activities, or the activities of the group you belong to, could conflict with the Council's interests or Council policy, or with your duties and responsibilities as an employee.

You should declare to the Council's Monitoring Officer (Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services) membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules or membership or conduct (for example, Freemasons). The Monitoring Officer will keep a confidential record of such declarations.

16. Breach of the code

Failure to comply with the Code of Conduct could lead to criticism of the Council or you. In such cases, the Council's Disciplinary Procedure would apply.

If you have any concerns about the application of any part of this code to your own circumstances you should discuss it, as soon as possible, with your manager.

Planning Code of Conduct

[18 October 2022 - The Planning Code of Conduct is being reviewed and will be presented to the Standards Committee for review]

PLANNING CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COUNCILLORS

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL, 20 OCTOBER 2015 (updated 22 May 2019)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance note is purely advisory. However, its recommendations are based upon the best practice promoted by the Local Government Association, the Planning Advisory Service and the Royal Town Planning Institute's Code of Professional Conduct. It also takes into advice issued by the Local Government Ombudsmen and the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors. Failure to follow the recommendations without good reason could be taken into account in investigations into possible maladministration or have implications for the standing of Councillors and professional officers.
- 1.2 This Code once adopted is intended to guide Councillors who deal with planning matters at Reading Borough Council. Though devised primarily to address the processing of planning applications, it applies equally to all planning matters including planning policy, enforcement of planning control, listed buildings, conservation areas and trees.

2. Outline of Planning

- 2.1 Planning is not an exact science. Rather it relies on informed judgement within a firm policy context. It is also highly contentious because its decisions affect the daily lives of the public and the private interests of individuals, developers. This is heightened by the openness of the system (it actively invites public opinion before taking decisions) and the legal nature of development plans and decision notices.
- 2.2 One of the key purposes of the planning system is to control development in the public interest. In performing this role, planning necessarily affects land and property interests, particularly the financial value of land holdings and the quality of their settings. It is important, therefore, that the Council should make planning decisions affecting these interests openly, impartially, with sound judgement, and for justifiable reasons. The process should leave no grounds for suggesting with any justification, that a decision has been the subject of bias or predetermination or was otherwise not well founded.
- 2.3 Thus the successful operation of the planning system in Reading depends upon the Council always acting in a way which is clearly seen to be fair and impartial. This requires a shared understanding of the respective roles of Councillors and Officers and trust between these parties. The following quotation from the Local Government Association serves to illustrate the point:-

"The role of an elected member on a planning committee involves a balance between representing the needs and interests of individual constituents and the community with the need to maintain an ethic of impartial decision-making on what can be highly controversial proposals. It is this dual role which, as the Nolan Committee in its recent report acknowledges, can give rise to great tensions".

(Source: Probity in Planning 1997)

3. The General Role and Conduct of Councillors and Officers

- 3.1 Councillors and officers have different, but complementary, roles. Both serve the public but Councillors are responsible to the electorate, while officers are responsible to the Council as a whole. Officers advise Councillors and the Council, and carry out the Council's work. They are employed by the Council, not by individual Councillors, and it follows that instructions may only be

given to officers through a formal Council decision including delegated powers. Any other system which develops is open to question. A successful relationship between Councillors and officers can only be based upon mutual trust and understanding of each other's positions. This relationship, and the trust which underpins it, must never be abused or compromised.

3.2 Both Councillors and officers are guided by Codes of Conduct. The Local Code of Conduct provides general guidance and standards for Councillors. Breaches of that Code may be regarded as maladministration by the Local Government Ombudsman, and failure to declare a pecuniary interest may be a criminal offence. Officers are also bound by the Council's Code of Conduct for Officers and those who are Chartered Town Planners are guided by the Royal Town Planning Institute's (RTP) Code of Professional Conduct. Breaches of the Code may be subject to disciplinary action by the Institute. In addition to these Codes the Council's standing orders set down rules which govern the conduct of Council business.

3.3 Officers must always act impartially. In order to ensure that senior officers do so, the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 Act places restrictions on their outside activities, such as membership of political parties and serving on another Council. During the course of carrying out their duties, officers may be offered hospitality from people with an interest in a planning proposal. If possible, such offers should be declined politely. If receipt of hospitality is unavoidable, officers should ensure it is of the minimum level and declare its receipt as soon as possible. Officers will be guided in such matters by the Council's Code of Conduct for Officers.

3.4 In respect of planning, Councillors set policies and must determine applications, enforcement issues and other planning matters within the context of those policies. When the Planning Applications Committee considers any report and recommendation within that report Councillors must:-

- Act fairly and openly.
- Approach each application with an open mind.
- Carefully weigh up all relevant issues.
- Determine each application on its own merits.
- Avoid contacts with interested parties which might be taken to indicate that they were unduly influenced by one party or another.
- Ensure that there are clear and substantial reasons for their decisions and that those reasons are clearly stated.

3.5 The Officers' function is to advise and assist Committee Members in policy matters and in their determination of planning applications, enforcement issues and any other planning related matters by:-

- Providing impartial and professional advice.
- Making sure that all the information necessary for the decision to be made is given.
- Providing a clear and accurate analysis of the issues.
- Setting planning applications, enforcement issues and other planning matters against the broader Development Plan policies and all other material considerations.
- Giving a clear recommendation.
- Carrying out the decisions of the Committee.

4. **Declaration and Registration of Interests**

4.1 The Localism Act 2011 places requirements on Councillors regarding the registration and disclosure of pecuniary (financial) interests and the consequences for a Councillor taking part in consideration of an issue in the light of those interests. The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 set out the definition of such interests. The Local Code set out requirements and guidance for Councillors, respectively, on declaring pecuniary interests and non-pecuniary interests and the consequences of having such interests. These must be followed scrupulously and Councillors should review their situation regularly. When doing so it must be borne in mind that the Local Code advises that not only should impropriety be avoided but also any appearance or grounds for suspicion of improper conduct. The responsibility for this rests individually with each Councillor. The Commission for Local Administration in England's publication 'Guidance for Good Practice on Members' interests' also provides helpful advice.

- 4.2 A Register of Members' Interests is maintained by Members' Services. Councillors who have substantial property interests or other interests which would or are likely to prevent them from voting on a regular basis, should avoid taking up a position on the Planning Applications Committee and/or avoid other Council positions where regular decisions on planning matters are required.
- 4.3 Whilst advice on what constitutes a pecuniary interest is reasonably clear, that regarding non-pecuniary interests or personal interests is less so. Advice is given in the Local Code for Councillors. It is for Councillors to interpret this using the guiding rule that one should not use one's position to further a private or personal interest, rather than the general public interest, or give grounds for such suspicion. Such non pecuniary interests include those of a spouse or civil partner and being a member of an outside body. There is no statutory duty to register or declare such interests but Councillors are encouraged to do so.
- 4.4 Gifts and hospitality give rise to particular problems in respect of the credibility of the planning process and the acceptance of gifts or hospitality by Councillors can be a very serious criminal offence. Committee members should have particular regard to the provisions of the Local Code of Conduct. Also, they should avoid any behaviour which might be taken as indicating that they are open to such offers.
5. **Bias and Predetermination**
- 5.1 The common law principles of bias and predetermination may apply even if no pecuniary or other interest exists. Bias is "*an attitude of mind which prevents the decision maker from making an objective determination of the issue he has to resolve.*" It could include membership of a body that has lobbied for or against the issue being determined.
- 5.2 Predetermination is having a closed mind ie where a person has "*nailed their colours to the mast*" in advance of considering all material planning considerations including the debate at the Planning Applications Committee.
- 5.3 Councillors cannot take part in decisions on individual applications if they are biased or have already made up their mind and if they do so then the decision of the Committee is susceptible to judicial review proceedings.
- 5.4 However where a Councillor has expressed a preliminary view (predisposition), however strong that may be but s/he is willing to listen to all the considerations presented at the Committee then they are at liberty to fully participate in the decision making process.
- 5.5 Section 25 of the Localism Act 2011 makes it clear that a Councillor should not be taken to have had a closed mind just because s/he had previously done anything to indicate the view s/he might take.
- 5.6 All these matters are best judged by applying the objective by-stander test namely whether in all the relevant circumstances the reasonable onlooker would conclude that there was a real possibility, or a real danger of bias. If the answer to that question is yes the Councillor should declare and leave the room.
6. **Lobbying of and by Councillors**
- 6.1 It is important to recognise that lobbying is a normal and perfectly proper part of the political process: those who are making proposals may wish to explain them to elected members or those who may be affected by a planning decision will often seek to influence it through an approach to their elected Ward Councillor or to a member of the relevant committee. It is essential for the proper operation of the planning system that local concerns are adequately ventilated. The most effective and suitable way that this can be done is via the local elected representatives, the Councillors themselves.
- 6.2 However, such lobbying can, unless care and common sense are exercised by all the parties concerned, lead to the impartiality and integrity of a Councillor being called into question (See Paragraph 5 on Bias and Predetermination above). When being lobbied, Councillors should take care about expressing an opinion which may be taken as indicating that they have already made up their mind on the issue before they have been exposed to all the evidence and arguments. In such

situations, they should restrict themselves to giving procedural advice, including suggesting to those who are lobbying, that they should speak or write to the relevant officer, in order that their opinions can be included in the relevant officer's report. If they do express an opinion, they should make it clear that they will only be in a position to take a final decision after having heard all the relevant evidence and arguments at the Committee.

6.3 In reality, of course, Councillors will often form a preliminary view about an application early on in its passage through the system, whether or not they have been lobbied. Members of the Committee must accept that they will only make a final decision about how to vote on a particular application when they have heard the evidence and arguments on both sides.

6.4 A committee member who represents a Ward affected by an application is in a difficult position if it is a controversial application around which a lot of lobbying takes place. If a Councillor represents either their own or constituents opposition to a planning application on planning or other relevant grounds that member should not be constrained from speaking at the Committee meeting or voting on the application. However if the member responds to lobbying by applicants by deciding to go public in support of a particular outcome, or by campaigning actively for it before the matter is formally considered by the Council and before all the facts and information are known, the proper course of action for such a member would be to make an open declaration that they have already formed a judgement and in those circumstances it would be inappropriate for them to vote.

7. **Political Discussions and the Party Whip**

7.1 There are occasions when planning matters will be discussed prior to being determined at Committee by political groups and/or by the Chair and Vice Chairs of Committee either with or without officer attendance. These meetings are informal opportunities for Councillors to consider various aspects of planning matters before taking a decision at Committee. For more complex planning proposals these informal meetings may be essential to the understanding of proposals and could lead to the request for more information or consultation on a proposal.

7.2 Notwithstanding Paragraph 7.1 Members of the Committee cannot accept an instruction from anyone to determine an application in a particular manner, but must determine the issue on its merits. Accordingly, whilst they may accord appropriate weight to the relevant views of other Committee Members, whether expressed in the Committee meeting or in prior discussions, they must determine the application on its merits and should not take into account any factor which they are not prepared to state in open Committee. Therefore, it is inappropriate for any Party Group to instruct its Committee Members to vote in a particular manner on an application or to apply or threaten to apply any sanction to any Member who votes contrary to the Group's collective views.

7.3 Where such a "Whip" has been applied, Committee Members should declare it in exactly the same manner as they would declare any other attempt at lobbying.

7.4 A Councillor must not put pressure on officers for a particular recommendation.

7.5 Call-in procedures, whereby Councillors can require a proposal that would normally be determined under the delegated authority to be called in for determination by the planning committee, should require the reasons for call-in to be recorded in writing and to refer solely to matters of material planning concern.

8. **Pre-Application and other discussions held before a decision is made**

8.1 Discussions between a potential applicant and officers/members prior to the submission of an application can be of considerable benefit to both parties and is to be encouraged. However, it would be easy for such discussions to become, or be seen (especially by objectors) to become, part of a lobbying process. The Localism Act, particularly S25, has given councillors much more freedom to engage in pre-application discussions. Nevertheless, in order to avoid perceptions that councillors might have fettered their discretion, such discussions should take place within clear, published guidelines.

8.2 In order to avoid such problems, pre-application discussions should take place within the clear guidelines below. Although the term 'pre-application' has been used, the same considerations should apply to any discussions which take place before a decision is taken:

- Clarity at the outset that the discussions will not bind a council to making a particular decision and that any views expressed are personal and provisional. By the very nature of such meetings not all relevant information may be at hand, nor will formal consultations with interested parties have taken place.
- An acknowledgement that consistent advice should be given by officers based upon the development plan and material planning considerations.
- Officers should be present with councillors in pre-application meetings. Councillors should avoid giving separate advice on the development plan or material considerations as they may not be aware of all the issues at an early stage. Neither should they become drawn into any negotiations, which should be done by officers (keeping interested councillors up to date) to ensure that the authority's position is co-ordinated.
- Confirmation that a written note should be made of all meetings. An officer should make the arrangements for such meetings, attend and write notes. A note should also be taken of any phone conversations, and relevant emails recorded for the file. Notes should record issues raised and advice given. The note(s) should be placed on the file as a public record. If there is a legitimate reason for confidentiality regarding a proposal, a note of the non - confidential issues raised or advice given can still normally be placed on the file to reassure others not party to the discussion.
- A commitment that care will be taken to ensure that advice is impartial, otherwise the subsequent report or recommendation to committee could appear to be advocacy.
- The scale of proposals to which these guidelines would apply. Councillors talk regularly to constituents to gauge their views on matters of local concern. The Nolan Committee argued that keeping a register of these conversations would be impractical and unnecessary. Authorities should think about when, however, discussions should be registered and notes written.

8.3 The council has other mechanisms to involve councillors in pre-application discussions including:

- Committee information reports by officers of discussions to enable councillors to raise issues, identify items of interest and seek further information;
- Developer presentations to committees which have the advantage of transparency.
- Ward Councillor briefing by officers on pre-application discussions.

8.4 Similar arrangements can also be used when the Council is looking at new policy documents and particularly when making new site allocations in emerging development plans and wish to engage with different parties, including councillors, at an early stage in the process.

8.5 The Statement of Community Involvement will set out the Council's approach to involving communities and other consultees in pre-application discussions. Some authorities have public planning forums to explore major pre-application proposals with the developer outlining their ideas and invited speakers to represent differing interests and consultees. As well as being transparent, these forums allow councillors and consultees to seek information and identify important issues for the proposal to address, although still bearing in mind the need to avoid pre-determination.

9. **Officer Reports**

9.1 It is particularly important to write full and consistent reports to committee on planning applications with clear officer recommendations, not only as a matter of good practice, but because failure may constitute maladministration, and/or give rise to judicial review on the grounds that the decision was not taken in accordance with the provisions of the development plan and the Council's statutory

duties under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and other town planning legislation/delegated legislation.

- Relevant points will include a clear explanation of the development plan, site or related history, and any other material considerations.
- Reports should be accurate and cover, among other things, the substance of objections and the views of people who have been consulted.
- Reports should have written recommendations of action; oral reporting (except to update a report) should be extremely rare and carefully minuted when it does occur.
- Reports should include a balanced assessment of the planning issues and contain a technical appraisal which clearly justifies the recommendation.
- If the report's recommendation is contrary to the provisions of the development plan, the material considerations which justify this must be clearly stated.

10. **Site Visits**

- 10.1 Where possible site visits should take place in advance of a committee decision and should only be used where the expected benefit is substantial.
- 10.2 The purpose, format and conduct of site visits should be clearly established by officers. They consist simply of an inspection by members of the Planning Applications Committee, with officer assistance, as the most fair and equitable process between applicant and objectors. Site visits are normally unaccompanied (ie without applicant and objectors). If accompanied, applicants and objectors will have no right to speak but will merely observe the process and answer questions when asked. Applicants will be informed of such visits as a matter of practice.
- 10.3 A site visit is only likely to be necessary if: the impact of the proposed development is difficult to visualise from the plans and any supporting material including photographs taken by officers (although, if this is the case, additional illustrative material should have been requested); or, there is a good reason why the comments of the applicant and objectors cannot be expressed adequately in writing; or, the proposal is particularly contentious.

11. **The Decision Making Process**

- 11.1 In determining applications submitted pursuant to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and other planning or planning related legislation the Council will follow the Guidelines adopted as part of this Code. These adopted Guidelines will be subject to changes from time to time to reflect the latest government guidance and case law ([Appendix A](#)).
- 11.2 Committee Members should not take part or vote on any application or matter if they have not read the committee report and have not been present throughout the consideration of such application or matter unless the item has been deferred from a previous meeting after being partially considered.
- 11.3 In discussing and determining a planning application, enforcement issue or other planning matter, Committee Members should confine themselves to the planning merits of the case. The reasons for making a final decision should be clear, convincing and supported by material considerations and the planning merits. The Planning Committee's decisions should be properly minuted.
- 11.4 From time to time Members of the Planning Applications Committee will disagree with the professional advice given by the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services, the Head of Planning or his/her representative. As indicated above planning is not an exact science and there can be genuine disagreement about the implications of a particular proposal. A legal officer will be present at Committee and will be able to advise if the facts simply cannot support the conclusion which the Committee Members have drawn and the Committee is in danger of acting unreasonably and exposing the Council to a claim for costs.

- 11.5 Where an appeal arises against such a decision, Officers will give support to the relevant Committee Members in preparing evidence for the appeal, but it will be for Members of the Planning Committee to appear at any appeal inquiry/hearing and give evidence to justify the reasons for the Committee's decision. On occasion the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services or Head of Planning may consider it appropriate to appoint external Planning Consultants to defend the decision.
- 11.6 Where Committee members wish to add or amend conditions or reasons for refusal, the general content will be agreed at the meeting before the vote is taken and the final wording will generally be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services/Head of Planning.
- 11.7 If the officer report recommends approval of a departure from the Development Plan, the justification for this recommended departure should be included in the report.

12. **Section 106 Planning Agreements/Unilateral Undertakings**

- 12.1 When applications which propose or require planning obligations by agreement or Unilateral Undertaking are referred to the Planning Applications Committee the heads of agreement will be included in the officers' written report, and a copy of the agreement, when made, will be publicly available, provided (following the advice of a Council Solicitor) it is not considered to prejudice clearly established interests of commercial confidentiality.

13. **Development proposals submitted by Councillors and Officers, and Council development**

- 13.1 Proposals to their own authority by serving Councillors and officers can easily give rise to suspicions of impropriety. So indeed can proposals for a Council's own development. Proposals can take the form of either planning applications, development plan proposals or relate to other planning matters including enforcement.
- 13.2 It is perfectly legitimate for planning applications and development plan proposals such proposals to be submitted. However, it is vital to ensure that they are handled in a way which gives no grounds for accusations or favouritism.
- Serving Councillors who act as agents for people pursuing a planning matter within their authority should play no part in the decision-making process for that proposal. Similarly, should they submit their own proposal to the authority they serve, they should take no part in its processing, nor should they seek to influence the case officer's assessment or recommendation on the proposal.
 - All planning matters that relate to serving Councillors should be reported to the relevant Council body as main items and not dealt with by officers under delegated powers. In addition planning matters that relate to any member of the Corporate Management Team, and any person employed or engaged by the Planning and Legal Services must be dealt with in the same way and be determined by the Committee. The Committee report should make it clear that the applicant is a member or a relevant officer of the Council.
 - Proposals for a Council's own development should be treated in the same way as those by private developers.
- 13.3 Enforcement matters relating to serving Councillors and officers will also dealt with in the same way as any other enforcement case.
- 13.4 The Council's Monitoring Officer should be informed of such proposals or other planning matters relating to serving Councillors and officers.

14. **Training**

- 14.1 Planning regulations can sometimes be complex and it is appropriate that councillors should receive basic training on planning when first appointed to the Planning Applications Committee or local plan

steering group, and regularly thereafter. Officers will also provide guidance to individual councillors on planning related matters as necessary.

15. **Complaints and Record Keeping**

- 15.1 Every planning file will contain an accurate account of events throughout its life. It should be possible for someone not involved with the matter to understand what the decision was and how and why it was reached. Planning matters determined under officers' delegated powers, where there is no committee report, will be as well documented and recorded as those taken by the Committee.
- 15.2 Whatever procedures a Council operates, it is likely that complaints will be made. However, the adoption of the advice in this guidance note should greatly reduce the occasions on which complaints are justified. It should also provide less reason for people to complain in the first place. When such complaints came forward, they will be treated as any other made to the Council and considered under the Council's complaints procedures.

COUNCIL GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING PLANNING APPLICATIONS

1. The emphasis in determining applications is upon a plan led system. Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires all planning applications to be determined by reference to the Development Plan if material to the application, and any other material considerations. If the Development Plan is material to the application then the statutory position is that the application should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
2. The term “*other material considerations*” has a wide connotation as expressed by the following judicial comment:-

“I find it impossible, however, to accept the view that such considerations are limited to matters relating to amenity.....it seems to me that any consideration which relates to the use and development of land is capable of being a planning consideration”.
3. Material considerations include national planning guidance in the form of the NPPF, the NPPG, government Circulars, a Ministerial Statement, Non-Statutory Development Control Guidelines Inspectors Decisions and case law.
4. Examples of material considerations are:-
 - appearance and character of development;
 - traffic generation, highway safety and parking;
 - Overshadowing, overlooking and loss of privacy;
 - noise, disturbance or other loss of amenities;
 - layout and density of buildings;
 - relevant planning policies.
5. Matters which are not material considerations include:-
 - boundary disputes, covenants or other property rights;
 - personal remarks (e.g. the applicant’s motives);
 - reduction in property values;
 - loss of private view over the land.
6. The personal circumstances of an applicant for planning permission are not generally a material consideration because they do not relate to the character or use of the land. However, in exceptional circumstances they may outweigh other material planning considerations. Where this is the case, specific and valid reasons must be given to justify the exception.
7. What constitutes a material consideration is a matter of law. The weight to be attached to the consideration is a matter of planning judgement for the decision-maker having regard to the planning evidence.
8. It is essential to consider thoroughly any advice given by a statutory consultee or relevant Government Department, including views expressed by Historic England or the Environment Agency.
9. The view of local residents are relevant when determining a planning application, but it must be recognised that such opposition cannot be reason in itself for refusing or granting planning permission unless founded on valid planning reasons, which are supported by substantial evidence.
10. Account should be taken of previous Council decisions, appeal decisions in relation to the site, or other related appeal decisions.
11. It is not permissible to prevent, inhibit or delay development which could reasonably be permitted.
12. Planning Conditions should only be imposed for a planning purpose and not for any ulterior one. They must fairly and reasonably relate to the development. Thus it is essential to avoid conditions which are unnecessary, unreasonable, unenforceable, imprecise or irrelevant.

Protocol on Member/Officer Relations

(ratified by Council on 11 June 2014)

COUNCILLOR/OFFICER PROTOCOL

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document provides a guide to both Councillors and Officers on the matters listed below, to facilitate the smooth management of the Council in a way that will enable Councillors and Officers to carry out their roles with certainty and confidence in the provision of excellent services to the public:
- Roles of Councillors and officers
 - Councillors' access to information, to Council documents, and meetings
 - Agenda preparation
 - Scrutiny
 - Corporate values
- 1.2 The protocol seeks to reinforce principles which are highlighted in the statutory General Principles governing the conduct of Councillors, the Council's Code of Conduct for Members, the Planning Code of Conduct, the Officers' Code of Conduct and the Council's Values statement. These documents aim to maintain and embrace the high standards of local government and ensure the integrity of Councillors and employees at all levels.
- 1.3 It also incorporates guidance from the Information Commissioner in relation to correspondence relating to constituents and the disclosure of personal information to and by Councillors.
- 1.4 If Councillors or officers are in any doubt as to the application or interpretation of the guidance, the matter should be raised in the first instance with the Director or Assistant Director of the relevant Directorate; and if the matter remains unresolved, with the Monitoring Officer or Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive).
- 1.5 The protocol also applies to non-Councillor members of the Council's Standards Committee, the Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education Committee, and the Health & Wellbeing Board, and any other co-opted member.

2. ROLE OF COUNCILLORS AND OFFICERS

- 2.1 Both Councillors and officers are servants of the public and they are indispensable to one another. The roles of Councillors are set out in Article 2 of the Council's constitution; they are principally those of determining the strategy and policies of the Council and of acting as representatives of the communities from which they are elected. Officers are responsible to the Council and their functions concentrate on management, advising Councillors in their formulation of strategy and policies and the implementation of the strategy and policies. The roles of the Council's statutory officers are set out in Article 12 of the constitution.
- 2.2 The Council has adopted a set of values that define the organisation's culture and set the framework for a way of working. These are to:
- Be open and honest with our dealings with colleagues and the public;
 - Learn from what we do, encouraging innovation and creativity;
 - Work together to achieve best results;
 - Value and respect the diversity within our workforce, services and community;
 - Take responsibility for what we do and how we do it;
 - Set high standards and support people in meeting them.
- 2.3 The Values confer a commitment on both Councillors and officers on how to work together and deliver services to the community. The Protocol and Values should complement each other in order

to achieve this. Councillors and officers should always bear in mind the Values in their dealings with each other and the public.

- 2.4 Any complaints about Member/Officer relationships should in the first instance be referred to the relevant Director or the Council's Head of the Paid Service, who will decide how the complaint should be dealt with having regard to any relevant Council procedures.

3. COUNCILLORS' ACCESS TO INFORMATION, TO COUNCIL DOCUMENTS AND MEETINGS

Documents and Information

- 3.1 Information and access to it is now the subject of a variety of legislation including the Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000 and Regulations made in accordance with those Acts, and the Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000. The 1998 and 2000 Acts apply significant controls on the way in which information relating to living individuals is both handled and disclosed.
- 3.2 Councillors have a statutory right to see any document containing material relating to any business to be considered at Council or Committee meetings except where those documents contain certain types of confidential or "exempt" information as defined in the access to information legislation or the Freedom of Information Act 2000. In addition, Councillors are entitled to any information that they require to enable them to do their job as a Councillor (the "need to know" principle) although it is necessary to be careful not to breach the data protection legislation.
- 3.3 Unless the "need to know" principle is satisfied, Councillors may not request information which is confidential or exempt under the provision of the Access to Information, Data Protection or Freedom of Information legislation. The Council's data protection registration covers the sharing of information between officers and Councillors, for the conduct of the Council's business. Under the registration, Councillors may have access to, and process, information, including personal information, in the same way as officers, subject to the Council determining what the information is used for.

Correspondence

- 3.4 Correspondence on Council business between Councillors and officers is not private and takes place under the Council's data protection registration. The issue of confidentiality only arises in three specified circumstances:
- 1) where the correspondence is on a subject matter where the information is confidential or exempt under the provisions of the Access to Information, Data Protection or Freedom of Information legislation: this would normally include ward-based correspondence about individuals or clients (see paras. 3.7-3.9 below)
 - 2) where the correspondence is covered by a data sharing protocol which places restrictions on its circulation
 - 3) where the correspondence takes the form of a request for a confidential briefing under para. 3.21 below.
- 3.5 In general terms, correspondence with the Council should be through the Councillor Services team, who will record and monitor it. This includes complaints, general enquiries, and requests for information.

Personal Information

- 3.6 Councillors do not have a general right of access to information about individuals or clients, or the services they receive from the Council, unless they can clearly establish a "need to know" with regard to that particular information or the individual in question. The Data Protection Act 1998 specifically prevents information about living individuals being disclosed to anybody unless the subjects have been told that the information will be used for that purpose or they have consented to the disclosure.

- 3.7 Councillors who are asked by a ward resident to represent them on a particular matter have a right to expect reasonable access to information in order to represent that resident effectively. With regard to personal information this will normally be limited to information about that individual and may not extend to information about other associated individuals, for example other members of the family or household, or neighbours.
- 3.8 The more general principles concerning when officers may share personal information with Councillors, and the use that Councillors can make of that information, are set out in paras. 3.15-3.16 below.

Attendance at Meetings

- 3.9 Standing Order 32 (see Part 4 of the Constitution) sets out the rights of Councillors who are not members of a Committee to attend meetings and to speak, at the invitation of the Chair, including items on the confidential part of an Agenda.

Briefings, Reports etc

- 3.10 The authority operates a committee system, rather than an executive form of governance, where decisions are made by Committees on which all political groups on the Council are represented in proportion to the Groups' political strength on the Council. However the authority has continued to recognise the controlling political Group on the Council as the Administration and the Leader of that Group is appointed by Council to be its Leader. The Council also appoints Lead Councillors with responsibility for a service portfolio.
- 3.11 The Lead Councillor Members are appointed to the Policy Committee and have a specific role to play in managing their portfolio of responsibilities, and a greater degree of accountability for those responsibilities. Lead Councillors must therefore, be consulted, individually or collectively, by officers on matters within their portfolio in advance of reports or advice being published or given by officers. Lead Councillor briefings should be held regularly to ensure ongoing communication between officers and their Lead Councillor(s). A similar process to coordinate agendas will apply to the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Council's Committees. Lead Councillors will also be invited to any agenda coordination meetings covering their portfolio area.
- 3.12 All Councillors will have an important role to play in the provision of services and functions by the Council and need to have access to information and advice to a degree which will enable them to participate fully as councillors and to take decisions as members of Committees of the Council.
- 3.13 As a result, all individual councillors are entitled to information or briefings from relevant officers to enable them to fulfil their roles and obligations to their constituents on the understanding that information/advice will not be given on matters which have not yet come forward as proposals or are not in the public domain other than through the Council's formal procedures such as questions to Council or Committee or through an overview or scrutiny process undertaken by a Committee. However, Councillors should not ask officers for their personal opinion on the matter in question, and in responding to requests from Councillors for information or briefings, officers should give their professional advice and not their personal opinion.
- 3.14 Lead Councillors or Committee Chairs are entitled to receive all non-personal information necessary for them to carry out their official duties. Officers should seek to ensure that their Lead Councillor or Committee Chair are fully briefed on all matters for which they are responsible, and are not put in a position of being less informed on a matter concerning a service for which they are responsible than a fellow Councillor or member of the public. Therefore as general rule, officers will copy responses in writing to requests from Councillors for information or briefings to the responsible Lead Councillor / Chair, and where Councillors request oral briefings the officer will normally give the same information to the Lead Councillor / Chair, subject to the information:
- a) being necessary for the Lead Councillor or Chair to conduct their official duties
 - b) not being provided through a confidential briefing (see para 3.20 below)
- 3.15 Where the information is personal to a constituent or other third party, officers will normally only share this with a Councillor in the following circumstances:

- a) to the Lead Councillor or Chair
 - where the information is covered by any local information sharing protocol, and its disclosure to the Lead Councillor or Chair is consistent with that protocol;
 - in other cases, where the disclosure of the personal details is necessary to help the constituent, and to enable the Lead Councillor or Chair to carry out their official duties.

In these cases, the officer must specify to the Lead Councillor or Chair the purpose for which the personal information is being provided (eg for the conduct of their official duties), and the Lead Councillor or Chair must use the personal information solely for this purpose.

- b) to the ward Councillor
 - where the disclosure is to help a constituent and to address his/her concerns
 - where the councillor represents the ward in which the individual lives, and
 - where the councillor makes it clear that he/she is representing the individual in any request for their personal information;
 - where the information is necessary to respond to the individual's enquiry or complaint
 - where the disclosure is consistent with any information sharing protocol

3.16 Any Councillor, including Lead Councillors or Chairs, who receive personal information on a constituent or other third party from another Councillor or an officer under the Council's DPA registration must take care:

- a) To use that information solely for the purpose for which it has been provided;
- b) Only to disclose the personal information to another ward councillor in the following circumstances:
 - To address the constituent's concerns
 - Where the issue raises a matter which concerns other councillors in the same ward
 - Where the constituent has been told that this is going to happen, and why it is necessary (and has not objected to the disclosure)
- c) Not to disclose that information outside the Council without the third party's consent; and should be aware that to do so could put the authority in breach of the Data Protection Act, and the Councillor in breach of the Member Code of Conduct. Personal information provided under the Council's DPA registration must not be used for party political purposes.
- d) To comply with the Council's ICT security policy statement when using, storing or processing the personal information away from the Council's premises.

3.17 Where a Councillor has made a written request for information or briefing to an officer, and has copied that request to other persons, generally the officer will respond in writing to all persons so named. However, where an officer considers that in his/her professional judgment it is inappropriate to provide the information or briefing to any of the other persons, or alternatively that the information or briefing should be provided to other persons not named in the original request, s/he will explain this in the written response to the Councillor.

3.18 Subject to para. 3.17 above, and to any standing instructions given by ward Councillors to the contrary, an officer responding to a Councillor on ward business will not, as a matter of course, copy the response to other ward Councillors. All standing instructions from ward Councillors in individual wards which vary this arrangement should be reviewed each year after the local election.

However, officers will notify all ward Councillors of physical works to be undertaken in their ward, once the decision to do the works has been taken.

3.19 Officers should not respond to outstanding enquiries from former Councillors once they have ceased to serve of the Council. Where the enquiry involved correspondence from a constituent, officers will send the response directly to the constituent and explain why they are doing so.

Visits to Premises etc

- 1) A Councillor who is entitled to ask for a briefing under this Protocol may request the briefing in the form of a visit to Council premises outside the Civic Offices, to inspect Council equipment, or to observe the provision of Council Services on site or within the community. In such cases, the Councillor must put the request in writing to the Director or Assistant Director responsible for the service and must specify his/her locus for requesting the briefing, and the purpose of the briefing. The Director or Assistant Director may refuse to arrange the visit or inspection if its purpose is not consistent with this Protocol, or is operationally inconvenient for the service, or may give rise to health and safety considerations, in which case the Director or Assistant Director will explain their reasons in writing to the Councillor.
- 2) Where an Assistant Director arranges a briefing visit or inspection for one or more Councillors, s/he will confirm the arrangements, including date, time and location, with the Councillor(s) beforehand in writing, and will be present, or arrange for a service manager to be present, to meet with the Councillor(s) and to accompany the visit or inspection.
- 3) Councillors may not visit Council premises, inspect Council equipment, or deal directly with Council staff undertaking their duties on site or within the community, outside the provisions of this Protocol.
- 4) In line with para. 3.14 above, the Assistant Director will let the responsible Lead Councillor and Committee Chair know of the request to visit Council premises, inspect Council equipment and/or to observe the provision of Council services on site or within the community, and the arrangements made to meet the request.
- 5) The rules set out in this Protocol relating to briefings and reports will apply to any such visits or inspections. This includes the provisions concerning Councillors not asking officers for their personal opinions on a matter in question; and giving the same information to the Lead Councillor and Committee Chair as was given to a Councillor during a visit or inspection.

Confidential Briefings

- 3.20 A briefing in confidence may only be requested from Directors or Assistant Directors, and will only be given to Councillors who are not Lead Councillors or Committee Chairs in the following circumstances:
- a) Where the advice is requested by the Councillor on a personal matter (eg concerning declarations of interest or where advice is required on the wording of a resolution or the interpretation of law, Standing Orders or a code of conduct);
 - b) Where the advice is requested in confidence by the Leader or Deputy Leader of a political group, or any other nominated officer of the group, for the purposes of that Group.
 - c) Councillors may ask for advice / guidance as to whether their action / proposals are within the law and on questions of probity eg in connection with Council or other resolutions, financial or other types of interest.
- 3.21 A confidential briefing does not have to relate solely to exempt (Part II) business.

Briefings for Political Groups

- 3.22 The existence of political groups within local authorities is now specifically recognised by law. Officers may properly be called upon to give information and advice to party group meetings. It may be appropriate for senior officers to give advice on the formulation of strategy and policy options to all political groups but it would be inappropriate for political groups to expect officers to give advice on or to undertake research to inform the formulation of proposals which are or would be contrary to the approved policies of the Council or its Committees, except in the formulation of alternative budget proposals for presentation to the annual budget meeting.

- 3.23 When officers do provide information and advice to a Lead Councillor, a political group representative or a political group meeting, it is not a substitute for providing all necessary information and advice to the Council or its Committees when the matter is considered.
- 3.24 Officers may not attend Group meetings except by invitation. Groups may ask officers to attend a meeting to provide information and advice in relation to relevant matters of Council business on the agenda for the meeting. Any request for an officer to attend a Group meeting should be directed to the Head of Paid Service or relevant Director and indicate the subject matter upon which information and/or advice is to be sought. If the Head of Paid Service or Director is of the opinion that it would be inappropriate for an officer requested to attend, the reasons for that view should be discussed with the party leader or other relevant group officer immediately.
- 3.25 If officer attendance is appropriate, the Head of Paid Service or the relevant Director shall determine which officers should attend. However, officers should not be present when party business is being discussed and must not be involved in advising on matters of party business.
- 3.26 When attending Group meetings to provide information, the officer must make clear the status of the information being presented (eg whether it is confidential or exempt) and may specify that the information can only be presented to Councillors and not to other people attending the Group; and the Group must adhere to these conditions. The unauthorised disclosure by any Group Councillor of exempt or confidential information given to the Group by an officer could be a breach of the Member Code of Conduct.
- 3.27 Both Councillors and officers should refrain from any conduct which could lead to the political impartiality of officers being called into question. It is a requirement of the Code of Conduct that Members should not do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of staff. Officers may at their discretion decline to disclose exempt information (i.e. information which if contained in a Committee report would lead to it being placed in Part 2 of the Agenda).
- 3.28 Advice / information or reports given by an Officer to a political Group must remain confidential to the Group to whom it is given. (This does not prevent the same advice/information being given to another Group if requested by them).
- 3.29 Councillors and officers shall respect the confidentiality of political Group meetings and meetings with Lead Councillors and the existence and content of any such discussions shall not be relayed directly or indirectly to Councillors of another group without the consent of the Group Chair or Secretary, or Lead Councillor.

Accounts

- 3.30 Councillors also have all the rights acquired by members of the public to see the authority's accounts and the general right to see all books, deeds etc, which are included in the annual audit. The period of inspection takes place over a three-week period after the publication of the Council's final accounts for the previous financial year, and usually occurs during August.

Working with Councillors on Non-Council Business

- 1) Councillors need to deal with the Council in various personal capacities: as private citizens; as local residents and receivers of services; as members of local voluntary, community and interest groups; as householders; and also as employees, Directors, owners or shareholders in local businesses or property. Councillors are required to complete and keep updated a public register of their financial interests; and to declare any personal and pecuniary interests which arise when they are taking decisions.
- 2) Councillors who contact the Council in a personal or business capacity must do so within the terms of the local Member Code of Conduct, and any failure to do so may involve a breach of the Code. Councillors are also required to comply with the authority's Planning Code of Conduct, and advice on Licensing applications.
- 4) Councillors, when communicating with the Council on personal business, should:

- Contact the Council from their home or business address or contact
- Make clear both that they are a Councillor, but that their contact on this occasion is personal (ie not as a Councillor)
- Not contact the Council using their Council e-mail account, nor through Members' Services
- Make the contact or request in writing, and make clear that they are acting in a personal capacity

5) Officers, when responding to a Councillor on personal business, will:

- Respond in writing to the Councillor in his/her personal capacity, and not address him/her as Councillor
- Send the communication to the Councillor's home or business address or contact by Royal Mail (not the Council's courier service); and not send responses by e-mail through the Councillor's RBC e-mail account
- In all cases, treat the Councillor no differently from any other member of the public making a similar request
- If officers consider that a Councillor is making an inappropriate request, they should notify their Assistant Director and the Monitoring Officer.

6) All communications with Councillors on their personal business should be recorded through Front Office. Services should do this directly, and not through Councillor Services, who will only log onto Front Office enquiries by Councillors acting in their capacity as a Councillor.

7) Councillors who are communicating on personal business will be treated as members of the public. Councillors cannot demonstrate a "need to know" that goes beyond their public rights under the Freedom of Information Act when they are not acting as a Councillor and are not covered for personal business by the Council's DPA registration.

8) Councillors who are submitting development proposals and planning applications in respect of any land or property in which they have a beneficial interest must do so in line with the Planning Code of Conduct, and in particular:

- must make clear that they are a Councillor
- must not take any part in the decision-making process (this would be a breach of the Member Code of Conduct, through failure to declare a disclosable pecuniary interest)
- should not seek to influence the case officer's assessment or recommendation on their proposal

The same rules apply in relation to applications made by the Councillors' spouse or partner. In the interests of transparency and openness, the local member code of Conduct extends them to include applications made by other members of a Councillors' family or any other person with whom the Councillor has a close association; in such cases the interest will not be a disclosable pecuniary interest, and the Councillor should declare a personal interest.

4. AGENDA PREPARATION

Agenda Co-ordination

4.1 The Agenda for Council meetings will be constituted in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 5 set out in the Council and Committee Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution.

4.2 Agendas for Committee meetings will be compiled in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 36C of the Council and Committee Procedure Rules. They state that the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services will determine the agenda for Committee meetings, subject to consultation with the Leader, the Chair and the responsible Lead Councillor(s), as well as the Head of Paid Service, Chief Financial Officer, and lead officer(s) for the Committee. The following may request the Clerk to the Committee to include an item on the Agenda for the next meeting of a Committee (subject to the Access to Information Regulations being met):

Leader
Responsible Lead Councillor;

- 4.3 An Opposition Group Leader or the Mayor may ask the Leader to put an item on the Agenda of a Committee meeting for consideration, and if the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services agrees the item will be considered at the next available meeting, subject to there being no more than two such reports per Committee meeting. The notice of the meeting will give the name of the Councillor who asked for the item to be included.
- 4.4 The Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and/or the Chief Financial Officer may include items for consideration on the Agenda of any Committee meeting and may require that a meeting of the Committee be called in pursuance of the statutory duties.
- 4.5 Under Standing Order 29, any three members of a Committee may call a meeting of that Committee at any time.

Reports

- 4.6 It must be remembered that officers are required to draft reports for Council and Committees which contain proper professional advice, and all relevant information, and no irrelevant information, necessary to allow the meeting to make a reasonable decision, in line with the *Wednesbury* Principles.
- 4.7 All reports should be submitted to the Council or Committees under the name of the Director or Statutory Officer, and Directors and Statutory Officers shall be fully responsible and accountable for the contents of any reports submitted in their names.
- 4.8 All reports submitted to the Council or Committees must also state the name of the responsible Lead Councillor(s), and the officer submitting the report will consult with the Lead Councillor(s) on the recommendations made in the report before submitting the report to the meeting.

Consultative and Advisory Bodies

- 4.9 Councillors and officers will also attend meetings of consultative and advisory bodies which have representatives of partnership bodies, local businesses, voluntary groups and other agencies. At such meetings Councillors and officers may provide appropriate information and advice on Council business but shall not disclose any exempt or confidential material, including personal information except where its disclosure is provided for by an information sharing protocol, in which case this must be explained.

5. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

- 5.1 A Committee may resolve to undertake an overview or scrutiny exercise of any function or service delegated to it, or of a partner organisation providing public services locally in Reading. In addition, under the provisions of Standing Order 25, full Council may request a Committee to undertake a scrutiny review. In such cases, the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules will apply, as set out in Part 4 of the Constitution.
- 5.2 A scrutiny exercise undertaken under the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules may include the scrutiny and review of decisions made or actions taken in accordance with the discharge of any Council functions covered by the Committee. In addition to reviewing documentation, in fulfilling the scrutiny role, a Committee, or a task-and-finish group of Members set up by a Committee to undertake the scrutiny exercise, may require any Lead Councillor and/or senior officer to attend before them to provide evidence in relation to matters within their remit. The Committee or task-and-finish group may request information on any decision or series of decisions, the extent to which the actions taken implement Council policy and their performance.
- 5.3 Lead Councillors and officers are required to attend such scrutiny exercises if requested, unless exceptional circumstances prevent this, in which case arrangements for an alternative date will be made in consultation with the Lead Councillor and Chair of the Panel. They are also required to answer all questions asked of them, unless they would otherwise have grounds for not answering the question if it were put to them in a court of law.

- 5.4 Officers who are not Directors or Assistant Directors and who are requested to attend to give evidence at a scrutiny exercise can, at the officers' request, be accompanied by a senior manager or a Trades Union representative. This request cannot be reasonably denied by the Committee or task-and-finish group.
- 5.4 Councillors and officers may not be accompanied by an external legal representative without the specific approval of the Monitoring Officer.

6. CORPORATE VALUES/ NOLAN PRINCIPLES

- 6.1 Councillors and officers should always bear in mind the corporate values and Nolan Principles in their dealings with each other. Mutual respect between officers and Councillors is essential to good local government. It is important that any dealing between Councillors and officers should observe reasonable standards of courtesy and that neither Councillors or officers should seek to take advantage of their position, intimidate the other party or seek to exert duress.
- 6.2 Close personal familiarity between Councillors and officers can damage their relationship and prove embarrassing to other Councillors and officers. However, it is clearly important that there should be a close professional working relationship between the Lead Councillor and the Director and other senior officers with service responsibilities within the Lead Councillor's portfolio; and also between the Director and senior officers and their Committee Chair(s).

Disputes

- 6.3 Taking into account the corporate values and with Councillors and officers respecting integrity, the majority of disagreements should be resolved quickly and amicably. However, if there is a serious dispute, the matter should be discussed in the first instance between the Councillor and the officer concerned. If such discussions do not produce an acceptable resolution the matter should be referred to relevant senior managers and senior party leaders, ultimately resulting in referral to the Head of Paid Service. In addition, any officer can make a complaint that a Councillor has acted in breach of the Member Code of Conduct to the Monitoring Officer.

Other relevant Codes etc

- 6.4 These include:

- Code of Conduct for Members
- Code of Conduct for Officers
- Planning Code of Conduct for Members
- Working with Reading's MPs – Guidelines
- Publicity in Elections
- Whistleblowing Policy

Working with Reading's MPs – Guidelines

The Council has always been keen to encourage joint working with the Borough MPs, where this is appropriate. In order to facilitate this, whilst at the same time ensuring the legitimate use of Council officer time and facilities, these guidelines have been developed with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Chief Executive.

General

1. Council Officers should only do work on behalf of MPs that is related to legitimate Council business, ie it must be a legitimate Council activity.

Invitations and Publicity

2. The Council must take great care in issuing publicity which includes the Borough's MPs as they are persons identified with a political party and therefore subject to the provisions of Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 and Section 27 of the Local Government Act 1988. Times when it will be appropriate to invite MPs to Council events and to include the MPs in Council publicity will include:

- Civic and other events organised by the Council to which MPs are formally invited, such as Royal visits, ministerial visits, Mayor Making, Remembrance Day events, the Civic Ball and Carol Service, and other Mayoral and partnership events where the MPs are included on the Civic VIP list.
- Events organised by schools, youth and community centres or other Council services or activities funded by the Council to which they invite the MPs.
- Events organised by partners and community organisations to which both the Council and MPs are invited.
- Local campaigns and issues where the Council had formally asked one or both MPs to be involved in lobbying on the Council's behalf: in all such cases, the reason for MP involvement should be clearly established; sometimes it will be specific to an individual constituency.

Formal requests to MPs can take a number of forms, which should be documented:

- Council or Committee motions or resolutions
 - MPs briefings
 - Requests in writing, only from the Chief Executive
- Local campaigns and issues where MPs have approached or put a proposal to the Council, to which Council is responding.
3. MPs may be invited to launches of Council initiatives or functions where they have a clear personal, geographical or interest-based link with the initiative, and it would be normal to invite the MP.

In this respect, and with regard to geographical links:

- Both MPs may be invited to Borough-wide events, irrespective of where they are held.
- The fact that an event is held at the Civic Offices, the Hexagon, the Town Hall, or Rivermead Leisure Centre, or in other Town Centre locations does not, in itself, establish a geographical link to the MP for Reading East.
- Both MPs should be invited to events at South Reading Leisure Centre.

4. Requests from MPs to Council Officers or services to participate in campaigns initiated by an MP should be handled with great care, and must be relevant to Reading. In all cases they should be referred to:
 - The Strategic Communications Manager or Senior Press Officer – in relation to publicity
 - The Chief Executive or relevant Executive Director or Assistant Director – in relation to use of civic facilities
 - The appropriate Lead Councillor or Committee Chair (if unavailable the Leader or Deputy Leader)

The Communications Team will liaise directly with the officer and Lead Councillor, Chair and Monitoring Officer on the request, and the arrangements for the activity.

5. Separate guidance will be offered during election purdah periods, which will supersede this guidance.

Correspondence and Briefings

6. Except where otherwise agreed by the Chief Executive, all correspondence between MPs and the Council will be through the Chief Executive. Exceptions will include constituency casework, where the MPs may correspond directly with the responsible Director or Assistant Director, and electoral issues where the MPs may correspond directly with the Returning Officer.
7. The Chief Executive offers briefing meetings to both MPs (separately and together) on a regular basis. As a general rule, only Directors and/or Assistant Directors will attend briefing meetings.
8. Conversely, either MP can request briefings on specific items at these meetings, in which case the appropriate officer will be approached to arrange for the briefing to be provided to the meeting, either orally or in writing.
9. MPs may also request information or briefings, from Directors, and vice versa. To avoid any conflict with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, MPs may only request information or briefings in confidence in the following circumstances:
 - on a matter where the information itself is confidential or exempt under the provision of the Access to Information, Data Protection or Freedom of Information legislation. This will usually include correspondence between constituents and their MPs which as a general rule will be covered by the Data Protection Act.
 - Where the advice requested is on a matter personal to the MP
10. MPs do not have a right of access to information about individuals or clients, and the Data Protection Act 1998 specifically prevents information about living individuals from being disclosed to anybody unless the subject has been told that the information will be used for that purpose or has consented to the disclosure. MPs who can show written evidence that they have been asked by a constituency resident to represent them on a particular matter have a right to expect reasonable access to information in order to represent that constituent effectively. With regard to personal information, this will normally be limited to information about that individual and may not extend to information about other associated individuals, for example for members of the family, household or neighbours.
11. Requests for information or briefings from the Borough's MPs which do not involve confidential information or personal advice will be handled in line with the long-standing protocol concerning briefings given to Councillors, which is that information given in writing will always be copied to the Lead Councillor and (if relevant) Chair of the appropriate Committee; and where MPs request oral briefings the Chief Executive or Director will inform the Lead Councillor of the content of the briefing.

Facilities

12. MPs may not make use of Council officer time or Council facilities in their publicity or constituency work.
13. MPs may book and use rooms in Council buildings for their surgeries without charge.
14. On other occasions, MPs may book rooms in Council buildings, but when they do so they will be charged for this use. This will be the rate for voluntary organisations, where such a rate applies; if not, it will be the normal commercial rate.
15. As above, separate guidance will be issued during election purdah periods which will supersede this guidance.

If you have any queries about these guidelines or whether a piece of work with an MP is appropriate Council business, please contact the Monitoring Officer or Strategic Communications Manager.

Council Publicity and Elections

1. STATUTORY POSITION for COUNCIL PUBLICITY

- 1.1 The Council must comply at all times with both the statutory restrictions on publicity Acts 1986 and 1988, and the national Code of Recommended Practice on Publicity (issued under the 1986 Act)
- 1.2 Under Section 2 of the 1986 Act, and Section 27 of the 1988 Act, a local authority shall not publish any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect support for a political party. In determining whether material falls within this prohibition, regard shall be had to the content and style of the material, the time and other circumstances of its publication, and the likely effect on those to whom it is directed. The legislation makes specific reference to:
 - Whether the material refers to a political party or to persons identified with a political party or promotes or opposes a point of view on a question of controversy which is identifiable as the view of one political party and not of another
 - Where the material is part of a campaign, the effect which the campaigning appears to be designed to achieve.
- 1.3 The above restrictions apply to all parts of the local authority's operation, and not just to its Communications operation.
- 1.4 The restrictions do not stand alone, and have to be read in conjunction with other legislation which justifies local authority funding or activity as part of the provision of a function or service of the local authority. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 a local authority has the power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions. Under Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, a local authority has a general power to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area, but in doing so it must have regard to the community strategy for its area.
- 1.5 The above restrictions apply to local authority publicity at all times. However, the Code states that, "***the period between the notice of an election and the election itself*** [the purdah period] ***should preclude proactive publicity in all its forms of candidates and other politicians involved directly in the election. Publicity should not deal with controversial issues or report views, proposals or recommendations in such a way that identifies them with individual members or groups of members ... Proactive events arranged in this period should not involve members likely to be standing for election***".

2. COUNCIL PUBLICITY AND ELECTIONS – GENERAL

- 2.1 This Protocol is based on the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Government Publicity, and the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) guide to the Code, "The Right Side of the Law".
- 2.2 The LGIU policy briefing was issued in March 2003, following the adoption of new executive arrangements from 2001, and the changes made to the Code of Conduct in 2001 to reflect this. The latter tightened the restrictions around elections, and in particular stated that authorities should stop all forms of proactive publicity relating to candidates and other politicians directly involved in elections.
- 2.3 There are three reasons to be cautious about publicity and other media events in the run-up to an election:
 - The statutory restrictions on publicity contained in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988, and the national Code of Recommended Practice on Publicity (see above)
 - Councillors must also comply with the Council's Code of Conduct. This says that Members must not use their position as a councillor to confer or secure an advantage for themselves or any other person; and must ensure that the Council's resources are not used for political purposes... Acting in breach of the Code could result in a complaint to the Standards Board

- There are strict controls on the amount that a candidate can spend on election campaigns, and all expenses must be declared. Councillors who are candidates should not put themselves in a position that attracts a claim that they are using Council resources for campaign purposes, in which case they would have to pay and declare the cost of those resources.
- 2.4 The Code of Recommended Practice states, amongst other things, that proactive events organised at election time should not include members standing for election, and that the safest policy between the **notice of the election being published** and polling day is to avoid mention of any Councillor who is seeking election. On press releases, it says that the safest route is not to mention Councillors standing for election; and if it is necessary to have a member comment, also to consider including a quote from an opposition Councillor.
- 2.5 The national Code is a statutory code of recommended practice, and authorities must have regard to its provisions in coming to any decisions about publicity; it applies to publicity issued by local authorities but not normally to other bodies
- 2.6 There is local custom and practice in Reading that Lead Councillors (and before them, Committee Chairs), may speak on and be associated with matters falling within their area of responsibility, so long as the law and the essential principles of the code of practice are not infringed. This is consistent with the principle behind Modernisation which was to sharpen the focus of executive authority.
- 2.7 The LGIU briefing states that there is no need to cease all proactive publicity during election periods, so long as the authority is mindful of the broad restrictions set out in the code

3. COUNCIL PUBLICITY AND LOCAL ELECTIONS

- 3.1 During the purdah period before a local election (ie from the date the notice of the election is published), Councillors and Officers should apply the following principles arising from the Code, subject to the merits of each individual case, and to none of the cases involving an event or issue which is politically controversial or clearly associated with a political campaign:
- 1) Lead Councillors may take part in events organised by the Council which relate directly to their portfolio area, where the event is in respect of a Council initiative that is already in the public arena and which has been approved by the Council or Committee, and where the timing of the event is incidental to the election process.
 - 2) Such events should not include ward Councillors who are standing for re-election, or any other candidates; and the responsibility for ensuring that this does not occur extends beyond Council officers to the individual councillors or candidates themselves.
 - 3) For such events, the Council may issue press releases which refer to the Lead Councillor, but should not refer to or include quotes by ward Councillors or candidates.
 - 4) Lead Councillors may also take part by invitation in events relating to their portfolio area which are arranged by another organisation, and as a result may receive publicity independently of the Council
 - 5) Lead Councillors may comment on situations of emergency or where there is a genuine need for a Member response to an important event outside the authority's control
 - 6) Councillors other than Lead Councillors (and the Mayor) should normally not take part in publicity events or be referred to or quoted in press releases
 - 7) The Code does not prevent individual Councillors who are candidates from responding to media enquiries made directly to them about Council business or issues which affect the Borough or its residents
 - 8) The Code does not prevent Councillors who are candidates from dealing with their everyday ward work, including correspondence from constituents, so long as this is not used as a means of canvassing
 - 9) Ward surgeries held in Council property can continue where they are held as part of a regular and scheduled programme, so long as they are used for normal constituency business and not for election canvassing or campaigning

10) The following may be considered to be acceptable events and activities involving Councillors who are candidates, subject to the event or activity not promoting the election or the Councillor as a candidate, as follows:

- Sending welcome letters to new ward residents - so long as it is the Councillor's regular practice to send them, and they are limited to information about the ward Councillor(s) and how to get in touch, surgeries etc
- Sending letters to large numbers of residents - so long as they are about a continuing problem or other Council matter with which the Councillor had been dealing and are informative about the current situation; care must be taken here to ensure that the letters are not viewed as campaigning
- Public consultation meetings - so long as they are provided as part of the normal business of the Council and are part of an agreed programme of work; care should be taken to ensure that they do not look as though they have been arranged as a potential opportunity for campaigning.

4. COUNCIL PUBLICITY AND THE BOROUGH MPs

- 4.1 The general position with regard to invitations and publicity outside the election purdah period is set out in the ***Guidelines on Working with Reading's MPs***. This also deals with briefings, and facilities.
- 4.2 The position is different with regard to prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs). They have no role as PCCs in any Council event or publicity.
- 4.3 The position will be complicated if a situation arises where any of the PPCs are serving Councillors on the Borough Council. They will continue to have a reason to be involved in events and publicity where this flows from their roles as a Councillor, and which may include Council and Committee motions which they move or second and which are carried.

5. COUNCIL PUBLICITY AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

- 5.1 This part of the Protocol applies to the purdah period for a parliamentary election, following the dissolution of parliament. From that date, the Borough's MPs cease to be MPs. If they have been re-selected to stand, their status will be as a parliamentary candidate; if they have not been selected to stand, or are retiring, then they will have no formal political status.
- 5.2 In addition, during the purdah period any Councillors who are candidates must be treated as parliamentary candidates and not as Councillors.
- 5.3 The general election is for parliament, and not for the Council, and therefore the focus of attention regarding publicity and PR will be on parliamentary candidates.
- 5.4 The Council must comply with both the statutory restrictions on publicity contained in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988, and the national Code of Recommended Practice on Publicity (issued under the 1986 Act)
- 5.5 The Code is written primarily with local elections in mind (hence the reference to Members). However, the same principles will apply with regard to parliamentary candidates, and other politicians who are actively involved in the election.
- 5.6 The Council may continue to issue publicity and promote events relating to its ongoing activities as a local authority, and that part of this protocol will continue to apply, subject to the events or publicity not involving any of the parliamentary candidates (unless all are involved).

Part 6 - Members' Allowances Scheme

Members' Allowances And Subsistence

This section explains the Councillors' Allowances Scheme adopted by the Borough Council effective from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023*.

(*The Councillors' Allowances Scheme for 2023 to 2024 will be finalised once the Local Government Pay Settlement has been agreed.)

1. **ALLOWANCES PAYABLE TO COUNCILLORS**

1.1 **Basic Allowance**

The Basic Allowance paid to all Councillors is £8,942.13 per year. It is paid automatically through the payroll system, monthly in arrears.

Basic allowance is intended to recognise the time commitment of all councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time as meetings with officers and constituents and attendance at political group meetings. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as the use of their homes and telephone.

1.2 **Special Responsibility Allowance**

Special responsibility allowance is paid to those councillors who have significant responsibilities which fall within the following categories:

- acting as leader or deputy leader of a political group
- membership of the executive, where an authority is operating executive arrangements
- presiding at meetings of a committee, sub-committee, or joint committee
- representing the authority at meetings of another body
- membership of a committee or sub-committee which meets with exceptional frequency or for exceptionally long periods
- acting as a spokesperson for a political group on a committee or sub-committee
- membership of an adoption appeals panel or panel dealing with licensing or controlling any activity
- any other activities in relation to the discharge of the authority's functions as to require equal or greater effort of the member than any of the activities listed above.

Paid through the payroll system monthly in arrears as follows*:

Leader	- £20,122.79 pa
Deputy Leader	- £12,291.22 pa
Tier One SRA	- £10,333.33 pa
Tier Two SRA	- £6,608.97 pa
Tier Three SRA	- £3,305.57 pa
Tier Four SRA	- £1,168.21 pa

No councillor is to receive more than one Special Responsibility Allowance.

With regard to Special Responsibility Allowance:

- ◆ Tier One to be paid to the Lead Councillors.
- ◆ Tier Two to be paid to the Leader of the main opposition group and the Chairs of Licensing Applications Committee and Planning Applications Committee.
- ◆ Tier Three to be paid to Chairs of Committees (except the Chair of the Appeals Committee) and Group Leaders of the other political groups.
- ◆ Tier Four to be paid to Councillors carrying out other activities in relation to the discharge of the authority's functions that require the commitment of equivalent time and effort as for other categories of activity which would qualify for Special Responsibility Allowance under Paragraph 5(1)(i) of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

1.2.1 Council on 24 May 2023 agreed:

That, further to Minute 28 of the meeting of Council on 31 January 2023, the following persons shall be regarded as, or equivalent to, "other Councillors carrying out other activities in relation to the discharge of the authority's functions as require the commitment of equivalent time and effort as for other categories of activity which would qualify for Special Responsibility Allowance" at Tier 4 for the financial year 2023/24 (and subject to no Councillor receiving more than one Special Responsibility Allowance):

- Vice-Chairs of Committees
- Representative(s) on the Fostering Panel
- Independent Person appointed in accordance with Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011

2.0 **TRAVELLING AND SUBSISTENCE EXPENSES**

Travelling and subsistence expenses may be claimed when a councillor is on Council business which is an approved duty as set out below. Claims must be supported by receipts/spent tickets in order to be non-taxable.

- a meeting of the executive
- a meeting of a committee of the executive
- a meeting of the authority
- a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of the authority
- a meeting of some other body to which the authority makes appointments or nominations
- a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of a body to which the authority makes appointments or nominations
- a meeting which has both been authorised by the authority, a committee, or sub-committee of the authority or a joint committee of the authority and one or more authorities, or a sub-committee of a joint committee and to which representatives of more than one political group have been invited (if the authority is divided into several political groups) or to which two or more councillors have been invited (if the authority is not divided into political groups)
- a meeting of a local authority association of which the authority is a member
- duties undertaken on behalf of the authority in pursuance of any standing order requiring a member or members to be present while tender documents are opened
- duties undertaken on behalf of the authority in connection with the discharge of any function of the authority conferred by or under any enactment and empowering or requiring the authority to inspect or authorise the inspection of premises
- duties undertaken on behalf of the authority in connection with arrangements made by the authority for the attendance of pupils at a school approved for the purposes of section 342 of the Education Act 1996
- any other duty approved by the authority in connection with discharging the duties of the authority or its committees or sub-committees.

Expenses may **NOT** be claimed for:

- ◆ meetings of political groups.
- ◆ attendance at Public Local Enquiries by councillors appointed by Planning Committee.
- ◆ attendance at Public Meetings not convened by the Council.
- ◆ attendance at School Governors' Meetings.

2.1 **By Councillor's Own Car**

The rate for travel by a councillor's own motor vehicle is 45p per mile.

A claim may also be made for carrying passengers (not exceeding four) who would qualify for travelling allowance. The rate payable is 3p per mile for the first passenger and 2p per mile for second and subsequent passengers.

2.2 **By Councillor's Own Bicycle**

The rate paid for travel by a councillor's own bicycle is 37p per mile. The cycle to work scheme for officers has been extended to councillors.

2.3 **By Councillor's Own Motorcycle**

The rate paid for travel by a councillor's own solo motorcycle is 40.9p per mile

2.4 **Car Park Fees etc.**

The costs incurred in car parking fees, tolls and ferries may be claimed.

2.5 **Public Transport**

The cost of the ordinary fare, cheap fare or portion of any weekly ticket may be claimed.

2.6 **Taxis**

When travelling by taxi, the equivalent of the fare for appropriate public transport is claimable UNLESS it is a case of urgency or no public transport is reasonably available. In this case a claim may be submitted for the actual fare and any reasonable gratuity paid.

This means, for example, a councillor using a taxi on non-urgent business during the day when there is a bus service available can only claim the cost of the bus fare. However, using a taxi late at night, when the bus service had ended, a claim for the total cost of the journey may be made.

Councillors with access disabilities which prevent their use either of private cars or public transport, may travel by taxi and reclaim both their actual fare and any reasonable gratuity paid.

2.7 **Day Subsistence**

Day subsistence rates for members are based on a meal basis, but with clarification of eligibility based on the time of day the meal is taken and time away from home. The scheme is the same as officers receive as follows:

- a. Breakfast allowance (more than four hours away from normal place of residence or where the authority permits, a lesser period, before 11.00am) £9.15;
- b. Lunch allowance (more than four hours away from normal place of residence or where the authority permits, a lesser period, including the lunchtime between 12 noon and 2.00pm) £12.64;
- c. Tea allowance (more than four hours away from normal place of residence or where authority permits, a lesser period, including the period 3.00pm to 6.00pm) £5.01;

- d. Evening meal allowance (more than four hours away from the normal place of residence or where the authority permits, a lesser period, ending after 7.00pm) £15.65.

2.8 Overnight Subsistence

The rate for an absence overnight from the usual place of residence is £82.21. For such an absence in London, or for attending the LGA Annual Conferences, the rate is £93.77.

Any overnight subsistence rate should be deemed to cover a continuous period of absence of 24 hours.

The subsistence rates referred to above may be exceeded in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer, eg to enable a Councillor and an officer attending a conference to stay at the same accommodation, subject to there being sufficient budget provision.

2.9 Meals Provided Free of Charge

The rates specified in 2.7 above should be reduced by an appropriate amount in respect of any meal provided free of charge by an authority or body in respect of the meal or the period to which the allowance relates.

2.10 Dependant Carer's Allowance

A claim may be made for the cost of a paid care attendant to look after children or elderly or disabled relatives when undertaking particular duties as set out below:

- a meeting of the executive
 - a meeting of a committee of the executive
 - a meeting of the authority
 - a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of the authority
 - a meeting of some other body to which the authority makes appointments or nominations
- or
- a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of a body to which the authority makes appointments or nominations
 - a meeting which has **both** been authorised by the authority, a committee, or sub-committee of the authority or a joint committee of the authority and one or more authorities, or a sub-committee of a joint committee **and** to which representatives of more than one political group have been invited (if the authority is divided into several political groups) or to which two or more councillors have been invited (if the authority is not divided into political groups)
 - a meeting of a local authority association of which the authority is a member
 - duties undertaken on behalf of the authority in pursuance of any standing order requiring a member or members to be present while tender documents are opened
 - duties undertaken on behalf of the authority in connection with the discharge of any function of the authority conferred by or under any enactment and empowering or requiring the authority to inspect or authorise the inspection of premises
 - duties undertaken on behalf of the authority in connection with arrangements made by the authority for the attendance of pupils at a school approved for the purposes of section 342 of the Education Act 1996
 - any other duty approved by the authority in connection with discharging the duties of the authority or its committees or sub-committees.

Claims may be made for up to £9.90 per hour for childcare for up to 15 hours per week.

Claims may be made for up to £9.90 per hour for the paid care attendant for an elderly or disabled relative (including a disabled child) for up to 15 hours per week.

The person providing the care may not be a close relative, defined as spouse, partner (opposite or same sex cohabitants), parents, children, brothers, sisters, grandparents and grandchildren. The paid care attendant must sign a receipt to show that they have cared for the dependent during the hours claimed for.

Note: This allowance is taxable.

2.11 **Co-optees' Allowances**

Co-optees' Allowances are payable solely to non-councillor members of the Standards Committee attending meetings of the Committee or any sub-Committee set up by the Committee as part of its process of assessing, investigating and hearing complaints about councillors, eg hearings to consider possible non-compliance with the Members' Code of Conduct. The allowances are paid at the daily rate equivalent of the Councillors' Basic Allowance. The Monitoring Officer is authorised to settle the rate to be paid on each occasion.

2.12 **Provision for withholding of Allowances under certain Circumstances**

Certain allowances may be withheld as a result of full or partial suspension of a member of an authority. Where authorities would like to provide for this option, they should include provision for withdrawal of allowances in their schemes. An authority may provide in its scheme for the repayment of any allowances which have been paid in respect of a period during which a member has been suspended.

Where a councillor is fully or partially suspended from their duties, their basic allowance may be fully or partly withheld.

Travel and subsistence allowances may be withheld where a councillor has been suspended from duties or responsibilities which attracted these allowances.

Where a councillor is fully or partially suspended from any duties or responsibilities which attract special responsibility allowance, those allowances may be withheld by the authority.

Co-optees' allowance may also be withheld where a co-optee is partially or fully suspended from their duties.

Dependant carer's allowance may not be withheld from councillors.

Note: A person may forego all or part of any allowances to which they are entitled. To do so, notice must be given in writing to the proper officer of the authority.

3.0 **PAYMENT OF ALLOWANCES/EXPENSES**

3.1 **Claim Forms**

All expenses can be claimed on the one form (except Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances, which are paid automatically).

Time and place of departure may be from work, it does not have to be a home to home journey but claims must show clearly where you are travelling from and to. Completed forms should be sent to the Councillor Services Team who will forward them to the Payments Section.

3.2 **Payment Dates**

Allowances will be paid at the end of each month. The usual payment date is 25th of the month. To ensure payment is received by the end of the month, claims should be submitted **by the 7th of the month**. It is essential that claims are submitted regularly and do not build up, to allow effective budgetary monitoring.

3.3 **Taxation Allowances**

Basic, Special Responsibility and Dependant Carers' Allowances are taxable income. HM Inspector of Taxes, Reading South 1 District is provided with the names of new councillors and asks them for appropriate information from which a PAYE tax code can be issued. Alternatively, a councillor may apply to HM Inspector to pay tax at the standard rate, although the only advantage in this method seems to be a greater element of privacy than with a normal tax code.

It is necessary to apply a temporary tax code on allowances until instructions are received from HM Inspector.

In returning the tax assessment forms, members are able to claim certain expenses which would reduce tax liability. These are expenses incurred wholly, exclusively and necessarily in the performance of the duties of the councillor not reimbursed by the Council; they can extend beyond direct Council work for example to the costs of dealing with Ward work, such as travelling, telephone calls, stationery and postage, provided they are not of a political nature. The decision on what is acceptable is made by the Inspector of Taxes who may ask for the actual figures to be returned by a member after the year end.

Travelling and subsistence allowances are not taxable, provided receipts or spent tickets are submitted with claims.

3.4 **National Insurance Contributions**

Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances are subject to a National Insurance contribution on the whole amount of allowances where the weekly average since the previous payment (or from the first week of the tax year, if later) exceed the 'lower earnings limit'. Some married women are still eligible to pay at 3.85% and retired persons are exempt, but in either case, an appropriate certificate from the Department of Social Security must be produced.

A Councillor who has more than one employment and expects to pay National Insurance contributions on earnings at the upper earnings limit throughout the year in one of them, or a combination of some of them, may apply for deferment of contribution liability in the other employment(s). If the application for deferment is accepted, payment of contributions in the other employment(s) will be excused and the employer(s) authorised not to make any deduction of National Insurance.

Any councillor interested in deferment of National Insurance contributions should refer to DSS Leaflet NP28 for further information.

3.5 **Councillors Receiving Benefit**

Entitlement to Income Support/Job Seekers Allowance/Universal Credit may be affected by the Councillor allowance.

4. **FINANCIAL ADVICE**

Councillors who would like financial advice should contact:

Teresa Regan

Tel: 01959 561 000

Email: teresa.regan@fluentifa.co.uk

Address: Victory Way, Admirals Park, Crossways, Dartford, Kent, DA2 6AG

Or alternatively contact the Councillor Services Team who can make an appointment for you.

5. **SALARY SACRIFICE SCHEME**

- Bus to Work Scheme
- Childcare Vouchers
- Cycle to Work Scheme