

POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 16 JULY 2018

Present: Councillor Lovelock (Chair)

Councillors Brock, Hacker, Hoskin, James, Jones, O'Connell, Page, Pearce, Skeats, Terry, Vickers and White.

Apologies: Councillors Ennis, Stevens and Warman.

15. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved -

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of items 16-18 below as it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

16. DISPOSAL OF ARTHUR HILL POOL

Further to Minute 27 of the meeting of full Council held on 18 October 2016, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval for the disposal of the freehold of Arthur Hill Swimming Pool following a marketing exercise. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 - schedule of offers
- Appendix 2 - schedule of clarifications requested
- Appendix 2A - schedule of further clarifications and 'best and final' offers
- Appendix 3 - letter from the agent
- Appendix 4 - location plan

Resolved -

- (1) That the property be disposed of on the terms set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report;
- (2) That, in the event that the offer price was subsequently reduced or that the purchaser did not perform to an acceptable timescale, the Director of Environment & Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to re-engage with the second highest bidder or to re-market the property for disposal at best consideration.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3).

17. PAYMENTS TO FOSTER CARERS FOR HOME EXTENSIONS/ADAPTIONS

The Director of Children's Services, Education and Early Help Services submitted a report seeking approval to increase the budget provision within the Council's Capital

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Programme to facilitate alterations to two properties, to enable four looked after children and young people to remain in suitable family environments.

The report explained that there was currently no provision in the 2018/19 Capital Programme for the proposed works, but that there was a clear business case to support the expenditure as the overall cost was significantly less than the cost of alternate placements which would be incurred if the extensions were not completed. The funding and commissioning of the adaptations would be monitored by the Private Sector Housing Team, and in one of the cases an application for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) was to be made to meet part of the cost.

The report explained that a policy and supporting procedure were in development to ensure a systematic response to future requests, and enable future budget provision to ensure cost-effective placements.

Resolved -

- (1) That an additional capital budget of £247,000 be approved to facilitate extension works to two residential properties owned by foster carers to facilitate foster care placements, as set out in the report;**
- (2) That the Head of Legal & Democratic Services be authorised to enter into the necessary legal agreements with the foster carers in relation to the loans for the extension works and to secure the registration of a legal charge and, in the case of DFG funding, a local land charge against the property titles.**

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 2, 3 and 5).

18. PROPERTY IN CENTRAL READING

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Committee of the analysis and scoring of the offers received in relation to the disposal of the former Central Club building. Attached to the report at Appendix A was the scoring matrix produced by the agent.

The report asked the Committee to take the information into account when taking a decision in public session regarding the potential disposal of the property (see Minute 22 below).

Resolved -

That the report and appendix be taken into account when considering the report on the proposed disposal of the former Central Club building in open session (Minute 22 below refers).

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3).

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19. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reported that a decision had been taken in closed session to dispose of the former Arthur Hill swimming pool to a preferred bidder. She noted that the Council had previously resolved that the pool be permanently closed in order to secure revenue savings and reduce liabilities of over £700k, and that the process to market the property had included an advert in the Reading Voluntary Action Newsletter in accordance with the Council's Third Sector Premises Policy. The pool had been listed as an Asset of Community Value and 'Arthur Hill - Save Our Swimming Community Interest Company' had asked to be considered as a potential bidder, but no bid had been received. Details of the successful bidder could not yet be made public due to commercial confidentiality.

20. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

21. PETITIONS & QUESTIONS

David McElroy presented a petition on the subject of 'Save Reading Libraries'. Councillor Hacker responded to the petition.

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

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Roger Lightfoot	Sports Forum	Cllr Hoskin
2.	Peter Burt	Contributions to Leisure Service	Cllr Hoskin
3.	Peter Burt	Use of Out-Of-Borough Facilities	Cllr Hoskin
4.	Anne Green-Jessel	Swimming Pool at Palmer Park	Cllr Hoskin
5.	David McElroy	Why Restrict Pool Location?	Cllr Hoskin

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr White	Is a Pool in Palmer Park really guaranteed?	Cllr Hoskin
2.	Cllr White	Recycling league to boost recycling in Reading?	Cllr James
3.	Cllr Gavin	Planning Process for Pool at Palmer Park	Cllr Page

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

22. PROPERTY IN CENTRAL READING

Further to Minute 11 of the meeting held on 17 July 2017, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report giving an update on the marketing process for the former Central Club building and a summary of the bids received. The report sought authority to proceed with a disposal of a long leasehold interest to one of the bidders. A location plan was attached to the report at Appendix A.

The report explained that, following the meeting held on 17 July 2017, agents had been appointed and the property had been offered for sale on a long leasehold (999 year) basis. Four substantive bids had been received, three via the commercial marketing and one via the third sector advertising. Surveys of the mural had been commissioned and made available to all bidders, and various options had been offered regarding its refurbishment and maintenance. All bidders had opted to be responsible for ongoing refurbishment and maintenance of the mural, which would mean that the Council would not incur any ongoing revenue costs.

The report set out a summary of the bids received, with an evaluation score for each bid from an assessment that had been made by Haslams. The assessment criteria including the approach to retaining the mural, the capital receipt arising from the scheme and matters related to deliverability, and the community element of each bid had also been assessed. The full evaluation contained confidential information and had been considered in closed session (Minute 18 above refers). The highest-scoring bid had been from Redline (Bidder 2), who had submitted a proposal for a seven-storey building for residential use including an element of affordable housing. It was intended that the ground floor be let to a local theatre group Reading Between the Lines (RBL), for storage and rehearsal space.

The report explained that the marketing of the property had indicated that the potential opportunity cost of retaining the original mural could be up to £1m in terms of a capital receipt, and that it was therefore appropriate to consider the option of re-marketing the building without the constraint of retaining the original mural in situ. However, the cultural importance of the mural as a unique and iconic symbol of Reading's cultural history had long been recognised by the Council, and it had been listed as an Asset of Community Value and referenced for retention in draft planning policy. The report therefore recommended proceeding with a disposal to Redline on proposed terms which were set out in the report.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Committee re-affirm the cultural importance of the mural as a unique and important symbol of Reading's cultural history, and note the draft planning policy set out in the report and the mural's listing as an Asset of Community Value;

- (2) That the retention of the original mural in situ be endorsed, and the opportunity cost of circa £1m capital receipt associated with this decision be acknowledged;
- (3) That, taking into account the information considered in closed session (Minute 18 above refers), a 999 year lease be granted to Redline on the terms set out in the report;
- (4) That, in the event that Redline did not proceed with the acquisition, a further report be submitted to the Committee.

23. THE FUTURE OF READING PRISON SITE

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the current position with regard to the former Reading Prison site and the anticipated future disposal for development by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The report set out the aspiration of Theatre and Arts Reading (TAR) Community Interest Company to utilise the site for the development of a new theatre and a range of complementary uses, and sought approval for the Council to engage in this process as a key partner and stakeholder. Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was TAR's document 'A Vision of Opportunities for Reading Gaol'.

The report noted that the future of the Prison site was potentially key to the long-term success of the Abbey Quarter and to the town's cultural offer and reputation. The Vision being developed by TAR would be a model of heritage-led regeneration and economic growth, with a significant long-term impact on the town. Conversely, given the range of constraints on the development of the site, the financial return to the MoJ from its disposal was likely to be relatively modest.

The report explained that there had been discussions among a range of stakeholders, including TAR and the Council, on establishing a charitable organisation to take responsibility for the Prison site if the opportunity arose, and the current intention was to establish a charitable company limited by guarantee as a corporate entity to take on the site. Whilst deliverability could not be guaranteed at this stage, it was recommended that the Council support and contribute to the work to establish such a charitable organisation and publicly endorse TAR's work.

The report also proposed that the Council liaise with other partners and stakeholders to develop an outline application to the new 'Cultural Development Fund' recently announced by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), focused on the future development of the Prison site. The objectives of the fund were closely aligned with Reading's aspirations for the Abbey Quarter and the Vision for the Prison site being developed by TAR, and the funding available was significant with bids sought for between £3 and £7 million. There was a requirement that at least 20% match-funding be provided by local partners (with at least 50% of this being cash); the Council was not in a position to provide a cash contribution but could explore potential investment options with partners alongside providing in-kind support.

Resolved -

- (1) That the draft 'Vision' developed by Theatre and Arts Reading (TAR) as attached to the report at Appendix 1 be noted and welcomed;
- (2) That the Council's support and engagement in developing proposals for a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee in partnership with TAR be endorsed;
- (3) That a further report be submitted to the relevant Committee, in due course, on progress in establishing such a charitable company and how the Council might best support its objectives for the Prison site going forward;
- (4) That officers explore with key partners the opportunity of submitting an Expression of Interest to the DCMS's new 'Cultural Development Fund', recognising that the Council was unable to commit to any match funding.

24. NEW LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN AND BOROUGH-WIDE CAR PARKING & AIR QUALITY STRATEGY

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report giving an update on the preparation of a new Local Transport Plan for Reading (LTP4), and seeking approval to develop a new borough-wide car parking and air quality strategy to support the new Plan. The LTP4 development programme was attached to the report at Appendix A, and case studies of demand management schemes were attached to the report at Appendix B.

The report stated that the car parking and air quality strategy would consider the introduction of local transport charging schemes, under powers given to highway authorities in the Transport Act 2000. Charging schemes could take the form of a road user charge and/or a workplace parking levy (WPL), and could be complemented by Clean Air or Low Emission Zones targeting higher polluting vehicles. Various local authorities were in the process of considering charging schemes, and a number of case studies were set out in Appendix B. To date, Nottingham City Council were the only local authority to successfully implement a WPL scheme, which took the form of a levy on employers providing workplace parking to motor vehicles used in the journey to work and parked at the business premises, and had generated income to fund key transport improvements.

The report explained that it was proposed to undertake an initial feasibility study to develop and consider how one or more of a Workplace Parking Levy (largely following the Nottingham model), a Clean Air Zone / Low Emission Zone, and a road charging scheme could be applied within Reading. A package of complementary measures to these demand management schemes would also be assessed, including traffic management, access restrictions, park and ride, MRT and bus priority, public transport information, ticketing improvements and walking and cycling

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improvements. A 'Do nothing' option also had to be considered in the option appraisal, although evidence indicated that Reading was unlikely to be able to meet the identified transport, growth and air quality challenges without additional methods of managing traffic growth.

The report proposed that the appraisal of scheme options include a comprehensive parking survey of all private and public car parks in the Reading borough. The survey was expected to take place from September 2018 to early 2019, and following completion it was intended to submit a report summarising the results of the preliminary option appraisal to the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee in early 2019. If agreed, demand management options would then be developed in consultation with key stakeholders, including employers, before seeking approval from the Secretary of State.

Income generated from the schemes being assessed would enable the Council to bring forward existing transport programmes, as well as fast-track the development and delivery of a 15-year LTP4 investment programme, which included: Major Schemes (including park and ride, MRT, preparation of a full business case for a third Thames crossing), investment in public transport (including subsidised bus travel, smart ticketing, discounts, alternative fuels), and 'Easy Access Reading' (including better maintained footways, cycleways and roads and delivery of the emerging Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan).

The report noted that, whilst the proposed options were currently being considered for the Reading Borough only, several key employment sites were split across two Local Authorities or entirely outside of the Reading Borough. Given the large number of trips that were generated by these sites, it was proposed that officers commence early discussions on the proposed options with Wokingham and West Berkshire Councils. In parallel to the development of LTP4, discussions on a third Thames crossing would continue with Oxfordshire and South Oxfordshire, and the impact of potential housing sites located north of the Reading borough identified in South Oxfordshire's draft Local Plan would also need to be discussed and considered.

Resolved -

- (1) That the delivery programme for LTP4, including a new borough-wide car parking and air quality strategy, and the proposed work to progress this be approved;
- (2) That officers undertake a borough-wide parking survey and consultation to inform investigations into the potential measures set out in the report;
- (3) That the Acting Head of Transport and Streetcare, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, be authorised to consult on the draft LTP4;

- (4) That officers consult Wokingham Borough Council and West Berkshire Council on the proposed options;
- (5) That officers continue discussions with Oxfordshire and South Oxfordshire Councils about their potential housing sites located north of the Reading Borough boundary, a third river crossing, and associated measures to manage potential displacement of local traffic.

25. LIBRARY SERVICE: REPORT ON PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND CONFIRMATION OF SAVINGS

Further to Minute 70 of the meeting held on 19 February 2018, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out the feedback received during a public consultation on proposals for the future of the library service, and making recommendations for reductions in opening hours in order to deliver savings. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 - 2018 Consultation Report - analysis of responses
- Appendix 2 - Representations received during consultation and officer response
- Appendix 3 - Equality Impact Assessment

The report noted that the library service had been asked to deliver savings as part of a package of budget savings proposals. At the meeting held on 19 February 2018 the Committee had approved savings of £145,000 and had authorised public consultation on proposals to reduce the opening hours at six of Reading's seven libraries, in order to deliver the remainder of the savings required. A four-week public consultation had been carried out in February and March 2018, and a study of library usage over a four week period had also been undertaken to inform the development of the proposals.

The report explained that two options for reduced opening hours had been developed, both of which retained evening opening at all sites except Palmer Park, and made no changes to Mondays and Thursdays. Of the two options Option B was recommended, and the report set out a summary of the proposed changes and the factors that had been considered in developing this option. The total proposed hours of service opening per week would be 164 hours, which was a reduction of 35 hours (18%) against the current 199 hours. The proposed changes included Central and Caversham libraries being closed on Wednesdays, Whitley library being closed on Fridays and Palmer Park library being closed on Saturdays.

It was considered that under the proposed changes the library service would continue to meet the legal requirement for the service to be 'comprehensive and efficient', and would make more effective use of community buildings, reflect patterns of usage relative to local needs, and respond to the consultation on reducing opening hours while ensuring appropriate provision across communities. The recommended option could deliver annual savings of £72,000 if agreed, and would be fully implemented

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from October 2018, subject to staff consultation on a restructure to deliver the savings.

It was proposed and agreed at the meeting that the recommendations be amended to retain the current Saturday opening hours (10am - 1pm) at Palmer Park library.

Resolved -

- (1) That the outcome of the libraries consultation exercise be noted;**
- (2) That the recommended reduction in library opening hours to deliver savings, as detailed in the report, be noted;**
- (3) That Palmer Park library remain open on Saturday mornings between 10am and 1pm;**
- (4) That, with regret, the recommended reduction in library opening hours, as amended by (3) above, be approved subject to staff consultation;**
- (5) That staff be consulted on proposed changes to the library services and, subject to the outcome of such consultation, the Head of Neighbourhood Services be authorised to implement the recommended changes to the library service from October 2018.**

26. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY PROTOCOL AND PROPOSED CONSULTATION ON THE ALLOCATION OF 15% 'LOCAL' CONTRIBUTION

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval for a revised protocol in relation to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and setting out a list for public consultation of proposed projects to be funded by the 'local' element of CIL. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix A - Updated Community Infrastructure Levy Protocol
- Appendix B - Community Infrastructure Levy - Local Areas
- Appendix C - CIL 15% receipts by ward and zone to 31 March 2018
- Appendix D - List of preferred projects for consultation

The report explained that the Updated Community Infrastructure Levy Protocol had been amended in relation to the use of the 15% local CIL, with an additional line added stating that the funds would be normally allocated to small-scale projects of around £100k or less. Given the limited funds available, a focus on the delivery of a greater number of small-scale projects was considered appropriate, although it was noted that there might be exceptions should a larger piece of important infrastructure require investment. The types of projects that would be funded included open space improvements / small scale leisure, local highway improvement projects, air quality, community improvements, renewable energy infrastructure and economic support. A map of four 'local areas', attached to the report at Appendix B,

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would be used to ensure that CIL contributions collected were allocated within the area where the development providing the contribution had taken place.

The report stated that in accordance with the protocol a number of projects which could benefit from the 15% local CIL contributions had been identified, and these were listed by zone and ward in Appendix D to the report. Approval was sought to carry out an online consultation over the summer on the proposed projects, with the outcomes of the consultation and spend approval for the recommended projects to be considered at a future meeting. It was noted that other projects might come forward which were not currently listed, and that not all projects set out would receive funding. Unfunded projects would remain on the list, and additional projects would be added, to be considered for local CIL funding in future years.

Resolved -

- (1) That the updated protocol in relation to the use of Community Infrastructure Levy funds be approved;
- (2) That an online public consultation be carried out on the proposed use of 15% CIL contributions, based on projects listed in Appendix D to the report;
- (3) That following the completion of the public consultation a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee, to seek approval for the final allocation of funds and confirm spend approval for the projects listed.

27. THE BASE - AUTISTIC SPECTRUM CONDITION PROVISION AT BLESSED HUGH FARINGDON CATHOLIC SCHOOL

The Director of Children, Education & Early Help Services submitted a report setting out a proposal that the Autistic Spectrum Condition Provision at Blessed Hugh Faringdon School be redeveloped to provide 30 Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) pupil places.

The report noted that the local authority currently had insufficient places at special school settings for children who were on the autistic spectrum, and that a number of children were therefore placed in special schools outside the borough, including independent schools. In many cases, this resulted in higher placement and travel costs, and did not offer provision that was of any higher quality than could be provided in Reading.

The report proposed the provision of a new dedicated block (The Base) at Blessed Hugh Faringdon Roman Catholic Secondary School to consolidate and expand current provision and meet the demand for 30 specialist places for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Condition. In order to develop the new building it would be necessary to demolish an existing modular classroom block which dated from the 1990s and had exceeded its useful life, as well as the original caretaker's house. A mainstream

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classroom was incorporated into the caretaker's house and therefore a replacement classroom was also required as part of the new development.

The report explained that, following a formal design and build tender process to appoint a contractor in 2016, Extra Space Solutions had been appointed to develop the scheme. Due to the need to ensure protection for future SEND pupil placements should the school become an academy, it had been agreed to develop an agreement between the Council and the Diocese linked to placement of Reading SEND pupils. There had been a 12 month delay associated with establishing formal agreement with the School and Portsmouth Catholic diocese, and this meant that the overall project costs were higher than first estimated.

Resolved -

- (1) That spend approval be given in the sum of £1,973,684 to the project to develop a 60 pupil place block at the Blessed Hugh Faringdon School including new Autistic Spectrum Condition provision for 30 pupils;
- (2) That the Council enter into a contract with Extra Space solutions Ltd to develop the Autistic Spectrum Condition Provision at Blessed Hugh Faringdon School in the sum of £1,623,071;
- (3) That the demolition of the existing life-expired modular teaching units and caretaker house at Blessed Hugh Faringdon School be approved.

28. READING'S ARMED FORCES COVENANT AND ACTION PLAN - MONITORING REPORT

The Chief Executive submitted a report giving an annual update on the Armed Forces Covenant and progress against the associated action plan, which was attached to the report at Appendix A.

Resolved -

That the progress against the actions set out in the Armed Forces Covenant action plan be noted.

29. READING TRANSPORT LIMITED - APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval from the Committee, acting as shareholder of Reading Transport Ltd, for the appointment of Mr Robert Williams to the role of Chief Executive Officer of Reading Transport Ltd. A letter from the outgoing Chief Executive Martijn Gilbert advising the Council of the outcome of the recruitment process was attached to the report at Appendix A.

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The Chair of the Committee agreed that consideration of this item was a matter of urgency as defined in section 100B (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), and should be considered at this meeting because of the need for the shareholder to consider confirming the appointment to the post of Chief Executive of Reading Transport Limited as soon as possible, and should not be delayed until the next available meeting on 24 September 2018.

Resolved -

- (1) That the appointment of Mr Robert Williams to the role of Chief Executive Officer of Reading Transport Ltd, commencing on 1 October 2018, be approved;
- (2) That Martijn Gilbert be thanked for his work as Chief Executive of Reading Transport Ltd.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and was adjourned at 6.56pm until 7.01pm. The meeting closed at 9.13pm).