

## POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 17 NOVEMBER 2025

**Present:** Councillor Terry (Chair);  
Councillors Leng (Vice-Chair), Barnett-Ward, Eden, Ennis, Gittings, Griffith, Nikulina, Rowland, R Singh, Thompson, White and Yeo

### 36. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 37. PUBLIC PETITION

A petition was submitted by Alan Macro titled 'Petition against Reading extending its Boundary to include Theale'. Councillor Terry, Leader of the Council, responded to the petition.

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

### 38. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr Thompson	Remedicare Education	Cllr Eden

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

### 39. INTRODUCTION OF EMISSIONS BASED CHARGING

Further to Minute 52 of the meeting held on 20 January 2025, the Committee considered a report on proposals to introduce emissions-based charging (EBC) for on-street parking, resident and all other parking permits across the Borough following public consultation. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 - Responses to EBC on-street pay and display charges consultation
- Appendix 2 - Proposed EBC charging structure for on-street pay and display
- Appendix 3 - Responses from the EBC permit charges consultation
- Appendix 4 - Proposed EBC charging structure for permits
- Appendix 5 - Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix 6 - Consultation responses from the March 2025 consultation on permits and pay and display
- Appendix 7 - Emailed consultation responses from the March 2025 consultation on permits and pay and display

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The report explained that a broad informal consultation had been carried out in March 2025 covering multiple elements of the proposed EBC scheme, including resident parking permits, on-street pay and display parking and other permit types. This had been followed by a statutory consultation for the introduction of EBC for on-street Pay and Display only, carried out between 21 August and 12 September 2025, as these proposed changes would require amendments to existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). The proposed change to parking permit charges was a change to policy rather than to TROs, and as such there was no requirement to undertake a statutory consultation. A non-statutory consultation had been carried out between 25 September and 16 October 2025, to provide residents with information on the proposals and seek feedback before a final decision was made.

The report set out the results of the statutory consultation on the on-street pay and display element as well as the outcome of the residents permit consultation. It outlined the most common themes in the consultation responses and other factors to be taken into consideration. It was recommended to implement the proposed schemes, as an important part of a mixed approach to bring improvements to air quality over time to Reading.

At the meeting an updated version of Appendix 4 (Proposed EBC charging structure for permits) was tabled which corrected a number of rounding errors in the document circulated with the agenda.

### **Resolved –**

- (1) That the consultation responses in relation to emissions-based charges for on-street pay and display changes be noted, and that the proposed charges as set out in Appendix 2 be agreed;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Environmental and Commercial Services, be authorised to make permanent the resultant Traffic Regulation Order in relation to the on-street pay and display charges;**
- (3) That the consultation responses in relation to emissions-based charges for Permits be noted and that the proposed charges as set out in Appendix 4 (as tabled at the meeting) be agreed;**
- (4) That the Assistant Director of Environmental and Commercial services be authorised to implement the emissions-based charging structure for the list of Parking permits set out in Appendix 4;**
- (5) That respondents to the consultations be informed of the decisions of the Committee accordingly.**

### **40. PROPOSAL TO IMPLEMENT A BOROUGH WIDE PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER**

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Further to Minute 9 of the meeting of the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure (HNL) Committee held on 9 July 2025, the Committee considered a report setting out proposals to introduce a Borough Wide Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) following a public consultation. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix A - Consultation responses.
- Appendix B - Supporting evidence
- Appendix C - Equalities Impact Assessment
- Appendix D - Council response to consultation comments.
- Appendix E - Draft PSPO Order

The report noted that the HNL Committee had agreed that a public consultation be carried out on a proposal to introduce a Borough Wide PSPO which would provide an additional tool to tackle four key types of behaviour: Begging, Street Drinking, Anti-social use of E-bikes and E-scooters and Dog Control and Fouling. Local councils were responsible for making PSPOs, which was a power intended to address anti-social behaviour in a designated public space. PSPOs were intended to improve the quality of life in communities by restricting or prohibiting certain activities in a public area which had caused the community a detrimental impact.

The report set out the feedback from the public consultation that had been undertaken between 21 July 2025 and 7 September 2025, as well as concerns highlighted by respondents and the Council's responses to these concerns. Following the completion of the consultation and review of the evidence, an assessment had been made to ensure that the Council was satisfied that, on reasonable grounds the two required conditions to implement a PSPO were met: that activities being carried out within a public place had had a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality or it was likely they would, and that the effect, or likely effect, of these activities was, or was likely to be, of a persistent or continuing nature, such as to make the activities unreasonable.

The report summarised the implications of introducing a PSPO and outlined the arrangements for its implementation and monitoring. It was proposed to carry out a yearly review to review effectiveness and ensure there were no unintended consequences. A PSPO Implementation Project Board would manage the monitoring and measuring of the PSPO.

### **Resolved -**

- (1) That the outcome of the public consultation on the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) be noted;**
- (2) That the PSPO be introduced as set out in the report;**
- (3) That the Executive Director for Communities and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety, be authorised to finalise and publish the proposed conditions for the PSPO as set out in paragraph 3.8 of the report, subject to final legal drafting;**

- (4) That the consequences of breach as being a Fixed Penalty Notice of £100 as an alternative to prosecution which carried a maximum fine of £1000 be agreed;**
- (5) That the creation of a PSPO Implementation Project Board to oversee implementation and communications activity be noted.**

**41. DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT AND RECOVERY CONTRACT**

The Committee considered a report seeking approval to procure and award a new drug and alcohol treatment and recovery contract. An Equality Impact Assessment was attached to the report at Appendix A.

The report noted that the current Drugs and Alcohol treatment and recovery contract commissioned by the Council was scheduled to end in September 2026. Following discussions with neighbouring Berkshire local authorities, it was proposed to carry out a procurement exercise solely for Reading, commissioning a new contract of five years with options to extend for up to another five years.

The report explained that the government had announced its 2025-26 drug, alcohol, and recovery grant funding to support local authorities in enhancing treatment and recovery services. Several previously separate grants, including those for inpatient detoxification, rough sleeping drug and alcohol treatment, and supplemental substance misuse and recovery, had been consolidated into a single Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Improvement Grant (DATRIG). The announcement of DATRIG allocations beyond 2025/26 was expected in December 2025. Due to the late announcement of the allocations and the procurement timetable deadlines, it was proposed to design a specification and funding stream for a core offer and an enhanced offer until funding allocations had been confirmed. It was intended that the enhanced offer would include the Multiple Disadvantage Outreach Team Contract, which was currently funded by the DATRIG until September 2026. The Council would continue to commission inpatient detoxification and intensive prescribing services through subregional consortiums.

The report explained that the current drug and alcohol treatment and recovery service was delivered from 4 Waylen Street/ 127 Oxford Road a Council-owned property. It was the intention to continue to use this property and align it with the contract terms under a new lease, and the report sought authority to grant a lease to the successful provider. The long-term plan was for the successful provider to work with the Council to identify, secure, and renovate new premises that were fit for purpose. The existing lease arrangement would ensure continuity of service and provide necessary flexibility for both the provider and service users during the transition period.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That a new drug and alcohol treatment and recovery contract be procured to commence on 1 October 2026, for a long-term duration of up to 10 years;**

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- (2) That, if the Government announced its continuation beyond March 2026, the annual Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Improvement Grant be incorporated into the contract allowing flexibility to enhance service delivery in line with grant conditions, subject to continued government funding;
- (3) That the Executive Director of Communities & Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Education and Director of Public Health, be authorised to award the contract and any subsequent extensions following completion of the tender process;
- (4) That the Council enter a contract with the successful provider for an initial period of five years, with the option to extend for a further three years and then an additional two years (5+3+2), subject to performance and funding;
- (5) That the Assistant Director of Property & Asset Management, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Lead Councillor for Health, the Director of Finance, the Director of Public Health and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised to grant a new lease to the successful provider for the use of 4 Waylen Street, Reading, on terms aligned with the duration of the treatment contract, as set out in section 3.6 of the report as further required to protect the Councils interests.

### 42. REGULATORY SCHEMES MID-TERM ADJUSTMENT

The Committee considered a report seeking approval for a number of mid-year adjustments to fees and charges in respect of regulatory schemes operated by the Council. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Confidential Financial Annex – Fee proposal Mandatory and Discretionary Licensing (Exempt information under Paragraph 3)
- Fees comparison for Mandatory and Discretionary Licensing
- Current and Proposed Fees & Charges Building Regulations Scheme
- Current and Proposed Fees for Planning Pre-Application Advice and Planning Performance Agreements

The report noted that the Council currently operated a licensing scheme for larger houses in multiple occupation with five or more occupants, the national Mandatory Licensing Scheme. The phased implementation of a Discretionary Licensing Scheme consisting of a boroughwide Additional Licensing Scheme alongside the phased implementation of a Selective Licensing Scheme were currently in progress with an aim to launch in the current financial year. Licensing fees for both schemes had been reviewed to ensure they were operating on a cost recovery basis and it was proposed that fees be increased as set out in the report. The information was included in a confidential annex to the report due to commercial sensitivity in the tender process. To reflect the adjustments to the fees some minor amendments to the Housing Standards Enforcement Policy would also be required.

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The report explained that the Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010 provided legal minimum standards applicable to the majority of building work undertaken. The Building Control Team performed a monitoring and enforcement service to ensure these standards were met through assessing, commenting on and approving building plans and then inspecting these works as they progressed on site. Local Authority Building Control services produced a scheme of charges for work in connection with the Building Regulations. The fees charged had been reviewed to ensure costs were recovered and were in line with those charged by our neighbouring authorities and proposed increases were set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

Pre-application advice was an informal planning service offered by local planning authorities, which allowed individuals or developers to discuss their development proposals with planning officers before submitting a formal planning application. This process was designed to help improve the quality and success rate of applications. The Council's pre-app service had been reviewed against total costs and comparison with adjacent authorities, and it was recommended that fees for some categories of application be increased as set out in Appendix 4 to the report.

### **Resolved -**

- (1) That the mid-term adjustment to the Mandatory HMO Licensing fees be approved and applied to the Discretionary scheme when the tender process was complete and the scheme launched;**
- (2) That the amendments to the Housing Standards Enforcement Policy, removing reference to discounts in relation to licences issued under the Housing Act 2004 to reflect the revision of fees, be approved;**
- (3) That the revised Building Regulation charging scheme in line with The Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010 be approved as set out in Appendix 3;**
- (4) That the revised fees for the planning pre-application service be approved as set out in Appendix 4;**
- (5) That the revised fees become effective from 1 December 2025.**

### **43. 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 item 44 below as it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

### **44. ADELPHI HOUSE**

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The Committee considered a report seeking approval for a surrender and regrant of a new lease of Adelphi House, on the terms set out in the report.

### **Resolved -**

- (1) That the surrender and regrant of a new lease on the terms set out in paragraph 3.5 of the report be agreed, to ensure that the tenant remained in occupation of the property for a longer term at least until 23 June 2033 and to enable the Council to retain this asset for its income as an investment property in order to support the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy;**
- (2) That, if the tenant subsequently changed their negotiated position, the Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Director of Finance, Leader of the Council, the Lead Councillor for Planning & Assets and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised to agree revised terms that represented best value to the Council.**

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.59 pm)