

POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 16 MARCH 2015

Present: Councillor Lovelock (Chair)

Councillors Davies, Duveen, Eden, Gavin, Gittings, Hopper, Hoskin, Page and Skeats.

Apologies: Councillors Terry, White & Willis.

79. 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 80 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.

80. ERAPA AND RIVERSIDE NURSERY

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report advising the Committee of the current position relating to ERAPA, which was situated in Palmer Park, and Riverside Day Nursery (Riverside) which was located in New Town Primary School. The report sought approval to work with ERAPA and Riverside to provide additional accommodation at Palmer Park in order to provide a facility at the current ERAPA site which would be capable of accommodating both organisations.

Resolved -

- (1) That the proposed action set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report be approved;
- (2) That capital spend approval be given to the relocation of Riverside Nursery to Palmer Park, to be funded from the Primary School expansion programme contingency budget.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3).

81. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Minutes of the Mapledurham Management Committee meeting held on 2 December 2014 were received.

82. ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Andy Fry, Chief Fire Officer of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS), gave

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a presentation on the new policy direction and strategic priorities of RBFRS, highlighting areas where this could complement the Council's own priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. He also outlined some of the RBFRS community programmes including 'FireBreak' mentoring for young people with poor prospects, 'FireFit' to improve health and wellbeing and 'FireEd-up' mentoring in schools.

Andy and Trevor Ferguson, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, also answered questions from the Committee on subjects including planning for the future location of fire stations, the ongoing firefighter pension dispute and possible joint working with neighbouring fire services and other emergency services.

Resolved -

That Andy Fry be thanked for his presentation.

83. FORMER CENTRAL CLUB BUILDING - CONSULTATION AND REVIEW BY READING VOLUNTARY ACTION

Further to Minute 43 of the meeting held on 3 November 2014, the Managing Director submitted a report on a consultation and review by Reading Voluntary Action (RVA) about possible ways of bringing the former Central Club building back into community use. The review report was attached to the report at Appendix A.

The report set out the suggested first phase of the project, which would include commissioning an engineer's report to consider how the mural could be restored and maintained, carrying out a feasibility study to include consideration of how the mural could be incorporated in the proposal, developing a building brief for the centre that could be shared with potential developers, producing an outline business plan, and making a funding application that would support the development of a detailed business case for potential investors and funders.

The report explained that it was proposed to set up a Feasibility Steering Group to direct the first phase of the project and consider future governance and partnership arrangements. The proposed membership of the Group comprised representatives from each of the voluntary organisations who had expressed an interest (CultureMix, Readipop, African Caribbean Community Group, The Reading Arts & Culture Centre, The Reading Sustainability Centre, Reading Community Culture Group and Hogarth Productions); one RVA representative to provide ongoing support and advice on management and governance; two nominated members of the Council, who would ensure that appropriate advice and support was made available from Council officers; one representative from Reading University in their role as community leader, who would provide links to both the student population and academic expertise.

It was proposed at the meeting that the Cultural Partnership also be invited to nominate a representative.

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Resolved -

- (1) That the proposal to set up a Feasibility Steering Group be endorsed, with the addition of a representative from the Cultural Partnership;
- (2) That Councillors Page and James be appointed as the Council's representatives on the Steering Group;
- (3) That the Council meet any reasonable shortfall of funding for the feasibility study where external funding was not sufficient to meet the feasibility study, subject to the availability of funding in existing budgets.

84. KINGS MEADOW POOL

Further to Minute 21 of Policy Committee on 21 July 2014, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report to advise the Committee of objections received following the advertising of the disposal of open space at Kings Meadow, and seeking the Committee's view on whether the objections should be upheld. The terms for the disposal of the land had been agreed by the Committee on 21 July 2014 (Minute 21 refers).

The report noted that the planning application for the refurbishment of Kings Meadow Pool had been considered by the Planning Applications Committee at its meeting on 10 December 2014 and permission had been granted subject to completion of a S106 agreement (Minute 50(3) refers). Following the grant of planning consent the disposal of open space had been advertised in the local press: the advert related to the disposal of the open space to be leased for the car park as well as the refurbished swimming pool, which was shown on Plan A attached to the report. The area between the new car park and pool would remain in the ownership of the Council as open public space, but would be the subject of a licence to landscape, maintain and manage the area. The report summarised the main provisions included in the licence and the area covered by the licence was shown on Plan B attached to the report.

Five objections had been received and these were attached to the report at Appendix 1. Officer comments on the issues raised by the objectors were set out in the report.

Resolved -

That, having considered the objections received, the Council proceed with the disposal of the land shown on Plan A to Thames Lido, for a 250 year lease on the terms agreed by the Committee on 21 July 2014 (Minute 21 refers).

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85. DRAFT DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY 2015-2018

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report outlining the need for and scope of a draft Domestic Abuse Strategy 2015-18, and seeking approval for public consultation on the draft strategy, which was attached to the report at Appendix A.

The report explained that the draft Domestic Abuse Strategy 2015-18 outlined the focus for tackling domestic abuse over the next three years. Reading provided a good and improving level of support for victims of domestic abuse, and the draft strategy aimed to continue to improve the delivery of the offer for victims and their families, and deliver the best possible coordinated response to the challenge of domestic abuse. The strategy was multi agency in its approach and reflected the work of the Council, Thames Valley Police, Probation, local NHS and commissioned services as well as a number of other local partners.

The report explained that the draft strategy identified four key areas which would be prioritised over the next three years:

- Improving information, education and prevention;
- Improving identification and disclosures of domestic abuse, and ensuring an appropriate immediate response;
- Support to move from victim to survivor;
- Improved understanding of the challenges in our town.

These priorities would be overseen by the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group, which was a delivery group of the Community Safety Partnership.

It was proposed to launch a public consultation on the draft strategy in order to seek the views of current service users and partners and ensure that these were reflected in the strategy. A plan for public consultation from 17 March to 18 May 2015 was attached to the report at Appendix B. It was intended to submit the final draft of the strategy for approval to the 20 July 2015 meeting of the Committee.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Committee endorse the launch of a public consultation on Reading's Draft Domestic Abuse Strategy;
- (2) That following the consultation period, a final draft of the strategy be submitted to the Committee for approval.

86. PROPOSED FOSTER CARER ALLOWANCES AND POST ORDER SUPPORT PAYMENTS SCHEDULE

Further to Minute 36 of the meeting of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education (ACE) Committee held on 4 March 2015, the Director of Children,

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Education & Early Help Services submitted a report seeking approval of the new Foster Carer Allowances and the Post Order Support Payments Schedule and the associated Means Testing process, and recommending that the short breaks, respite care and day care hourly rates be aligned with the living wage as part of the Ethical Care Charter. The proposals had been recommended by the ACE Committee at its meeting on 4 March 2015 (Minute 36 refers).

The report explained that all new fostering, new supported lodgings and new Post Order Support (Staying Put arrangements) placement allowances for children and young people would be under the new scheme from 1 April 2015. Short breaks, respite care and day care payments would be aligned to the living wage as part of the Ethical Care Charter from 1 April 2015. To reduce impact on existing carers or children and young people in placement, it was proposed that where an existing child was receiving more fostering allowance or day care rate than the proposed new rate, those placements would have preserved rates of allowance until the existing placement ends, and existing Post Order Support packages would continue under the arrangements agreed at the time of the order. The Post Order Support payment arrangements in the new schedule were intended to promote the full range of permanency options for children and young people.

Attached to the report at Appendix A was a schedule showing the proposed new rates and information on the financial impact. An addendum to the report also provided clarification on the standard allowance and backdated payments to carers for Staying Put arrangements.

Resolved -

- (1) That the proposed Foster Carer Allowances and Post Order Support Payments Schedule from 1 April 2015 be approved;
- (2) That the short breaks, respite care and day care hourly rates be aligned with the Living Wage, as part of the Ethical Care Charter from the date of implementation.

87. BROADBAND CONNECTION VOUCHER SCHEME

The Managing Director submitted a report providing an overview of the Council's role in implementing the Broadband Connection Voucher Scheme and seeking approval to administer the scheme in Reading.

The report noted that the Broadband Connection Vouchers Scheme was a government-funded project to improve the internet connectivity of Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The scheme, led by Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) and the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), provided Broadband Vouchers to SMEs to cover the installation costs of a faster and better broadband service.

The report explained that the Council had been invited to participate in Phase 2 of

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the scheme, starting on 1 April 2015, which would target £40m of capital grant funding to SMEs in 22 additional cities around the UK. The extension of the voucher scheme to Reading would provide a further source of funding potentially to improve superfast broadband infrastructure across the borough. Reading was the only town in Berkshire currently invited to participate in the scheme, but BDUK and DCMS were keen to explore the possibility of extending the scope wider into Berkshire and further discussions were taking place with Thames Valley LEP and BDUK to determine the final scope and participation.

Resolved -

That the Council administer the Broadband Connection Voucher Scheme in Reading to support SMEs in improving their internet connectivity.

88. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS UPDATE

The Electoral Registration and Returning Officer submitted a report providing an update on the results of the 2014/15 annual canvass, the preparations and arrangements for the 2015 UK Parliamentary and Local Borough Elections to be held on Thursday 7 May 2015, and the position regarding the development of Individual Electoral Registration.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That the Electoral Registration team be thanked for their work on Individual Electoral Registration and preparations for the 2015 elections.**

89. BUDGET MONITORING

The Head of Finance submitted a report setting out the result of the detailed budget monitoring exercise undertaken for 2014/15, based mainly on the position to the end of January 2015. The results of the Directorate budget monitoring exercises were attached to the report at Appendix 1A (Children, Education & Early Help Services/Adult Care & Health Services), Appendix 1B (Environment & Neighbourhood Services), Appendix 1C (Corporate Support Services) and the Housing Revenue Account at Appendix 1D.

Resolved -

That the budget position for 2014/15, as set out in the report, be noted.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 8.15pm).