

POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 13 FEBRUARY 2017

Present: Councillor Lovelock (Chair)

Councillors Davies, Duveen, Eden, Gavin, Gittings, Hoskin, Jones, Page, Skeats, Stevens, Terry and White.

Apologies: Councillor Hopper.

84. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

85. QUESTIONS

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

	Questioner	Subject	Reply
1.	Roger Lightfoot	Arthur Hill Pool	Councillor Gittings
2.	Phil Vaughan	Arthur Hill Pool	Councillor Gittings
3.	Tom Lake	New Swimming Pools	Councillor Gittings

Questions on the following matters were submitted by councillors:

	Questioner	Subject	Reply
1.	Councillor White	Children's Services Agency Social Workers Overspend	Councillor Gavin

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

86. BUDGET 2017-2020

The Corporate Management Team submitted a report setting out the General Fund budget and indicative capital programme for the Council covering the forecast capital and revenue expenditure and resources for 2017/18, and explaining how the 2016/17 budget overspend would be financed. The Committee was asked to make a recommendation to the full Council meeting to be held on 21 February 2017.

The report set out the financial position of the Council, the context for service delivery, national and local financial matters affecting the Council's services for residents and businesses, proposals about how to address these issues, revenue budgets for service delivery, pressures, savings and income generating solutions and proposed fees and charges, the capital programme 2017/20 (which included updates for 2016/17 to reflect recent decisions and progress), proposals for the Housing Revenue Account, the risks associated with the financial position in the short and medium term, and the Equality Impact Assessment of the overall budget.

The following documents were attached to the report:

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Appendix 1a)	Savings and income proposals for 2017/18 agreed in previous years
Appendix 1b)	Savings and income proposals for 2017/18 agree at Policy Committee during 2016/17
Appendix 1c)	Additional savings proposals for 2017-20
Appendix 2)	Calculation of Council Tax
Appendix 3)	Fees and Charges Summary Statement
Appendix 4)	Robustness of Budget Estimates & Adequacy of Balances 2017-18 (Statutory Advice)
Appendix 5)	Treasury Management Strategy Statement
Appendix 6)	General Fund and Summary Cost Centre Budget
Appendix 7)	Capital Programme
Appendix 8)	CIL protocol
Appendix 9)	Dedicated Schools Grant
Appendix 10)	HRA Budget 2017/18

Recommended -

- (1) That the following, as set out in the report by the Interim Managing Director and Interim Director of Finance and in the Budget Book, noting the Equality Impact Assessment, be approved:
 - a) The Council's General Fund Budget for the period 2017/20 (Appendix 6);
 - b) The specific revenue estimates for 2017/20;
 - c) The capital programme for the period 2017-20 including the 2016/17 update (Appendix 7);
- (2) That it be noted that on 24 January 2017 the Council calculated the Council Tax Base 2017/18 for the whole Council area as 53671 [item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")];
- (3) That the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2017/18 be calculated as £1,490.56;
- (4) That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2017/18 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
 - (a) £413,593,113, being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act;
 - (b) £333,593,000, being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act;

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- (c) £80,000,113, being the amount by which the aggregate at 4(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 4(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B(4) of the Act);
- d) £1,490.56 being the amount at 4(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (2 above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year;
- e) Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
993.71	1159.32	1324.94	1490.56	1821.80	2153.03	2484.27	2981.12

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at 4(d) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands;

- (5) That it be noted that for the year 2017/18 the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) for the Thames Valley had stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
113.52	132.44	151.36	170.28	208.12	245.96	283.80	340.56

- (6) That it be noted that for the year 2017/18 Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service had stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

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A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
41.65	48.60	55.55	62.49	76.37	90.26	104.14	124.98

- (7) That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 4(d), 5 and 6 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2017/18 for each of the categories of dwelling shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1148.88	1340.36	1531.85	1723.33	2106.29	2489.25	2872.21	3446.66

- (8) That the savings and income proposals outlined in Appendices 1a and 1b that had been approved at earlier meetings of Policy Committee be noted, and officers be authorised to implement the additional savings proposals outlined in Appendix 1c subject to any necessary consultation and equality impact assessments being undertaken and the outcomes being reported back for consideration by the relevant committee;
- (9) That, after considering the statutory advice of the Interim Finance Director in accordance with S25 of the Local Government Act 2003 on the robustness of the budget adequacy of financial reserves in Appendix 4, summarised in section 5 of the report, the minimum level of General Fund balance to be maintained over the year to 31 March 2018 be set at £5m (Appendix 4);
- (10) That, in the event that the Council decide to set a General Fund balance which was less than that advised by the Interim Director of Finance then the reasons for this difference be recorded in the Minutes of the Council Meeting;
- (11) That the arrangements set out in paragraphs 4.25 to 4.33 in connection with capital receipts, the Council's Equal Pay Provision and the Minimum Revenue Provision to balance the 2016/17 financial position and proposed 2017/18 budget be approved, and the Director of Finance be authorised, in consultation with the Leader and Chairman of Audit & Governance Committee, to determine the final detailed arrangements for 2016/17 in closing the accounts;
- (12) That the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy and the

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Prudential Indicators set out in Appendix 5, and the revised MRP Statement to apply for 2017/18 set out in Annex D of the strategy, be approved;

- (13) That the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) protocol as set out in Appendix 8 be approved, but that it be submitted for further detailed consideration to a meeting of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee or Policy Committee;
- (14) That the changes to Fees and Charges outlined in Appendix 3 of the report, and set out in detail on the Council's website be approved, and officers authorised to take the action necessary to implement these changes;
- (15) That the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2017/18 set out in Appendix 10 be approved, and the outcome of the consultation with tenant representatives be noted, and that the Head of Housing & Neighbourhoods be authorised to implement the revised rent policy to re-let vacant HRA housing at target (formula) rent on all relets with a tenancy commencement date of 3 April 2017 or later, as explained in paragraphs 4.41 to 4.45 of the report;
- (16) That a 2.0% garage rent increase be approved, in line with normal rent policy. (CPI + 1%).

87. PROPOSED SAVING TO HOMELESSNESS PATHWAYS SERVICES

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking authorisation to undertake a public consultation on a proposed saving for all Homelessness Support services.

The report explained that the Council commissioned a range of Homelessness Support services, including Homelessness Pathway accommodation to meet the needs of vulnerable single homeless residents and to support the reduction of rough sleeping numbers in the Borough, an Outreach service for rough sleeping in Reading, and a Floating Support service to prevent homelessness. Interim and extended contracts for these services would end between March and June 2018.

A review of Homelessness Support services had been recently undertaken by officers, which would lead to a full competitive tender exercise and implementation of new contracts from 1 April 2018. As part of this process, it was proposed that all Homelessness Support services be reconfigured and a more flexible model of support service adopted to better meet the needs of individuals, in line with current best practice, and to allow savings to be achieved which were consistent with the Council's legal duties. In the context of the Council's financial position, options for reducing spend in this area had been considered, and a saving of £244,550 to reduce the total commissioning budget for Homelessness Support services from £1.49m to £1.25m was proposed.

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Resolved -

That officers be authorised to undertake public consultation on proposals to reconfigure Homelessness Support services in Reading as set out in Section 6 of this report to deliver a target saving in the region of £245,000.

88. CONTRACT AWARD - LOWFIELD ROAD TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PROJECT, CONSTRUCTION OF 28 TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION UNITS AT LAND OFF LOWFIELD ROAD IN CAVERSHAM

Further to Minute 15 of the meeting of the Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee on 18 November 2015, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval for the award of a contract for the provision of 28 Temporary Accommodation units at land off Lowfield Road in Caversham, to provide accommodation for those families currently in bed and breakfast accommodation.

The report explained that expressions of interest had been sought against a specification of the Council's requirements, and six tenders had been received, but that the Council was unable to accept any of the tenders on the grounds that the responses significantly exceeded the available budget, or were not fully compliant with the requirement for a steel construction modular unit. Having tendered unsuccessfully, it was proposed to negotiate a contract directly with a potential provider on the basis that the contract was urgently required and value for money was more likely to be obtainable by way of direct negotiation with the potential supplier or contractors than carrying out another tender process.

The report explained that Morris and Blunt Ltd (MBL), who were currently working on the refurbishment of flats at Hexham Road, had been identified as a potential provider. MBL had completed two phases of Hexham Road and were about to start a third, each contract's value was similar to the Lowfield Road requirement, and in addition they were experienced in similar development projects. To establish a link to a competitively tendered project, and therefore value for money, MBL had agreed to use rates already accepted on the Hexham Road project. Scheme completion was now anticipated by late summer, subject to the proposal from the intended contractor.

Resolved -

That Morris & Blunt Limited be awarded a contract for the supply and installation of 28 Temporary Accommodation units and associated groundworks, landscaping and infrastructure at land off Lowfield Road in Caversham.

89. CONTRACT AWARD - MANAGED STORE FACILITY FOR THE SUPPLY OF CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval for the award of a contract for the provision of a Managed Store Facility for

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the Supply of Construction Materials following a competitive tendering exercise. This largely related to the supply of construction materials to Housing Property Services trades staff for the repair and maintenance of the Council's Housing Stock.

The report explained that the Housing Property Service teams managed approximately 5,600 Council properties throughout the Borough. The Service employed approximately 55 trades operatives who carried out a range of repairs and maintenance works to the Council Housing stock. The contract for procurement of constructions materials required for these works had come to an end, and a re-tender exercise had been carried out. The evaluation of the tenders was complete and the report sought authority to award the contract to the successful tenderer.

Resolved -

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services be authorised, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, the Head of Finance and the Head of Legal & Democratic Services, to award a contract to Travis Perkins Trading Company Limited for the provision of a Managed Store Facility for the Supply of Construction Materials for an initial period of 5 years with an option to extend for two further consecutive periods each of 2 years in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

90. REVIEW OF CARE AND SUPPORT CHARGING AND FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK - INFORMATION REPORT

The Director of Adult Care and Health Services submitted a report setting out information on a review of the Charging and Financial Assessment Framework for Adult Care and Support.

The report stated that the Council had consulted on and implemented a Charging and Financial Assessment Framework for Adult Care and Support as part of implementing the Care Act 2014 in Reading. A review of the Framework had been carried out as part of the Adult Social Care Transformation programme, and the report summarised proposed changes including proposals that had gone out to public consultation regarding Removing allowances and disregards from the Financial Assessment, Assistive Technologies and Telecare, Respite breaks/short stays in registered care homes, and Meals and refreshments provided at council day centres.

The report explained that the outcome of the consultation and the recommended amendments to the Framework would be submitted to the meeting of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee on 20 March 2017, for implementation from 1 April 2017. The proposed changes, if agreed and fully realised, would result in estimated additional annual income of £630,336.

Resolved -

That the report be noted and it be noted that the meeting of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee on 20 March

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2017 would make a final decision on the Charging and Financial Assessment Framework for Adult Care and Support in the light of the outcome of the consultation.

91. BUDGET SAVING PROPOSAL - CONSULTATION RESULTS FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE READYBIKE SUBSIDY

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval to carry out a procurement process to identify a contractor to operate the Readybike scheme without a Council subsidy, in line with a budget savings proposal agreed by the Committee on 18 July 2016 (Minute 21 refers).

The report summarised the responses to a public consultation on the proposal to remove subsidy from the Readybike scheme, and an Equality Impact Assessment on the proposal was attached at Appendix 1. The report explained that the Council had invited expressions of interest to assess the level of interest from contractors to operate and maintain the Readybike scheme with no financial support from the Council. The invitation had specified that the contractor would be expected to utilise existing cycle hire infrastructure and to operate ReadyBike as a self-financing scheme funded by commercial income or alternative funding sources, such as but not limited to scheme sponsorship and advertising. Two expressions of interest had been received.

The report stated that the existing contract to operate the scheme had a six month notice period, and it was therefore recommended that notice be given to the current contractor and that a full procurement exercise be undertaken during the notice period to secure a suitable contractor to operate the scheme beyond the existing contract. If a suitable contractor could not be identified to operate the scheme commercially, ReadyBike would cease to operate beyond summer 2017.

Resolved -

- (1) That notice be given on the current contract for the operation of the ReadyBike cycle hire scheme;
- (2) That a full procurement process be undertaken to identify a suitable contractor to operate the scheme commercially without a Council subsidy, in line with the previously agreed budget saving proposal;
- (3) That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services be authorised, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and the Head of Finance to enter into contract for the operation of the Readybike scheme if a suitable contractor could be identified.

92. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS 2018/19

The Director of Education, Children And Early Help Services submitted a report

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asking the Committee to determine the admissions arrangements for community primary schools in Reading for the school year beginning in September 2018, and the coordinated schemes for primary and secondary schools. The report also sought approval for the proposed Relevant Area for admission policy consultations.

The report explained that the Admission Policy for Community Primary, Infant and Junior Schools 2018-2019, attached to the report at Annex A, had no significant changes from the agreed proposals for 2017/18. The Primary School Co-ordinated scheme, attached to the report at Annex B (with catchment area maps at Annex C) and the Secondary School Co-ordinated scheme, attached at Annex D, had been changed to reflect appropriate dates.

The report noted that the current admission policy had been adapted for the 2016 entry to community schools, and that it had not yet been possible to collate meaningful comparable data on the impact of changes, as the policy had only been through one complete admissions round. The School Admissions Forum had approved a decision not to consult on the admissions policies for 2018/19 entry, and this complied with the School Admissions Code (2014) as there were no significant changes to the admissions policy.

The Relevant area, attached to the report at Annex E, outlined the organisations that must be consulted on admissions arrangements by all schools in Reading. The arrangements complied with a statutory Code on School Admissions 2014.

Resolved -

- (1) That the scheme attached at Annexes A, B and C be determined as the admissions arrangements for community schools in Reading and the local arrangements for complying with the national co-ordinated primary school admission procedures for the allocation of primary school places for residents of Reading Borough;
- (2) That the scheme attached at Annex D be determined as the local arrangements for complying with the national coordinated secondary admissions procedure for the allocation of secondary school places for residents of Reading Borough;
- (3) That the relevant area attached in Annex E, setting out the organisations that must be consulted on admissions policy, be approved.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 7.25pm).