

Our Ref: hnl/agenda
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To: Councillor James (Chair);
Councillors Debs Absolom, Davies, Dennis,
Kelly Edwards, Ennis, Grashoff, Hacker,
McDonald, McGonigle, O'Connell, Steele,
Terry, Tickner and Rose Williams.

27 June 2017

Your contact is: Amy Bryan - Committee Services

**NOTICE OF MEETING - HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE -
5 JULY 2017**

A meeting of the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee will be held on **Wednesday 5 July 2017 at 6.30pm** in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading.

AGENDA

	WARDS AFFECTED	PAGE NO
1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the items for consideration.		-
2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 MARCH 2017		1
3. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES Community Safety Partnership - 2 February 2017 and 27 April 2017		9
4. PETITIONS Petitions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been received by Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.		-

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5.	QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS		-
	Questions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been submitted in writing and received by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.		
6.	DECISION BOOK REFERENCES		-
	To consider any requests received by the Monitoring Officer pursuant to Standing Order 42, for consideration of matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been the subject of Decision Book reports.		
7.	READING CARNIVAL	BOROUGHWIDE	-
	To receive a presentation on the 2017 Reading Carnival.		
8.	WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE CHANGES AND CHARGABLE GREEN WASTE COLLECTION	BOROUGHWIDE	18
	This report updates the Committee on the introduction of the revised waste collection service standard, the rescheduled collection rounds and the introduction of the chargeable green waste service.		
9.	PEER REVIEW OF CULTURAL SERVICES	BOROUGHWIDE	22
	This report informs the Committee of the outcome of the Peer Review of Cultural Services, which took place in February 2017.		
10.	GREAT PLACE SCHEME: 'READING-ON-THAMES'	BOROUGHWIDE	39
	This report informs the Committee of the Council's successful bid for the Great Place Scheme, which is a new joint funding initiative by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England and Historic England.		
11.	USE OF S106 AND RIGHT TO BUY RECEIPTS TO INCREASE THE PROVISION OF NEW AFFORDABLE HOMES	BOROUGHWIDE	51
	This report provides the Committee with an update on the Local Authority New Build programme and details proposals and funding arrangements for the next phase of the programme.		

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**HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
15 MARCH 2017**

Present: Councillor James (Chair);
Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Davies, Dennis, Kelly Edwards (for items 26 - 36), Gittings, Grashoff (for items 27 - 36), McDonald, McGonigle, O'Connell (for items 24 - 32 and 36), Steele, Terry, Tickner and Rose Williams.

24. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of 16 November 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were submitted:

- Community Safety Partnership - 10 November 2016.

Resolved - That the Minutes be received.

26. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

A Question on the following matter was submitted, and answered by the Lead Councillor:

Questioner	Subject
Councillor McGonigle	Zero Carbon Homes Policy

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

27. COMMUNITY ALCOHOL PARTNERSHIP (CAP) UPDATE

Tessa Brunsdon, Community Alcohol Partnership Officer, gave a presentation on the work of the Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP).

Reading's CAP was piloted by Trading Standards in two areas which ran from 2011. CAP was an alcohol industry funded initiative receiving funding from both alcohol industry retailers and producers although individual CAP schemes might also receive funding from a range of other sources. In 2014 Public Health started to fund the role and supported Trading Standards to make it the first borough wide partnership of its kind. The vision of the CAP was to shape a society in which communities worked in partnership to ensure that children did not drink alcohol and where all young people learnt to develop responsible attitudes to drinking as they became adults. The mission of the CAP was to reduce alcohol harm in local communities with a primary focus on tackling underage drinking. This would be achieved via a partnership approach with a focus on education, enforcement and public perception.

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Tessa talked about the work the CAP, which included education, enforcement, public perception, communication, diversionary activities and evaluation. Part of the work with retailers had included Challenge 25 test purchasing all retailers in 2014 and there had been a 72% failure rate. When tested again in 2017 the failure rate had fallen to 17%. Tessa also talked about the work the CAP had done with schools, which included alcohol awareness sessions, and through diversionary activities, which had included football tournaments and create a comic sessions would be held in the school holidays.

Tessa reported that she had been the joint winner of the South East CAP Community Champion Award in 2016. The award had also been won by Tessa's predecessor Matthew Knight in 2015.

Resolved - That Tessa Brunsden be thanked for her presentation.

28. READING FESTIVAL 2016 DEBRIEF

James Crosbie, Regulatory Services Manager, gave a presentation on the 2016 Reading Festival.

The campsites had opened on Wednesday 24 August and by 7pm on Thursday 25 August 65,000 people were on the site.

James reported that 50 complaints had been received about the festival, which was an increase on 2015. 25 of the complaints related to noise (some from repeat complainants). There had been some anomalies in 2016 as some of the noise complaints had been received from 15 miles away in Oxfordshire so for 2017 the team would try to plan differently for low frequency noise. Complaints had also been received about river taxis, street trading on Thames promenade and boat moorings. All of these areas were being considered in the planning for the 2017 festival.

The weather had been hot during the 2016 festival and advice had been given from the public health team regarding the safety of those attending the festival and Festival Republic had implemented plans such as providing water for those in queues.

In 2016 egress at the site had changed as there had been more day attendees than in previous years, which meant more people had been leaving the site each evening. The new egress plan had included closing part of Richfield Avenue for about an hour each evening which had meant pedestrians could walk down road safely to get to pick up and drop off sites. It was recognised that more promotion of the Hills Meadow drop off/pick up site was needed.

James reported that something that had been particularly effective in 2016 had been a multi-agency team (an officer from Festival Republic, a police officer, a licensing and a trading standards officer) to deal with touting, pedalling and street trading. This team had given 35 verbal warnings and issued three fixed penalty notices. It had been noted that having street traders on both sides of Richfield Avenue had caused some issues and this would be reviewed for the 2017 festival. Off-site traders had been subject to test purchases over the festival weekend and two traders had failed.

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Increased air pollution particulates had been recorded during the 2016 festival. This was in some part due to the weather, which was still and dry so pollution was sitting locally especially after the traffic congestion. It was noted that work was needed to reduce bonfires on site which contributed to the air pollution.

Noel Painting, Festival Republic, attended the meeting.

Resolved - That James Crosbie be thanked for his presentation.

29. RE3 COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Anna Fowler, re3 Marketing and Communications Officer, gave a presentation on some of re3's current marketing and communications campaigns. Anna explained that re3 was a waste management partnership between Bracknell Forest, Reading and Wokingham Councils.

Re3 was trying to help residents waste less and recycle more through a variety of communication methods. There had been a recent poster campaign, officers had given visits, talks and workshops, press releases were issued as well as information given through social media. Residents asked the same questions in all three authority areas so re3 had produced myth buster information sheets which were available on the re3 website www.re3.org.uk.

Anna talked about a current campaign re3 was running about preventing food waste 'Love Food Hate Waste' and showed a film on some recent workshops that had been held.

Resolved - That Anna Fowler be thanked for her presentation.

30. WASTE MINIMISATION STRATEGY 2017 - YEAR 2 UPDATE

Further to Minute 19 of the previous meeting, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which provided an update on the progress achieved in the first two years of the Waste Minimisation Strategy 2015-2020 Action Plan. The Council had adopted the Waste Minimisation Strategy 2015 - 2020 in March 2015 demonstrating its commitment to promoting waste minimisation through reuse, recycling and composting, to minimise disposal and to achieving the EU Directive target recycling rate of 50% by 2020. Reading currently sent 24.7% of its municipal waste to landfill with 75.3% being recycled, composted or sent for Energy from Waste. The current recycling rate for Reading was 32.6% compared to the national rate of 43.9%. The year one and two updated Action Plan was attached to the report at Appendix A. The revised Council strategy and appendices was attached to the report at Appendix B.

The report stated that the re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board had adopted a new strategy in 2016/17 in response to changes in government funding as a result of the central government austerity programme and the requirement of the Revised EU Waste Framework Directive (2008) which set the 50% target for reuse and recycling to be reached by 2020. The Council and re3 strategies had been aligned to focus on the two fundamental aims to reduce the net cost of waste and to achieve the 50% re-use and recycling target by 2020.

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The report stated that the progress towards meeting the objectives set out in the action plan for the first two years of the waste minimisation strategy 2015-2020 was summarised in Appendix A.

Resolved -

- (1) That the progress to date of the Waste Minimisation Strategy Action Plan be noted;
- (2) That the alignment of the re3 and RBC Waste Minimisation Strategies be noted and endorsed;
- (3) That a half yearly update report be submitted to the Committee in November 2017 and the third annual progress report be submitted to the Committee in March 2018;
- (4) That the Head of Transportation and Streetcare, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods, be granted delegated authority to make amendments to the action plan as required.

31. PROGRAMME OF WORKS TO COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK 2017-18

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out the key elements for delivery of the Housing Property Service during the next year and highlighting the achievements over the past financial year. The Housing Property Service managed the day to day repairs, planned maintenance and void repair works to approximately 5,600 Council properties which were let throughout the Borough. Illustrations of programmes of work and the impact they had on the tenants and communities was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and the proposed work programme for 2017-18 was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The report stated that in addition to carrying out day to day to day repairs and a cyclical maintenance programme the Housing Property Services Team achieved the following in 2016-17:

- Completed the refurbishment of 2-54 Bamburgh Close as part of the Hexham Road Refurbishment Project of five blocks of flats and environs.
- Took on the responsibility for minor and major disabled adaptations work in the Borough (excluding major private sector works) after Aster Living's contract came to an end. Since June 2016, the team had delivered 33 major and 193 minor adaptations to the Council's Housing stock and 574 minor adaptations to private dwellings.
- Obtained planning permission to build 28 units of temporary accommodation at Lowfield Road.
- Awarded accreditation from Safecontractor for its commitment to achieving excellence in health and safety. Safecontractor was a leading third party accreditation scheme which recognised very high standards in health and safety management amongst UK contractors.

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The report stated that the budget for the works programme for 2017-18 was £15,146,000. Key elements for delivery included:

- Refurbishment of Kielder Court flats - the continuation of a flagship programme to greatly improve the four storey block properties at Hexham Road Estate. This affected 135 flats in total and each year work was carried out on a block of 27 flats. Following completion of works at Kielder Court, the remaining two of the five blocks would be refurbished over the following two years.
- Installation of gas central heating as a replacement for storage heating at the 8 storey blocks at Granville Road.
- Commencing work to replace the water mains at the Wensley Road high rise flats. The programme would take 3 years and will cost circa £1.8 million in total.

Work would continue with the kitchen and bathroom replacement programme with an extended colour range for kitchen doors and an enhanced specification for bathrooms which included over bath showers.

Resolved - That the programme of planned work for Council Housing Stock for 2017-18 set out in Appendix 2, be approved and that the Head of Housing and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the relevant Lead Councillor, be granted delegated authority to make minor amendments during the course of the year to the planned programme of works.

32. 'FIXING OUR BROKEN HOUSING MARKET' - HOUSING WHITE PAPER, FEBRUARY 2017

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Committee of the Housing White Paper, entitled 'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market', which was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in February 2017. The White Paper explained how the government intended to provide lasting reform that would get more homes build now and for years to come. It set out the support the Government would provide to enhance the capacity of local authorities and industry to build these new homes.

The report briefly summarised the content of the White Paper and considered some of the possible implications for housing development and specifically for the Council. The Housing White Paper covered a wide range of proposals. It detailed the initiatives and proposals under four main headings: Step 1 Planning for the right homes in the right places; Step 2 Building homes faster; Step 3 Diversifying the market; and Step 4 Helping people now. The content of the Executive Summary List of Proposals from the White Paper was attached to the report at Appendix 1. The main points of the White Paper as they related to the Council's Planning function were summarised and attached to the report at Appendix 2 and the Government's revised definition of affordable housing was attached to the report at Appendix 3.

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The report stated that the Government intended to consult on elements of the White Paper and on linked documents that had been published at the same time, such as a consultation document Build to Rent proposals. It was intended that the Council would submit a response to the consultation to cover both the questions posed and the wider implications of the paper.

Resolved - That the contents of the White Paper published by the DCLG in February 2017 and the implications for the Council be noted.

33. READING OLD CEMETERY GATE

The Managing Director submitted a report responding to a petition, which had been submitted to the Committee on 18 March 2015 (Minute 21 refers). The petition had requested the access gate on the Wokingham Road to the Reading Old Cemetery to be opened to allow local residents the opportunity to walk through the cemetery.

The report stated that officers had investigated a number of options if the gate were to be opened, all of which required a financial commitment given the state of the footpaths. Appended to the report was a plan of the cemetery showing two possible options to upgrade the footpaths within the Old Reading Cemetery to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and enable the Cemetery to be open for general public use. As a range of remedial work and investment would be needed to facilitate the opening of the rear gates to the Cemetery it was recommended that the gate should remain closed. The report also detailed other considerations that had been taken into account when recommending that the gate remain closed.

Resolved - That, having taken into consideration the petition to open the access gate on the Wokingham Road to Reading Old Cemetery to allow local residents the opportunity to walk through the cemetery, the request be declined and the access gate remain closed for the reasons specified in section 4 of the report.

34. DEMOUNTABLE POOL AT RIVERMEAD LEISURE COMPLEX

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking the Committee's endorsement of the actions taken to date regarding the demountable pool at Rivermead Leisure Complex and the intention to enter into a Development Agreement for Lease and a Lease with Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) to enable the installation and operation of a demountable swimming pool. The report also sought detailed scheme approval for the capital costs of constructing the demountable pool.

The report stated that at Policy Committee on 30 November 2015 (Minute 53 refers) the proposal to develop a demountable swimming pool at Rivermead was approved. GLL had procured a preferred contractor who had developed a costed design proposal and were looking to finalise the contract sum and enter into a contract shortly. Construction work aimed to start on site early May and complete by December ready for opening in January 2018. The total project value was circa £2.4m including all build costs and professional fees. This was a higher cost than the £1.8m estimated in the report to Policy Committee in November 2015 because unfavourable ground

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conditions had required a specific piling solution and as a consequence a more permanent building structure, which increased the requirements for BREEAM compliance. This increased the professional fees and build costs. The building housing the demountable pool would be a permanent structure and had an expected lifespan well beyond the current anticipate use. Subject to appropriate permissions it might subsequently be used for alternative activities should the Council wish and the building would therefore potentially have future value beyond the use as a swimming pool. It was proposed that the Council enter into a Development Agreement for Lease and a Lease with GLL to enable the installation and operation of a demountable swimming pool extension incorporating a permanent building structure with a view to enabling a planned closure of Central Pool in December 2017.

Resolved -

- (1) That the intention to enter into a Development Agreement for Lease and a Lease with Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) to enable the installation and operation of a demountable swimming pool at Rivermead be noted and endorsed;
- (2) That scheme approval for the demountable pool of up to £2.4m of capital expenditure, as per the approved capital programme, be given.

35. THE CULTURAL EDUCATION PARTNERHSIP

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that provided an update on progress in establishing a Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) for Reading in order to ensure access to high quality arts and cultural education for all child and young people, especially those young people who otherwise might not have access to such opportunities. Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was the CEP's Action Plan September 2016 - August 2019. This document included membership of the Partnership, terms of reference, information on Artsmark and Arts Award (accreditation schemes supported by ACE for the cultural activities of schools and individual young people respectively) and summary feedback from the initial consultation with young people that had taken place between May and July 2016. Attached to the report at Appendix 2 was detail on the Sound Around project referenced in section 4.2 of the report.

The report outlined the strategic context set by Arts Council England (ACE) and the role of its bridge organisation 'Artswork' in working with Reading to establish the CEP as a priority 'early adopter' in the south-east. It outlined the key stakeholders engaged with the CEP and the content of an initial Action Plan, as well as highlighting some emerging opportunities to deliver significant benefits to Reading's children and young people. The report sought the Committee's endorsement of actions taken to date to establish the CEP and the support of the Committee and its members in advocating for the work of the CEP and the importance of access to high quality cultural experiences for all our young people whatever their background or circumstances.

Resolved -

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- (1) That the progress made in establishing a Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) for Reading be noted and endorsed;
- (2) That promoting access to high quality arts and cultural education for all children and young people as a means of improving outcomes, especially for those young people who otherwise might not have access to such opportunities be endorsed;
- (3) That the commitment and support of a range of partner organisations involved in the CEP and the ongoing delivery of its associated Action Plan, noting the significant opportunities outlined in section 4.2 of the report, be welcomed.

36. SOUTH STREET ARTS CENTRE

John Luther, Arts Co-ordinator, gave a presentation on South Street Arts Centre following the recent refurbishment and the current arts programme.

John talked about the participation and outreach work that took place at South Street. This included a successful youth theatre and South Street had a number of relationships with local groups and artists. John talked about some recent work that had taken place to produce their own work and would this year include a play about Gordon Greenidge, the Bajan cricketer who had attended school in Reading between the ages of 12 and 15.

John also talked about the diverse range of comedy, theatre and music that was on offer at the venue. Recent events that had taken place included the Walking: Holding project and the off-site project Sitelines. Fuel theatre had been working with South Street and one of their upcoming projects was An Evening with an Immigrant by Inua Ellams. John reported that South Street had recently registered interest with Arts Council England to be a national portfolio organisation, the outcome of which would be announced in June 2017.

Resolved - That John Luther be thanked for his presentation.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 8.40pm).

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP - 2 FEBRUARY 2017

Present:

Cllr Liz Terry (Chair)	Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods, RBC
Anthony Brain	Community Safety Manager, RBC
Chris Bagshaw	Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Emma Burroughs	Thames Valley Police
Kathryn Warner	Communities Manager, PACT
Lisa Wilkins	Troubled Families Project Manager, RBC
Liz Harrison	Chair, Berkshire Magistrates
Nicola Bell	Manager, Rahab Project
Sarah Gee	Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods, RBC
Simon Allcock	National Management Trainee, RBC
Stan Gilmour	Reading Police, TVP
Simon Hill	Committee Services, RBC

Apologies:

Cllr Jan Gavin	Lead Councillor for Children's Services and Families, RBC
Cllr Tony Page	Deputy Leader and Police & Crime Panel representative, RBC
Aaron Blessing	Thames Valley OPCC
Ann-Marie Dodds	Head of Governance & Business Support, DCEEHS, RBC
Clare Muir	Policy, RBC
Geoff Davis	Head of Operations, Thames Valley CRC
Jo Middlemass	Anti-Social Behaviour Team Manager, RBC
Tina Heaford	Children's Action Team, South Reading

1. MINUTES AND MATTER ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

Further to Minute 2 of the previous meeting it was reported that the training on County Lines had been very popular with good feedback. There were a small number of places available for the remaining sessions.

2. TROUBLED FAMILIES UPDATE

Lisa Wilkins submitted a report providing an overview of the different elements of the Troubled Families Programme in Reading.

The report included information on the following:

- Progress with meeting DCLG payment-by-results targets;
- Current work to strengthen and share areas of specialised expertise with partners;
- A new data sharing agreement and a proposed new system for data management;

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- The first round of applications to the Innovations Fund and the awards to be made, up to a total of £70,020. The Awards had been made through the Council's Decision Book Issue 521.

Lisa reported that the second round of applications to the Innovations Fund was about to open, with more specific requirements for applicants to follow. The meeting noted that the proposed new database was potentially a significant asset for the CSP, and that the Delivery Groups should consider how it could be used.

AGREED: That the update report be noted.

3. PREVENT UPDATE

Simon Allcock presented a report submitted by Clare Muir giving an update on the implementation of the Prevent duty in Reading.

The report updated the Group on training and awareness raising activity since the previous report, and summarised the 7 cases considered by the Reading Channel Panel. It also explained that the Prevent Management Group had agreed to focus on the following areas of the Prevent Action Plan:

- Improving the referral pathway for partners
- Developing a communication strategy
- Developing an engagement plan with faith establishments
- Using educational establishments' returns on discriminatory incidents
- Identifying the range out-of-school settings providing support to young people

The Group noted that it was encouraging that referrals to the Channel Panel had come from a number of different agencies and not the Police.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

4. DELIVERY GROUP ACTION PLANS

The four Delivery Groups submitted their current actions plans, which set out progress against actions/tasks under the agreed priorities for each group.

a) Domestic Abuse

Sarah Gee reported on the Domestic Abuse Group's progress against the Action Plan. She noted that the Council was currently consulting on proposed changes to the commissioning of domestic abuse services, which included a reduction in funded refuge places from 25 to 15, alongside an increase in investment in non-accommodation based support and preventative activity. The Group had drafted a letter to central government to highlight that due to funding cuts local authorities were having to make large reductions in refuge provision, and to lobby for a national system of funding.

The meeting noted some apparent trends in the need for refuge provision, such as a recent fall in the number of referrals to the specialist Asian women's refuge provision and also fewer EU national being referred. It was suggested that relevant partners meet separately to consider these issues.

b) Violent Crime

Emma Burroughs, Thames Valley Police, gave the Group an update on the priorities and related tasks identified by the Violent Crime Delivery Group. She noted that the Pubwatch scheme had been reinvigorated, and that TVP had appointed an officer to lead on licensing issues. Purple flag accreditation had also now been obtained.

Emma also noted that the First Stop bus service would be relocated to Reading Minster, who had been very helpful in arranging and accommodating the change. It was agreed that a letter be sent on behalf of the CSP to recognise their support.

c) Modern Day Slavery and Adult Exploitation

Nicola Bell updated the Partners on the work of the Modern Day Slavery and Adult Exploitation Delivery Group. She noted that current issues included trying to increase take up of training in health services, and working to reduce referrals to Adult Social Care by diverting appropriate cases to RAHAB instead. More preventative work and awareness-raising was being carried out and there had been outreach across the town centre.

Nicola noted that Rahab had been asked to work across Berkshire, but that a 10% funding reduction from the PCC was expected, and future funding of victim support services had not been confirmed. The Chair suggested that victim support funding be discussed at the next meeting.

d) Vulnerable Communities

Anthony Brain updated the Partners on the priorities and tasks identified by the Vulnerable Communities Delivery Group. With regards to counter terrorism work he noted that the annual conference for the Town Centre Business community and a town centre evacuation table top exercise were being planned. Following the Christmas market attack in Berlin, the safety of large crowd situations such as Reading Festival had been reviewed.

AGREED:

- (1) That the Delivery Group Action Plans be received;
- (2) That the Partnership endorse a letter to government on refuge provision funding;
- (3) That S Gee, S Gilmour, A Brain, Cllr Terry and N Bell meet to discuss the refuge provision issue further;
- (4) That A Brain and M Golledge arrange for a letter from the CSP to Reading Minster to recognise their support for the community in hosting the First Stop service;
- (5) That Victim Support funding be discussed at the next meeting.

5. CRIME PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Anthony Brain submitted a report on the latest crime figures to the end of September 2016, covering:

- All British Crime Survey crimes - there had been a 13% year-on-year increase, the main drivers of which were arson, theft from vehicle and criminal damage. The crime rate in Reading was 9/15 in the group of most similar local authority areas ('most similar group').
- Burglary of a dwelling - 16% year-on-year increase, Reading was 5/15 in most similar group.
- Violent Crime - 1% year-on-year increase, Reading was 2/15 in most similar group.

It was noted that acquisitive crime was increasing in all areas, and that although Reading had also seen a recent increase in burglary, the rate was still low compared to historical levels and within the most similar group. Violent crime had increased in many other areas, but not significantly in Reading, and there had been no homicides in Reading in 2016.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

6. UPDATE FROM THE OFFICE OF POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

There was no representative of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office present at the meeting.

7. COMMUNICATION & PUBLICITY

Chris Bagshaw reported that there had been a large increase in incidents of arson (mainly bin and scrubland fires), and that RBFRS were working on a leaflet on this issue. He asked if this could be distributed with a future Council mailing.

The Group also noted that there would be an ACRE event to mark International Women's Day on 8 March 2017 and that a press release had been prepared on changes to the First Bus service.

AGREED: That A Brain try and arrange for the RBFRS arson leaflet to be distributed with a Council mail-out.

8. FUTURE ITEMS

Stan Gilmour reported that there was a proposal being developed to use the old Civic Centre site for community use with an early intervention/crime reduction programme.

AGREED: That the proposal for use of the old Civic Centre site be reported to the Group when ready.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETING

The next meeting would take place on Thursday 27 April 2017 at 9.30am.

(The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and closed at 10.51 am)

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP - 27 APRIL 2017

Present:

Emma Burroughs (in the Chair)	Thames Valley Police
Cllr Tony Page	Deputy Leader and Police & Crime Panel representative, RBC
Cllr Jan Gavin	Lead Councillor for Children's Services and Families, RBC
Anthony Brain	Community Safety Manager, RBC
Jo Middlemass	Anti-Social Behaviour Team Manager, RBC
Sarah Gee	Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods, RBC
Aaron Blessing	Thames Valley OPCC
Geoff Davis	Head of Operations, Thames Valley CRC
Sally Andersen	Contract and Project Manager, RBC
Carol Kelly	Berkshire Magistrates
Simon Hill	Committee Services, RBC

Apologies:

Cllr Liz Terry (Chair)	Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods, RBC
Kathryn Warner	Communities Manager, PACT
Liz Harrison	Chair, Berkshire Magistrates
Lisa Wilkins	Troubled Families Project Manager, RBC
Tina Heaford	Children's Action Team, South Reading Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service

1. MINUTES AND MATTER ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

Further to Minute 4(3) of the previous meeting a meeting to discuss refuge provision and new communities was being arranged.

Further to Minute 7 of the previous meeting the distribution of an arson leaflet with Council mail-out was still to be arranged.

2. DRUG AND ALCOHOL ACTION TEAM UPDATE

Sally Andersen gave an update on the current work of the Drug and Alcohol action team. She explained that the drug and alcohol team had now been incorporated into the public health team due to the significant commissioning function of their work. Following the completion of a Needs Assessment in 2016 there was now a greater emphasis on alcohol issues and prevention and education, to recognise the large number of problem drinkers, and there had been a reduction in work with the much smaller cohort of habitual Class A drug users. A drug and alcohol strategy was being prepared, although the national strategy was still awaited.

The Group discussed the need for more work to identify the cohort of offenders who were also problem drinkers, and to link up interventions with this group. Sally said that she would share new research on whether treatment reduced reoffending.

Sally asked how the CSP wished to engage with drug and alcohol services, and it was agreed that the Delivery Group Chairs' Group should discuss the issue further.

AGREED:

- (1) That the update be noted;
- (2) That the Chairs' group consider arrangements for reporting of drug and alcohol issues to the CSP and invite S Andersen to attend meetings as required.

3. COUNTY LINE UPDATE

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

4. DELIVERY GROUP ACTION PLANS

The Delivery Groups submitted their current actions plans, which set out progress against actions/tasks under the agreed priorities for each group.

a) Vulnerable Communities

Anthony Brain explained that the reporting of hate crime was increasing, but that current performance in achieving a successful outcome for victims of hate crime was 29% against a target of 43%, which placed Reading 11th out of 15 Thames Valley local police areas. The annual figures for referrals to Prevent were due to be published shortly, and would be reported to the next meeting.

Regarding the priority to raise awareness of the threat of terrorism and how to recognise signs, Anthony outlined the key points of the South East Counter Terrorism Unit's (SECTU) current assessment of the changing terrorist threat. The full briefing would be circulated to the Group after its forthcoming release. Anthony also noted that Councillors would be invited to the annual Project Griffin conference for the Town Centre Business community.

b) Violent Crime

Emma Burroughs reported that the move of the First Stop service to Reading Minster had been very successful, and noted the successful implementation of the Purple Flag scheme.

c) Modern Day Slavery and Adult Exploitation

No representative was present at the meeting.

d) Domestic Abuse

Sarah Gee noted that changes to Domestic Abuse services had been agreed at Policy Committee (Minute 98 of the meeting held on 13 March 2017 refers). Referrals to MARAC were now at 98% of the Safelives figure, above the target of 75%. A new communications group had been successfully established.

e) Integrated Offender Management

Geoff Davis outlined current work and priorities for the IOM Delivery Group, which included:

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP - 27 APRIL 2017

- Understanding the profile of offenders, mapping current interventions and considering how to work differently with different groups;
- Putting a process in place to understand violent crime / Domestic abuse perpetrators, who were very different from the acquisitive crime cohort, and identify the best way to manage them;
- Considering how IOM could be used with regards to organised crime groups involved in adult exploitation such as cuckooing.

AGREED:

- (1) That the Delivery Group Action Plans be received;
- (2) That a report on Prevent referrals be submitted to the next meeting;
- (3) That detail on the performance for achieving a successful outcome for victims of hate crime be reported to the next meeting;
- (4) That A Brain circulate the briefing from SECTU to the Group when available.

5. OPCC UPDATE

Aaron Blessing gave an update including the following:

- detailed allocation of the PCC's 10% 'topslice' from the Community Safety Fund was yet to be decided, but it would be used to support current issues including supporting IOM and possibly FGM;
- a bid had been made for government(?) funding for RAHAB but a decision on this would not be made until after the General Election;
- a redesign of Victims' Services was planned for 2018 and this could involve a central hub in Reading to which all victims would be initially referred before being moved on to the relevant service.

AGREED:

- (1) That the update be noted;
- (2) That A Brain circulate information on the proposed Victims' Services redesign.

6. CRIME PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

A Brain gave an update on the latest crime figures. He noted that the overall rate of all British Crime Survey crime types was increasing, and that Reading was in the middle of the most similar group of local areas. The main drivers for the increase had been theft from vehicle and vehicle damage. For the rate of violence against the person Reading was below average in the most similar group, despite the night time economy (NTE) attracting large numbers of people from other areas, which suggested that the NTE was being well managed.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP - 27 APRIL 2017

It was noted that Reading, like other CSPs, had changed emphasis over the previous few years away from burglary and serious acquisitive crimes, but that crimes of this type were beginning to increase again. Detective Inspector Katie Smith outlined some current local trends in burglary.

AGREED: That the update be noted.

7. COMMUNICATION & PUBLICITY

A Brain suggested that due to the increase in burglary and theft from vehicle some publicity should be considered. Cllr Gavin noted that the University participated in the local NAG, and would be able to circulate information to their database of students in private rented accommodation.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETING

The 2017/18 meetings would take place on the following dates:

Thursday 21 September 2017

Thursday 16 November 2017

Thursday 1 February 2018

Thursday 26 April 2018

All meetings at 9.30am.

(The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and closed at 10.55 am)

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	5 JULY 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	8
TITLE:	WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE CHANGES AND CHARGEABLE GREEN WASTE COLLECTION		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR LIZ TERRY	PORTFOLIO:	NEIGHBOURHOODS
SERVICE:	TRANSPORTATION AND STREETCARE	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	DAVID MOORE	TEL:	(0118) 937 2676
JOB TITLE:	NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES MANAGER	E-MAIL:	David.moore2@reading.gov.uk

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the introduction of the revised waste collection service standard, the rescheduled collection rounds and the introduction of the chargeable green waste service.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 That Members note the report.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 One of the service priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan 2016 -2019 is 'Keeping the town, clean, safe, green and active', to ensure we retain and attract residents and businesses and remain an attractive place to live, work and visit'. One means of delivering this priority is to reduce the volume of waste sent to landfill and improve recycling rates through implementation of the service efficiencies and the Waste Minimisation Strategy.
- 3.2 The EU Waste Framework Directive 2008 sets a recycling and re-use target of 50% for certain waste materials from households to be achieved by 2020.
- 3.3 On 15th March 2015 HNL Committee adopted the Waste Minimisation Strategy 2015 -2020, which set out an approach for working with residents, stakeholders and partners to improve the way waste is managed with a

growing population and limited resources. The strategy was subject to a four week web based consultation.

3.4 The re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board adopted its strategy in May 2016.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 In response to the current Central Government austerity programme and the need to make savings a review of the domestic waste collection service standard, collection round efficiency and the free green waste collection service was carried out in 2016. The review concluded that the following changes were required:

- Application of the existing service standard
- Rescheduling of collection rounds
- Introduction of a green waste collection charge.

4.2 Service Standards

The collection service standard has remained unchanged since its introduction but it has not been applied with any rigour for the last 10 years. Crews were collecting side waste, emptying overfilled bins and many properties had too many bins for the number of residents in the property.

The Council has in effect provided residents with domestic waste capacity in excess of the 240l per fortnight and paid for its collection and disposal. Residents have become used to putting out excess waste and have had little incentive or encouragement to manage their waste more carefully.

4.2.1 Collection of contaminated recycling bins has meant that full loads of otherwise good recyclable material has been rejected at the HWRC. The material has then been landfilled rather than being recycled, increasing costs, adversely impacting on recycling rates and revenue from saleable materials. Many residents were unsure what materials could be recycled and it was clear that more information had to be made available.

4.2.2 The revised waste collection service standards were re-introduced on Monday 13th February at the same time as a revised collection round structure. All residents received information outlining the reason for the changes in advance, a revised collection calendar, information about how to recycle better and details of the new chargeable green waste service through the post in early January 2017. Information has been available on the website and via a social media campaign since before Christmas 2016.

4.2.3 The revised rounds have bedded in well since February after a few minor problems and collection crews and staff are enforcing the new service standards. Side waste is no longer collected and is stickered to inform residents that it will no longer be collected. Overflowing waste is removed from bins prior to emptying and contaminated recycling bins have are left with a bin hanger with information about recycling.

In the first weeks of the changes the average number of contaminated recycling bins which were left by crews per round was 7.5% but this has now fallen to 1.5% as residents become more familiar with the new regime. The

number of enquiries and complaints about waste collections has also fallen from a peak in late February and is now lower than before the changes were introduced.

- 4.2.4 Despite the success of the revised regime there are issues with excess domestic waste being fly-tipped, notably at bring bank sites and in areas with bagged collections such as the Oxford Road. The 2 new Environmental Enforcement Officers, brought in to support the waste changes are sorting through fly-tipped bags to find evidence of ownership and have issued 102 Community Protection Notices (CPN's) since February 2017 compared to a total of 12 in 2016/17.

The effects of the changes on collection tonnages, recycling and contamination rates since the introduction of the changes will be reported when the data is available and reported to a future meeting.

4.3 Round rescheduling

Round scheduling software rather than the old paper system was used to reschedule the rounds, allowing one to be removed saving £110,000 and the rounds were made more equal in size and more efficient.

4.4 Green Waste

The chargeable green waste collection service was announced in January 2017 and the service started on 1st April 2017. Prior to the charge being introduced 16,700 residents took advantage of the free green waste collection and based on the experience of other authorities who introduced a charge a drop-out rate of between 25 and 50% was anticipated. The number of subscribers at the end of June was 14,000 with new enquiries coming in at a rate of 50 per week. Revenue for the green collection service to date is £700,000.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The revised service standard, new round structure and chargeable green waste service contribute to the council's Corporate Plan 2016 -2019 objective of 'Keeping the Town Clean, Safe, Green and Active'.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The revised service standard, round changes and green waste service were publicised via a direct mail shot to every household in Reading, by press releases and on social media.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Council has duties under various UK and EU legislation to deliver waste collection and disposal services, principally the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the revised EU waste framework directive 2008.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:-

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 An equality impact assessment is not required.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The revised service standard and round rationalisation generated a saving of £110,000 and green waste revenue is currently £700,000.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 RBC Corporate Plan.
- 10.2 HNL Committee November 2016
- 10.3 HNL Committee July 2016
- 10.4 HNL Committee March 2015
- 10.5 HNL Committee November 2013

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	5 JULY 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	9
TITLE:	PEER REVIEW OF CULTURAL SERVICES		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	SARAH HACKER	PORTFOLIO:	CULTURE, SPORT AND CONSUMER SERVICES
SERVICE:	ECONOMIC & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	GRANT THORNTON	TEL:	0118 937 2416
JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF ECONOMIC & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	E-MAIL:	grant.thornton@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council bid for and secured a 'Peer Review' of cultural services in late 2016 with funding provided by the Local Government Association (LGA) and Arts Council England (ACE). The external and independent Peer Review team comprised two senior officers with relevant experience and a similarly experienced senior councillor. The on-site element of the Peer review was conducted on the 8th and 9th of February 2017 with the feedback report being received in March. This report summarises the findings of the 'Peer Review', which were very positive, and key recommendations for further enhancing the contribution of cultural activity to the town's success and the well-being of its residents in line with the aspirations of the Culture & Heritage Strategy 2015 - 2030. The report outlines proposed next steps to respond proactively to the recommendations in the feedback report, including reference to how proposals to implement Reading's successful 'Great Place Scheme' bid can assist with this (a separate report on the 'Great Place Scheme' follows on the agenda). The report seeks Committee's views on the outcomes of the Peer Review, endorsement of the proposed next steps and recommends that this Committee scrutinises and contributes to the work of the Cultural Partnership on a regular basis.
- 1.2 The full content of the Cultural Services Peer Challenge Feedback Report is attached at Appendix 1.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Committee considers the outcomes of the Peer Review as outlined in the Feedback Report.
- 2.2 That Committee endorses the proposed next steps, including the role of a refreshed Cultural Partnership to provide strategic leadership.

2.3 That Committee receives regular reports on the activities of the Cultural Partnership and associated work-streams and determines whether this be on a twice yearly or annual basis.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 A new Cultural and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030, developed under the auspices of the Cultural Partnership, was endorsed by the Council's Policy Committee in November 2015. This reflects the strong partnership approach in Reading, recognising that it will be a range of organisations working collectively that will be key to delivery and success. The new Culture and Heritage Strategy clearly sets out an aspirational vision for culture and heritage to play a key role in the town's future, enhancing the quality of life for residents and increasing the attractiveness of the town for visitors and investors. The Strategy envisages Reading's profile and reputation as a cultural destination being transformed over the coming years, building from a strong base of arts and heritage organisations and assets and catalysed by a Year of Culture in 2016.

3.2 Peer Reviews or Peer Challenges are a well-developed mechanism within local government for sector led service improvement and the further adoption or development of best practice. Peer Reviews are not inspections and are rather a voluntary process focused on improvement tailored to meet individual council's needs. The Cultural Services Peer Challenge was jointly funded by the LGA and ACE and Reading was one of 4 successful bids to participate nationally in 2016/17.

3.3 The Peer Challenge Feedback Report observed that:

'We were impressed by the quality of cultural services and the management of them. Culture, arts and heritage make a strong contribution to the Council's Corporate Plan 2016-2019 'Building a Better Reading', in particular the priorities of:

- *Keeping the town, clean, safe, green and active*
- *Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living*
- *Providing infrastructure to the support the economy'.*

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position:

The full Feedback Report is attached at Appendix 1 but key findings can be summarised as follows:

- It is evident that arts and culture in Reading have reached a critical mass as a result of clear ambition, steady growth and targeted investment by the Council and its partners, particularly over the last 2 - 3 years;
- There is a real opportunity for the Council and its partners to capitalise on the new shared ambition for the place as a cultural destination and to use the arts and culture to make a significant local and national impact;
- The Council's own cultural services appear to be of high quality and focused on efficiency and improvement. The peer team were impressed by a clear focus on raising standards and reducing costs in direct provision;
- The Council has high calibre cultural teams who are creative, innovative and 'can-do' and who understand the serious financial challenges faced by the Council;

- The peer team found significant support and enthusiasm for arts and culture among partners from business, arts community, university and education sectors with ambition articulated and progress made across a range of sectors;
- The Council has recognised that as its own resources are under considerable pressure, its role needs to change moving forward. Notwithstanding the evident value of its direct provision, there is an opportunity to recast the role of the Council as an enabler, a facilitator and a promoter of Reading's art and heritage ambitions;
- Building on the strong relationship forged and the momentum of the Year of Culture in 2016, there is an opportunity to facilitate high level discussions and capitalise on the appetite of partners for joint ventures and collaborations.

Building on these key findings and an overall very positive assessment of cultural services and activity in the town the Feedback Report identified the following key recommendations:

1. Develop a SMART action plan to set out the Council's priorities against the Culture and Heritage Strategy;
2. Re-engineer the governance structure for the Culture, Arts and heritage portfolio, clarifying the structure's role, purpose and function;
3. Develop a prospectus evidencing how culture supports corporate and commissioning priorities;
4. Establish multi-disciplinary teams for key projects like the Abbey Quarter to break down silo working and enhance project delivery;
5. Lead a high level conversation about relationships with business and agree a fundraising strategy for Reading with the University and Reading UK CIC;
6. Coordinate the upfront planning for legacy from culture and heritage projects and programmes with Reading UK CIC, the University and partners.

There is also at section 6 in the feedback report further commentary and observation that sits behind the findings and key recommendations, including some useful pointers to other local authorities that might provide useful learning in relation to their particular strengths.

4.2 Options Proposed

As noted above the Peer Challenge is not an inspection but an aid to service improvement and in this regard recommendations are advisory. The review took place over two days with significant advance preparation supported by extensive background information. As stated in the feedback report the peer challenge is a snapshot in time and it is acknowledged that some of the feedback may be about things that are already being addressed or progressed. That said the calibre of the peer team was impressive and, based on their wider knowledge and experience, they have provided both confirmation of the strength and potential of cultural services in Reading and some insightful suggestions to assist further progress.

Perhaps the key focus of the peer challenge's recommendations is on the strategic partnership context with an opportunity for the Council to re-define its role as the leader of a diverse and collaborative partnership:

'Our recommendation is that you refocus the governance structure for the sector, establishing a clear governance pyramid and identifying a leadership role for the Council which is agreed by all partners. The new arrangements would enable strategic planning and programming; design and deliver investment strategies; oversee commissioning; and provide overall programme governance to ensure the delivery of outcomes.'

As reported to and endorsed by this Committee in November 2016 there is already an acknowledged need to re-engineer the Cultural Partnership and this is clearly supported by the peer challenge findings. In this regard the success of Reading's 'Great Place Scheme' bid (see related report on tonight's agenda) has relevance as it includes a proposal for the Cultural Partnership to act as the 'Great Place Board' to provide strategic governance and oversight. In order to progress this, the bid incorporated resources for external facilitation to support the process and the councillor peer from the peer review team has agreed to carry out this facilitation.

Once in place this will deliver on recommendation 2 and provide the partnership infrastructure to take forward recommendations 5 and 6.

The Great Place Scheme will also support delivery of recommendation 3 as it has a focus on cultural commissioning to support delivery of priority outcomes.

Recommendations 1 and 4 will be further considered and taken forward by Council officers.

In addition it is proposed that the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee provides scrutiny on the activities and associated work-streams of the Cultural Partnership going forward. Not only is this good practice with regard to partnership working, it also provides an opportunity for wider dissemination of and engagement with the Cultural Partnership's work. It also provides the Committee with the opportunity to positively contribute, either on the generality of the Cultural Partnership's activities or to request a particular focus. The Committee is requested to determine whether it would like to exercise this scrutiny function on a twice yearly or annual basis.

4.3 Other Options Considered

The decision to bid for and then to participate in the Peer Challenge process was not taken lightly given the very heavy workload demands on both the Council and its partners. However, the potential advantages of a constructive external, informed and independent review focused on potential further improvement were considered to outweigh the demands of the process. The review team have provided a very positive view of cultural services in Reading, including those provided directly by the Council and by its partners, and highlighted the significant potential going forward. The key recommendations are focused on helping to realise this potential and it is felt they should be given serious consideration by the Council and its partners (who all participated in the Peer Challenge process).

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The ambition to raise Reading's cultural profile and reputation is about both the outcomes for Reading as a place and delivering better quality of life for residents. The delivery of culture and heritage contributes to achieving the following Corporate Priorities:

- Keeping the Town clean, safe green and active
- Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living
- Providing infrastructure to support the economy.

5.2 A new Cultural and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030, developed under the auspices of the Cultural Partnership, was endorsed by the Council's Policy Committee in November 2015. This strategy has an over-arching ambition that:

‘By 2030, Reading will be recognised as a centre of creativity with a reputation for cultural and heritage excellence at a regional, national and international level with increased engagement across the town.’

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 There has not been specific community engagement with regard to the Peer Challenge process, although it did engage with a wide-range of partners and stakeholders. However community engagement is critical to the development and delivery of cultural activities in the town more widely. There has been widespread consultation and engagement in the development of the Culture & Heritage Strategy, indeed it was this consultation that led to the development and delivery of the Year of Culture 2016. There has also been a specific consultation exercise with young people to inform the action plan developed by the Cultural Education Partnership (CEP). At a project level community engagement and activity programmes form a major component of HLF funded projects such as Abbey Revealed and MERL. In part this is to inform how these projects are delivered but it is also about engaging with new and under-represented groups. More broadly information, marketing and engagement is central to audience development across much of the culture and heritage sector.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 It is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant with regard to the content of this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None directly. The difficult financial position of the Council is directly acknowledged in the Peer Challenge Feedback report and is a key factor in the focus of the recommendations on partnership working and the Council’s role as an enabler, a facilitator and a promoter of reading’s arts and heritage ambitions.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 ‘Culture and heritage in Reading’, Report to the Council’s Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee 16th November 2016.

Great Place Scheme - Reading-on-Thames - Full Application (January 2017).

Cultural Services Peer Challenge **Reading Borough Council**

8 - 9 February 2017

Feedback Report

Executive Summary

1. Scope

Reading Borough Council applied for a Cultural Services Peer Challenge in 2016/17, funded by the Arts Council England and the Local Government Association. It is one of only four local authorities to be selected for the Cultural Services Peer Challenge this year.

The Council asked the peer team to focus on the following four areas:

- 1.1 In relation to directly run services, is the Council maximising financial sustainability and resilience?
- 1.2 In relation to the wider cultural offer and stakeholders, how might the Council reshape the Cultural Partnership to reflect recent developments and drive and add value to the delivery of the Culture and Heritage Strategy?
- 1.3 What else could the Council be doing to secure and embed private sector investment into the delivery of cultural activity?
- 1.4 What else could the Council be doing to maximise the contribution of culture to key corporate priorities and outcomes for local people, including the contribution from libraries?

In addition, the peer challenge team provided related recommendations for Reading Borough Council's consideration and general commentary about cultural services.

2. Key Findings

- 2.1 It is evident that arts and culture in Reading have reached a critical mass as a result of clear ambition, steady growth and targeted investment by the Council and its partners, particularly over the last two to three years.
- 2.2 There is a real opportunity for the Council and its partners to capitalise on the new shared ambition for the place as a cultural destination and to use the arts and culture to make a significant local and national impact. This cultural ambition is exemplified by the nationally significant installation by Artangel 'Inside: Artists and Writers in Reading Prison' which over the autumn and winter attracted 30,000 visitors and gained widespread acclaim.
- 2.3 The Council's own cultural services appear to be of high quality and focused on efficiency and improvement. The peer team were impressed by a clear focus on raising standards and reducing costs in direct provision, particularly using capital investment to enable efficiencies in an invest to save approach. It was also evident that solutions were being sought cross-departmentally, for example the co-location of services in the Town Hall and the integration of libraries with children's centres. A continued corporate approach to the overall asset strategy will be essential for success.

- 2.4 The Council has high calibre cultural teams who are creative, innovative and ‘can-do’ and who understand the serious financial challenge faced by the Council. All of the cultural services staff we met were determined to provide high quality public services and deliver the Council’s priorities. The stakeholders we spoke to were in general appreciative of cultural services managers and frontline staff and valued the strength of the partnership with them.
- 2.5 The peer team found significant support and enthusiasm for arts and culture among partners from business, arts community, university and education sectors with ambition articulated and progress made across a range of sectors. Cultural events and attractions are viewed as key on all levels to attracting new businesses, employees and visitors in this growing economy. There is evidence of productive relationships with national partners too, in particular with Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).
- 2.6 The Council has recognised that as its own resources are under considerable pressure, its role needs to change moving forward. Notwithstanding the evident value of its direct provision, there is an opportunity to recast the role of the Council as an enabler, a facilitator and a promoter of Reading’s arts and heritage ambitions. The Council’s key strategic partners, such as the University of Reading, Reading UKCIC (the economic development company for Reading) and the independent arts sector, are ready to ‘take up the mantle’ and take a stronger leadership role where their support can add momentum and capacity to the Council’s own place shaping endeavors. Partners are looking to the Council to provide a strong vision and clear strategy to which they can align their own agendas.
- 2.7 Building on the strong relationship forged and the momentum of the Year of Culture in 2016, there is an opportunity to facilitate high level discussions and capitalise on the appetite of partners for joint ventures and collaborations. A number of the senior stakeholders we spoke to indicated that the time was right for a series of strategic conversations between the City’s senior political leaders and key stakeholders to consider how they might collaborate moving forward with culture at the heart of the conversation.

3. Key recommendations

There are a range of suggestions and observations within the main section of the report that will inform some ‘quick wins’ and practical actions in addition to the conversations the peer team had with the Council while in Reading.

Recommendation 1: Develop a SMART action plan to set out the Council’s priorities against the Culture and Heritage Strategy

While good initial progress has been made the peer team think that you have a little more work to do in implementing your vision for culture. The 2015 – 2030 Cultural and Heritage Strategy was developed in partnership and with public consultation and it has proved a successful platform for subsequent development. A workshop was held last year to develop a delivery/action plan and a plan now needs to be finalised and communicated to partners. It is recommended that at the start of the new financial year the Council sets out

its own SMART action/delivery plan for the Strategy for years 1, 2 and 3 moving forward and that this is then built on to include the actions of key partners.

Recommendation 2: Re-engineer the governance structure for the Culture, Arts and Heritage portfolio, clarifying the structure's role, purpose and function

The success of the 2016 Year of Culture has acted as a catalyst that has brought an energised group of influential partners together all of whom have great ambitions for Reading and its economy. There was a strong view expressed by many that the current partnership arrangements must change to accommodate these ambitions. The Council has an opportunity to lead on the re-design of the relationships with the cultural community and the business sector with a focus on arts and culture and to re-define its role as the leader of a diverse and collaborative partnership. The Council demonstrates that it has the institutional confidence to position itself as the leader, facilitator and enabler of this new collaboration.

The new governance structure should incorporate consideration of the current lead member portfolios, the Cultural Partnership Board, the Cultural Education Partnership, the Arts and Heritage Forum and the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee. It should confirm how a new structure provides strategic leadership and coordination, concentrating and focusing the investment and commissioning capacity of a broad range of internal and external partners. Durham City Council is an example of a council providing strategic leadership for arts, heritage and culture which could be useful in your approach.

Recommendation 3: Develop a prospectus evidencing how culture supports corporate and commissioning priorities

Business leaders and public sector commissioners both indicated that they were supportive of arts and culture but did not have sufficient evidence of the impact they could make locally. We heard some impressive examples where excellent outcomes are being achieved, such as the digital/ tech businesses support to Light Up Reading; the work with vulnerable older people in libraries; and mental health work in Reading Museum. However, these successes are not widely communicated in the Council or externally thereby missing the opportunity for further investment or collaboration. The London Borough of Bexley is a good example of a library service demonstrating strong outcomes in adult social care.

Recommendation 4: Establish multidisciplinary teams for key projects like the Abbey Quarter to break down silo working and enhance project delivery

There is an opportunity for the Council to work more effectively. Working relationships within the department are good but some staff expressed concern that there can be a tendency towards silo working more widely in the Council, especially given current challenges. Similarly, external partners noted they can find it difficult to get traction when trying to take forward cultural initiatives of value to the Council for example placing advertising banners. Tasking cross departmental teams to deliver key initiatives like the Abbey Project or the Libraries Review is an effective way of giving a strong message about the importance to the whole Council of key cultural projects and to overcome silo working.

Recommendation 5: Lead a high level conversation about relationships with business and agree a fundraising strategy for Reading with the University and Reading UKCIC

The peer team found the business sector to be open to becoming a more active commissioning partner in arts and cultural initiatives with a clear focus on place shaping and workforce retention. Alongside the business community, the University is also developing a significant portfolio of initiatives across the creative and heritage sectors. The Council likewise has great plans for both cultural and heritage initiatives. There is a risk that all partners, including the Council are pursuing the same potential supporters and investors leading to confusion about initiatives, leadership and legacy. A strategic conversation focused on the place shaping ambition and led from the highest political level in the Council, would be beneficial. A high level fundraising strategy agreed between the Council, University and Reading UKCIC would enable a coordinated approach to business planning, project development and management alongside making single approaches to public institutions, commercial investors and philanthropists that are initiative led rather than institutionally led.

Recommendation 6: Coordinate the upfront planning for legacy from culture and heritage projects and programmes with Reading UKCIC, the University and partners

The excellent progress made by all partners, in particular over the last two to three years, has generated a momentum and enthusiasm about what can happen next. However, it was not clear to the peer team that legacy objectives had been consistently set in advance in project planning. A key role of the governance structure discussed above should be to ensure that legacy outputs and outcomes are identified up front and become a 'golden thread' running through the business plan for a project.

4. Summary of the Peer Challenge approach

The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge at Reading were:

- Councillor Guy Nicholson, Cabinet Member for Regeneration at London Borough of Hackney
- Sue Thiedeman, Head of Culture and Visitor Economy at Barnsley Metropolitan Council
- Liz Blyth, Peer Challenge Manager, LGA Associate and recently Director of Culture and Neighbourhood Services at Leicester City Council

Scope and focus

The Council asked the peer team to focus on the following four areas:

- In relation to directly run services, is the Council maximising financial sustainability and resilience?
- In relation to the wider cultural offer and stakeholders, how might the Council reshape the Cultural Partnership to reflect recent developments and drive and add value to the delivery of the Culture and Heritage Strategy?
- What else could the Council be doing to secure and embed private sector investment into the delivery of cultural activity?
- What else could the Council be doing to maximise the contribution of culture to key corporate priorities and outcomes for local people, including the contribution from libraries?

The peer challenge process

It is important to stress that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement focussed and tailored to meet individual council's needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent two days at Reading Borough Council, during which they:

- Spoke to more than 28 people including a range of Council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders
- Gathered information and views from more than 18 meetings and additional research and reading
- Collectively spent more than 75 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than 2 weeks in Reading

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their on-site visit 8 - 9 February 2017. In presenting feedback to you, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members, not professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the

peer challenge is a snapshot in time. We appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing.

5. Strategic Context

Reading is a thriving and diverse town with an expanding population of over 160,000 (plus a wider catchment of more than 250,000 people), a thriving economy and a large university. Reading's economic growth is evident in the redeveloped waterfront and rail station expansion, inward investment from high profile businesses like Microsoft and Pepsico and strong optimism among business partners. Reading is home to the number one tech cluster in the UK and the second highest concentration of SME's. In contrast there are some extremes of local poverty and addressing inequality is stated as a key priority for the Council.

It is important to emphasise that the Council as a whole is facing significant financial pressures. Savings of over £65m have been made since 2010 but there is a funding gap to close by 2020 of more than £40m in order to balance resources against expenditure, and this equates to one third of current net expenditure. This disconnect between the resources of the Council and the overall economic success of the town brings significant challenges. Importantly we found these challenges to be widely understood by partners and Council staff. Staff in cultural services are determined in their efforts to raise income and reduce costs.

We were impressed by the quality of cultural services and the management of them. Culture, arts and heritage make a strong contribution to the Council's Corporate Plan 2016-2019 'Building a Better Reading', in particular the priorities of:

- **Keeping the town, clean, safe, green and active**
- **Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living**
- **Providing infrastructure to the support the economy**

Cultural services enjoy the support of the political leadership with active engagement from the portfolio holder, the Chair of the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee and the Chair of the Arts and Heritage Forum.

In this challenging financial context for the Council, cultural services are well placed to help capitalise on the opportunities that economic growth and a vibrant independent arts sector can bring to the place. A new Cultural and Heritage Strategy 2015-30 has been produced with partners and consultation on its development led to 2016 being designated a 'Year of Culture'. The strategy notes that:

“By 2030, Reading will be recognised as a centre of creativity with a reputation for cultural and heritage excellence at a regional, national and international level with increased engagement across the town”

The commitment to culture is evident in Reading with evidence of tangible investment and support, ranging from stated priorities in the Council Plan through to the capital investment in the Town Hall and Museum, library service modernisation, South Street Arts Centre and

the Abbey Quarter. The Council has undertaken a programme to reduce the revenue costs of its in-house services, while driving up income through a focused programme of capital investment, modernisation and culture change. Recent developments include:

- Capital investment with ACE to refurbish South Street Arts Centre and redevelop it to offer a mix of theatre, poetry, comedy and music in an intimate environment. The improvements have focused on creating a more flexible space to increase the financial sustainability of the venue.
- Successfully driving up income to circa £3m at the Hexagon, a 1600 seater performance venue which delivers a popular programme of touring product from rock, pop, drama, musicals to comedy as well as pantomime and a classical season. As well as being popular with adults, the Hexagon has featured in a list of top children's venues in the Telegraph.
- Re-development of the Town Hall and Museum along with its historic Concert Hall, café and a range of spaces for commercial hire to maximise income generation opportunities. This has included the relocation of a range of services as part of the wider corporate asset strategy.
- The Abbey Project, with HLF funds to restore the Abbey ruins, deliver interpretation and a five-year activity programme as well as associated improvements to Reading Museum. This includes the fascinating possibility that another King of England, Henry I, could be found under another car park – this time under the tarmac at Reading Prison.
- Modernisation of the library service, including replacement of the libraries management system, introduction of Wifi and self-service technology. The libraries review is resulting in community hubs with co-located services with children's centres and other services. This is a well-supported approach nationally to reducing costs while maintaining the core values of a library service. Particularly impressive was the individual approach taken to each area so the most effective solution was arrived at, rather than applying a one size fits all approach.

The 2016 'Year of Culture' aimed to raise Reading's profile and reputation as a cultural destination with a coordinated programme of hundreds of arts and cultural events. The programme was managed by Reading UKCIC. They levered in £100k private sector sponsorship in addition to ACE's 'Ambition for Excellence' funded contribution. Increasing collaboration in recent months – particularly with the University and Reading UKCIC - have stimulated a raft of ambitious partnership projects including an ACE application for joint National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status for the University's Museum of English Rural Life and Reading Museum; an application to the Great Place scheme; a new Cultural Education Partnership, the new Reading on Thames festival and the University's new Institute of Heritage and Creativity.

6. Feedback

6.1 Are you maximising financial sustainability and resilience?

Reading Council is facing a very serious budgetary deficit. Managers and staff understand the need to develop a commercial approach across cultural services and for this to sit alongside public service values. The peer team found cultural services staff to be creative, entrepreneurial and focused on income targets. They demonstrated a clear desire to significantly reduce or remove the need for public subsidy where possible and to deliver high quality public services. Three examples are the increased box office income at the Hexagon due to effective programming and contract negotiations, the reconfiguration of facilities at the Town Hall to drive up income generation, and the scale and demand for the museum handling boxes.

However, internal processes and procedures are acting as barriers to 'doing business', for example the ability to respond quickly to HR matters such as increasing the number of casual staff at short notice to meet demand, or the inflexibility of the IT contract to allow the teams to successfully market services through social media. Removing these internal corporate barriers at the center would enable officers to compete for 'business'.

Partners recognise the financial constraints on the Council. They are keen to move forward at pace but at times are constrained by the Council's inability to respond quickly or reluctance to delegate control where appropriate. This can be overcome by the Council agreeing a set of shared priorities and seeking ways to facilitate priority initiatives at little or no cost to the Council or on the basis of their added social or financial value.

The strength of operational collaboration with the University on the cultural programme is impressive and has directly influenced the establishment of the University's Institute of Heritage and Creativity. The strategic relationship with the University holds a great opportunity to be developed further to increase the appeal of the town to students and staff, expand research and innovation, provide student work experience opportunities, and increase graduate retention. This also enables the Reading economy to benefit more from the innovation generated from a live programme of University led local graduate opportunities and student placements. De Montfort University's '#DMUlocal' programme provides an interesting model for university engagement.

A coordinated and close working relationship with Reading UKCIC holds great potential but at the present time there appears to be some disconnect. The relationship would benefit from a strategic conversation with senior elected members and officers about respective roles in relation to arts and culture and place shaping, as part of the wider economic development focus. There is a real opportunity to build on the successful role Reading UKCIC took in delivering and contributing to the Year of Culture, their declared support for the arts and culture sectors in Reading, and their desire to co-invest into the delivery of the place shaping agenda. The peer team believe that the relationship between the Council and Reading UKCIC is a mature one and both parties are confident enough to develop a meaningful and rewarding commissioning relationship – with targets agreed and set - that will achieve significant outcomes.

6.2 In your review of cultural partnership, how might you reshape this to reflect more recent developments and to drive and add value to the delivery of the Culture and Heritage Strategy?

Following the Year of Culture, there is a well-articulated demand for the partnership structure to be re-engineered. The Council is aware of this but has yet to agree with partners how best to reconfigure it.

The ambition expressed by a wide range of individuals for art, culture and heritage in Reading is both impressive and carries with it a real investment for the sector. It is an opportune moment to review the whole landscape of the Council's governance arrangements for the arts, culture and heritage including all partnerships, forums and committees to redesign the role of the Council as a strategic leader in this field. Currently the partnerships, forums and committees are so multi-faceted it has led to a lack of clarity about decision making and authority.

Our recommendation is that you refocus the governance structure for the sector, establishing a clear governance pyramid and identifying a leadership role for the Council which is agreed by all partners. The new arrangements would enable strategic planning and programming; design and deliver investment strategies; oversee commissioning; and provide overall programme governance to ensure the delivery of outcomes.

A starting point could be a reformed Cultural Partnership Board hosted by the Council and including representatives of the leadership from the University and Reading UKCIC. This Board could be supported by the Cultural Partnership Executive group, an officer working group comprising senior representatives from all three institutions. The relationship with the Council's Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee and its role in making recommendations and decisions also needs to be established. The current Arts and Heritage Forum would provide the open access networking forum embracing representatives from across the arts, culture and heritage sectors. The already high-functioning and well-regarded Cultural Education Partnership would remain as it is focusing on its specialist interest area.

6.3. What else could you be doing to secure private sector investment into the delivery of culture?

The Council has made great strides in increasing external investment in culture. We would widen the scope of this point to be about 'investment' per se rather than a sole focus on the private sector. There are opportunities to develop giving from the position of Corporate Social Responsibility, philanthropy, sponsorship and support in kind. The Council would benefit from agreeing a fundraising strategy with Reading UKCIC, the University and sector partners. Reading UKCIC has demonstrated their appetite and aptitude for delivering some of the key priorities of the Culture and Heritage Strategy and it would be beneficial to confirm and consolidate their role in place shaping, using arts, culture and heritage as an economic driver.

The people we met at the Council understood the importance of the authority's place shaping role. The Council as a whole should focus its efforts on encouraging and

enabling innovation with partners and officers, removing barriers that slow the pace of change or obstruct their ability to do business. As stated above we found cultural services staff to be commercially focused but they now need the tools to do the job and run the 'businesses'. Sometimes Council processes can work against these requirements and can be inflexible. Inviting some of your key staff and partners such as Reading UKCIC, to advise on business practice and the tools and changes that could help equip officers in a competitive environment is likely to generate some quick wins.

As the business culture develops you will need to consider your capacity to market your service and the skills required to make sales. We can suggest potential external sources of support for this if required. In addition, Barnsley Museums and Tyne and Wear Museums and Archives have both set up interesting models for Development Trusts for the purposes of fundraising without any operational responsibilities.

Overall we noted that there should be improved coordination of marketing of the cultural offer across Reading. Developing this will become increasingly important if Reading is to maximise its potential as a visitor destination in the future.

6.4 What else could you be doing to maximise the contribution of culture to key corporate priorities and community outcomes?

You set out to us in the introductory session the Council's firm commitment to tackling inequality and we heard from staff that they were aware of local analysis setting out needs, such as the JSNA. However, we found insufficient clarity about how this commitment can be achieved and believe you have some way to go before you can evidence that you are meeting the needs of your diverse population. While we heard some examples of good practice, diversity did not have the prominence we might have expected. For example, among the Key Performance Indicators you provided, only the adult education service is reporting on how well you are meeting the needs of your fast expanding BAME population, people with disabilities or those on low incomes.

Unless equality and diversity related data is collected and analysed, there is a risk that you base your services on assumptions rather than hard facts. Other authorities are well placed to share good practice in this area, for example Leicester City Council which was awarded Beacon Status for Culture and Sport for hard to reach groups and which is likely to be the first local authority outside of London to have a non-white majority population.

Understanding audiences through detailed customer insight not only enables provision of a more equal service, leading to increased engagement and participation, it also makes good business sense. A comprehensive approach to data capture and improving customer insight should be adopted, utilising tools such as "Mosaic" and "Audience Finder" which require a small level of investment but which should reap rewards. This would also be useful in the development of the Abbey Project.

Staff have a good understanding of the contribution their services make to corporate priorities but as a service you need to capture and evidence this more effectively and agree priorities with commissioners, the corporate centre and the political leadership. You could do more to share your key successes and plans with internal partners to let

them know your contribution to corporate priorities and to enlist their help in delivering the ambitions of the Culture and Heritage Strategy.

There are some excellent examples of performance management, linked to corporate and service priorities, for example a robust set of indicators in the library service which are regularly monitored and reported. All of the services need to be able to demonstrate the 'golden thread' running from strategy to delivery and have in place a performance management system that provides visibility and timely reporting. This will enable political and managerial overview and inform decision making. A review of your performance management framework is advised to ensure it is focused on outcomes, monitors progress and provides appropriate visibility to senior officers and elected members. In addition, producing some resources – from case studies to a prospectus – would help you to celebrate good practice and to use as an advocacy tool. Writing up your key successes as case studies for the consideration of the LGA or Arts Council for their websites would be a quick win. As early adopters in developing a Cultural Education Partnership, Reading has a real opportunity to showcase its good practice in this area.

7. Next steps

Immediate next steps

The peer team appreciate the senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of further activity to support this. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this. Mona Seghal, Principal Adviser, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association (LGA). Her contact details are: Email mona.seghal@local.gov.uk and Mobile 07795 291006.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	5 JULY 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	GREAT PLACE SCHEME: 'READING-ON-THAMES'		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	SARAH HACKER	PORTFOLIO:	CULTURE, SPORT & CONSUMER SERVICES
SERVICE:	ECONOMIC & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	GRANT THORNTON	TEL:	0118 937 2416
JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF ECONOMIC & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	E-MAIL:	grant.thornton@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Great Place Scheme ('the Scheme') is a new joint funding initiative by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Arts Council England (ACE) and Historic England (HE). Following submission of a full bid in January 2017 the Council was informed that its bid had been successful on the 13th April 2017, one of only 16 successful bids nationally. This report provides an overview of the rationale behind the bid in the context of existing activity; a summary of the key areas of work that will be supported by the grant award of £558,400, including who will lead on delivery of these over the eligible expenditure period that runs until December 2020; and a summary of the next steps required to ensure that proposals are progressed in accordance with grant conditions. The report seeks the Committee's endorsement of the proposals and support for their ongoing implementation

1.2 The core narrative of the successful bid to the Great Place Scheme is attached at Appendix 1.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 That Committee notes the content of the report and the key work-streams that will be supported by the Great Place Scheme Grant.

2.2 That Committee notes the link between the Great Place Scheme and delivery of the recommendations of the Cultural Services Peer Challenge (the subject of a separate report to this Committee).

2.3 That Committee endorses the work undertaken to date to secure the Great Place Scheme grant and supports the proposals for the Council and its partners to take forward implementation.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The ambition to raise Reading's cultural profile and reputation is about both the outcomes for Reading as a place and delivering better quality of life for residents. The delivery of culture and heritage contributes to achieving the following Corporate Priorities:

- Keeping the Town clean, safe green and active
- Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living
- Providing infrastructure to support the economy.

3.2 A new Cultural and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030, developed under the auspices of the Cultural Partnership, was endorsed by the Council's Policy Committee in November 2015. The new Culture and Heritage Strategy clearly sets out an aspirational vision for culture and heritage to play a key role in the town's future, enhancing the quality of life for residents and increasing the attractiveness of the town for visitors and investors. The Strategy envisages Reading's profile and reputation as a cultural destination being transformed over the coming years, building from a strong base of arts and heritage organisations and assets and catalysed by a Year of Culture in 2016. The Great Place Scheme is strongly aligned with and directly contributes to achieving the strategic ambition of the Culture and Heritage Strategy.

3.3 The new Economic Development Plan led by Reading UK CIC, "Growing Opportunity" has the three key objectives of: raising Reading's profile; growing opportunities to strengthen the local economy; and employment for local people. The further development of arts, culture and digital economy to contribute to these objectives is at the heart of the plan.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position:

The Great Place Scheme is a new joint funding initiative by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Arts Council England (ACE) and Historic England (HE). The aim of the Scheme is:

'To put arts, culture and heritage at the heart of the local vision for 12 places across England, making a step change in the contribution of culture in those areas and embedding them in the places' plans for the future. Four of these places will be rural. It will fund projects in areas where there is already a strong local partnership approach and a commitment to embed arts, culture and heritage as a core part of local plans, policies and strategies - cementing partnerships across the public, private and voluntary sectors'.

The stated ambition of this pilot programme is to support local areas to:

- Inspire a vision of how culture can change your place;
- Connect culture with new partners to help change places for the better;
- Incorporate a vision for culture into ambitions for your place;
- Build and share learning.

The scheme will award each successful place funding of between £500,000 and £1.5m for three year programmes running to December 2020.

Unsurprisingly given the levels of funding available there was strong interest and competition for this new funding stream and a two-stage process was adopted.

Following a successful expression of interest the Council submitted a full application in January 2017 entitled 'Reading-on-Thames', reflecting the focus of the Scheme on place making and distinctiveness and learned that this bid had been successful in April 2017. This was one of 16 successful bids nationally (beyond the 12 originally specified) and the only successful bid for an urban area in the south-east region (the only other successful bid for the south-east was for East Kent which got through as one of the rural areas).

Referencing the emerging 'Place-shaping' 2050 Vision being led by Reading UK CIC, the University and local businesses and the Vision's strong thematic references to rivers, parks, festivals and culture, the proposals in Reading's bid were framed within the context of existing activities and building blocks, including:

- A new aspirational Culture and Heritage Strategy;
- The Abbey Revealed project funded by the Council and HLF. A nationally significant restoration of the Abbey ruins with a 5 year interpretation and engagement programme;
- HLF funded revamp of the Museum of English Rural Life and an associated engagement and development programme;
- The existing award of 'Ambition for Excellence' funding of £450,000 for Reading from ACE to a partnership led by Reading University for the 'Reading International' visual arts programme (that included £150k to support Artangel's 'Inside' programme at Reading Prison). The 'Ambition for Excellence' funding stream shares some of the objectives of the Great Places Scheme and so a focus on gaps / complementary opportunities was considered essential.
- Refurbishment of South Street arts centre as a vibrant hub;
- The success of the Year of Culture 2016 and a focus on developing a legacy programme, embedding culture and heritage as integral to economic success;
- Newly launched Cultural Education Partnership with an action plan to transform cultural opportunities for young people.

To build on this momentum the bid focused on complementary programmes that had the potential to further transform cultural opportunities for residents and visitors, broadening and deepening the reach and impact of cultural activities on outcomes for the town. The 5 key strands of activity proposed in the bid are set out more fully in Appendix 1 but in summary are:

1. A new Delivery Board - effectively a revamped Cultural Partnership providing strategic drive and creating effective sub-groups for delivery;
2. Research and Evaluation - identifying best practice, researching local needs and ongoing evaluation to inform the iterative development of new initiatives and interventions;
3. Cultural Outreach and Commissioning - linking to the research strand above, connecting cultural organisations and partners such as public health, adult social care and education to create a platform for mainstream commissioning of cultural activities to deliver on key social outcomes;

4. A new 'Reading-on-Thames' Festival - celebrating Reading's identity and providing a platform for cultural excellence, engagement of local cultural organisations and widely accessible for local people (N.B the Great Place Scheme will provide funding to support this new festival for 3 years from 2018 but it will be piloted in September 2017 with the support of a separate grant approval by ACE to Reading UK CIC);
5. Economic Development and Business Engagement - build from the strong support from the business community for the Year of Culture 2016 and embed culture and heritage in economic development and business strategies.

4.2 Options Proposed

The grant award letter was received by the Council in mid-April with the 'Approved Purposes', against which progress will be monitored, reflecting the 5 strands of activity as outlined above. Following approval there are a number of requirements that must be satisfied in order to receive approval from the funders to commence delivery - 'Permission to Start'. These include:

- Cost break down and cash flow;
- Confirmation of partnership funding;
- Timetable / activity programme (with more detail for year1);
- Project management and procurement arrangements;
- Job descriptions for any staff to be employed utilising grant funding;
- Service Level Agreements with key delivery partners.

Officers are currently working up the detail of these requirements, including liaison with key delivery partners, with a view to obtaining 'permission to start' by the end of July and for delivery to fully commence from September 2017. Some elements are being fast-tracked to ensure that impetus and progress can be maintained, including recruitment of a project development post by the Council and a facilitated workshop to re-configure the Cultural Partnership.

Whilst the whole programme is collaborative and will involve a range of partners and delivery organisations, the leads on the key strands of activity are as follows:

1. New Delivery Board - Reading Borough Council
2. Research and Evaluation - Reading University
3. Cultural Outreach and Commissioning - Reading Borough Council
4. Reading-on-Thames Festival - Reading UK CIC
5. Economic Development and Business Engagement - Reading UK CIC.

The required legal agreements with the University and Reading UK CIC as lead partners are also being progressed.

4.3 Other Options Considered

The award of grant is clearly tied to the 'Approved Purposes' and whilst there is a degree of flexibility to enable adjustments over the 3 year delivery period the grant can only be utilised in accordance with these 'Approved Purposes'.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The ambition to raise Reading's cultural profile and reputation is about both the outcomes for Reading as a place and delivering better quality of life for residents.

The delivery of culture and heritage contributes to achieving the following Corporate Priorities:

- Keeping the Town clean, safe green and active
- Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living
- Providing infrastructure to support the economy.

5.2 A new Cultural and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030, developed under the auspices of the Cultural Partnership, was endorsed by the Council's Policy Committee in November 2015. This strategy has an over-arching ambition that:

'By 2030, Reading will be recognised as a centre of creativity with a reputation for cultural and heritage excellence at a regional, national and international level with increased engagement across the town.'

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 There are specific requirements and guidelines for publicity for Great Place Scheme Projects and in particular the funders are keen that the public know how they have contributed towards putting arts, culture and heritage at the heart of 16 places across the country by playing National Lottery games.

6.2 Community engagement and information is at the heart of plans for delivering Reading's Great Place Scheme proposals. In particular the research and commissioning strands of the programme will require extensive community involvement and incorporate community led research models. More broadly information, marketing and engagement are central to audience development across much of the cultural sector, including the many community based culture and heritage delivery organisations.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 It is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant with regard to the content of this report.

7.2 A particular focus of the proposals is to enable widespread access to cultural opportunities and to address the needs of more vulnerable groups through a programme of cultural commissioning.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Council will be required to comply with the Great Place Scheme 'Standard Terms of Grant'. These mirror those of the HLF with which the Council is familiar through its management of other HLF funded projects. There are no additional conditions in respect of the project beyond these standard terms.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Great Place Scheme bidding guidelines stipulated that a minimum of 10% of direct project costs should be provided by cash contributions from delivery partners. The Council and Reading UK CIC have each committed to provide £30,000 over the life of the programme to meet this requirement. For the Council this amount can be

contained within existing budget allocations for Economic & Cultural Development Services.

9.2 It is anticipated that over the course of the Scheme's implementation additional match-funding will be generated through business sponsorship and commissioning activity.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 GREAT PLACE SCHEME: Reading-on-Thames - HLF grant award letter 13th April 2017.

So why 'Reading-on-Thames'?

Reading has an emergent 'Place-shaping' 2050 Vision developed by a strong business led partnership and Reading University. The Council has endorsed the direction of travel and engaged as a partner but has not driven this visioning process, itself indicative of a wide stakeholder base with a real grasp of how culture can be pivotal to the town's future success. Based on wide-ranging stakeholder engagement and 'hands-on' workshops the vision is that by 2050 Reading will be renowned as:

1. 'A city of Rivers and Parks'.... Recognising how water has shaped much of Reading. Not just the River Thames, but the River Kennet, the Kennet & Avon Canal and the Holy Brook that all weave their way through and under much of our city, defining and offering opportunity via their river banks and crossings. The City would celebrate Reading's waterways, opening them up to offer recreational spaces and animated parks.
2. 'A City of Festivals and Culture'.... Building on the success of the iconic Reading Festival to deliver arts and culture to people of all ages and ethnicities. We would look to facilitate community interaction and opportunity within Reading, weaving festivals back into and throughout the city, offering vibrant public gathering spaces and integrating and celebrating our city's heritage, bringing our city to life.
3. 'A Green Tech City'.... Evolving from the established technology focus of our city. It celebrates and encourages diversity through business incubation units, 'Ideas Factories' and a city centre University campus through which to exhibit and test cutting edge ideas, no matter what faculty they are emerging from.

This vision thus already embraces cultural excellence grounded in Reading's particular attributes as a place, its diverse multi-cultural demographic and its economic and business strengths. It is also fully aligned with the aspirational Culture and Heritage Strategy (developed through the Cultural Partnership) and both place culture firmly at the heart of the town's future, this being both continued economic success and delivering a better quality of life for all.

In this regard "culture" as referenced in this application is shorthand for the whole indivisible gamut of arts, culture and heritage, all intimately connected and related. For Reading this is grounded in the pivotal role of the medieval Reading Abbey and its patronage by Henry 1 in the development of the town and this growth being strongly associated with its waterways. The dissolution of the Abbey reminiscent of a complex history resonating through the ages with today's 'Abbey Quarter' a focus for the restoration of the Abbey Ruins and reconnecting the town with its illustrious past; bringing back Abbey Gate building (Grade 1 Listed) into use as an education centre, reflecting its one-time role in Jane Austen's schooling; the fully restored 'Green Flag' Forbury Gardens; and the exciting future possibilities of the adjacent vacant Listed Reading Prison, highlighting not only the strong Victorian heritage of the town and it's growth but also the infamous association with Oscar Wilde; all of this juxtaposed with the modernity of the iconic 'Blade' office building. These connections and inter-relationships have already figured strongly in Reading's 'Year of Culture 2016' with an acclaimed new play based on the life of Henry 1; the phenomenally successful 'Inside' exhibition by Artangel at Reading Prison; and a wide range of contemporary cultural events grounded in and celebrating Reading's personality and distinctiveness.

We are clearly not starting from a low base and context is vitally important to fully understand our Great Place proposals, how these complement, extend and deepen the impacts of current activities and why this is such a timely opportunity to really deliver “networked arts and heritage” in Reading.

Reading is a vibrant economically successful town at the heart of the Thames Valley and widely recognised as the sub-regional ‘capital’. The town has a resident population of approximately 161,000 within tightly drawn boundaries. This resident population is richly diverse, with diversity increasing in younger age cohorts. Despite the Borough’s small geographic size the town directly serves a wider catchment of approximately 400,000 people within a 20 minute drive time of the town centre who regularly come to the town centre for a range of activities. The population of the town continues to grow (9% in the last 10 years) and major housing developments in surrounding Boroughs will significantly increase the population in Reading’s catchment over the next decades. Whilst focused on activity within the town, our Great Place proposals will benefit this much wider catchment and extend it.

Despite these many attributes of a thriving and successful town: high levels of employment; prosperity; a skilled well-educated workforce; and a high quality of life enjoyed by many people within Reading, there are significant numbers of residents who are struggling. Reading has many of the attributes of a London Borough with affluence sitting cheek by jowl with areas of significant deprivation. Across the Borough nearly 20% of children, and their families, live in poverty and 30% of Reading pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. Whilst the Borough has a young population overall, the frail and elderly are increasing and Reading has a relatively high proportion of vulnerable elderly. Building from existing activities, such as the established Cultural Education Partnership (CEP), the Great Place Scheme offers great potential to address these issues of inequality and to improve outcomes for local people.

The building blocks to achieve this are varied and significant, Reading as a ‘cultural hub’ has made a significant step-change over recent years epitomised by the ‘**Reading Year of Culture 2016**’ and its role as a catalyst for a sustained programme to raise Reading’s reputation and profile, delivering a range of benefits to local people and further bolstering economic success:

- A new aspirational **Culture and Heritage Strategy** and its vision that: ‘By 2030, Reading will be recognised as a centre of creativity with a reputation for cultural and heritage excellence at a regional, national and international level with increased engagement across the town’;
- ‘**Reading International**’: an ambitious three year visual arts programme led by the University’s new Institute of Heritage & Creativity in partnership with Artangel, the Council and Reading UK CIC (the Council’s arms-length economic development company), with funding from ACE’s ‘Ambition for Excellence’ programme. The funding has supported **Artangel’s ‘Inside: Artists and Writers in Reading Prison**’ as the ‘front-end’ of this three year programme and it will culminate in a major exhibition in the re-opened Abbey Ruins in 2019. This offers an unprecedented opportunity to transform the visual arts in Reading, create a legacy for Reading Year of Culture 2016, deliver a high profile celebration for the reopening of Reading Abbey Ruins, and develop partnerships with local arts organisations, schools and communities. This in turn will generate a culture of artistic ambition, community involvement and audience development in the region to support a legacy biennial Reading International ‘festival’;

- **The 'Abbey Revealed'** project funded by the Council and HLF: Of national significance the project involves the essential conservation programme to the Abbey Ruins and the Abbey Gateway (both Scheduled Monument and Grade I listed); associated branding, signage, interpretation; and a five year engagement programme of events and activities across the heritage site. Reading's Museum service is pivotal for the successful delivery of the project and a rejuvenated 'Abbey Quarter';
- HLF funded redevelopment of the University's **Museum of English Rural Life (MERL)**: The new museum aims to challenge perceptions about rural England by revealing the historical and contemporary relevance of country life to urban settlements and evolution over the ages. The new interactive galleries explore questions of identity, environment, technology, culture and health. As with the Abbey Revealed project there is an extensive engagement and activity programme extending into future years;
- A new **Institute of Heritage and Creativity** established by the University to focus on research, innovation, partnership engagement and Reading as a place. Pulling together expertise, capacity and commitment from across the University's many areas of relevant expertise to research and develop best practice, engage with other stakeholders, including local communities. Ultimately to bring the University 'off-campus' and impact more widely on Reading's future development and the well-being of its citizens;
- Ongoing **collaboration** across the Museum's sector and the potential, in particular, for the collaboration between Reading Museum, MERL and the Institute of Heritage and Creativity to become an exemplar for community engagement and interaction. The two Museums are currently jointly applying to ACE for National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status.
- Refurbishment of **South Street Arts Centre**, a vibrant hub for original and eclectic work resonating across different generations and Reading's diverse communities. Extensive remodelling and refurbishment will consolidate the venue's national reputation for excellence, particularly for its contemporary theatre and music, and also enable an expanded outreach and educational programme. South Street is currently applying to ACE for NPO status;
- Developing a **Year of Culture legacy**, embedding culture and heritage as integral to the future success of the town and outcomes for its citizens. The Year of Culture has already delivered the engagement of national arts organisations in Reading; the development of new relationships between artists, arts groups, Reading businesses and stakeholders; the unlocking of new funding for the arts in Reading and new platforms and venues for artistic output in the town and an increase in the quantity and ambition of artistic output;
- **The Cultural Education Partnership (CEP)** with an agreed action plan to transform cultural opportunities for young people, especially those young people who otherwise might not have access to such opportunities. The CEP is acknowledged to be at the vanguard as an early adopter and has committed representation from key stakeholders, including Berkshire Maestros, the College, the University, schools and the Culture and Arts Network (CAN) of local delivery organisations.
- **The Cultural Partnership** has successfully overseen the development of the Culture and Heritage Strategy and the delivery of a Year of Culture, that itself emerged as a result of extensive consultation to develop this strategy. It is acknowledged that in the light of all the progress and developments referenced above, and not least the emergence of new key

strategic partners, the Partnership needs to grow and evolve. The Cultural Partnership is already in the process of reviewing its membership and terms of reference in order to ensure that it can drive and add value to delivery of the Culture & Heritage Strategy. Taking forward the legacy of the Year of Culture, key initiatives as outlined above, and facilitating further activity and collaboration will be key objectives and fully integrated with our Great Place Scheme.

We are determined to build on this momentum with carefully considered complementary programmes of exceptional quality to create a fully networked permanent legacy, transforming cultural opportunities both for residents and visitors. This is why context is so important, we need to ensure that scarce resources are adding value, carefully targeted to broaden the reach and impact of cultural activity on outcomes for the town. Key areas identified for the Great Places Scheme to achieve this on the back of already strongly developed partnerships and initiatives are:

1. A new delivery board which embeds culture at a strategic level and creating new sustainable sub-groups for culture, such as 'Ageing Well' and supporting new delivery partnerships such as the Cultural Education Partnership (CEP), Reading International and Junction Dance.
2. Using the momentum and success of 'Reading International' to build profile, reputation, partnerships and community engagement. This will include pulling together the research capability of the University, including the new Institute of Heritage and Creativity, in various fields to develop best practice geared to the needs of Reading and its people.
3. A community cultural outreach programme for targeted communities – connecting cultural organisations and partners such as public health, adult social care and education, creating a platform for mainstreaming cultural commissioning and helping to deliver key social outcomes.
4. Creating a new *Reading -on-Thames Festival* that will cement and celebrate Reading's unique identity and provide a platform for cultural excellence. The Festival will create a sustainable celebration of Reading's identity, enhancing a sense of place for residents and the attractiveness of Reading's cultural assets to visitors.
5. Build from the business engagement success of the Year of Culture to embed culture and heritage in economic development and business strategies.

Whilst it is difficult to fully convey or elucidate the complex and positive links between these strands of activity and existing initiatives, they are considered more fully below (with further detail in the Work Plan):

1. Strategic Partnership Building

The Cultural Partnership needs to evolve to reflect the many positive developments in Reading over recent years and to formalise delivery arrangements with a greater range of committed partners. Until recently key players such as the University, Reading UK CIC and their business stakeholders, the health and well-being sector (also reflected as a 'gap' in 3 below) and heritage focused organisations, including Reading Museum and MERL, have not been directly represented. In addition new partnerships and networks have developed, not least through the impetus provided by the Year of Culture and the rapid development and support for the CEP. There is a need to ensure that relationships and delivery plans are effectively networked across this expanded range of activities and that there are strategic

linkages that add value and drive progress and impact. The Cultural Partnership has already formally agreed to re-invent itself and our Great Place Scheme proposals include external support to assist in accelerating and embedding this process. It is currently envisaged that this new strategic 'Great Place Board' will provide overarching co-ordination and drive to deliver on the ambitions of the Culture & Heritage Strategy (and the Great Place Scheme itself) with a number of delivery focused 'sub-partnerships': CEP, Ageing-well, Skills & Economy, as well as separate implementation groups for key initiatives such as Reading International and the Abbey Quarter.

2. Research and Evaluation

The establishment of the Institute of Heritage and Creativity, with its strong existing links to Reading International, provides a real opportunity to focus on researching best practice, based on national experience and local needs, and ongoing evaluation to inform the iterative development of successful new initiatives and interventions. As well as the existing academic strengths across a range of faculties this will also involve the innovative 'Participation Lab' that utilises community representatives from Reading's more deprived communities to research local needs and to develop solutions to meet these. It is envisaged that this programme of research and evaluation will directly inform the development and delivery of strand 3 below over the course of the 'Scheme' and beyond.

3. Cultural Outreach and Commissioning

As outlined above, Reading has a challenging socio-economic demographic with complex patterns of inequality and deprivation. Reading has already engaged with the national 'Cultural Commissioning' initiative attending a number of workshops with senior officers, public health and commissioning leads attending. Whilst we have begun to broker conversations, for example with our social care and mental health services, cultural commissioning to deliver against key local priorities is weakly developed. In the context of the Great Place Scheme we believe that this is a key area to address, embedding cultural activities as a means of delivering against service priorities and improving outcomes for local people. The capacity of the research strand outlined above will be a key ingredient in facilitating this along with the already established willingness and goodwill of service providers to engage. Activities will also serve to embed other sectors and agencies in partnership and delivery structures.

4. Reading-on Thames Festival

We need to build on the ambition of the Year of Culture to continue to do new things and provide new opportunities for Reading's arts and cultural groups, supporting their increasingly ambitious plans and programmes. Our experience of the Year of Culture was that having a theme to respond to, however broadly and creatively, helped generate a focused and energetic response from across Reading's vibrant cultural sector, helping to build networks and collaboration, as well as raising artistic quality and ambition. There is also strong evidence that free to access activities played a significant role in broadening engagement, especially with more disadvantaged communities. Led by Reading UK CIC,

whose key role is to increase investment and grow the economy, the proposed Reading-on Thames Festival would meet multiple objectives and assist in the ongoing development of a relationship with the town's business community. N.B. Delivery of this Festival in 2017 is subject to a parallel application to ACE for Grants for Arts funding on the basis that any decision on the Great Place Scheme application will be too late to enable delivery. The two separate applications are complementary but not interdependent.

5. Economic Development and Business Engagement

As reflected in the key role envisaged for Reading UK CIC in strengthened cultural partnership delivery, the potential contribution of culture to the future economic success of Reading is both widely acknowledged and embraced. The Year of Culture elicited a positive response from the business community with significant cash and in-kind contributions. We believe that the Great Place Scheme can help embed this win-win relationship as Reading continues to grow and prosper, creating new and sustainable funding platforms as well as enhancing inward investment, quality of life and visitor numbers. The existing strength of business leadership with regard to the 2050 visioning process is indicative of potential here for Reading to become a national exemplar.

We believe that our Great Place Scheme proposals will wrap around and add value to existing initiatives and activities that have already resulted in a step-change in the contribution of culture to the life of the town, its status as a cultural hub and the resilience and ambition of local cultural organisations. With the pivotal role of culture already acknowledged in visions and strategies for the future, the strands of activity we are proposing will accelerate progress, strengthen and extend relationships and significantly increase impact, especially on addressing key social and economic outcomes, and provide even greater scope for the involvement and growth of the sector. Truly networked arts and heritage.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	5 JULY 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	11
TITLE:	USE OF S106 AND RIGHT TO BUY RECEIPTS TO INCREASE THE PROVISION OF NEW AFFORDABLE HOMES		
LEAD COUNCILLOR	CLLR JOHN ENNIS	PORTFOLIO:	HOUSING
SERVICE:	HOUSING	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES	E-MAIL:	Sarah.gee@reading.gov.uk
	HEAD OF PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATORY SERVICES		Giorgio.framalicco@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 Officers have continued to review opportunities to bring forward the development of new Council homes in order to increase the supply of affordable housing and maximise the use of Right to Buy (RTB) 1:1 replacement and S106 receipts.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on the current £26.6m Local Authority New Build (LANB) programme which has to date delivered 63 new units of local authority housing, with schemes on site to deliver another 85 units. The report also details proposals and funding arrangements for the next phase of the programme.
- 1.3 The report seeks spend approval for a budget of circa £20m to deliver phase two of the programme, funded through a combination of borrowing (both Housing Revenue Account and General Fund); Right to Buy receipts; and S106 receipts. It is estimated that this would deliver circa 100 new affordable Council homes depending on cost inflation.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- 2.1 That HNL Committee notes the current position regarding site appraisals and funding capacity to support the next phase of the Council's Local Authority New Build (LANB) programme.
- 2.2 That HNL Committee recommends to Policy Committee that spend approval of up to £19.9m is granted to deliver new Council homes on identified sites, and to support the acquisition of market sale properties to provide affordable homes.
- 2.3 That HNL Committee recommends to Policy Committee that it delegates authority to the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Lead Members for Housing and Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, the Director of Finance and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, to agree which sites to progress within the spend approvals and restrictions set out in the report.
- 2.4 That HNL Committee recommends to Policy Committee that it delegates authority to the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing, the Director of Finance and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to enter into contracts with the winning bidders in respect of multi-disciplinary/consultancy services and works to deliver the schemes, as set out in the report.
- 2.5 That HNL committee recommends to Policy Committee that it delegates authority to the Head of Housing and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Head of Finance, to approve the purchase of existing properties from the open market to be held within the General Fund for the use of Temporary Accommodation, with a limit of £500,000 per single unit.

3. POLICY CONTEXT/BACKGROUND

Local Authority New Build (LANB) Programme

- 3.1 Phase 1 of the Council's new build housing programme equates to the delivery of 148 new units with a capital spend of £26.6m (including acquisition of a small number of existing residential properties). 63 of the new homes are now completed and tenanted; the remaining 85 units will complete over the next two years.
- 3.2 The sites and acquisitions that have been completed or are in progress are set out in the table below:

Development	Number of units	Type of units	Status
Cedar Court	40	40 x1 bed extra care units	Complete
Acquisitions (open market homes for sale acquired and let through the Housing Revenue Account)	12	5 x 2 bed house 7x 2 bed flats	Complete
Whitley Rise Supported Living Scheme	11	11 x 1 bed accessible flats	Complete
Conwy Close - general needs housing	57	12 x 1-bed flats, 22 x 2-bed flats 9 x 2-bed houses, 6 x 3-bed houses 8 x 4-bed houses	Construction to commence late summer 2017; phased completion autumn 2018 and spring 2019.
Lowfield Rd - modular temporary new build accommodation	28	28 x 2 bed family units	Construction commenced; completion autumn 2017.
Total	148		

3.3 As shown in the table, 28 modular units are under construction at Lowfield Road and will be used for temporary accommodation as part of the wider package of initiatives implemented to meet the Council's statutory duty to house homeless households. Temporary Accommodation is accounted for within the Council's General Fund and therefore the cost of this development is being met via a combination of RTB receipts and General Fund borrowing with no ongoing financial burden on the Council's General Fund.

Right to Buy Receipts

3.4 At the point of self-financing in 2012, new arrangements were introduced regarding the use of RTB receipts. The Council elected to enter into an agreement with central Government to retain a proportion of any RTB receipt in order to develop replacement affordable housing within the administrative area. This means that an element of each RTB receipt (currently estimated at £40K per property) has to be used to fund the development of additional affordable homes - often referred to as 'RTB 1 for 1 replacement'. There are a number of constraints on how this can be spent:

- receipts can only fund up to 30% of development or acquisition costs;
- receipts can only fund rented properties (to be used for permanent or temporary accommodation);
- receipts can't apply where there is other public subsidy and cannot fund the acquisition of public land;
- receipts cannot be transferred to a company wholly owned by a local authority as this was seen by Government as an attempt by some LAs to circumvent the RTB requirement - this has been appealed to no avail;

- receipts must be spent within 3 years of receipt or repaid with a punitive rate of interest charged if this is not achieved.
- RTB receipts cannot be combined with S106 receipts.

3.5 RTB receipts can be passed to Registered Providers (RPs) to fund 30% of a housing development (where there is no other HCA funding being provided) or retained to fund local authority new build schemes. As stated above, receipts can also be used to support the development or acquisition of properties for temporary accommodation - financing rules dictate that these properties are accounted for within the Council's General Fund and therefore the 70% match funding needs to be provided from this account. Delivering or purchasing properties within the General Fund for Temporary Accommodation, alongside the development of homes for permanent use:

- Enables receipts to be used at times when the HRA is close to the debt cap (and HRA borrowing capacity is constrained)
- Enables sites or purchases to progress that would not be viable at social rent levels (within the HRA) as rents can be charged at 90% of Local Housing Allowance for Temporary Accommodation.
- Meets the need to accommodate homeless households pending the offer of a permanent home and to reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast.
- As with acquisitions to the HRA, enables RTB receipts to be used where timescales don't permit allocation to a development - avoiding the return of receipts to Government.

3.6 Funding parameters for both local authority HRAs and Registered Providers have changed over time due to a number of Government announcements and policy changes and this is impacting on councils' and RPs' ability to utilise these receipts. As a result a number of local authorities have had to return RTB receipts to Government - there is no penalty if receipts are returned within the first quarter.

Section 106 Affordable Housing Contributions

3.7 Under current planning policy all new housing developments, which require planning permission, are expected to contribute to the delivery of new affordable housing provision to meet local need. This requirement is subject to the development being viable. Developments of four or fewer units require a commuted sum to be paid. For developments proposing five units or more RBC planning policy requires, in the first instance, for the affordable homes to be provided 'on site' and to be 30% of any development. Where there are exceptional reasons, the provision of surrogate sites or a commuted sum may be considered. On-site contributions or commuted sums are secured via a Section 106 agreement. In relation to commuted sums, receipts paid by the developer are then held by the Council and have to be used to help deliver Affordable Housing within the Borough. This would be through the funding of RBC new build housing or grant funding to a Registered Provider. The use of S106 receipts cannot be combined with the RTB receipts outline above so would need to be allocated to separate developments.

3.8 RBC has been very successful in negotiating onsite delivery of affordable housing contributions, however, in some cases financial contributions have been accepted and are required from smaller scale developments.

4. CURRENT POSITION

Budget Available

4.1 Since the re-launch of the current RTB scheme, RBC has received RTB 1:1 replacement receipts totalling £8.16m (as recorded at the end of April 2017). To date £4.96m of these receipts has been spent on or allocated to the projects listed in paragraph 3.4.

4.2 £3.2m of the receipts are currently not allocated to a particular scheme. These receipts have staggered deadlines for when they need to be spent, up to March 2020. The level of HRA borrowing is capped by Government. However, in order to optimise the use of receipts the match funding for RTB receipts can be a combination of HRA borrowing (delivering properties to be used for permanent accommodation) and General Fund borrowing (delivering units to be used for Temporary Accommodation).

4.3 Additional RTB receipts are received by the Council each quarter and, although RTB sales are slightly reducing, the average total receipt per quarter is £550k. It is anticipated that this figure will broadly continue into the future and, if retained, these receipts will result in an additional £2.2m of receipts per year.

4.4 In summary, the Council has a total of £3.2m of unallocated RTB receipts, and it is projected that a further £2.2m will be received by March 2018 (totalling £5.4m). When match funded this would result in a total development budget of c.£18m (based on RTB covering 30% of development or acquisition costs).

4.5 In addition c.£1.9m of S016 receipts (received) are also allocated for affordable housing development.

4.6 This provides a potential total budget of c.£19,900,000. It is estimated that this would deliver circa 100 new Council homes depending on cost inflation.

LANB Sites

4.7 Feasibility work is being undertaken to assess development potential and deliverability of a number of identified sites owned by the Council. A 'long list' has been produced and a 'shortlist' of potential development sites are being assessed in greater detail.

4.8 Where appropriate feasibility work has been completed, plans are being developed and site investigation works carried out with the expectation of obtaining pre-application Planning views in the next 6-9 months. If deliverable these sites will then have the potential to be built out by the Council, be held for future development (potentially through a joint venture), sold to a Registered Provider or disposed of on the open market.

- 4.9 The progression of a site and allocation of funds to a particular development will depend on the viability and projected costs of each scheme and cannot be confirmed until a detailed development plan has been produced and 3rd party encumbrances, such as access arrangements, have been resolved.
- 4.10 Officers will identify the most efficient process to appoint an appropriate works contractor and multi-disciplinary services consultant to deliver the new homes. This will involve using either an existing available legally compliant framework agreement or holding a competitive tendering exercise; either route will be in compliance with RBC's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contract Regulations 2015.
- 4.11 It is also expected that a small programme of purchasing properties, often those within existing RBC (HRA) flatted blocks, will continue. This will expand to include purchasing of properties for temporary accommodation funded via a combination of RTB receipts and General Fund borrowing.
- 4.12 The Housing Service has also identified opportunities for conversion of storage/ancillary spaces in blocks of flats to create a small number of additional flats. These contribute positively to the HRA Business Plan and will also generate contributions to the General Fund through Council Tax and New Homes Bonus.

5 PROPOSAL

- 5.1 It is proposed that initial spend approval of £19,900,000 is agreed for continuation of the LANB programme. This budget will be funded via a combination of sources as broken down below:

Funding	Amount
RTB receipts	£5.4m
S106 receipts	£1.9m
HRA or GF borrowing	Up to £12.6m

- 5.2 This level of funding will not enable all of the available short-list sites to be developed.
- 5.3 Some new homes, including acquisitions, will be funded via the General Fund and the properties let as Temporary Accommodation. These developments will be on General Fund land and subsidised through RTB receipts. The limit set by central Government on rent for temporary accommodation is 90% of Local Housing Allowance (LHA is the maximum amount which Housing Benefit will pay for a given property size) - and rents will therefore be set at this level. This model will have no ongoing financial burden on the Council's General Fund and may provide a small return.
- 5.4 Strict rules and limitations on how funding can be combined will mean that there will be three sub-groups to the LANB programme:
- RTB + HRA funded units

- RTB + GF funded units
- S106 funded units

5.5 A financial appraisal of each development or purchase will be completed and only schemes that are expected to be cost neutral or provide a positive return to either the HRA or the General Fund will be progressed to construction. This means that rental income will cover borrowing costs (interest and repayment costs), management and maintenance costs. Cost avoidance in respect of reduced use of B&B would be an additional benefit and is not included in the appraisal.

5.6 In order to expedite the process of delivering viable sites through to completion, it is recommended that delegation be given to the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods in consultation with the and Lead Members for Housing and Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, the Director of Finance and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to agree which sites to progress within the spend approvals and restrictions set out above.

5.7 It is also recommended that Policy Committee delegates authority to the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing, the Director of Finance and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to enter into contracts with the winning bidders in respect of multi-disciplinary/consultancy services and works to deliver the schemes.

5.8 Delegated authority is also requested to the Head of Housing and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Head of Finance, to approve the purchase of existing properties from the open market to be held within the General Fund for the use of Temporary Accommodation, limited to a purchase price of £500k or below.

6 CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

6.1 The proposals within this report contribute towards the Council's Corporate Plan under the strategic priority 'Providing homes for those in most need'.

7 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Not applicable to this report.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Officers will identify the most efficient process to appoint an appropriate works contractor and multi-disciplinary services consultant to deliver the new homes. This will involve using either an existing available legally compliant framework agreement or a holding a competitive tendering exercise; either route needing to be in compliance with RBC's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

- 8.2 Any legal encumbrances for sites will need to be identified at an early stage and any issues that could impede or prevent development be highlighted and where possible resolved as each individual site is progressed.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Spend approval of £19.9m is requested for an LANB programme to include the development of Council owned sites and the acquisition of properties from the market as detailed in the body of the report.
- 9.2 The decision to proceed with any purchase or development will be supported by a financial modal outlining the short, medium and long term impact of the development on Council finances. Only those that result in a neutral or positive impact will proceed.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Government's Emergency Budget and related announcements
<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/council-housing-finance>
- 10.2 Policy Committee Report July 2015.
- 10.3 HNL report November 2015