

**HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
7 JULY 2017**

Present: Councillor Dennis (Vice-Chair in the Chair);
Councillors Debs Absolom, Davies, K Edwards, Ennis, Grashoff,
Hacker, McDonald, McGonigle, Steele, Terry, Tickner and Rose
Williams.

Apologies: Councillor James (Chair) & O'Connell.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of 15 March 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were submitted:

- Community Safety Partnership - 2 February and 27 April 2017.

Resolved - That the Minutes be received.

3. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
Councillor Debs Absolom	Fire Safety Following Grenfell Tower Fire	Cllr Ennis
Councillor McGonigle	Fire Safety Following Grenfell Tower Fire	Cllr Ennis

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

4. WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE CHANGES AND CHARGEABLE GREEN WASTE COLLECTION

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which provided an update on the introduction of the revised waste collection service standard, the rescheduled collection rounds and the introduction of the chargeable green waste service.

The report explained that the revised waste collection service standards had been re-introduced on 13 February 2017 at the same time as a revised collection round structure. The revised rounds had bedded in well after a few minor problems and collection staff were enforcing the service standards. There had been issues with excess domestic waste being fly-tipped, and this was being addressed by two new Environmental Enforcement Officers who had issued 102 Community Protection

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
7 JULY 2017

Notices since February 2017. The effects of the changes on collection tonnages, recycling and contamination rates would be reported to a future meeting when the data was available.

The chargeable green waste collection service had started on 1 April 2017. Prior to the charge being introduced 16,700 residents had taken advantage of the free green waste collection, and the number of subscribers to the paid service at the end of June 2017 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.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

5. PEER REVIEW OF CULTURAL SERVICES

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report summarising the findings of a 'Peer Review' of cultural services and setting out the recommendations made by the review. The full Cultural Services Peer Challenge Feedback Report was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the Council had secured an external 'Peer Review' of cultural services funded by the Local Government Association (LGA) and Arts Council England (ACE). The report summarised the findings of the review, which had been 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 Feedback Report had 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.

The report noted that a focus of the recommendations was on the strategic partnership context with an opportunity for the Council to redefine its role as the leader of a diverse and collaborative partnership, and that the 'Great Place Scheme' bid (see Minute 6 below) included a proposal for the Cultural Partnership to act as

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
7 JULY 2017

the 'Great Place Board' providing strategic governance and oversight. Once in place this would deliver on recommendation 2 and provide the partnership infrastructure to take forward recommendations 5 and 6. The Great Place Scheme would also support delivery of recommendation 3 as it had a focus on cultural commissioning to support delivery of priority outcomes. Recommendations 1 and 4 would be further considered and taken forward by Council officers.

The report also proposed that the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee provide scrutiny of the activities and associated work-streams of the Cultural Partnership on either an annual or twice yearly basis. It was agreed at the meeting that this should take place twice a year.

Resolved -

- (1) That the outcomes of the Peer Review be noted;
- (2) That the Committee endorse the proposed next steps, including the role of a refreshed Cultural Partnership to provide strategic leadership;
- (3) That the Committee receive an twice-yearly report on the activities of the Cultural Partnership and associated work-streams.

6. GREAT PLACE SCHEME - SUCCESSFUL BID

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Committee of a successful bid to the Great Place Scheme, and seeking endorsement of the proposals and support for their ongoing implementation. The narrative section of the bid was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the Great Place Scheme was a new joint funding initiative by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Arts Council England (ACE) and Historic England (HE). Following a successful expression of interest the Council had submitted a full application entitled 'Reading-on-Thames' and learned in April 2017 that the bid had been successful with a grant award of £558,400. The bid had referenced the emerging 'Place-shaping' 2050 Vision and the Vision's strong thematic references to rivers, parks, festivals and culture, and the proposals had been framed within existing activities including: a new Culture and Heritage Strategy, the Abbey Revealed project, the revamp of the Museum of English Rural Life and an associated engagement and development programme, refurbishment of South Street Arts Centre, the newly-launched Cultural Education Partnership, developing a legacy programme for the Year of Culture 2016, and complementary opportunities relating to the 'Ambition for Excellence' ACE funding of £450,000 for the 'Reading International' visual arts programme.

The report explained that the bid proposed five key strands of activity as follows:

- A new Delivery Board - effectively a revamped Cultural Partnership providing strategic drive and creating effective sub-groups for delivery;

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
7 JULY 2017

- Research and Evaluation - identifying best practice, researching local needs and ongoing evaluation to inform the development of new initiatives and interventions;
- 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 commissioning of cultural activities to deliver on key social outcomes;
- 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 (the Great Place Scheme would provide funding to support this new festival for three years from 2018 but it would be piloted in September 2017 with the support of a separate grant by ACE to Reading UK CIC);
- Economic Development and Business Engagement - building on the strong support from the business community for the Year of Culture 2016 and embedding culture and heritage in economic development and business strategies.

The report explained that following approval of the bid there were a number of requirements to be satisfied, in order to receive approval from the funders to commence delivery. Officers were currently working on these requirements with a view to obtaining 'permission to start' by the end of July and for delivery to commence from September 2017. Some elements were being fast-tracked including recruitment of a project development post by the Council and a facilitated workshop to reconfigure the Cultural Partnership. The required legal agreements with the University and Reading UK CIC as lead partners were also being progressed.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report and the key work-streams to be supported by the Great Place Scheme Grant be noted;
- (2) That the link between the Great Place Scheme and delivery of the recommendations of the Cultural Services Peer Challenge (Minute 6 above refers) be noted;
- (3) That the work undertaken to date to secure the Great Place Scheme grant and the proposals for the Council and its partners to take forward implementation be endorsed.

7. USE OF S106 AND RIGHT TO BUY RECEIPTS TO INCREASE THE PROVISION OF NEW AFFORDABLE HOMES

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing an update on the current Local Authority New Build (LANB) programme and asking the Committee to recommend to Policy Committee the proposals and funding arrangements for the next phase of the programme.

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
7 JULY 2017

The report set out the government requirements and current position regarding the retention and use of Right To Buy (RTB) receipts, and stated that the Council had a total of £3.2m of unallocated RTB receipts, with a further £2.2m projected to be received by March 2018. When match funded by Housing Revenue Account (HRA) or General Fund borrowing of up to £12.6m (based on the requirement that RTB be used to cover no more than 30% of development or acquisition costs) this would result in a development budget of c£18m. An additional c£1.9m of s106 receipts were also allocated for affordable housing development, providing a potential total budget of c£19.9m to continue the LANB programme. This would deliver around 100 new Council homes, depending on cost inflation, and the report sought initial spend approval for this budget.

The report listed the sites included in Phase 1 of the Council's new build housing programme, which would deliver 148 new units with a capital spend of £26.6m. 63 of the new homes were now completed and tenanted and the remaining 85 units would be completed over the next two years. Feasibility work was being undertaken to assess a number of sites owned by the Council, and a shortlist of potential development sites for the next phase of the LANB programme were being assessed in detail. It was also proposed to continue a small programme of purchasing properties, often within existing Council housing blocks, and to expand this to include purchasing of properties for temporary accommodation funded via a combination of RTB receipts and General Fund borrowing. The Housing Service had also identified opportunities for conversion of storage/ancillary spaces in blocks of flats to create a small number of additional flats.

The report recommended that, in order to expedite the process of delivering viable sites through to completion, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services be authorised to agree which sites to progress within the spend approvals and restrictions set out in the report, and be authorised to enter into contracts with the winning bidders in respect of multi-disciplinary/consultancy services and works to deliver the schemes. Delegated authority was also requested for the Head of Housing and Neighbourhood Services 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.

Resolved -

That the current position regarding site appraisals and funding capacity to support the next phase of the Council's Local Authority New Build (LANB) programme be noted.

Recommended -

- (1) That Policy Committee grant spend approval of up to £19.9m to deliver new Council homes on identified sites, and support the acquisition of market sale properties to provide affordable homes;
- (2) That Policy Committee authorise the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services 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,

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
7 JULY 2017

to agree which sites to progress within the spend approvals and restrictions set out in the report;

- (3) That Policy Committee authorise the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services 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;
- (4) That Policy Committee delegate authority to the Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods 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.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 7.11pm).