

## COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 27 JANUARY 2015

**Present:** Councillor Jones (Mayor);

Councillors D Absalom, D L Absalom, Anderson, Ayub, Ballsdon, Chrisp, Davies, Dennis, Duvveen, Eden, D Edwards, K Edwards, Ennis, Gavin, Gittings, Hacker, Hopper, Hoskin, James, Khan, Lawrence, Livingston, Lovelock, Maskell, McElligott, O'Connell, Orton, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rodda, Singh, Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Terry, Tickner, Vickers, White, Whitham, J Williams, R Williams, Willis and Woodward.

**Apologies:** Councillors Stanway and Stevens.

### 34. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced that:

- Holocaust Memorial Day was held on 27 January each year. The Council stood in silence in memory of those people who had been murdered or whose lives had been changed by the Holocaust and in other acts of genocide.
- there were still a small number of vacancies in the Mayoral Team for the Reading Half Marathon to be held on 22 March 2015.
- he had been advised that the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations, required any vote taken at a Council meeting on setting the budget for the authority would record, in the Minutes of the meeting, the names of all Councillors present at the vote and how each Councillor voted. In accordance with the Regulations, the Mayor would therefore be calling for recorded votes on the Budget 2015-16: Approval of Council Tax Base, NNDR1 Estimate & Estimated Collection Fund Surplus (Minute 39 below) and Housing Revenue Account - Financial Plan 2015-16 (Minute 40 below).
- pursuant to Standing Order 5 (3) (a), he proposed to use his discretion to change the order of business by bringing forward Item 12 'Youth Voter Engagement' (Minute 44 refers), to be taken after Item 6 'Questions from Councillors in accordance with Standing Order 10' (Minute 38 refers).
- in accordance with a provision within Standing Order 14(4), he would be using his discretion to allow Councillors to remain seated when they were addressing the Council.

### 35. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

### 36. PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER NO 8

James Berrie presented a petition in the following terms:

Use of Albert Road Park, Caversham as a site for a School

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"We the undersigned do not support the use of Albert Road Park, Caversham as a site for a school.

Reading Borough Council will soon be consulting on a site for the Heights Free School.

Albert Road Park is one of four sites up for consideration for the school. Whilst we understand and support the need to find a suitable site for this school, we are not convinced Albert Road Park is the best site.

It is a compact site, having served our community for 100 years and part of the original town planning of Caversham. We wish to highlight the benefits of preserving this important park, which is enjoyed by residents of all ages. We aim to inform members of the public of the potential redevelopment plans of this site and provide a forum for comments and any objections."

**RESPONSE** by Councillor Lovelock (Leader of the Council):

May I thank Mr Berrie for his petition.

I have received petitions about Mapledurham Playing Fields and Bugs Bottom at previous meetings of the Policy Committee and there is a closed petition regarding the High Ridge site.

There was a detailed report to the Policy Committee's meeting on 1 December 2014 on the Education Funding Agency's decision to consider four possible sites for The Heights new free school in West Caversham, and to work with the Council on a process of community consultation on views on the four sites. Policy Committee approved the process and timetable for the consultation process at its meeting on 19 January 2015.

It will be for the EFA, not the Council, to decide on their preferred location for the permanent site for the new free school, though of course their preferred site will be subject to a formal planning application. Your petition will be part of the evidence to be submitted to the Agency.

### 37. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER NO 9

Questions on the following matters were submitted:

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Jonathan Fanti	Readibike in Tilehurst	Cllr Page

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

### 38. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER NO 10

Questions on the following matters were submitted:

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	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.		WITHDRAWN	
2.	Cllr J Williams	Fuel Poverty	Cllr Hoskin
3.	Cllr O'Connell	Homophobic Bullying in Schools	Cllr Ennis
4.	Cllr Tickner	Planning Changes	Cllr Page
5.	Cllr Whitham	Cycle Lanes	Cllr Page
6.	Cllr Hopper	Social Work Teams - Staff Attrition Rate	Cllr Lovelock
7.	Cllr Hopper	Social Work Pay Bands	Cllr Lovelock
8.	Cllr Hopper	Social Work Visit Safeguards	Cllr Lovelock
9.	Cllr Rodda	NHS Winter Watch	Cllr Hoskin
10.	Cllr Ballsdon	Queen's Portrait	Cllr Lovelock

As there was insufficient time, pursuant to Standing Order 10(4), a written reply to Question 10 above would be provided in accordance with Standing Order 11(3).

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

### **39. BUDGET 2015-16: APPROVAL OF COUNCIL TAX BASE, NNDR1 ESTIMATE & ESTIMATED COLLECTION FUND SURPLUS**

Further to Minute 73 of the Policy Committee held on 19 January 2015, the Head of Finance submitted a report regarding the Council Tax support scheme, estimated Council Tax collection rate and Council tax base for the 2015/16 financial year.

The report explained that by 31 January 2015 it would be necessary to have estimated and informed Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner, Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service and the Environment Agency in connection with their levy of the Council Tax base to be used for setting the tax for 2015/16. In order to do this it would be necessary to estimate the anticipated Council Tax collection rate and the allowance to be made for non-collection and changes to the Council Tax Base. It would also be necessary by the same date to have estimated and informed the Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) of the estimated collectible business rates to be used for setting the budget and ultimately the Council Tax for 2015/16, which was done by completing an NNDR1 form. The form was attached to the report at Appendix B.

The report also explained that there was a requirement on 15 January 2015 to estimate the collection fund surplus or deficit separately for both Council Tax and business rate transactions as at 31 March 2015. Any surplus or deficit would then be taken into account when calculating the total amount to be collected from Council

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Tax payers in 2015/16. The report set out forecast Council Tax collection and the resulting impact on the Collection Fund.

The report also recommended the approval of the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/16. The proposed scheme's effect was broadly unchanged from that which applied in 2014/15, but various allowances within the scheme had to be uprated annually, and a small number of technical and administrative changes to improve the operation of the scheme had been consulted on. Pursuant to the approval of the Council Tax support scheme and other estimates explained, the report set out the detailed calculations to be made under the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as amended. The CTB1 Return setting out these calculations was attached to the report at Appendix A.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Lovelock and seconded by Councillor Page and CARRIED:

### Resolved:

- (1) That, in line with the recommendation of the Policy Committee held on 19 January 2015 (Minute 73 refers), the uprating of the allowances in the Council Tax Support Scheme be approved;
- (2) That the adoption of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2886(2012)) in 2013, and the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (SI 3181(2013)) in 2014 and that this would remain in place as the basis of the 2015-16 scheme, be noted;
- (3) That the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirement) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2014 which came into force on 12 January 2015 and would apply to local schemes from 1 April 2015 be adopted;
- (4) That Council notes that as well as upratings, minor amendments in terminology, the new legislation restricts the availability of Council Tax support in line with the amendments which were made by the Housing Benefit (Habitual Residence) Amendment Regulations for EEA Nationals;
- (5) That the "plain English" guide to the Council Tax Support Scheme, which explained how these regulations as amended locally would work together and that an update would be published on the website to reflect the 2015/16 scheme, be noted;
- (6) That for the purpose of, and in accordance with, the provisions of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations, 1992 (as amended):
  - (a) the estimated Council Tax collection rate for the financial year 2015/16 be set at 98.75% overall;
  - (b) taking account of (1), the Council Tax technical changes made last year and (6)(a) above, the amount calculated by Reading Borough

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Council as its Council Tax base for the financial year 2015/16 shall be 50,155;

- (7) That Council notes that a surplus of £2.2m had been estimated in respect of Council Tax transactions as at 31 March 2015, and Reading's share of this would be £1.887m;
- (8) That Council notes that a surplus of £1.735m had been estimated in respect of NNDR transactions as at 31 March 2015, and Reading's share of this would be £850,150;
- (9) That Council notes that Policy Committee held on 19 January 2015 (Minute 73 refers) approved the NNDR1 form at Appendix B and the estimated collection of £105.2m, of which Reading would retain £29.4m after the DCLG tariff.

A recorded vote having been demanded, the voting was as follows:

### For the motion 43

Councillors D Absalom, D L Absalom, Anderson, Ayub, Ballsdon, Chrisp, Davies, Dennis, Duveen, Eden, D Edwards, K Edwards, Ennis, Gavin, Gittings, Hacker, Hopper, Hoskin, T Jones, Khan, Lawrence, Livingston, Lovelock, Maskell, McElligott, O'Connell, Orton, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rodda, Singh, Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Terry, Tickner, Vickers, White, Whitham, J Williams, R Williams, Willis and Woodward.

### **40. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - FINANCIAL PLAN 2015/16**

Further to Minute 69 of the Policy Committee held on 19 January 2015, The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services and Head of Finance submitted a report setting out the current draft 2015/16 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget and HRA capital works proposals and budget.

The report explained that the HRA recorded all income and expenditure in connection with the Council-owned housing stock. It set out the latest position for 2014/15, and highlighted key implications and issues influencing the HRA budget for 2015/16. Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was the 'Housing Revenue Account - Estimates and Probable Budget 2014/15, and Draft Budget 2015/16'.

The report also set out a recommendation on the rent levels for 2015/16 and gave details of consultation with tenants on rent policy and explained that adopting a rent policy in line with national guidance would require a rent increase of 2.2%.

The report also sought approval for the HRA capital works proposals and budget, which were attached to the report at Appendix 2 with a commentary. The programme of work and plan for investment in the housing stock for 2015/16 would be subject to consultation with a Tenant Quality Panel before it was finalised for implementation.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Davies and seconded by Councillor Terry and CARRIED:

**Resolved:**

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- (1) That the draft budget for the Housing Revenue Account be approved as set out in Appendix 1 for 2015/16.
- (2) That the outcome of the consultation on rent levels in 2015/16 with tenants be noted, and an average increase of 2.2% be agreed with effect from Monday 6 April 2015;
- (3) That a 2.2% garage rent increase be approved;
- (4) That it be noted that to provide protection at individual tenant level, the Council's transitional scheme for rent restructuring and service charges would limit the maximum increase any individual tenant would pay to 1% above the average (i.e. 3.2% in 2015/16);
- (5) That a Rent Policy be adopted in line with national guidance, noting the outcome of the consultation with tenant representatives on this proposal was supportive and there would continue to be an annual review;
- (6) That the HRA capital works proposals and budget, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved, and that authority be given to the Director of Environment & Neighbourhood Services to make minor amendments following consultation with the Lead Councillor and Tenant Quality Panel during the course of the year and for the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to enter into the necessary contracts to facilitate the works.

A recorded vote having been demanded, the voting was as follows:

### For the motion 44

Councillors D Absolom, D L Absolom, Anderson, Ayub, Ballsdon, Chrisp, Davies, Dennis, Duveen, Eden, D Edwards, K Edwards, Ennis, Gavin, Gittings, Hacker, Hopper, Hoskin, James, T Jones, Khan, Lawrence, Livingston, Lovelock, Maskell, McElligott, O'Connell, Orton, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rodda, Singh, Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Terry, Tickner, Vickers, White, Whitham, J Williams, R Williams, Willis and Woodward.

## 41. DELEGATIONS REGISTER

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report on a comprehensive review of the Council's Delegations Register, which had been necessary as a result of the adoption of the Committee system of governance in May 2013. The report explained that functions were delegated to be exercised by Directors and Heads of Service. The Register recorded delegations by Director or Head of Service. An authority's Delegations Register was a public document which Councils were required by law to maintain and publish. It was a statement of the authority under which officers may exercise the functions delegated to them, and may be referred to in court if a decision were to be judicially reviewed. It was also important that Directors and Heads of Service were aware of the delegations made to them, and when they were exercising them; recording them; and publishing the record when required to do so by Regulation. The report had attached at **Appendix A** the General Provisions of the Delegations Register, which had been updated to reflect the move to a committee system of governance; and the general delegations that may be exercised by any Director or Head of Service in relation to employment, land and property, finance, miscellaneous matters and emergency planning. The full Delegations Register was

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available on deposit in each of the Group Rooms and had been published electronically on the Council's website.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Lovelock and seconded by Councillor Page and CARRIED:

### Resolved:

That, on behalf of all Committees of the Council, the Council's register of functions delegated by it and its Committees to officers, circulated separately with this report and published on the Council's website, be formally agreed and published.

### 42. ALTERATION TO THE READING BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (LOCAL PLAN) ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVISION - ADOPTION

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a report on the Government's policy in relation to affordable housing provision, contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with its emphasis on economic growth and the delivery of development, which gave a very high priority to the issue of viability. The report explained that this would inevitably mean that some of the Council's existing planning policies no longer fully met the requirements of national policy and would have to be changed as part of any review of the Local Plan. This would also enable the Council to introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy in order to secure financial contributions towards infrastructure provision.

The Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee, at its meeting on 20 November 2013 (Minute 19 refers), resolved that a fast track review of the existing policies on affordable housing would be undertaken to bring them into line with Government policy. An Issues and Options paper on the proposed Alteration was approved at that meeting, and was subject to consultation between November 2013 and January 2014. The Committee then approved the publication of a Pre-Submission Draft Alteration to the affordable housing policies on 19 March 2014. This was subject to consultation in April and May 2014, and submitted to the Secretary of State on 8 August 2014. An independent examination of the Alteration then took place, and the final report of the Inspector was received on 17 December 2014 and was found to be sound. The report recommended adoption of the Alteration, as set out in Appendix 1 as part of the development plan. The Core Strategy (adopted 2008) and Sites and Detailed Policies Document (adopted 2012) would be amended to include the altered policies, and would be used in decisions on planning applications.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Page and seconded by Councillor Davies and CARRIED:

### Resolved:

- (1) That the Report of the Inspector who had conducted the Examination into the Alteration to the Reading Borough Local Development Framework (Local Plan) on Affordable Housing Provision and that the Inspector's finding had found the Alteration to be sound be noted;

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- (2) That the Alteration to the Reading Borough Local Development Framework (Local Plan) on Affordable Housing Provision, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted.

### 43. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY CHARGING SCHEDULE - ADOPTION

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a report seeking approval of the Charging Schedule for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and to agree the date of 1 April 2015 for its implementation. The CIL would provide a means of funding infrastructure from development. It would replace some of the functions for which Section 106 planning obligations were currently used. Local planning authorities that wished to secure financial contributions towards infrastructure would have to use CIL rather than Section 106 from 6 April 2015, and this would necessitate preparing a Charging Schedule.

The CIL would work on the basis of a rate per square metre for various uses in various locations. Unlike Section 106, there would be no scope to negotiate a different level of payment on a site by site basis. However, there would be certain exemptions from paying CIL. Since there was no site by site flexibility, CIL was grounded in, and justified by, evidence of viability at the time that it was prepared. The Section 106 planning obligation system would still exist, but would be limited to securing infrastructure or other mitigation measures that were site-specific in nature, such as a new junction or improvements to a specific play area. It would also be used to secure affordable housing and employment and skills training.

The Council had consulted on a Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule in February, March and April 2013. The results of consultation were taken into account and a Draft Charging Schedule was published for further consultation in March 2014. The Charging Schedule was then submitted for examination on 8 August 2014. The public examination was carried out by a Planning Inspector during autumn 2014, and was held by written representations rather than involving public hearings. The Inspector's Report was received on 17 December 2014, and it concluded that the Charging Schedule represented an appropriate basis for collecting CIL.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Page and seconded by Councillor Maskell and CARRIED:

#### Resolved:

- (1) That the Report of the Inspector who had conducted the Examination into the Community Infrastructure Levy Draft Charging Schedule and that the Inspector's finding had found the Schedule to be sound be noted;
- (2) That the Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule, as attached to the report at Appendix 1, be approved; and
- (3) That the implementation date of the Community Infrastructure Levy of 1 April 2015 be approved.

### 44. YOUTH VOTER ENGAGEMENT

Pursuant to Notice, a motion was moved by Councillor James and seconded by Councillor Pearce.

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Ellie Emberson, Reading Member of the Youth Parliament, was present at the meeting and addressed the Council on the motion.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor O'Connell and seconded by Councillor Duveen and CARRIED:

"Replace the first point in the last paragraph, after 'This Council resolves:' with the following:

- '1. To develop a youth engagement project in educational institutions and as part of youth projects, working with the youth cabinet, the youth service, schools and colleges - with a strong focus on encouraging young people to register to vote.'

The remaining wording of the original motion to be retained as written."

The amended substantive motion was then put to the vote and CARRIED as follows:

### Resolved:

This Council notes:

1. Reading Borough Council reaffirms its support for votes at 16.
2. For votes at 16 to be successful there needs to be opportunities for debates in schools and colleges as part of the curriculum and wider student engagement.
3. Despite voter turnout in the UK being the highest in 2010 for 13 years (65%), only 52% of 18 - 24 year olds voted.
4. In Scotland, 80% of under 18s registered to vote in the Scottish referendum.

This Council believes:

1. Young people need to be engaged in democratic politics at an early age.
2. That the average age of politicians at national and local level does not motivate young people to participate in elections either as voters or candidates.
3. Investing in young people is an investment in the future. Reading Borough Council must strive to work with young people to encourage their interest in politics.

This Council resolves:

1. To develop a youth engagement project in educational institutions and as part of youth projects, working with the youth cabinet, the youth service, schools and colleges - with a strong focus on encouraging young people to register to vote.
2. To promote and continue support of votes at 16.

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3. To encourage each councillor to engage with students at local schools, colleges and youth projects as part of the youth engagement project.

### 45. FINANCIAL CRISIS SUPPORT SCHEME

Pursuant to Notice, a motion was moved by Councillor Lovelock and seconded by Councillor Davies and CARRIED:

Resolved:

This Council notes:

- that the Welfare Reform Act of 2013 included the abolition of the Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants elements of the discretionary Social Fund and replaced this with a discretionary local scheme to be administered and agreed by local authorities.
- that there was government funding of £450k per annum for 2013/14 and 2014/15, but that the government has now announced it will cease this funding from April 2015.
- that the Reading Borough Council local Financial Crisis Support Scheme (FCSS) agreed in January 2013 has delivered many benefits for individuals and families in dire circumstances either directly or via "support in kind" provided by voluntary sector partners funded by the FCSS.
- That because of the uncertainty over future funding the scheme has been managed carefully to keep a contingency of £200k from the grant.

This Council therefore agrees:

- to write to the Government asking for the decision to end the government grant to be reviewed as a matter of urgency.
- to write to the LGA and Reading's two MPs seeking support for the government grant to be reinstated.
- to continue the support in 2015/16 to the voluntary sector organisations who have helped to deliver the aims of our local FCSS.
- to request a report to Policy Committee on how best to target the remainder of the outstanding grant pending a response from the government.

### 46. SKY LANTERNS AND HELIUM BALLOONS

Pursuant to Notice, a motion was moved by Councillor Gittings and seconded by Councillor David Absolom.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Hopper and seconded by Councillor Willis and CARRIED:

"Replace the first bullet point of the motion with the following:

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'The increasing concern from the public, animal welfare charities, the Chief Fire Officers and the civil aviation authorities regarding the unsafe use of sky lanterns, helium balloons and camera drones.'

The rest of the motion to remain as written."

The amended substantive motion was then put to the vote and CARRIED as follows:

### Resolved:

This Council notes:

- The increasing concern from the public, animal welfare charities, the Chief Fire Officers and the civil aviation authorities regarding the unsafe use of sky lanterns, helium balloons and camera drones.
- That several Local Authorities have applied voluntary bans on council-owned premises and are using their licensing powers to issue appropriate guidance.

This Council resolves:

To ask the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services to research this issue further to establish the scale of the problem in Reading and to bring back a report to Policy or Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee regarding policy options and appropriate advice to the public about the associated safety issues.

### 47. FREE SCHOOLS

Pursuant to Notice, a motion was moved by Councillor White and seconded by Councillor J Williams.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Ennis and seconded by Councillor Eden and CARRIED:

"Delete all words after 'Unfortunately, under the coalition government, free schools are one of the few ways to address the school places crisis' and add the following:

'This Council notes the priority to meet its legal duty of providing a place at a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' school for every child in Reading and supports the ambitious £64m school building project, which includes the building of two free schools which will be integral in providing much needed school places in West and North Reading.

This Council supports Labour's commitment to ensure:

- that local accountability is reinstated when providing school places by introducing Directors of school standards in every local area;
- that the professional training and qualification of teachers is maintained and enhanced in schools to promote rising standards;
- that funding for new schools will be prioritised in areas of acute need rather than waste money building free schools in areas with surplus need to suit the Coalition ideological and political experiment of free schools.

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As a responsible and transparent Council we will work with schools, families, teachers, school staff, the local community and cross party politicians to plan and ensure that there are enough school places provided for every child in Reading now and in the future.'"

The amended substantive motion was then put to the vote and CARRIED as follows:

### Resolved:

This Council notes:

- Both nationally and in Reading there is a shortage of school places.
- Unfortunately, under the Coalition government, free schools are one of the few ways to address the school places crisis.

This Council notes the priority to meet its legal duty of providing a place at a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' school for every child in Reading and supports the ambitious £64m school building project, which includes the building of two free schools which will be integral in providing much needed school places in West and North Reading.

This Council supports Labour's commitment to ensure:

- that local accountability is reinstated when providing school places by introducing Directors of school standards in every local area;
- that the professional training and qualification of teachers is maintained and enhanced in schools to promote rising standards;
- that funding for new schools will be prioritised in areas of acute need rather than waste money building free schools in areas with surplus need to suit the Coalition ideological and political experiment of free schools.

As a responsible and transparent Council we will work with schools, families, teachers, school staff, the local community and cross party politicians to plan and ensure that there are enough school places provided for every child in Reading now and in the future.

(The meeting closed at 9.26 pm).