

## Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Present:	
Name	Organisation
CIlr Rachel Eden	RBC
CIlr Gul Khan	RBC
Helmuth Schroettner	Reading Buses
Rajesh Shah	Department of Work and Pensions
Matt Dady	RBC Neighbourhood Services
Suzanne Westhead	Interim Director of Adult Care & Health Services
Carol & Michael Froud	
Frank Millgate	
Mr & Mrs Beard	
Ruth Johnson	S A Central Club for the Retired
Jennie Ingram	
Alan & Dorothy Whitcelo	
Norma Parris	West Indian Women's Circle
Gina & Fran Harris	
M J Tallowin	
Mandeep Kaur Sira	Healthwatch Reading
D S Bhalla	
Dharam Ahuja	
Brian & Tomiko Morley	Redlands NAGS
Eiliis McCarthy	Reading CAB
L Kadwaha	Rep for Readibus
M McManus	
Miriam Sparkes	
Uda Chalk	Reading Elderly Befriending Scheme
Natasha Saunders	Stroke Association
Joan Walker	NHS Retirement Group
Mr & Mrs Melton	
Nina Crispin	RBC
Douglas Dean	Thames Valley Pensioners Convention
Tony Hall	Civil Service Pensioner Alliance, Reading Group
Elaine Jalland	
Pearl Gibson	
Patience Odunsi	
Margaret Robertson	
Janice Scruby	Firtree
Janette Searle	RBC
Robert & Irene Percival	

Jean Hutton	
Brenda Jenkins	
Brian Oatway	
Diane Seydoux	
Mr & Mrs Lawlor	
Brian Haines	Southcote Forum
Dianne Hilfi	
Judith El-Nager	
John Walford	Whitley Community Development Association
Roy Allum	Age UK Volunteer
Mark Drukker	
Louise Keane	Alzheimer's Society
Jean & Fred Pugh	
Colin Ferguson	Firtree
Maggie Barnes	
Heather Cresswell	MS Society Reading & Wokingham District Branch
Derek Woad	
Mrs Mickie Robinson	Firtree

Apologies	
Name	Organisation
Moira Gomes	
Marion Huggins	
Mike Porter	Forestcare
Cllr Meri O'Connell	
Cllr Sandra Vickers	

**Agenda item 1: Previous minutes & matters arising**  
*Cllr Rachel Eden*

Minutes of the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2014 were agreed. The minutes are available from the Older People's Working Group page on the RBC website at:  
<http://beta.reading.gov.uk/opwg>

***Feedback from Reading Buses***  
***Helmuth Schroettner, Network Development Manager***

In response to queries raised at the OPWG meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> November, Helmuth Schroettner provided the following information:

**Question 2:**  
 Can Reading Buses and the Council re-look at bus stops for buses going to North Reading / Caversham area?

Station Road is already very packed with Buses and can't handle more. Therefore I can't see any way - at the moment - to use stops closer to the station. We think the Pink Routes can be the one with stops furthest away from the Station due to the use of Northern Interchange.

Question 8:

Who is responsible for keeping the verbal / visual information on buses?

The Problem with acoustic internal announcements on the 21 should be sorted by now. Wifi. We rely on feedback from our customers (or internally) to know if Wifi on a Bus doesn't work. Once we receive it we fix it. We also have put some action in place with our supplier to increase reliability.

Question 9:

There is a bus stop to Caversham from Sainsbury then the next one is near the Reading Station at the Apex Plaza building. But there are no crossing to enable people to cross safely to get to that bus stop and it's quite dark as lighting is not properly set there. This could become a health and safety issue. Why can't revert buses back to previous route?

To increase and maintain reliability we have taken the decision to keep the current route for the foreseeable future.

Question 11:

Bus passes run out at 11 pm instead of 12.00 - how much will it cost to extend bus passes to midnight?

RBC has no plans to change times of validity.

In addition to the above, the following issues were raised at the meeting:

- Getting to the Civic Centre using Bus route 33 is not easy for older people who have to walk down from Broad Street to Bridge Street.

We have instructed drivers to let people down nearer to the Civic Centre. Reading Buses will arrange for drivers to start doing so.

- Bus drivers do not give priority to pedestrians.

Bus drivers have been trained to give pedestrians priority. This is critical especially for visually impaired and older people.

- For people who are visually impaired, could the pedestrian lights be operated by key/card system?

It is up to RBC to decide if this can be done.

Cllr Eden confirmed that this item is on the agenda for the next Access & Disability Forum on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2 - 4 pm, Council Chamber, Civic Offices.

## Agenda item 2: Pensions and changes to Pensions Regulations

### *Rajesh Shah, Department for Work and Pensions*

Rajesh did a presentation on the New State Pension and the key changes people need to be aware of.

A state pension is a regular payment from the Government, after working a number of years based on national insurance contributions. The new system will make it easier for people to start preparing for their retirement earlier and to know how much they will need to contribute before retirement age.

- Changes will be effective from 6 April 2016 for individuals who reach State Pension age on or after that date (for men born on or after 6 April 1951 and women born on or after 6 April 1953)
- The new State Pension replaces the Basic and Additional State Pension - this will be set just above basic level of means test (currently £148.35)
- It will bring an end to contracting-out (of the Additional State Pension)
- The qualifying years will increase from 30 to 35 to receive the full rate of the new State Pension once in steady state - pro-rata for less than 35 years providing the minimum qualifying years of 10 years is reached
- The qualifying years can be made up of paid or credited contributions and do not need to be sequential
- Entitlement to the State Pension will be based on an individual's own National Insurance contribution record - inherited/ derived rights will end (though there will be transitional arrangements in specific circumstances)
- Self-employed people will be fully brought into the State Pension scheme
- The new scheme removes entitlement to the Savings Credit element of Pension Credit (will be transitional arrangements for mixed age couples already receiving Savings Credit)
- It also removes deferral of lump sum payments - individuals will still be able to defer claiming their State Pension to receive a higher weekly amount

The key messages from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) are:

- **Current pensioners**  
We want to reassure current pensioners that their pension won't change and that they won't be worse off.
- **Future pensioners**
  - Those aged over 40 will be facing the most complex transition to the new system, with a critical focus on those within 5 years of reaching State Pension age in April 2016.
  - Those aged under 40 will need to be aware that they are highly likely to achieve a full state pension.
- **Employers/pension scheme providers/trustees -**
  - DWP need to support both public and private sector employers affected by the abolition of contracting out.
- **Partner organisations**
  - DWP need their support to help communicate the key messages.
- **For further information please go to GOV.UK**

## Additional information and weblinks:

Information on the new State Pension: <https://www.gov.uk/new-state-pension>

DWP has also produced a tool kit where people can find information:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/state-pension-toolkit>

The toolkit has a document (11 pages) which explains the new State Pension:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/your-new-state-pension-explained> and  
also one page fact sheets: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-pension-fact-sheets>

Please note that this information is based on what we know now and is likely to change over time as progress is made towards bringing in new State Pension on 6 April 2016.

Factsheets distributed at the OPWG meeting:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/388974/introduction\\_to\\_the\\_new\\_State\\_Pension.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388974/introduction_to_the_new_State_Pension.pdf)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/388982/NI\\_and\\_your\\_State\\_Pension.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388982/NI_and_your_State_Pension.pdf)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/388987/topping\\_up.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388987/topping_up.pdf)

For any queries relating to State Pension, contact the Future Pension Centre online or call 0345 300 168

Comments/Queries:

- People work hard and will suffer for it.
- Need to state how much NI contributions are needed to qualify.
- For people already receiving a state pension before 5<sup>th</sup> April 2016, nothing will change.
- Information needs to go back to ministers that something needs to be done for today's pensioners and for means testing to be eliminated.
- We need a flat rate of NI contribution for everyone  
*Contributions from employees and self-employed will be treated at the same level.*
- Currently, there are inequalities with NI contributions  
*NI contributions didn't accrue for some people at the same rate as for people at another level. How much the NI contributions are worth depends on the type of NI contribution. Currently there are reduced opportunities to save for retirement for example for some groups with broken work history, low earners and the self-employed. With new rules everyone who works will pay the same rate of NI. Similarly contributions from those who are self-employed will be treated the same as contributions from employed people.*

- Some employees pay high taxes during their working life and are still paying taxes as pensioners. Are there plans from the Government to get pensioners to pay less tax?

*This is a policy question - planners are still working on final points of the new State Pension.*

*Elections in May 2015 - depending on who wins the elections, things might change. DWP are working for fairness and equality across the board.*

*This question can be raised to Parliamentary Candidates/MP's.*

### Agenda item 3: Council's Budget

*Suzanne Westhead, Interim Director of Adult Care and Health Services*

Suzanne did a presentation on the Reading Borough Council Budget Position for the period 2015/2016.

#### Context

- Reading is a thriving and diverse town
- Population - 159,000 growing to 193,000 - 2050
- Needs of residents are changing
- The Council offers over 700 services - please see Appendix 1 for a list of the main services provided by RBC
- Not everybody can access the opportunities
- Some people are been left behind
- The next few years will see significant changes for the Council as we plan and cater for increased demand with significantly less income

#### Progress over the last year

- We have helped over 4,000 older and disabled
- We have looked after some 200 children.
- We have opened extra care facilities at Cedar Court
- We have implemented the Love Clean Reading initiative deep cleaning 136 streets across the town
- We have started work to build the pedestrian and cycle bridge across the River Thames
- Essential infrastructure work was carried out to strengthen Reading Bridge
- A project to reduce congestion along the A33 is under way
- Building of two new park and ride sites to the south and east of Reading with 1,000 new spaces
- We transformed the entrances to the north and south of Reading Station with much-improved facilities and public access
- 19 main roads and 27 residential streets were resurfaced as part of the Council's annual resurfacing programme
- We have improved our Council Houses and announced that we will be building 1,000 new Council Houses

#### Progress so far

- We are expanding and building new primary schools to create an additional 2,500 primary school places
- We are one of only five authorities nationally to agree the Better Care Fund as part

- of an accelerated programme with considerable partnership working
- We have successfully bid for Heritage Lottery Fund money to progress plans to open Reading's historic Abbey Quarter up to the public

### The Money

- The Council will receive £9m (27%) less for 2015/16
- So far:
  - Since 2011 we have saved £56.8m
  - We have lost over 600 roles in the Council
- This year - we have saved 12m (230k a week)
- The Council has already identified £13.6m for the next 3 years but it is not enough!
- We have to find another £28.8m between 2015-2018 (25%)

### What will we do

- Vital role in narrowing the gap
- We will be a large organisation £110m
- We will have to change our offer of services
- We will reduce staff by approximately 500 roles
- Right now we are in planning mode through March and April. We will be involving staff in shaping and reducing our money by 25%

**Then we will be going back to you about your thoughts on our proposed plan**

### Questions/Comments

- The way the money is spent is what makes the difference. A high proportion of people live in sheltered housing. Wardens are doing more admin work than seeing people.
- How many staff work for the Council?  
*4000 Council officers; 2600 work within schools. This number was reached after a 3 year savings plan.*  
*School budgets are ring fenced and protected in cash terms. This means that we don't have less teachers but fewer other council staff.*
- How do cuts in Reading compare with cuts in Wokingham/West Berkshire?  
*We work jointly with Wokingham and West Berkshire but we are on a different journey. They are also experiencing changes and have to make savings and have a 3 years saving plan.*  
*Over the next financial year, RBC spending power decreases - but Wokingham is also under pressure although their spending power increases. RBC have got difficult decisions to make.*

- What services are going to be reduced and how much is this going to cost?  
*In Reading we won't cut services, but we will increase Council Tax. There has been a low level of Council Tax increases over the past year. We were able to make 39.5m savings over services agreed last September 2014. Our next step is to save 28.8m - but we have not yet agreed how we will achieve this. Formal consultation for further reduction plans will be presented to this group to get ideas on how we can achieve the target saving amount.*
- A Council Tax increase will hit pensioners harder. What will the projected Council Tax be?  
*We can't confirm what the Council Tax will be at the moment. The final decision will be made by Cllrs. We are taking a pragmatic approach in Reading with allowing a rise sometimes whilst finding a balance to protect services that make a difference to residents. We would rather a higher contribution to Council Tax than seeing vital services cut.*
- What does it mean - savings plans over 3 years and over 5 years?  
*It means that 28.8m need to be saved over the next 3 years. We may not be able to save 1/3 each year. For example, when we make contractual arrangements for a residential care provision, it can take a couple of years before we agree an efficiency price. Suzanne will come back to the OPWG meeting in July/Sept to inform the group about the efficiency savings that could be achieved each year.*
- How is the budget for each RBC department set?  
*We have a zero base budgeting approach - we look at what we need for each department and set their budget accordingly. If a department hasn't spent their budget one year, the new budget will be reviewed and re-calculated accordingly for the following year. We have a duty to have a contingency budget to meet crisis situations: flu / disaster etc....*

- Is the Council charging rates for emptying industrial sites?  
*We need to check this, but the Government takes away business rates.*

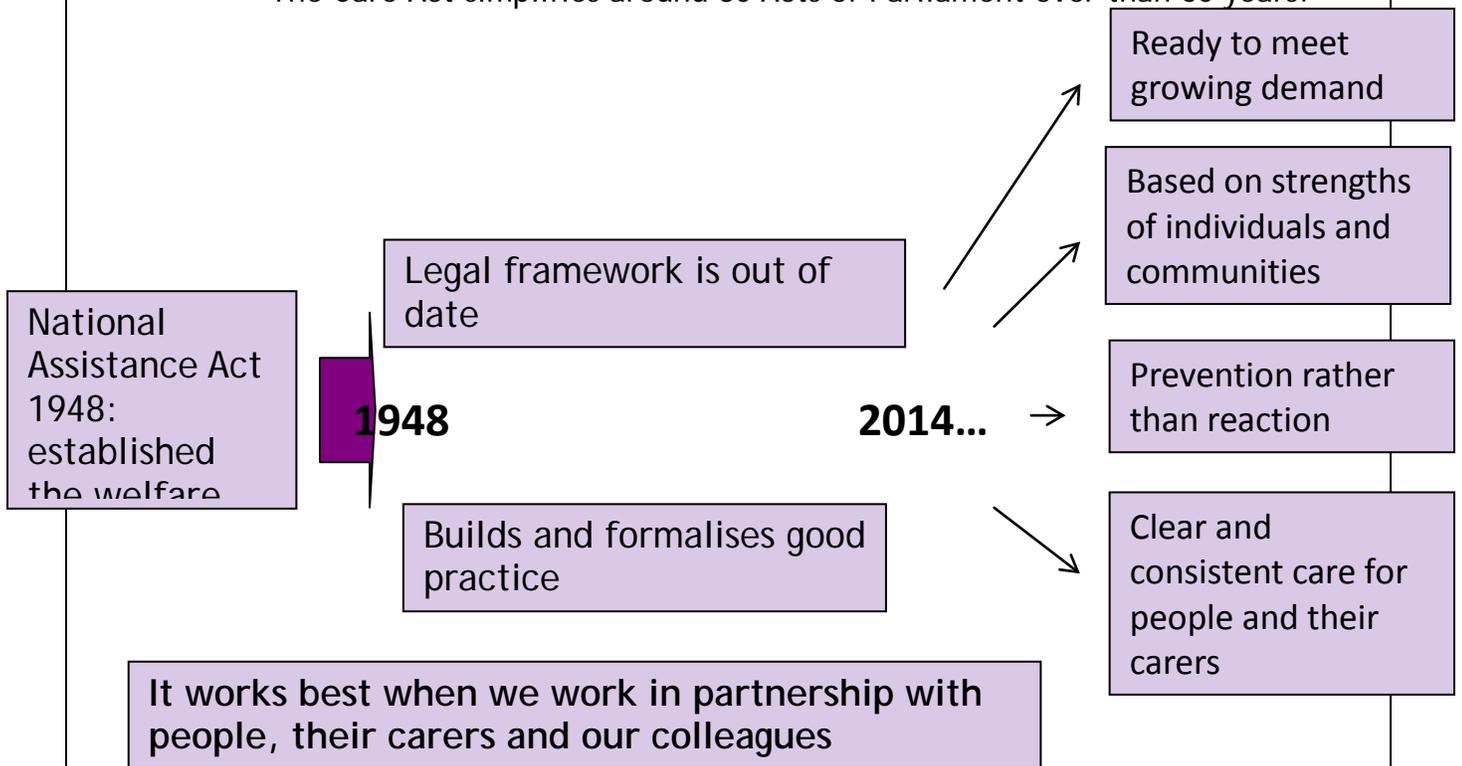
*We face unprecedented challenges. Council staff are dedicated to the town and will do their utmost to protect residents. We can't be doing more with less.*

**Agenda item 4: The Care Act in Reading**  
*Janette Searle, Preventative Services Manager, RBC*

Janette did a presentation on the new Care Act and the changes that will come into effect as from 1<sup>st</sup> April.

**What is the Care Act?**

- The Care Act simplifies around 30 Acts of Parliament over than 60 years:



**Key changes**

- A new focus on preventing and delaying needs for care and support, rather than only intervening at crisis point
- Making sure everyone with care or support needs can get high quality information and advice, including access to independent financial advice -  
*We want to provide a good local offer for information and advice for people to*

*know what is available to them and how they can access the support they need.*

*Under the Care Act the LA has a duty to provide independent financial advice.*

- More carers will be entitled to their own assessment, and the right to their own support
- **Independent advocacy** for people who would have 'substantial difficulty' in taking part in social care processes and have no one else suitable to help them
- A single **national threshold for eligibility** to care and support, helping to ensure continuity of care for people who move between local authority areas
- Wider access to a **deferred payment agreement** for people who need to sell their home to pay for care costs
- Extending **choice of accommodation** policies to different types of housing, such as Extra Care Housing and Supported Living as well as residential care
- New protections to ensure that **no one goes without care if their provider fails**, regardless of who pays for their care

### When does this happen?

The Care Act became law in May 2014. Most of the changes come into effect in April 2015, and reforms to the way care is funded come in from April 2016.

#### Getting ready for April 2015

The changes that are introduced from April 2015 are wide-ranging. They cover assessment, eligibility, care planning, carers, the local care market, safeguarding, and prevention. There are also some changes to how care is funded, in preparation for 2016.

#### Funding Reforms from April 2016

The Care Act introduces a limit to how much a person has to pay towards their care and support needs over their lifetime - a "cap" on the maximum that people will pay. It also increases the amount of capital that a person can have and still receive support with their care costs, if they can only be met in a care home.

The government plans to introduce these changes from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016.

## The Care Act in Reading

- If you are already using Adult Social Care services in Reading, there will be no automatic changes to your support in April 2015.
- Reading Borough Council already works in a lot of the ways needed to meet the Care Act, but we are planning some changes.
- We are currently consulting on our planned changes and would like to hear your views (consultation closed on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2015).

## Reading's Care Act Consultation (consultation closed on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2015)

The consultation focused on the following aspects of the Care Act legislation:

1. The Council's priorities for prevention, information and advice services
2. How we offer support to carers - and not charging for this
3. The Council's plans for developing the local market of care and support services
4. How the Council can support people who fund their own care and support
5. Updating the Council's Financial Assessment and Charging Framework

The consultation was widely publicised at various community groups and events. The proposals will shape our plans for meeting the Care Act as from 1<sup>st</sup> April.

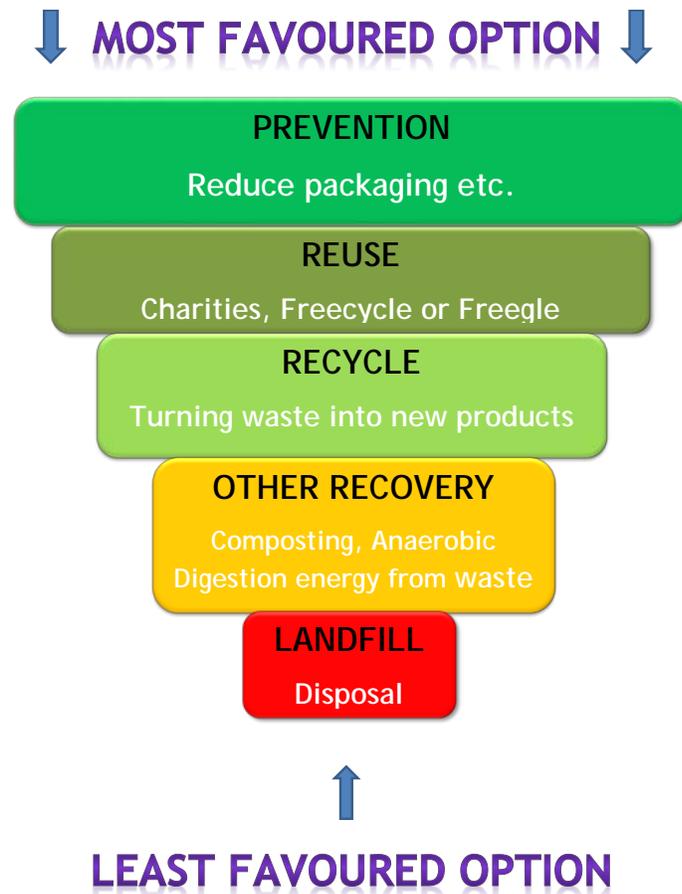
## Questions/Comments

- What doesn't change?  
*When you are about to have a review, changes will become effective then. We will then have a comprehensive look at what is needed to provide care and support.*
- What are the areas that will change?  
*The eligibility criteria will become national and not dependent on where people live.  
Carers - we have received so far overwhelming feedback that we shouldn't change services for carers.*
- Will the Advocacy Service be available to people who speak a language other than English?  
*We will clearly publicise where people can get advocacy support and in particular for people who don't have english as their first language.*

Agenda item 5: Refuse Collection/Recycling  
Matt Dady, Neighbourhood Services, RBC

Matt did a presentation on the Waste strategy run by Reading Borough Council.

The Waste Hierarchy - various ways to help people minimize waste:



The cost to waste that goes to landfills is £140 / ton.

What can you recycle in your recycling bin?



Recycling plastic items.....

The only plastics we recycle are plastic bottles



Some of the plastic we can't recycle



If in doubt, leave it out!

Items that are not recycled .....

49% of contamination of waste is caused by other plastics in the waste.



If in doubt, leave it out!

## Recycling Green Waste.....

- Grass and hedge cuttings
- Leaves, plants and weeds
- Untreated wood and branches up to 100mm thick
- Turf and soil in small amounts
- 'GET COMPOSTING' - For offers on Composters visit [www.getcomposting.com](http://www.getcomposting.com)

There is a one off payment for a green bin or bag.

## What can you recycle at your local recycling site?



You can find details of your local site at [www.reading.gov.uk/recycling](http://www.reading.gov.uk/recycling)

There are 58 recycling sites around Reading.

The Morrisons site takes books. Some sites collect for charities too.

## Ways you can reduce & re-use items before recycling

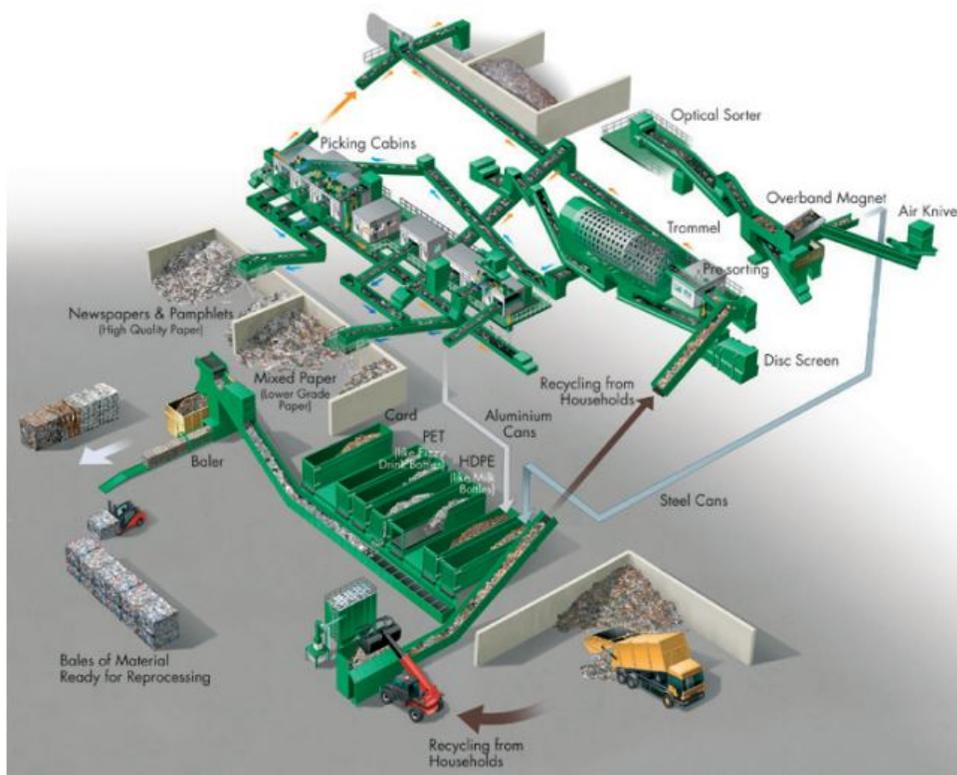
- 'Love Food Hate Waste' - Food waste is a major issue. We throw away 7 million tonnes of food and drink from our homes every year, the majority of which could have been eaten. It's costing us £12.5bn a year and is bad for the environment too.
- 'A - Z of How to Reduce, Re-use and Recycle'  
Visit our website [www.reading.gov.uk](http://www.reading.gov.uk)
- 'WEEE - Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment' - If you upgrade your mobile phone, TV, DVD Player, Games Console, Steam Iron, Hairdryer, curling tongs etc..
- Think about how items could be re-used, ask your friends or offer the item for free on [www.ilovefreecycle.org/](http://www.ilovefreecycle.org/) or [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org). Alternatively you could make a few bob by selling your items on one of the many 'Auction Sites' on the Web.
- 'Sue Ryder charity' - They visit the Household Waste and Recycling Centre and reclaim furniture that can be reused in the community.
- 'Green Machine CIC' - [www.greenmachinecommunityrepaint.co.uk](http://www.greenmachinecommunityrepaint.co.uk). This group reuse paint supplied by the HWRC's

## Where does all our recycling go?

- In the UK we recycle around 60% of our glass bottles and jars but with a little effort this could be as high as 90%.
- Plastic bottles are cleaned and sorted by plastic type using infra-red. They are then sorted by colour - blue, natural, green and mixed they are then shredded, melted and reformed into pellets which can then be used to make fencing, plastic bags, or more bottles
- As a nation we get through 12.5 million tonnes of paper each year. Paper is collected, sorted, and graded. At the paper mill it is pulped in a tank containing chemicals and water which separates the fibres. Paper passes through a series of large heated rollers, is wound onto onto huge rolls. The rolls are then divided into smaller reels, packed and dispatched to the printers.
- Green waste is composted and are sold to landscapers and farmers

## MFR - Materials Recovery Facility

Our local MFR is located at: Small Mead Waste Management Park, Island Road, Reading RG2 0RP



## Questions / comments

- Why can't yoghurts pots be recycled?  
*We hold a contract with recycling firm FCC Environment. It's a joint contract with the 3 Local Authorities: Reading, Wokingham, and Bracknell called 'Re3'*

[\(http://www.re3.org.uk/\)](http://www.re3.org.uk/). FCC decides what we can and can't recycle. They have specified that we recycle plastic bottles as these are easier to recycle. The recycling of other plastics is done at other sites in the UK - there is however a cost for driving those waste from one part of the country to another. It is therefore not cost effective to recycle complex plastics.

- Why do you reject black bags?  
*Black bags are rejected as we don't know what is in the bag. Recycling items must be loose and not put in a plastic bag.*
- Where can we take video sets?  
*Video sets can be taken to the local tip.*
- Why is there not a national agreement on the colour of bins?  
*We don't know. It's up to the policy makers, but there is constant disagreement as people don't use the right bins.*
- Oxfam in Reading has two shops - one for books and one for old CDs/cassettes. They can recycle them.
- Supermarkets offers 2 for 1 - this creates an excess of waste and packaging. Where do their waste / packaging go?

*They are first offered to charities. M&S do but not sure if all businesses do the same. All businesses have to dispose of their waste and food in special ways and respect Health & Safety regulations.*

- Does the Council empty the Bottle recycling bins?  
*Don't know, we will check and come back to the group with an answer.*
- Card for bin collections - the current system is that the calendars are put on the bins but if you are not in, you don't get one. Can a system be set up for collection dates for each resident?  
*Collection dates are linked to post code locations. Everyone should receive a calendar, if no, please call to request one.*
- Reading University - students welcome pack has info about dustbins and calendar for bin collections.
- Recycling of electrical items - British Heart Foundation will do this
- Recycling batteries - Redlands/Tilehurst Neighbourhood Action Groups collect batteries from schools and other places. Many places have batteries collection boxes, but these need to be made more visible.
- Kids can tell their parents where they can recycle batteries, not in the bin at home!
- Empty bins are sometimes left on pathways - can be hazardous for elderly people  
*Need to ask people need to put their bins away. RBC officers have to put recycling bins back to their original place.*

- What happens with clinical waste bins in care homes?  
*Doctor at the care home has to give the Council a letter for permission to deal with clinical waste.*

Agenda item 6: Current issues and suggestions for future meetings  
*Cllr Rachel Eden*

Current issues and AOB:

- The Caversham club for older people at Amersham Road has celebrated its 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary!
- A new club for older people was launched in Southcote on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February.
- Another new club for older people in Whitley Wood will be launched on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February.
- Flyers for free prostate cancer check and Firtree Social Club activities for February/March 2015

Suggestions for future meetings:

- Traffic lights switch off
- Planning area immediately outside South area of Reading Station - what is planned for that? Does it include a bus station?