

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

18 JULY 2016

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 1

Pat Dyer on behalf of Leslie McDonald to ask the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care:

Transfer of Day Services users to Reading Mencap

Reading Mencap has been working with RBC Day Services Management, at their request, for at least the last 10 months to open a fourth day of our ME Day activity service for adults with learning disabilities. All the plans are now in place, the additional staff have been hired, the service users identified and they have agreed to the transfer and are looking forward and expecting to start at ME in the coming week. Their carers have been visited by RBC day service staff and have agreed to the transfer, indeed some carers have been asking us for months when our fourth day was starting.

However, we discovered by accident on Friday 8th July that the 'panel' had turned down the transfer of the 11 services users concerned to move from RBC Whitley Wood SDR to Reading Mencap "OUT OF HAND".

Our question is why? There is little choice for these service users if the RBC provision is closing and the Reading Mencap ME service is a high quality, popular and enhanced service, known to many of the new service users already. The only explanation we have been given by the Director of Adult Care and Health Services, was:

"we all want to make sure that the best tailored options can be offered to individuals who have assessed needs"

I have pointed out in reply that our service is user-led and therefore meets individual preferences and users have a wide choice of activities from which to choose. We are situated in a very safe and accessible part of town on good bus routes for independent travellers, unlike some other services and we also have our own brand new mini-bus and fully equipped Changing Place. Our highly trained and experienced staff provide personal care, we fundraise to enhance the service and offer activities at no additional charge. But more to the point why did the Day Service Management not consider or even mention the "best tailored options" at some point during the last 10 months when they were pushing us to open the service?

Our concern here is that RBC intends to CUT much needed services here rather than to give service users any kind of choice. We would like an explanation of why this work has been so peremptorily stopped when carers and services users are expecting to transfer to ME this week, and also to ask what the service users and

their carers themselves have been told is happening and if they haven't been told, as we weren't, why haven't they?

We have read in the Policy Committee papers about the need for the Council to make further significant cuts to services in the coming years to 2020 and we fully appreciate the extreme situation that the Council finds itself in through no fault of its own, but we cannot stand by and watch vulnerable people with disabilities take yet more cuts to their services, which frankly constitute too great a share of the burden of the Government's current austerity agenda.

REPLY by Councillor Eden (Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care):

The Care Act 2014 introduced eligibility criteria for all adults requiring care and support from Reading Borough Council. It is a requirement that the Council ensures that following an assessment or review this eligibility threshold is reached prior to agreeing funding for a Care and Support plan. The individuals who were discussed at the panel were not turned down 'out of hand' - indeed it would be both inappropriate and contrary to our statutory obligation to do so and I would have been as concerned as you had they been.

Officers have confirmed that discussion at the panel highlighted that key information about the individuals' eligible needs was missing and further work was needed to develop Care and Support plans which were focused on outcomes for the individuals concerned. No decision was made at the panel meeting regarding these cases as the officers involved were not in a position to do so.

The additional assessment and support planning work is expected to be completed by Wednesday (20th July). It is expected this will allow Care and Support plans to be developed. As with all service users these plans will be reviewed and changed as needs change. It is expected all service users' needs and support arrangements will be reviewed by the end of the financial year.

I am pleased that we arranged for senior officers to meet with you and the Chief Executive of Reading MENCAP on Friday last week (15th July) to discuss the outcomes required for the service user group and the future requirements with an agreed focus on putting the person's ability to live a fulfilled and supported life at the centre.

I know we share the goal of supporting residents to be independent as possible, to develop daily living and employability skills and to access the full range of community services and activities open to all Reading residents and I believe that you have agreed an interim position with the Council.

As ever I am always ready to hear from you and discuss issues as we together face down the biggest threat to council services - and support for the communities and individuals that rely on them - that Reading has ever faced.

COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor White to ask the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport:

20's Plenty

Green councillors have long been working for 20 mph across Reading. We welcome the large, new East Reading zone which will help improve road safety and create a more pleasant environment for everyone. Please can the Lead Councillor for Transport detail the activities which have and will be undertaken by the council to raise awareness of this new zone and continue to change the culture of driving and transportation in Reading for the better?

Also, with the reduced cost of implementing 20 mph zones please can the Lead Councillor update me with a revised and reduced figure for implementing a Reading wide zone?

REPLY by Councillor Page (Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport):

I thank Cllr White for his question and would remind him that the new East Reading scheme owes much to the tireless work of the Redlands Labour councillors.

The East Reading scheme is still being delivered and road markings in the form of 20mph roundels are currently being painted on the road surface across the area. These markings, placed at regular intervals depending upon the characteristics of each street, will remind drivers that they are in the 20mph zone. The markings will provide a regular reminder of the lower limit which will improve awareness, compliance and ultimately the culture of driving in the area. Once the road markings are complete we can then consider the use of the speed activated signs, if appropriate, that we already deploy within Reading.

We are still required to demonstrate an average mean speed of 24mph or less to implement 20mph zones. East Reading met this requirement due to its mix of traffic calming, narrow streets and on-street parking that already existed.

We are already looking at other areas to extend the lower speed limit such as in Lower Caversham, the Oxford Road area to the west of the town centre, and a 20mph proposal is already included in the current informal traffic consultation for Southcote.

As Cllr White knows this Administration is opposed to imposing a Borough-wide zone, as we favour area schemes working with local communities to develop schemes that are based on extensive local consultations and support from local residents.

COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 2

Councillor White to ask the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport:

Cemetery Junction congestion

Please can the Lead Councillor for Transport please confirm the current number of vehicles heading into Reading on the London Road between the borough boundary and Cemetery Junction during the busiest hour in the morning? Please can the Lead Councillor also confirm what the modelling done by Reading and Wokingham as part of the East Reading park-and-ride and Mass Rapid Transit schemes estimates this number to be in 10 years' time if both of these schemes are built?

REPLY by Councillor Page (Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport):

I thank Cllr White for his question.

The busiest morning peak hour, recorded by the traffic counter located at the London Road/St Bartholomews Road junction for the current calendar year, was on the 27th January 2016 between 07.58 and 08.58 when 1,014 vehicles were recorded heading westbound on the London Road.

The business cases for the proposed Thames Valley Park Park and Ride facility and the East Reading Mass Rapid Transit scheme are currently being prepared by Wokingham Borough Council and Reading Borough Council respectively. Further information will be available when this work has been completed towards the end of the year.

As Cllr White knows the London Road corridor between the A3290 and Reading town centre is one of the most congested parts of the highway network and any private car trip removed from the network will help to reduce congestion and improve air quality which is particularly poor around Cemetery Junction.

The public exhibition which starts tomorrow at the Waterside Centre (and then continues in the Civic Centre foyer for a further month) will highlight the fact that we are looking for public transport from a much wider area to benefit from and use the new bridge. It is not just a bridge to serve a park and ride site at Broken Brow, but also intended for use by services such as the Heathrow Rail-Air Link, Winnersh Park and Ride, some of the local Woodley and Earley bus services, and other public transport services from the wider area that see the opportunity to gain a much more rapid journey in to Reading.

Both the MRT and Park and Ride schemes form part of our wider transport strategy to help manage the very substantial growth planned over the next 20 years in the Wokingham area by encouraging the use of sustainable transport.

The MRT scheme is a vital first element of developing a public transport corridor between Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell and would link to the preferred location for the Third Thames Crossing.

It is quite possible that, during peak hours, a bus could save up to 15 minutes by using the new bridge and the Napier Road link to the station, which obviously bypasses the often congested and slow-moving London Road/Cemetery Junction/Forbury Road route.

Once this new and faster route has become established it is quite conceivable to expect many thousands of car commuter journeys to switch to public transport from a much wider area.

Lastly let me emphasise that the plans (about which Cllr White and colleagues have already been briefed) clearly demonstrate that this scheme is only designed for public transport by virtue of a single lane that will cross Kennet Mouth itself. The road will be one lane in each direction, with the exception of a narrow short stretch over the Kennet which is designed only to be used by a single bus at any one time. There will also be a separated cycle and pedestrian facility alongside the new MRT route.

This therefore nails firmly the Green 'lie' that the MRT scheme is a precursor to a full-blown resurrected Cross Town Route in all but name. I trust that the irresponsible campaign of Green Party mis-information will now end.